Moral behaviour of students in school: Societal dilemma

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Abstract

This study was conducted at Hangolo senior secondary school, a school in Akapelu education region in Namibia. The study explored a principal, head of department, teachers and parents' views about the apparent moral decay among some students in school and possible strategies to be used to develop moral behaviours among students. A qualitative approach using a case study design was employed. Data was collected by means of focus group discussions with ten participants, that is, the school principal, a head of department, four teachers and four parents who were members of the school board. The findings of the study revealed that causes of moral decay among students included among others: their misunderstanding of their rights and the notion of a democracy, a lack of parental guidance at home, and a misinterpretation of policies. The study suggests that parents, teachers and other stakeholders should be dedicated to their responsibility to guide students to behave in a more moral way by adopting a community approach. Students should also be properly guided to understand what is meant by the concepts of rights and democracy in relation to moral behaviour.

Keywords: Moral decadence. Ubuntu. Whole community approach. Rights and democracy. Cultural approach.

Introduction

The development of moral behaviour among students is critical for any investment in good citizens in both developing and developed countries. The term "morals" implies certain standards of behaviour and "moral" and or "immoral" suggests behaviour which is acceptable or unacceptable by society (Ayeni, 2012). According to Igba, Oka and Chidimma (2016) each society has its own set of moral values which they consider as ideal and acceptable. Each family and or community inculcates such moral values in their children and raises them to be responsible children who will ensure harmony and continuity of these values in their society (Wachege & Rũgendo, 2017). Some of the moral values people in communities and societies should embrace include, among others, happiness, worthiness, duty, responsibility, conscience, honour and dignity (Taneri, Gao & Johnson, 2016).These traits are among some of the moral values students are expected to demonstrate at school and in society at large.

In the past, corporal punishment was seen as an appropriate means to enforce discipline and develop moral behaviour in children both at home and in school. However, after Namibia got her independence in 1990, this practice was abolished. The subject Bible Studies which was regarded as a tool to develop students' moral behaviour was also removed from the curriculum with independence. The removal of Bible Studies from the curriculum is still an issue among some Namibian people and there is a sense that this, plus the abolishment of corporal punishment are contributing factors to the unruly behaviour of students and children. Corporal punishment was seen as a successful means of managing student behaviour in school. For example, on April 2018, some Christian leaders visited the President Hage Geingob and requested him to reintroduce Bible Studies in schools as a means to combat immoral behaviour (Isaak, 2018). However, after 1990, alternative ways to manage discipline and teach students moral values were put in place.

The Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture introduced subjects such as Life Skills and Religious and Moral Education as part of the curriculum. Isaak (2018) specified that the rationale behind teaching Religious and Moral Education (RME) was not that RME would replace religious and moral instruction or education learned at home or in church, but would stimulate the student's awareness of spiritual and moral life in the society. Through RME the students would get an opportunity to critically and constructively reflect on their morality as individuals as well as society at large.

The primary aim of education is to sustain the individual with societal improvement and development as an end result. Hence, the role of education in the moral development of students is of paramount importance in order to raise ethical and effective people within the community and or society. Such people are expected to be active in the building and development of prosperous social conditions and feed the expectations of the society (Türkkahraman, 2012). Therefore, as Türkkahraman (2012) pointed out schools are important component[s] of an educational system as they are expected to take a lead in providing instruction and personality formation which will enable economic progress and community development. This is emphasized by Roosevelt's saying as cited in Türkkahraman that "trying to educate a person mentally without educating [him or her] morally is to bring menace into the society". That is, if a person is not morally educated that person is potentially dangerous and harmful to the society. Thus, it is important for schools to take a lead in developing moral behaviour in students in order to create a safer, healthier and a more prosperous society.

