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BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION AS CORRELATE FOR SUSTAINABLE MORAL VALUES AND SECURITY IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The prevalence of unemployment in Nigeria has become a serious issue that needs urgent attention. This is because most unemployed youths tend to engage in many social vices that usually impinge on the security of the country. This study therefore examined the effectiveness of behaviour modification as a correlate for sustainable moral values and security in Enugu State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The correlation survey research design was adopted in the study. The study area was Plateau State, Nigeria. The study's population covered all the 2,796 public primary school teachers in the State. A multistage sampling technique was employed in drawing a sample of 400 teachers for the study. Three instruments, the Child Behaviour Modification Questionnaire (CBMQ), the Questionnaire on Sustainable Moral Values (QSMV), and the Questionnaire on Sustainable Security in Nigeria (QSSN), with reliability indices of 0.77, 0.81, and 0.79, respectively, which were developed by the researchers, were used for data collection. The collected data were analyzed using regression analysis. The result showed that effective behaviour modification correlates with sustainable moral values and security in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study revealed that effective behaviour modification significantly ($p < 0.05$) correlates with sustainable moral values and security in Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that parents and teachers ensure proper modification of children's behaviour to enhance sustainable moral values in Nigeria. The government, through the school authorities, should set out mechanisms for effective behaviour modification of children to promote security in Nigeria.
Keywords: Behaviour modification, moral values, security

Introduction

During formative age, children grow with a wide spectrum of behaviours that need to be shaped appropriately to achieve societally desirable behavioural outcomes. Behaviour modification in children therefore plays a pivotal role in shaping their moral values and contributing to the overall societal security. According to Obibuba (2020), behaviour modification involves systematically altering an individual's behaviour through various techniques and approaches to achieve specific desired outcomes. It is a psychotherapeutic intervention that is used to eliminate or reduce maladaptive behaviours in children or adults (Leiserowitz,

Kates, & Parris, 2016). In children, behaviour modification is majorly used to promote positive behaviours and deter negative ones. The process, according to Viederman (2006) involves identifying target behaviours, implementing appropriate interventions, and using reinforcement or punishment to encourage or discourage those behaviours. This is very crucial during the early childhood years because it is a critical period for shaping moral values. During this stage, modification of children's behaviour can instill fundamental principles such as empathy, respect, honesty, and responsibility over a lifetime.

Nigeria, like many other nations, faces significant challenges related to moral decay and insecurity. There has been a growing concern over the erosion of these values in the country despite its richness in cultural diversity and heritage. The decline in moral values is evident in the rising crime rates, including armed robbery, kidnapping, and cybercrime (Eze, 2022). These activities are often driven by greed and a lack of respect for the law and fellow citizens. There is also a noticeable increase in indiscipline among Nigerian youth, reflected in behaviours such as truancy, drug abuse, and disrespect for authority (Adamu & Musa, 2021). This can be attributed to a lack of proper guidance and positive role models. The erosion of moral values has also impacted the work ethic of many Nigerians. According to Akinwale (2020), there is a growing tendency towards laziness, dishonesty, and a lack of commitment in both the public and private sectors. Babatunde (2019) also noted that traditional communal values that emphasized collective responsibility and mutual support are being replaced by individualism. This has largely weakened community bonds and led to increased social fragmentation.

The above issues can be attributed to the failure to effectively modify children's behaviour during childhood which can lead to juvenile delinquency (Obibuba, 2020). Moreover, when children are not guided towards proper conduct and ethical values, they may engage in criminal activities, posing a significant threat to societal security. Lack of moral values can make children susceptible to gang influence and can further lead to substance abuse, criminal behaviours, and perpetuating insecurity in society (Bolarin, 2015). This not only jeopardizes their well-being but also increases criminal activities, negatively impacting overall security. Some researchers (Law, Fisher, Eccleston, & Palermo, 2019) have reported that behaviour modification promotes desirable behaviours in both children and adults. This is also supported by Scott, Jain, and Cogburn, 2023) who observed that behaviour modification can help children change their negative behaviours. Accordingly, establishing a solid foundation in children through effective behaviour modification strategies can potentially address challenges concerning moral values and pave the way for a more secure and morally upright society.

