

MORAL DETERIORATION: THE REFLECTION ON EMERGING STREET YOUTH GANGS IN MUSOMA, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated on youth moral deterioration in Musoma, Tanzania. Specifically, it aimed at finding the causes stakeholders attribute to youth moral deterioration; and explore the necessary approaches to restore morality. A total sample of 57 (Mean=36.5 years, SD=9.24) participants were used. Results indicated that stakeholders attributed the problem strongly to exposure to drugs (M=4.11, SD=1.129); peer pressure (M=3.96, SD=1.195) and ineffective parenting (M=3.88, SD=1.283) while genetic influence (M=2.44, SD=1.239); poor school performance (M=2.63, SD=1.277); and need to satisfy and gain fellows' recognition (M=3.19, SD=1.394) were weakly attributed to moral deterioration respectively. The role of moral education, relationship among stakeholders, and guidance, counselling and rehabilitation services were the necessary approaches suggested by stakeholders to restoring morality. National wide survey study on moral deterioration and its impacts on social, economical and political development are vital.

Keywords: Moral, Moral deterioration, Gang(s), Youth, Stakeholders

INTRODUCTION

Moral deterioration is reported in different societies and cultures; industrialized world to non-industrial world. Behaviours and actions denoting immorality such as rape, sexual abuse, robbery, and drug abuse, school violence and killings have been common among adults, youth and children all over the world. For instance, recent statistics on rape crime by UNODC indicates that France ranked first in the world having 10,277 rape crime cases in 2009 followed by Germany (7,292) and Russia (6,208). In Africa, Lesotho leads with a total of 1, 878 cases in 2009, followed by Sudan (1,183) and Morocco (1,130). In East Africa, Uganda leads with a total of 1,536 rape cases followed by Kenya having 735 rape cases. For example, in USA, nearly one in five women surveyed had been raped or had experienced an attempted rape at some point, and one in four reported having been beaten by an intimate partner; one in six women has been stalked (Rabin, 2011).

Statistical data on drug abuse indicates that there has been an increase in crimes involving drug abuse. UNODC (2012) indicates that there is an increase in rate of illicit drug use in the world whereby 230 million people or 5% of the world adult population were estimated to have used an illicit drug at least once in 2010. It is however astonishing that the rate is rising in several developing countries. Maithya (2009) reported that children and youth aged between 11 and 13 in Kenya have been recruited in drug abuse which is a crime and immoral according to the cultural values and practices in Kenya. Illicit drugs undermine the social and economic development of individuals and the nation and contribute to poverty, instability, crime, insecurity, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that in 2010 there were 99,000

to 25000 deaths globally caused by illicit drug use for people aged 15-64 years old (UNODC, 2012).

School violence also has been reported to rise in several countries including USA, China and Germany. For example, in Germany, the teenager of 17 years killed 15 fellow students at school near Stuttgart (Dougherty, 2009). Robbery is documented to contribute to about 10% of all violent crimes in Canada and 16% of all accused of robbery are young offenders (Bartol, 1991). Poipoi et al. (2011) also reported on the prevalence of school violence in Kenyan secondary schools taking the forms of bullying, threats, physical assault and verbal harassment.

Sexuality and sexual abuse, as one of the indicators of moral deterioration, characterize adults, youth and children. Children have been prone to sexual abuse by adults (UNODC, 2011). Adolescents reported to engage early in sexual activity and more prone to sexual abuse. For instance, in the USA, early pregnancy and childbearing are at the highest rate nearly twice those of Canada and Great Britain, and at least four times the rates in France and Sweden (Santrock, 2005).

EMERGING STREET GANGS IN MUSOMA

The emerging youth street gangs in Musoma municipality, as reported by media, government officials and through researcher's observation, is an alarming indicator of moral deterioration in the municipality. For instance, Maratu (2012) reported that one of the youth gangs named Mbio za Vijiti killed a citizen and injured another from opponent gang named Mdomo wa Furu in a fight involving the two gangs. The Regional Police Commander (RPC) further verified the event and explained that a number of youth gangs are formed in Musoma involved in violence, robbery, oppression, sexual harassment and theft. He further said that the Police are taking possible measures and requested citizens of Musoma to help the police in curbing the situation as some operations were underway to end the gangs and restore peace in the municipality. Report from the RPC office indicated that some members of the gangs were already arrested for robbery, theft, violence and sexual harassment cases (actual number not provided) and their cases were in court for hearing.