Contextual background

There is not much literature on the upbringing of children in the Namibian context. Therefore, in this article I am writing from the perspective of the communities in the Northern part of Namibia where the research took place. Here, raising a child is now the sole responsibility of the family. What used to be a joint effort by the family and community to develop and socialize a moral person for the benefit of all, known as the culture of Ubuntu, is now lost in Namibia. The spirit of the "whole village" to raise the child no longer exists. It has become the responsibility of the parents alone to bring up their children. However, this problem is exacerbated by the fact that in many cases the parents themselves have lost their moral compass and are unable to instill moral behaviour in their own children. In general moral development among the youth is a facet of nurture. That is, the youth observe each other in their environment and adopt the accepted behaviour of other youths that is most significant to them and that is what they take home and ultimately to school. Shocking activities such as murder, robbery, theft, violence, child abandonment, rape, disrespect, and more are the order of the day among the Namibian society in this study. Morally offensive dress codes, where students deliberately expose parts of their anatomy are some of the issues which teachers experience in schools. The lack of virtue has created a negative environment for both Namibian people and the schools.

In an African culture the teaching of moral values starts at home and continues being nurtured at school. That is, "the first seed of moral education is to be sown within the family" and as such the family then becomes the child's "window to the world" (Igba et al., 2016). Parents are seen as the primary source to provide moral and values education for their children by setting a good example for their children. This cultural practice appears to have been abandoned in families.

The Kiswahili saying cautions, Mwacha mila ni mtumwa ("one who abandons one's culture is a slave"), since culture is regarded as a vehicle for transmitting moral values to individuals (Nyabul, 2009). In this regard parents are further cautioned to remember that children pay attention to what they see and hear from adults (Igba et al., 2016) and regard these actions as the correct way of doing things. Children learn values and attitudes that other people display through an observational process that they then encode and imitate (McLeod, 2011).
A Nigerian Yoruba proverb educates that: "When the home is unhappy the town appears to be like a forest" (Ayeni, 2012). Therefore, everybody has to pull together to make morality an achievable phenomenon in the society (Ayeni, 2012). The importance of developing morality in individuals, especially children is explained by Lodhi and Siddiqui (2014) that exposing individuals to principles helps to reap socially interactive humans, who are well-adjustable in the society and groomed for gaining good rapport from their surroundings and/or the community they find themselves, including at school.

Although the family in an African context [Namibia included] is regarded as the primary platform where morals are inculcated in the children, it is not done in isolation but with the help of the community, this context is the spirit of ubuntu. That is, it is a collective effort of the community to raise good and honest children. Thus, the child is

who he or she is because of others in the community (Mbigi, 2005). It used to be an important responsibility of everybody in the village or community to make sure that children internalized socially desirable or acceptable values and that their behaviours conformed to the values and norms of the community in which they lived. Nyabul (2009) pointed out that an educated person, apart from being knowledgeable, is also expected to be morally competent. That implies that schools have a real obligation to lead and develop students' moral behaviour since without moral virtues man and woman can achieve and contribute nothing of value (Sule & Shettima, 2018). When an ethical atmosphere is the norm, individuals tend to avoid activities like stealing, cheating, selfishness, dishonesty and greed. Morality also keeps the society from disintegration (Isaak, 2018) and it can lead to the social phenomenon of peace and harmony to flourish among people (Ayeni, 2012). Morality also produces virtues such as friendship, compassion, love, honesty, justice, freedom, courage and self-control (Isaak, 2018) in individuals, not only at school but also in the society at large.

From the research conducted in other African countries it is evident that a lack of morality is not only an issue in Namibia, but occurs elsewhere on the African continent. In Nigeria Sule and Shettima (2018) pointed out that moral decadence, which is described as a collapse in upholding societal values, norms and ethical standards behaviours has caused many problems in Nigerian society, while Coetzee, Louw and Jooste (2005) point out that in South Africa the issue of morality is contentious and controversial. However, the corrosion of moral values is not only an African phenomenon. Taneri et al. (2016) indicate that the corrosion of moral values has become a phenomenon in many nations including China, Turkey, and the USA. They state that research shows that young people globally care less about morals and focus instead on themselves to promote agendas that have nothing to do with ethical values. This implies that moral deficiency in young people has become a worldwide phenomenon.