Moral values, the guiding principles that define the distinction between right and wrong, good and bad, are essential for the development and cohesion of any society. Moral values, according to Palmer (2016) refer to standards or judgments in

human behaviour which are intimately related to what an individual accepts as guiding principles of living. Kozer and Erl (2017) also defined moral values as personal beliefs about the worth of truth about a particular idea, object or behaviour. In other words, moral values are beliefs that serve as a guide to an individual's choices and behaviours in daily life. Bolarin (2015), observed that many young people can get their values shaped through appropriate behaviour modification strategies. This can be done to sustain desirable moral values that meet the needs of the present society and future society. For instance, parents and guardians are the primary influencers in children's lives, as such they can play a crucial role in behaviour modification by setting consistent expectations, establishing consequences for actions, and reinforcing positive behaviours. Likewise, the school plays an important role in the behaviour modification of a child. This involves teachers employing strategies like praise, rewards, and peer recognition to encourage moral behaviour (Enu & Esu, 2011). Thus, a proper and timely behaviour modification of a child can lead to the sustainability of positive and desirable moral values. This can also promote the security of people's lives and property.

Security, according to Nwagboso (2012), as well as Usman and Matthew (2014), entails the act of being safe from harm or danger, protection and preservation of values, and the absence of threats to acquired values. Bashar (2017) also defined security as the state of being safe from damage or danger; the protection and preservation of values; and the lack of risks to acquire values. From these definitions, it can be said that security is the act of being free from physical and psychological danger, harm, or injury. Emphasizing the importance of security, Balami, Ahmed and Yusuf (2016) stated that security is a very vital instrument for the economic development of any nation. In other words, it may be difficult for an individual or nation to thrive where there is no security of life and property, or in insecurity.

It is unfortunate to note that the spate of insecurity challenges in Nigeria has grown rapidly and is becoming a major impediment to the country's developmental strides. According to Obiamaka (2016), insecurity in Nigeria has become a major issue of concern to many citizens, as almost every day the news media reports a series of cases of insecurity such as bombings, banditry, abductions, kidnappings, yahoo-yahoo, broad daylight robbery, rape, cultism, ethnic and communal clashes, and hired assassinations, among others. The security situation has contributed to a wide range of destruction of lives and properties and disruption of economic and academic activities in the country (Obiamaka, 2015; Achumba, Ighomereho, & Akpan-Robaro, 2019). These issues which are mostly attributed to employment have put Nigeria at the bottom of the Global Peace Index (Ifeoma, Purity, & Anagbogu, 2021), which is a big problem for Nigerians who want to live in a peaceful environment.

It is very important to note that the wide range of social vices and destructive behaviours perpetuated by many young people may have been nurtured by them right from their childhood. Surprisingly, despite the potency of various behaviour modification strategies, techniques and approaches, there is no empirical information about the nature of the relationship between behaviour modification of a child and sustainable moral values and security in Nigeria. This paper was therefore aimed at exploring the relationship between a child as the determinant of sustainable moral values and security in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

In Nigeria, as in many countries, concerns over the erosion of moral values and the increasing security challenges have become topics of paramount societal importance. Nigeria particularly faces an increasing dilution of traditional moral values, driven by factors such as globalisation, technological advancements, and urbanisation. This has become more disturbing in Plateau State. The extent to which the behaviour of children influences these changes is not yet fully understood. The nation also grapples with a range of security challenges, including communal conflicts, insurgency, and criminal activities such as banditry, abductions, kidnappings, yahoo-yahoo, armed robbery, rape, cultism, and hired assassinations, among others. The possible connection between the behavioural development of children and their future contributions to these security issues still needs to be explored. Hence, this paper aimed to examine behaviour modification as a correlate for sustainable moral values and security in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study specifically:

1. determine behaviour modification as a correlate for sustainable moral values.
2. examine behaviour modification as a correlate for security.

Research Questions

1. What is the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values?
2. What is the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security?

Hypotheses

HO_1: There is no significant correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values.

HO_2: There is no significant correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security.

Method

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. This is because the researchers were interested in establishing the direction and magnitude of the relationships that exist between the behaviour modification of a child and sustainable moral values and security in Plateau State, Nigeria. The study was carried out in Plateau State, Nigeria. The study population consisted of all the public primary school teachers in the State. A multistage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample of 400 teachers for the study, derived using Taro Yamene's formula. The instruments used for data collection were the Child Behaviour Modification Questionnaire (CBMQ), Questionnaire on Sustainable Moral Values (QSMV), and Questionnaire on Sustainable Security in Nigeria (QSSN) developed by the researchers. Each of the questionnaires had two sections; A and B. Sections "A" elicited personal information of the respondents, such as; their gender (male or female), subject area, and tribe. Sections "B" of the questionnaires (CBMQ, QSMV, and QSSN) contained 20 items each, which measured child behaviour modification, sustainable moral values and sustainable security in Nigeria, respectively. All the items were based on a four-point Likert style scale type, with options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) to Strongly Disagree (SD) and numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

The instruments were subjected to face validation by five experts; two from Guidance and Counselling and one each the fields of from Civic Education, Measurement & Evaluation and Educational Psychology. The validators were required to proofread the instruments in terms of clarity of items, simplicity of vocabulary and relevance of items to the research questions, hypotheses, and the overall purpose of the study. Consequently, their comments, suggestions and corrections were used to improve the quality of the instruments.