Apart from the above reports, researcher's stay in Musoma between December, 2011 and March, 2012 led to observation of many immorality incidences. The shocking one was which two girls were kidnapped by Mbio za Vijiti gang at Peninsula Beach Complex during Idd El Fitr and escorted to Nyakato for raping or other forms of sexual harassment. The police on patrol intervened at Kamunyonge area, arrested two boys and rescued one girl and the other was not rescued (what happened later to her was not known to the researcher). Nevertheless, the gang members are characterized with hatred and they are involved in frequent fights with rival gang members using weapons such as *sime* (matchet) and *panga* (long double-edged knife). These are practices that are against societal, cultural and traditional norms and values in Musoma municipality and Tanzania at large.

Studies indicate that moral values and behaviours are relevant to individuals, society and the nation at large. Santrock (2005) explains that children and youth are supposed to grow morally good for their own social and life development. Societies and nations with morally children and youths are more likely to prosper than societies characterized with immorality. Despite the negative effects caused by the gangs in the society and the nation at large, little is known or reported in different parts of the country including Musoma. This is what prompted the researcher to investigate the causes for moral deterioration among youths in Musoma municipality.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The study employed a multi-theoretical approach of moral development (eclectic approach) which explains individuals' moral development (thoughts, behaviours and feelings) as a function of a number of factors. Freud, Kohlberg, & Piaget as cited in Santrock (2005) explain moral development as highly influenced by peers (give-and-take relations), parents and culture. For instance, Gibbs (ibid) stress that parents' moral values influence children's developing moral thoughts.

Moral development takes place in the so called moral contexts (Santrock, 2005). The contexts include school, family (parenting) and religion. It is within the contexts where moral values of what is right and wrong are learned by children. Bronfenbrenner (ibid), put forward that children develop in five social systems (microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem, mesosystem and chronosystem) which are interactive. From the model, families (e.g. parents), school (e.g. teachers), peers (e.g. friends), church/mosque (e.g. religious leaders), media, government (e.g. policies, officials) and international organizations are responsible for children development and should relate to each other in their upbringing. These are what in this study are referred to as "*stakeholders*" of moral development.

In addition to development theories above, the study adopted the Attribution Theory which, as advanced by Weiner (1995) tries to explain people's behaviour, and explore the possible cause of an event or behaviour i.e. why people do what they do and find themselves attributing to internal and external factors.

Defining the term "moral/morality" has been controversial and debatable among scholars in philosophy, religion and psychology. For instance in philosophy, the descriptive definition of morality which explain moral as a set of conduct put forward by any actual group, including a society; and the normative definition which is based on the idea that what is moral should have a code of conduct that is put forward by a society and that it should be accepted as a guide to behaviour by the members of that society (Gert, 2012). In this study, the term "moral" shall be defined and used as per normative definition of morality above to refer to set of conducts put forward by a society and accepted as a guide to behaviour by the members of the society.

Moral deterioration is sometimes referred to as moral decay/decline/erosion and can easily be explained by referring to behaviours associated to it. For instance, Turiel (2002) indicated that failure of many people, especially the youth; to incorporate moral values and ideals of the society are indicators of moral decline. In this study, moral deterioration shall refer to diminishing in moral values among individuals or a group of people in a particular society.