Moral behaviour is vital in all walks of life if societal goals and the developmental goals of a country are to be attained. It is therefore necessary that a moral order is revived in order for people to live a good life in societies (Taneri et al., 2016).

Statement of The Problem

A lack of moral behaviour in students has been a concern in Namibia since independence. The Namibia Institute of Educational Development (NIED, 2012) for example shows that ill- discipline, and lack of ethical behaviour is on the increase in Namibian schools. This behaviour in students continues to raise concerns today among teachers, parents and the community at large (Sinalumbu, 2013). Thus, morality among Namibian youth in general and students in particular has become a thorn in the flesh and a social evil. The societal moral values are no longer the prevailing guide for the behaviour of our young ones. The Head of State, President Hage Geingob raised the same concern about the moral decay among Namibians, and is turning to religion for assistance. The President pointed out that gender-based violence and child abuse are some of the social problems and daily challenges that Namibians live with. Some religious leaders argue that many of these social problems are a result of government policies enacted without consultation with some stakeholders.

This study was therefore motivated by numerous concerns about moral decay among students and consequently in the society at large. The study focused on researching the views of the school principal, head of department, teachers and parents at Hangolo senior secondary school in the Akapelu education region, about students' moral decay in school and possible strategies that could be used to develop better behaviour among students.

The research objectives for this study were:

1.   To explore the views of parents and teachers about the moral decay among students.
2.   To identify the causes of moral decay among the students.
3.   To identify possible strategies to address these issues among students in school.

Methodology

Research design and approach

I adopted a qualitative approach as it helps to describe and interpret a phenomenon, in this study, the moral decay among students, from the point of view of the participants. This qualitative study explored the views, feelings and experiences of the school principal, head of department, teachers and parents of what core values have been eroded that result in the unacceptable behaviour among students (Mohajan, 2018). This qualitative study used a case study design. The case study is likely to yield rich descriptions and explanations from the participants (Yin, 2012).

It further enabled me to gain a meaningful perspectives on the decadence among students as experienced by participants and to arrive at some strategies that could be used to improve behaviour among students in school.

Sampling procedure

The study was conducted at Hangolo senior secondary school in the Akapelu education region (pseudonyms) in Namibia. I used purposive sampling to select participant for this study. That is, participants were deliberately chosen because of their knowledge of the phenomenon under study. Ten participants were conveniently selected for the study. They constituted one (1) school principal, one (1) head of department, four teachers (4), and four (4) parents who are members of the school board. Gender representative was considered in the sampling. Ten participants partook in this study.

Figure 1: Parents and educators demographic characteristics:

NAME	PORTFOLIO	SEX	AGE	NO. OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOL	QUALIFICATION	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	ETHNICITY
Mr Timo Elia	School Principal	M	45	1	B. Ed (Hons)	18	Omuwambo
Mr Etu Ndali	Head of department	M	35	2	Basic Education Diploma	15	Omuwambo
Ms Maria Josef	Teacher	F	30	3	Basic Education Diploma	10	Rukwangali
Mr Pau Wangolo	Teacher	M	32	2	Basic Education Teacher Diploma	11	Omuwambo
Ms Precious Namasiu	Teacher	F	31	2	B.Ed (Hons)	12	Caprivian
Mr August Twendi	Teacher	M	34	2	Basic Education Diploma	13	Omuwambo
Mr Weyuku Oiva	Parent(Chairperson -Schoolboard)	M	56	2	Certificate in Community development	None	Omuwambo
Ms Shetu Konena	Parent (Schoolboard member)	F	54	2	Certificate In Early Childhood Development	8	Omuwambo
Mr Kota Walaula	Parent (Schoolboard member)	M	58	1	None (Can read and write)	None	Omuwambo
Ms Amona Taala	Parent (Schoolboard member)	F	50	1	None (Can read and write)	None	Omuwambo