The reliability of the instruments was ascertained after trial-testing 30 copies of each of the instruments on a sample of 30 teachers drawn from three public primary schools in Plateau State that were not part of the actual study. The reliability of the instruments based on the data gathered was estimated using the Cronbach alpha statistical method. The reason for using Cronbach Alpha is because the items of the instruments were polytomously scored. This means that the items had multiple ordered scoring since all the options were assigned a value. The reliability coefficients (r) obtained for CBMQ, QSMV and QSSN were 0.83, 0.79 and 0.81, respectively. These coefficients showed that the instruments were reliable for data collection. This is in line with Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) who stated that a correlation coefficient (r) of .70 and above should be considered high and reliable. The researchers sought the consent of the respondents and established adequate rapport with them before administering the instruments to them which were retrieved immediately after completion by the respondents.

Data Analysis: Data obtained from the questionnaires were sorted, coded and analyzed on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), using simple linear regression analysis. The correlation coefficients (r) and coefficients of determination (r^2) obtained were used for answering the research questions while the regression ANOVA model was used to test all the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section deals with the presentation of results. The results are presented in Tables in line with the research questions and the null hypotheses formulated for the study.

Research Question One: What is the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values?

Table 1: **Regression Analysis of the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values**

Variables	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	r	r^2
Behaviour modification	400	55.94	11.89	0.69	0.48
Sustainable moral values		51.69	6.61		

KEY: N = Number of respondents, SD = Standard Deviation, *R* = Correlation coefficient,

R^2 = Coefficient of determination

The result in Table 1 shows the regression analysis for the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values. The result indicates that when the scores from the responses of teachers on behaviour modification of a child were correlated with their responses on sustainable moral values, a correlation coefficient (*R)* of 0.69 with an associated coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.48 was obtained. This coefficient of determination (r^2) of 0.48 denotes that a 48% variation in sustainable moral values in Nigeria can be predicted by the behaviour modification of a child. This implies that there is a high positive correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values. This means that when efforts are made to change people's behaviour for the better, it strongly supports the development and maintenance of good moral values in the community.

Hypothesis One

HO_1: There is no significant correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values.

Table 2: Regression ANOVA test of significance of the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	10496.265	1	10496.265	672.838	.000
Residual	6208.994	398	15.600		
Total	16705.258	399			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable moral values
b. Predictors: (Constant), Behaviour modification

Result in Table 2 shows that the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values is statistically significant (F (1, 398) = 672.838, p = .000). This is because the associated probability value of .000 when compared with 0.05 level of significance at which the hypothesis was being tested was found to be significant because .000 is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis one (HO_1) was rejected, and the inference drawn was that there is a significant correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values.

Research Question Two: What is the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security?

Table 3: **Regression Analysis of the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	r^2
Behaviour modification	400	55.94	11.89	0.57	0.33
Sustainable security		49.67	7.63		

KEY: N = Number of respondents, SD = Standard Deviation, R = Correlation coefficient,
R^2 = Coefficient of determination

The result in Table 3 indicates the regression analysis for the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security. The result shows that when the scores from the responses of teachers on behaviour modification of a child were correlated with their responses on sustainable security in Nigeria, a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.57 with an associated coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.33 was obtained. This coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.33 implies that a 33% variation in sustainable security in Nigeria can be predicted by the behaviour modification of a child. This shows that there is a substantial correlation between

behaviour modification and sustainable security. This means that changing people's behaviour positively helps in creating and maintaining a safe and secure environment.

Hypothesis Two

HO_2: There is no significant correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security.

Table 4: Regression ANOVA test of the significance of the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5464.531	1	5464.531	193.483	.000
Residual	11240.728	398	28.243		
Total	16705.258	399			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Security

b. Predictors: (Constant), Behaviour modification

The result in Table 4 shows that an f-ratio of ($F(1, 398) = 193.483$, $p = .000$) was obtained for the correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security. Since the associated probability (p) value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance at which the result is being tested, the result was therefore considered significant. To this effect, the null hypothesis two (HO_2) was rejected, and the conclusion drawn was that there is a significant correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security.