Studies indicate that moral deterioration is associated to a number of factors. These include genetic factors such as inheritance of a difficult temperament; ineffective parenting; and living in a neighbourhood where violence is a norm (Dodge & Petit 2003; as cited in Santrock, 2005); poverty, lack of education, family background, and drug abuse (Mbatia et al. 2009; Possi, 1996); media, culture and technology (Kumar, 2010; Rwechungura, Olotu, Mathias, Minja & Goodluck, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The study sought to investigate on youth moral deterioration in Musoma municipality, Tanzania. Specifically, it aimed at finding causes stakeholders attribute to youth moral deterioration; and exploring the approaches stakeholders thought necessary to restore morality. The town was selected because of emerging number of street youth gangs including: Mbio za Vijiti, Mdomo wa Furu, Jamaica Mockers, West Lawama, Wamaili, and

B5 Ink. The gangs perform actions and behaviours that are illegal and immoral marking moral deterioration among youth in the municipality.

The study employed a descriptive cross sectional survey design. The design was chosen because of its usefulness in getting respondents' feelings, views and opinions in actual setting and in a specified time frame. Also, it allowed in collecting data from stakeholders having different age, status and background. Moreover, it helped in development of instruments and methods of data collection as well as widening the researcher's chance of employing different techniques of analysis while assisting in attaining validity and reliability of data collected (Creswell, 2009).

The study sample included 57 participants: 12 parents (conveniently sampled); 37 teachers (conveniently sampled from four selected secondary schools); three religious leaders, two media personnel, and three Ward Executive Officers (WEOs; both purposeful selected because of their role in individuals moral development).

The study used questionnaire (closed and open-ended), interview and focus group discussion (FGD) methods of data collection. The triangulation of methods of data collection was done to enrich data obtained by one method and assisting in validation of data. Closed questionnaires were self-developed in a Likert Scale format consisting of 18 item factors answered along 5 points scores ranging from 1 (*not a factor*) to 5 (*a very strong factor*). The study instruments were subjected to pilot study involving two parents, three teachers and one religious leader drawn from the target area prior to the commencement of the actual study. Moreover, The 18 items were subjected to scale reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha) and had adequate internal reliability ($\alpha=0.76$) which, according to (Pallant, 2005), is acceptable (Table 1).

Table 1. Scale Reliability

<i>Reliability Statistics</i>		
<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</i>	<i>Number of Items</i>
0.759	0.755	18

Data obtained through questionnaire (closed and open-ended) were coded and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 to obtain respondents' frequency and percentages, mean and standard deviation. Textual data obtained from Interview and FGD were subjected to thematic and content analysis methods. Moreover, individual and group quotations, paraphrases and voices were used. For data presentation purpose, not a factor scores were ignored while a very weak factor and a weak factor were taken as weak factors. A strong factor and a very strong factor were taken as strong factors.

Coolican (2009) and Creswell (2009) contend that ethical issues including privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality should be given higher priority in collection of data and reporting of research findings. Thus, the study was administered after the researcher got permission from the responsible authorities and informed consent from respondents themselves. Moreover, the researcher explained the objective of the study to participants and assured them with confidentiality. For the sake of this study, all the discussed issues were used for the intended purpose.

RESULTS**Causes Attributed to Youth Moral Deterioration**

The first objective of the study intended to find out the causes stakeholders attribute to moral deterioration. To meet this objective, stakeholders were requested to rate the 18 scaled items from 1 (*not a factor*) to (*a very strong factor*). Table 2 indicates stakeholders' rating and their attribution to moral deterioration.