Data collection method and instruments

I used three (3) focus group discussion interviews in this study. Interviews were held in homogeneous groups in that I took the status and the position of the participant in the hierarchy of the school into consideration. Thus, there was a focus group discussion for teachers, a focus group discussion for the principal and head of department, and a focus group discussion for the parents. The duration of each discussion was one hour thirty minutes. The reason I interviewed participants in groups was I did not want to create an environment where participants did not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, opinions and experiences (Cheng, 2007). In the focus group discussion I engaged participants in a deeper investigation of their social realities within their specific context (Cooper & Hall, 2014). Participants shared their lived experiences of the problem under discussion, students' lack of moral behaviour. I also gave participants an opportunity at the end of the discussions to converse about anything else related to the study that they felt was relevant. With the permission of the participants I recorded the discussions which were immediately transcribed and analysed while fresh in my mind.

Figure 2: Focus group discussion guide

1. How would you describe the moral behaviour of your students?
2. Why do you think students behave the way they do?
3. What do you think are the impacts of student behaviour on the society?
4. What strategies do you think can be used to foster moral behaviour in students?

The participants' answers to the questions guided me on whether to ask additional questions to "probe for information if it does not come up" in the answer (Rabionet, 2011).

Data analysis

I used an interpretational data analysis technique (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) as the narrative analysis. That is, I analysed and interpreted participants' accounts of their lived experiences. I read through the data from the interviews, interacted with it and looked for emerging categories by making comments in the margins (Patton, 1990). This helped me to organise the data and identify patterns and categories which framed the presentation of the data. I simply used highlights to code, sort and identify similar phrases that emerged across the focus group interviews and grouped them together. I quoted the exact words and statements of participants and wrote detailed descriptions and narratives of the participants' views concerning the moral decay among students. I included the most noteworthy quotes in this article to give readers a taste of the opinion of the participants.

Procedure

I obtained entry to the school using a letter of authorization from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education. I visited the principal of the identified school and explained to the principal the purpose of the research and which participants would take part in the research. I also asked the principal to assist in asking the head of department, teachers, parents (the schoolboard chairperson and other three members of the schoolboard) to voluntary participate in the research. After the participants' voluntarily agreed to participate in the research, meetings were arranged and the purpose of the research was explained to them in their respective homogeneous groups. I also explained to them that participating in this research was voluntary. Participants were further assured that the information collected from them would not reveal their identity and the identity of their school. Participants were given a consent letter to read that enabled them to decide whether to take part in the research or not. They were also given the opportunity to ask questions. Thereafter, those who wished to participate in the research signed the consent letter. I was fortunate that because there was a schoolboard meeting taking place that week. I managed to meet the parents on the date of the schoolboard meeting, talk about my research and their voluntary participation in the research, and explain the consent letter as well as the anonymity and safeguarding of their identity. After the discussions I asked the participants to verify the accuracy and the content of their transcriptions to ensure the credibility of the research.

Findings

The following categories emerged from the data: Unruly behaviour, Misunderstanding of rights and democracy by students, lack of parental guidance at home, misinterpretation of policies and suggestions for developing moral behaviour in students. These categories are presented in the next section.

1. Unruly behaviour

On the question of **how the participants would describe the behaviour of their students**, the 45 year old school principal Mr Timo, who had taught for 18 years remarked, shaking his head that: *These students are very much unruly and difficult to handle. You cannot just understand them. The wrong thing to them is the right thing. These students do not want to listen. They do not want advice. The way they behave towards teachers is the way they behave towards their fellow students. They do not show any respect towards their teachers and that is the same thing some do to their parents. This is just a difficult and immoral generation we are dealing with.*

Mr Etu, a 35 year old head of department who had taught for 15 years added that: *Students nowadays have no manners. They insult their teachers just because they indulge themselves in things like alcohol and drug abuse. They are influenced by the social life out there. Immoral things are happening outside the school and that is what they bring to the school. By doing so, other students' behaviour become contaminated.*