Discussions

This study aimed to examine the behaviour modification of a child as a determinant of sustainable moral values and security in Nigeria. Accordingly, the study found that a 48% variation in sustainable moral values in Nigeria can be predicted by the behaviour modification of a child. This implies that there is a high positive correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values. Further findings also showed that there is a significant correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable moral values. In essence, when efforts are made to change people's behaviour for the better, it strongly supports the development and maintenance of good moral values in the community. For instance, if we focus on helping people learn and adopt good behaviours, it will lead to a more morally upright society. This means people will be more honest, respectful, and

responsible. This finding lends support to Law, Fisher, Eccleston, and Palermo (2019) who reported that behaviour modification promotes desirable behaviours in both children and adults. Likewise, the finding is consistent with Scott, Jain, and Cogburn (2023) who disclosed that behaviour modification can help children change their negative behaviours. This could be so because the purpose of behaviour modification is to shape the undesirable behaviour patterns of individuals and replace them with acceptable behaviours. So, the more children's behaviour is modified times and appropriately, the more likely their moral values will be sustained as portrayed by the above finding of the study.

To achieve the above, schools and community centres can organise workshops and seminars that teach the importance of honesty, respect, and responsibility. Regular lessons and discussions about moral values can also help reinforce positive behaviour among students and community members. Students need to be recognised and rewarded for good behaviour. For example, giving praise, certificates, or small rewards to individuals who display good moral behaviour encourages them and others to continue behaving well. Teachers, parents, and community leaders need to exemplify good behaviour in their daily actions. This is because when influential figures demonstrate honesty, respect, and responsibility, it sets a strong example for others to follow. Again, there is a need for engaging the community in activities that promote safety and cooperation can foster a sense of responsibility and security among residents.

Moral values such as honesty, respect, and a sense of responsibility, among others, can be inculcated in students by teachers, parents and caregivers. To inculcate honesty, teachers can teach students the importance of telling the truth through stories and real-life examples. Similarly, parents can encourage children to be honest by praising them when they tell the truth, even if they've made a mistake. Caregivers can create an environment where honesty is valued and rewarded. For respect, teachers can implement classroom rules that promote respect for everyone, such as listening when others speak and not interrupting. In the same vein, parents can model respectful behaviour at home by treating everyone with kindness and consideration. Caregivers can also teach children to respect others' opinions and belongings. To ensure a sense of responsibility, teachers may need to assign classroom duties and responsibilities to students to teach them accountability. Parents can give children age-appropriate chores and hold them accountable for completing them. Caregivers can also encourage children to take responsibility for their actions and understand the consequences of their behaviour.

The study also found that a 33% variation in sustainable security in Nigeria can be predicted by the behaviour modification of a child. This can be construed that there is a substantial correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security. Further analysis also revealed that there is a significant correlation between behaviour modification and sustainable security. This can be interpreted to mean

that changing people's behaviour positively helps in creating and maintaining a safe and secure environment. For instance, when people are guided to behave better, it results in a safer community. Less crime, violence, and unrest are likely to occur, leading to a more peaceful and secure society. This is consistent with the findings of previous researchers (Marraccini & Brier, 2017), who observed that individuals who were exposed to early behavioural management interventions were less likely to be involved in actions that were detrimental to society. The finding also agrees with Bolarin (2015) who submitted that many young people can get their values shaped through appropriate behaviour modification strategies. Similarly, the finding is consistent with that of Cornell and Huang (2016) who concluded that there is a high positive impact of behaviour modification on children's upbringing and societal well-being. This finding could be in order because when children's undesirable behaviours are identified and modified on time, the possibility of engaging in acts that threaten the security of lives and property will be low and vice versa. Thus, there is high potential that behaviour modification of a child can positively predict sustainable security in Nigeria as depicted by the outcome of this study.

In promoting security through behaviour modification, schools can teach students how to resolve conflicts peacefully through dialogue and understanding. Also, teaching young people how to manage disputes without resorting to violence can help create a more peaceful society. Strong community bonds can deter crime and promote a sense of collective responsibility for safety. Another thing could be pairing young people with positive role models who can guide them in making good life choices. Mentorship can also provide support and guidance, helping individuals stay on a positive path and avoid criminal behaviour. By implementing these strategies and focusing on these moral values, teachers, parents, and caregivers can effectively modify behaviour, leading to a society that is both morally upright and secure.

Conclusion

From the study's findings, behaviour modification of children serves as a cornerstone for sustainable moral values and security in Nigeria. By focusing on early formative years, engaging parents and educational institutions, and implementing effective behaviour modification strategies, we can shape a morally upright generation capable of contributing positively to society. Notably, addressing challenges and fostering a collective commitment to instilling moral values is essential for a secure and prosperous Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that:

1. Parents and teachers should ensure proper modification of children's behaviour to enhance sustainable moral values in Nigeria.

2. The government, through the school authorities, should set out mechanisms for effective behaviour modification of children to promote security in Nigeria.

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