Table 2. Stakeholders' Frequency Rates on Causes for Moral Deterioration

<i>S.N</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>Weak Factor</i>	<i>Strong Factor</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (SD)</i>
1.	<i>Ineffective parenting</i>	12 (21.1%)	41 (71.9%)	3.88	1.283
2.	Media influence	14 (24.5%)	29 (50.9%)	3.16	1.486
3.	<i>Peer pressure</i>	13 (19.3%)	43 (75.4%)	3.96	1.195
4.	Lack of relationship between stakeholders	21 (36.9%)	22 (38.5%)	2.88	1.351
5.	Ineffective children and youth policy	13 (22.8%)	24 (42.1%)	2.82	1.605
6.	<i>Exposure to drugs</i>	7 (12.3%)	47 (82.4%)	4.11	1.129
7.	Decline in religious upbringing	13 (22.8%)	32 (56.1%)	3.32	1.441
8.	<i>Genetic influence</i>	25 (43.9%)	13 (22.8%)	2.44	1.239
9.	Low self-esteem	20 (35.1%)	17 (29.8%)	2.51	1.416
10.	Socio-cultural influence	21 (36.8%)	27 (47.4%)	3.11	1.398
11.	Individuals' overambitious desire	21 (36.8%)	29 (50.9%)	3.25	1.272
12.	Emotional and aggression influence	21 (36.8%)	26 (45.6%)	3.12	1.390
13.	Family background	15 (28.0%)	31 (54.4%)	3.26	1.408
14.	Poverty	10 (17.6%)	36 (63.1%)	3.49	1.560
15.	Lack of education	12 (21.1%)	36 (63.1%)	3.49	1.390
16.	<i>Poor school performance</i>	27 (47.3%)	14 (24.6%)	2.63	1.277
17.	Self-directed behavior	22 (38.5%)	22 (38.5%)	2.82	1.351
18.	<i>Desire to satisfy others and gain fellow's recognition</i>	26 (45.6%)	24 (42.1%)	3.19	1.394
	<i>Total Item</i>	18 (31.6%)	29 (50.9%)	3.19	1.879

The results from Table 2 revealed that majority of participants attributed *exposure to drugs* (82.4%; $M=4.11$, $SD=1.129$); *peer pressure* (75.4%; $M=3.96$, $SD=1.195$); and *ineffective parenting* (71.9%; $M=3.88$, $SD=1.283$) as strong factors for moral deterioration. On the other

hand, *poor school performance* (47.3%; $M=2.63$, $SD=1.277$); *desire to satisfy others and gain fellows' recognition* (45.6%; $M=3.19$, $SD=1.394$); and *genetic influence* (43.9%; $M=2.44$, $SD=1.239$) were attributed by participants as weak factors for moral deterioration among youth in Musoma municipality. Other factors are as indicated in Table 2 above.

Data obtained from interview and FGD sessions from religious leaders, teachers, parents and WEOs supported closed questionnaire results above. Exposure to drugs was strongly attributed to youth moral deterioration in all interview and FGD sessions. For example, in an interview with one of the WEOs he had strong insights that youths in Musoma highly engage in drug abuse such as marijuana (bhangi), smoking and alcoholism. Similarly, teachers and parents exposed in interviews that drug abuse, smoking and alcoholism has been common among youth in the municipality causing school dropout and influencing them to engage in immoral behaviours such as robbery, assault and theft.

Moreover, interview data revealed that stakeholders strongly attributed youth moral deterioration to peer pressure. One of the parents inclined that his relative's child joined a gang named mbio za vijiti while in form two because of the influence from peers and later dropped out of school. She further explained that the boy was arrested by the police in mid-May, 2012 and currently held in prison for robbery, theft and kidnapping cases. Similar results were found in an interview with religious leaders, WEOs and media personnel who had insights that peer pressure is the strong cause for moral deterioration because youth learn immoral behaviours through imitating from friends or close relatives.

Moreover, ineffective parenting was among the strong factors that stakeholders attributed to the problem. For instance, in a focus group discussion session with teachers at one of the selected secondary schools, teachers had insights that ineffective parenting is a serious problem. Teachers lamented for parents' ineffectiveness in their children upbringings. It was revealed that sometimes parents end up in confrontation with teachers when their children get punished for indiscipline. One of the head of schools said:

"...In August last year, I was involved in an intense verbal confrontation with a parent after the school board decided to suspend his son for one month after he had committed indiscipline case at school. This terrified teachers to the extent that most of them became reluctant to deal with students' misbehaviour..."

One religious leader said that ineffective parenting and increase in marriage break up that makes most of the children ending up reared by single parents contributes to the problem. Nevertheless, participants weakly attributed the problem to genetic influence, low self-esteem and poor school performance in both interview and FGD sessions.