Ms Precious a 31 year old female teacher who has12 years' teaching experience sadly said: *In teaching one is no longer excited to teach. The behaviour of students nowadays is demoralizing. The society wants a decent person, an orderly person, a respectful person, a person who can serve the society with dignity and this dignity starts at home, continues in school and to the society. This is not what the behaviour of our students depicts. No morality among our students, who are our society members. If we are working with immoral students that later will go back into the society, that means, we will have an immoral society.*

Parents also felt that the behaviour of the students was unacceptable. Mr Weyuku, 56 year old, the chairperson of the schoolboard remarked that: *Our children's behaviour is very much disappointing. Something went wrong with the upbringing of our children, starting from home. As a result, we have immoral students and thus an immoral society. Drug and alcohol abuse were not substances we used when we were kids at school that time. Now, that is the order of the day among our students.*

Participants were also asked to explain ***why they think students behave the way they do*?** The following category emerged from the discussions:

2. *Misunderstanding of rights and democracy by students*

Parents' views about the moral decay among students were that it has an impact on the image of the country in general and it affected teaching and learning in school. For example, they referred to issues such as alcohol and drug abuse, killings, disrespect, rape, and other immoral acts. These acts tarnish the image of the country. Parents attributed such immoral behaviour to the issue of rights and democracy. This is supported by the following quotations by parents.

Mr Kota, a parent of 58 years old and a member of the schoolboard said: *There is a misinterpretation of rights and democracy among our children. To them everything is their right. It is their right not to respect the adults, it is their right to misbehave, it is their right to dress in a manner that offends other people, it is their right not to study, it is their right… It is just difficult to guide these children to behave morally because of the rights and democracy issues.*

Ms Shetu aged 54 also a member of the schoolboard, expressed how powerless parents felt when he stated: *It is like we as parents we do not have power to guide these children and that is the same with teachers in school. We are powerless. We and I mean parents, teachers and the government at large, should do something as far as the moral behaviour of students is concerned. They have become unruly. These students are the future parents and leaders of our society. Imagine how the future of this society will look like. What a disaster and chaos in the society.*

Ms Amona, 50 years old and a member of the schoolboard added: *Democracy has created problems in school and society at large. You do not talk about moral values and or guide the behaviour of your child, that child will tell you "that is something of the past, it is old fashioned. It is only you who did that at your time. We are not living the world you live. We are talking about democracy now, and we do whatever we want to do."*

Participants were of the opinion that the constitutional rights of children seems to have been misinterpreted by children. Some young people claimed that they behave the way they do because it is their constitutional right to do so, and the kinds of immoral things they do. The chairperson of the schoolboard Mr Weyuku explained: *Students behave the way they do because they claim it is their constitutional right and that they are in a democratic country. Perhaps the constitution should be well explained to the students when it comes to rights and democracy. There is a serious misinterpretation of constitutional rights and democracy by students which leads to moral corrosion in schools and the society at large.*

Ms Shetu also strongly felt that the constitutional rights of children were misinterpreted by children and the students. She remarked: *The rights issue is a problem in our country now. Now everything is just children's rights. I do not even know whether they understand what rights mean. That is why schools and we parents are suffering because of immorality of these students caused by their understanding of their constitutional rights.*

The misinterpretation of their rights and what a democracy entailed emerged as a major challenge to the morality of students at school and it affected teaching and learning. Teachers pointed out that they are put in a position where they are not able to manage and guide students' behaviour. Mr August, a 34 year old teacher, who has 13 years teaching experience, explained: *The rights and democracy issues have affected the way students behave in and outside the school. The society is restless. Citizens live in fear, fear of their own sons and daughters and it is the same with us at school. Rape cases by very young children are reported. Immorality! Somebody should come to our rescue.*