Approaches to Restore Morality

The second objective of the study was to find out what approaches stakeholders thought necessary to restore morality in Musoma municipality. Findings from open ended questionnaires indicated that respondents suggested for non- governmental organizations (NGOs) and government interventions; counselling and rehabilitation services; family planning; provision of moral education in schools and the society at large; and effective parenting. Table 3 summarizes the approaches suggested.

Table 3. Approaches Suggested in Restoring Morality

<i>Approach</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Counselling and rehabilitation services	19	33.3%
Effective parenting	9	15.8%
Government intervention	3	5.3%
Law enforcement	4	7.0%
Moral education provision	22	38.6%

Data obtained from interview and FGD echoed open-ended questionnaire findings above. Participants insisted on the provision of moral education to children and youth; establishment of counselling and rehabilitation services; laws enforcement; establishment of economic and social support for youths such as loans provision; religious intervention; and effective relationship between stakeholders. Collaboration between stakeholders was insisted by one participant who said:

“...Moral education should be given to the whole society. It should be known that a child does not belong to a certain family but the whole society. His/her success or failure does not only affect his/her family, but the whole community. Thus, parenting should be a community responsibility rather than parent based responsibility...”

Additionally, the establishment of counselling and rehabilitation services as moral restoration approach was insisted during interview with secondary school teachers. For instance, one teacher said:

“...Counselling and rehabilitation services should be established and provided in schools and the community. The need for establishment of children and youth social clubs in Musoma and the whole country should be considered...”

DISCUSSION

The role of drugs on crime rate and individual's behaviour change is irrefutable irrefutable (Mbatia et al. 2009; Possi, 1996; UNODC, 2011). In this study the role of drugs on youth moral deterioration was strongly attributed by participants as the leading cause (Table 2). This signifies that drug abuse among youth in the municipality is an alarming problem causing behavioural change and may lead to increase in crime rate. This is because the municipality is the regional headquarters bordering Rorya and Musoma rural districts which borders Tarime district which is notable in production of marijuana. Thus, the municipality is an immediate source of market for marijuana because of its economic and population advantage.

Nevertheless, the rise in use of Kuber (smokeless chewing tobacco popular in India which is mainly used in place of cigarettes) and alcoholism such as Viroba (Konyagi small packet packs) among youth and elders in the municipality contributes mostly to the rise of moral deterioration. Possi (1996) insist that attitudes towards the use and effects of drugs and the presence of models and social reinforces, particularly peers and friends influence much of youth drug abuse as some youths think it is cool, to take drugs, especially when they see their peers 'getting high'. Thus, the role of group perception can cause drug abuse as those who don't take drugs...

Oladipo (2009) argued that parents are the first moral teachers and role models that young people have. Effective parenting characterized with love, care, attachment and trust between parents and children is more likely to lead to children and youths' good moral behaviour. Nevertheless, ineffective parenting characterized with lack of trust, hate, lack of love, care and attachment between parents and children leads to children's and youths' bad behaviour. However, results indicate that ineffective parenting is rated as the third cause for youth moral deterioration in Musoma. This indicates lack of effective parent-child relationship, care and control that accelerates to the problem in the municipality. Posi (1996) delights that insufficient influence of the family over individual's actions and lack of parental guidance plays a significant role and may lead to children and youth engaging in drug abuse.

Oladipo (2009) opined that the quality of the parent-child bond and the degree of warmth in the parent-child relationship affect many facets of children's development. This is in line to findings by Andersson & Stavrou (2000) studied on youth delinquency and the criminal justice system in Tanzania and contended that among the other factors, breakdown of family structure and kinship ties may increase the number of children/youth engaging in delinquent crimes such as petty theft in Dar es Salaam.

Lack of good relationship and cooperation among stakeholders in the upbringing of children and youth, though not indicated as a strong factor, implies that children upbringing has been taken as one's responsibility rather than a societal/collective responsibility. This is different from Oladipo (2009) who proposed that schools, family and community should merge to create the moral development climate that ultimately becomes the moral development classroom for children. Abebe & Davis (2004) posit that teachers and parents are the adults with whom the nation's young people most frequently and regularly come in contact. The existence of cooperation between stakeholders is an approach that if taken seriously can help in creating a moral society than lack of cooperation among the stakeholders.