Mr Pau, a teacher, aged 32 who had taught for 11 years pointed out that: *Children's rights and democratic rights are killing morality in our schools and hamper teaching and learning. Students are walking around with hanging trousers and they claim it is their right to dress that way. They do not want to be guided because it is their democratic rights. We are working in a threatening situation. You cannot guide the moral behaviour of a student nowadays. That student may insult you. That is why in school we just keep quiet and not put our noses in students' moral behaviour. We are toothless.*

Maria, a female teacher, who is 30 years old remarked: *The rights and democracy raised concerns. Immorality problems are escalating every day. We do not have peace in school and in the society anymore because of the immoral acts the community and the wider society experienced every day. You mention disrespectful behaviour, stealing, pregnancies, and others. Students claim it is their right to do all these. Where are we heading to?*

3. Lack of parental guidance at home

It was also pointed out that there was a lack of instruction in moral behaviour at homes. Parents have abrogated their responsibility of teaching their children moral behaviour at home. The school principal Mr Timo pointed out that: *Parents have abandoned the teaching of moral behaviour of their children at home which made it difficult for us to instill those behaviours in students at school.*

Mr Kota, a parent explained that: *Today's parents are also not behaving in a moral way. They brought children on this earth, and because they are not moral, their children are also not moral. Children were supposed to be guided by their parents. An immoral parent cannot guide a child to be a moral person because he or she does not know how to behave in a moral way himself or herself.*

August, a male teacher pointed out that: *It is a pity. The generation we have now is a generation of parents who do not know what morality is. As such, we should not expect them to send us moral students.*

4. Misinterpretation of policies

It is believed that the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools was a contributing factor to immoral behaviour of students in school. However, some participants argued that the abolishment of corporal punishment did not mean students and youth in general should not be guided to behave in a moral way. This is evident in Mr Etu's remark: "*It is nowhere stated in policies that schools should not guide and develop students' moral behaviours. That is a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of policies by our teachers and other stakeholders.*

The chairperson of the schoolboard, Mr Weyuku emphasized that *the misinterpretation of policies by both the teachers, parents and students caused immorality in schools. Policies did not say students should live an immoral life. We put the blame on policies, but the problem is us.*

Teacher August also felt that *misinterpretation of policies created problems in schools. Teachers feel it is not allowed to guide students morally, which is not true. Parents also blame policies that they are not allowed to guide their children morally. Just a confusion that should be cleared.*

Another question that was asked during the focus group discussions was: ***What strategies do you think can be used to foster moral behaviour in students?***
Participants came up with various suggestions about the strategies that could be used to foster moral behaviour in students. These are presented below:

a. Whole community approach

The school principal Mr Timo suggested that*: The guidance should start at home as they say "charity starts at home" and be reinforced by the whole community. People do not want us to talk about the past, but I think the way parents raised children in the past bear positive fruits as far as moral behaviour of students in school are concerned. It has not been an individual task to foster moral behaviour in children; therefore, I suggest that we go back to our roots.*

Mr Etu the head of department was of the opinion that*: We should adopt a cultural approach of the whole community bringing up and nurturing the moral behaviour of students. Students and youth in general need to understand that the community/society needs moral people for the development of this country. Therefore, all stakeholders should understand that "my child is your child".*

Teacher Ms Maria also felt that: *This is a national crisis now and an individual cannot handle it alone. Joining hands as a whole community might help to foster moral behaviour in students. She said: If we do not think of what we should do now, these students are going too far. I think we should work together as parents, teachers and the whole community to see how far we will go to foster moral behaviour in our students and thus the society at large.*

b. Moral behaviour campaigns

Participants felt that campaigns would be useful. Mr Kota a parent said: *We should be proactive in this matter. Organise campaigns for students so that we can talk to them and teach them about the importance of living a moral life for their own benefits and the benefits of others.*

Ms Amona, a parent also added that: *When HIV and AIDs was so vulnerable to our people in this country there were campaigns going on in this country. Meetings were held and people were educated on how to take care of themselves and others. This helped a lot. Therefore I suggest that* we *need to join hands to educate our students what rights and democracy mean. I mean, all education stakeholders including parents.*

Mr Pau, a teacher also felt that moral campaigns should be organized. He stated that: *We should save our society from immorality by organizing campaigns to educate our students about moral behaviour. The community should also be educated because it does no help to only deal with the students in school. We should also treat the other side, which is the community. Otherwise the poison will still remain.*

b. Life Skills subject in schools

Another strategy to develop moral behaviour in students as suggested by participants was to strengthen the teaching of Life Skills in schools. The principal, Mr Timo said: *The Life skills subject where students learn life skills as important components of moral behaviour should be strengthened. In addition we should also see how we can develop the moral behaviour of students through the word of God, the Bible.* Ms Precious believed that*: Religious and moral education subject is one of the subjects that could have a positive influence and impact on the moral behaviour of students and not only teach different religions.* Mr Etu agreed with Ms Precious, a teacher that: *We need a moral society. Strengthening the teaching of moral behaviour through the Life Skills subject might alleviate immoral behaviour in students. Therefore, those teachers teaching Life skills subject should take the subject serious. I suggest that it should be taught by those teachers who are trained to teach it. It should not just be given to a teacher who does not have enough workload.*

Discussion

The major findings of the research revealed that various misunderstandings of certain aspects such as rights and democracy by students, lack of parental guidance and misinterpretation of policies were contributing causes of the problem. These issues added to the immoral behaviour of students in school and the society at large. The findings further indicated that parents and teachers felt paralyzed by students' claims to their rights and democracy, a problem exacerbated by the abolishment of corporal punishment which made it difficult to guide students to behave in a moral way either at home or in school. However, the view that corporal punishment made students behave in a more moral way is contested in the Legal Assistance research brief (2016) when Desmond Tutu argued that children could be disciplined without corporal punishment.

The findings further revealed a lack of parental guidance in the moral behaviour of students. This situation was highlighted by Saphier and King (1985) who pointed out that "good seeds will not grow in a weak culture" (p. 67). Lack of parental guidance of students could be viewed as a "norm" that "constrains" (Schein, 2004, p. 1) moral behaviour of students in school. This is in accordance with Marais and Meier (2010, p. 47) who argued that it is at home where students learn the basics of good ethical behaviour. Therefore, parents must ensure that morality is maintained home and also promoted in school (Heystek, 2003, p. 329).

It is therefore of utmost importance to build communities where the home and school are safe places, where discipline is taught to children and sustained in order to achieve a moral society. It is worth noting that the way the parents raise their children has an effect on determining what those children would achieve in the future. In Proverbs (22) we read: "Train the child the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it". Parents and teachers have a great responsibility to nurture the moral behaviour of their children in order for them to adopt standards or principles that guide their actions, conduct and moral consciousness in the society (George & Uyanga, 2014). Thus, a good moral upbringing is essential for a healthy, decent and productive school and society. As Taneri et al. (2016) pointed out the moral condition of individuals in school, including teachers, parents and students is representative of the society's moral condition in future.

The findings further indicated that there is a need for a collaborative culture between schools, parents and society at large if moral behaviour is to be realized in students and consequently in the society at large. What needs to be done is that church communities and other organizations should work together to attain a peaceful and compassionate world. Such an approach is in line with Camburn (2009) that "knowledge does not reside in the minds of individuals but [is] instead distributed across people in the social context" (p. 10). That is, the school can use the social capital (Caldwell & Harris, 2008, p. 10), of the school to enhance improved behaviour by its students. Schools could form partnerships with individuals and stakeholders who have the potential to support them in reinforcing values that shape the moral behaviour of their students.