Nevertheless, it is implying that the traditional African culture in which a child was taken as a societal being is now diminishing. It is amazing that nowadays punishing one's child, especially in urban areas, for indiscipline need for a detailed explanation to his/her parents, otherwise it might lead to misunderstanding among the involved parents.

Despite the role played by genetics on moral values and individuals development as explained by Rwechungura et al. (2010) the study findings indicated that the role of genetics on moral deterioration is negligible. This is an implication that youth moral deterioration in Musoma is highly attributed to external (out of one's disposition) than internal (inside ones' disposition) causes. School performance indicated to be the weak factor for moral deterioration. It is undoubtedly that students with moral values such as punctuality in performing tasks and obedience are more likely to achieve well academically than those with no moral values (Huitt, et al., 2009). This denotes that whether a person is performing poor academically at school, it doesn't guarantee him/her to misbehave.

The role of moral education in transmitting moral values is unquestionable (Coetzee, Louw & Jooste, 2005; Scott, 2004). Moral education in the Tanzanian education system is not strongly insisted with few moral values contents found in studies such as uraia (civics/general studies) and history at primary and secondary school levels. This is one of the contributing factors for youth moral deterioration because students lack moral teachings in their education system bearing in mind that children and youth spend most of their life time in schools.

Nevertheless, the traditional modes of transmitting moral values such as through *jando* (male initiation ceremonies) and *unyago* (female initiation ceremonies) to the young generation have been ignored in some societies. This is because of changing in life styles caused by the

so called “modernization” or “globalization”. This inhibits children and youth in getting character education (teaching students, children moral literacy to prevent them from engaging in immoral behaviours and value clarification (helping people to clarify what their lives are for and what is worth working for (Santrock, 2005).

The findings revealed that stakeholders suggested for establishment of counselling and rehabilitation service as well as social clubs among other approaches. Counselling and rehabilitation service is thought necessary by stakeholders due to its role in helping individuals adjust accordingly to their problem/difficulty. The use of social clubs in which children and youth can meet and discuss some challenges and success facing each other, play and do other activities is important because it can help youths meet, integrate and understand their cultural/social values and be in a position to appreciate each other and their differences. Counselling service seems to lack in schools and the society at large as far as the role of counselling in the country is not much recognized/utilized (Nkuba, 2012). Carlson (2003; as cited in Rayburn, *n.d.*) Delighted those schools counsellors can help avert violence in schools through aiding troubled students to experience their law-abiding and nonviolent selves as authentic.

The role of law enforcement and effective government intervention was suggested by stakeholders together with the country’s need to effectively implement children and youth policy. The use of laws to prevent youth related crimes such as robbery, theft and kidnapping, and drug abuse is important and indicated to be of necessity by stakeholders in the municipality. This corroborates to Andersson and Stavrou (2000) that it is the responsibility of each urban authority, as a local government authority, to maintain and facilitate the maintenance of peace, order and good governance within its area of jurisdiction.

Cooperation between stakeholders was among the approaches suggested in restoring morality. Findings indicated that the role of children upbringing has been taken as individual’s responsibility rather than societal/community responsibility. This is different from the traditional practices in which child rearing is taken as societal responsibility. This side with Oladipo’s (2009) argument that schools, family and community should merge to create the moral development climate that ultimately becomes the moral development classroom for children. In addition to that it echoes Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model in which suggest that the systems should interact in facilitating proper development of an individual.

CONCLUSION

The present study suggests that moral/character education should be established in Tanzanian education system to enable restoring moral values in the society. Youth moral deterioration is strongly attributed to exposure to drugs, peer pressure and ineffective parenting. National study on moral deterioration in Tanzania is vital and could take into consideration necessary intervention programmes that can help in restoring moral values across ages including children, youth and adults.

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