Furthermore, a collaborative approach to develop moral behaviour in students can be explained according to Young, Caldarella, Richardson and Young (2012) that "if schools develop a strong sense of *collaborative* (my emphasis) and cooperative community within the school and the surrounding communities, it helps students to make meaningful links between moral behavioral expectations between the school, home, and a wider community" (p. 26). That is, schools need to establish positive relations with parents and the community at large to reinforce and develop moral behaviour in students. The findings indicated that this could be done through moral behaviour campaigns that involved all stakeholders. As Osterman (2000, p. 323) emphasized quality relationships are therefore crucial in realizing moral behaviour in students since they help the school to accomplish what it cannot do alone (Minckler, 2013, p. 2).

Furthermore, the call for joining hands is a call to adopt the cultural approach of the whole village contributing to raising children, the Ubuntu approach. It is believed that this approach may bring about change and give students a chance to gain direction and wisdom from various people with different expertise concerning morality. It also has the potential to open up a possibility of moral behaviour among students. This is in line with Isaak (2018) who stated that the Ubuntu culture is rich in values that can enhance students' understanding [of what morality entails]. Thus, participants advocated for "my child is your child" to develop moral behaviour in students and consequently in the society.

The findings further revealed that subjects such as Life skills and Religious and Moral Education are potential tools that teachers could use to improve the behaviour of students in school. This is in line with the rationale of the introduction of RME in schools (Isaak, 2018). Furthermore the findings revealed that the moral behaviour of students could be nurtured by the word of God. This view is in line with Chowdhury (2016) who argued that religion and spirituality is increasingly being marginalized nowadays to the extent that it has a negative impact on morality in the society at large.

The findings further indicated there is a misconception that the constitution and other policies prohibit the nurturing of children and the development of student moral behaviour, which is not the case. This is an indication that there is a need to develop a common understanding of the policies that guide the behaviour of students in school.

Implications of the lack of moral behaviour of students

If moral behaviour of students in school is not addressed, this is likely to deepen and produce an immoral society that is already evident in some activities in the society as mentioned earlier. In addition, it is likely to alarm and demotivate teachers to make any effort to inculcate moral behaviour in students. Should this continue, it is likely that the education system will produce immoral citizens. Insults and students' disrespect of teachers is likely to push teachers out of the system. The quality of education provided to students is also challenged and not guaranteed. Immorality if not addressed will be passed on from one generation to the other. Therefore, the findings of this research have important implications to develop strategies and programs geared at addressing immorality in students.

This was a small scale research which involved a limited number of participants. Therefore, the findings might not be generalized; however, lessons can be learned from the findings of this research. For future research, a larger population and sample should be used to make it more representative.

Conclusion

The present study sought to explore the causes of immoral behaviour among students in school from the perspectives of the principal, head of department, teachers and parents at Hangolo senior secondary school in Namibia. The study also explored how the immoral behaviour among students in general might be addressed to enhance moral consciousness in the society at large. Focus group discussions were used to collect data. The findings confirmed that students' decadent behaviour in school is among others a result of misunderstanding of rights, democracy, parents who have abandoned their parental role of upbringing and developing their children's morality and a misinterpretation of policies. Having abandoned their responsibility of nurturing children's behaviour at home has created a challenge for schools to continue with the task of guiding students' behaviour. As a result, the school produces citizens who are not morally sound. That is, the morality of the society is challenged by immoral behaviour among the youth. Participants believed adopting a collective and whole community approach to guiding student behaviour in school might help to improve the current situation. It can be concluded that Namibia needs to direct the attention of its citizens to issues of morality through education. Education should target not only students in school, but also the community in general to achieve the goal of producing upright citizens. Therefore the idea of embracing a community approach to address the issue of morality in the society should be treasured by all.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study it is recommended that:

1. Parents, schools and other stakeholders should not ignore the immoral behaviour of students. Both parents and teachers should be dedicated to their responsibility to guide students to behave in an ethical way.
2. A community approach in guiding student moral behaviour should be adopted.
3. Students should be properly guided to understand what is meant by rights and democracy in relation to moral behaviour.
4. Subjects such as Life skills and Religious and Moral Education should be taught in such a way that they enhance and develop the moral behaviour of students.
5. Social gatherings and groups to campaign for better behaviour among students should be established.

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