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MORAL EDUCATION: ANTIDOTE FOR DEVIANCE AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DELTA SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines moral education as an antidote for deviance and effective management of discipline among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research. The population of this study comprised the 122 principals, 244 vice principals, 2,847 teachers, and 35,252 students across the 122 public senior secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District. A sample of 330 respondents comprising 15 principals, 15 vice principals, 75 teachers, and 225 students was selected using a six-phase multistage sampling technique in 15 public senior secondary schools. A 30-item self-structured instrument titled "Moral Education as Antidote for Deviance and Effective Management of Discipline among Students Questionnaire" (MEADEMDSQ) was used to collect data analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The study revealed that the grand mean scores of 3.66 and 3.68 indicated that moral education improved students' behaviour, and reduced deviant acts, respectively. Also, the grand means of 3.63 and 3.69 indicated that moral education positively influenced discipline management and character development, respectively. The grand means of 3.71 and 3.71 revealed that moral education promoted positive behaviour and discouraged indiscipline, respectively, in secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District, Delta State. The study recommended, among others, that the Ministry of Education should ensure secondary schools consistently integrate moral education to reduce truancy, violence, theft, malpractice, and cultism, while improving respect for rules, authorities and fostering positive peer relationships.

Keywords: Moral Education, Antidote, Deviance, Effective Management of Discipline, Delta South Senatorial District.

Introduction

Moral education plays a vital role in shaping the behavior, values, and discipline of students, especially in regions facing social challenges like the Delta Central Senatorial District of Nigeria. In recent years, increasing cases of deviant behaviours such as truancy, violence, theft, bullying, and disrespect for school authority among secondary school students have raised serious concerns about the effectiveness of discipline management in schools. According to Adepoju and Ogunwale (2022), moral education serves as a foundational tool for instilling ethical values, promoting self-control, and reducing tendencies toward deviant behaviour among adolescents.

OSEMWENGIE, BLESSING

MORAL EDUCATION: ANTIDOTE FOR DEVIANCE AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE...

The absence of strong moral grounding among students often leads to increased disciplinary issues within schools. Olatunji and Okoro (2023) noted that the lack of character education programs in many Nigerian secondary schools contributes to students' poor moral judgments and behavioral misconduct. Moral education teaches students the difference between right and wrong, fosters empathy, and builds responsible citizenship, key components needed for effective school discipline management (Eze & Chukwu, 2022).

In the Delta South Senatorial District, where students are often exposed to social vices such as cultism, examination malpractice, and gang violence due to prevailing socio-economic and security challenges, moral education is seen as a preventive and corrective mechanism. According to Nwankwo and Ede (2021), integrating moral education into the school curriculum helps reduce aggression, improves teacher-student relationships, and fosters a positive school climate conducive to learning. Moreover, moral education not only addresses students' behavioural issues but also equips them with conflict resolution skills, emotional regulation, and respect for authority and school rules (Okafor & Ezeani, 2023). School-based moral instruction programmes and value-based counseling initiatives have been shown to reduce disciplinary cases in many Nigerian schools (Ibe & Onah, 2022).

Additionally, moral education fosters critical thinking and ethical decision-making among students, helping them to resist negative peer pressure and make choices that align with societal norms and values (Bello & Nwachukwu, 2023). In schools across the Delta South Senatorial District, where external influences such as community violence, oil-related conflicts, and youth restiveness often affect students' moral judgment, structured moral education programmes can act as a stabilizing force (Ogunyemi & Alabi, 2022). Teachers, as moral role models, play a pivotal role in transmitting values such as honesty, respect, empathy, and responsibility through both formal instruction and everyday interactions with students (Ezeani & Uche, 2021). Incorporating participatory methods such as role-playing, debates on ethical dilemmas, and community service projects into moral education can further reinforce these values and help students internalize them (Chukwuma & Obi, 2022).

Furthermore, integrating moral education with school counseling services provides at-risk students with targeted support to address behavioural challenges and personal conflicts before they escalate into serious disciplinary issues (Okorie & Nwosu, 2023). Evidence from recent studies indicates that schools that implement regular moral education programmes report fewer incidents of violence, bullying, and disrespect for school authorities (Abdulrahman & Onyekachi, 2023). In light of these benefits, it behooves the education policymakers to enforce the inclusion of moral education as a core subject in secondary schools. This according to Adepoju and Ogunwale (2022), will enhance the integration of training programmes for teachers on moral instruction delivery, coupled with parent-school collaboration, can further strengthen moral standards among students.

In a nutshell, moral education remains a critical antidote for deviance and a powerful tool for enhancing discipline management among secondary school students in any environment, including the Delta South Senatorial District. For sustainable impact, Abdulrahman and Onyekachi (2023) stated that stakeholders such as school administrators, teachers, parents, and policymakers

need to prioritize the integration of structured moral education programmes into school activities and the wider educational curriculum. Overall, moral education stands out as a proactive and effective strategy for combating deviance and ensuring effective discipline management, thereby creating a peaceful and conducive learning environment essential for academic success and societal stability. This is the crux of the study.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing rate of deviant behaviors among secondary school students in the Delta Central Senatorial District of Nigeria has become a growing concern for educators, parents, and policymakers. Incidents of truancy, bullying, cultism, theft, disrespect for authority, and general disobedience to school rules and regulations are becoming more prevalent in schools across the region. This growing wave of indiscipline not only disrupts the learning environment but also hampers the overall academic and social development of students.

Several studies (Ezeani & Onah, 2021; Olatunji & Okoro, 2023) have shown that many secondary school students in Nigeria lack moral guidance, which contributes to their involvement in deviant acts in Nigeria. This situation is further worsened by students' exposure to socio-economic challenges, peer pressure, and the influence of violent community environments resulting from oil-related conflicts and insecurity in any environment, including the Delta South Senatorial District. Despite various disciplinary measures adopted by school authorities, including suspension, corporal punishment, and expulsion, cases of student misconduct continue to rise. This suggests that punitive approaches alone are insufficient in addressing the root causes of indiscipline.

Experts such as Adepoju and Ogunwale (2022) argue that the absence of well-structured moral education programmes at all school levels may be a key factor fueling this trend. Given the growing concern over students' moral decline and the ineffectiveness of reactive discipline methods, there is an urgent need to investigate the role of moral education as a proactive and preventive measure against deviance. This study, therefore, seeks to examine how moral education can serve as an antidote for deviance and an effective tool for managing discipline among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District of Nigeria.

Thus, the stated problems prompted the articulation of the following research questions that guided this study.

1. To what extent does moral education influence students' behaviour and reduce deviant acts in secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District?
2. How does moral education contribute to the effective management of discipline and character development among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District?
3. What are the specific moral education strategies adopted by schools for promoting positive behaviour and discouraging indiscipline among students in the Delta South Senatorial District?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to examine moral education: an antidote for deviance and effective management of discipline among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District, Nigeria. In specific terms, the objectives of the study are to:

OSEMWENGIE, BLESSING

MORAL EDUCATION: ANTIDOTE FOR DEVIANC E AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE...

1. Examine the extent to which moral education influences students' behaviour and reduces deviant acts in secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District.
2. Investigate how moral education contributes to the effective management of discipline and character development among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District.
3. Identify the specific moral education strategies adopted by schools for promoting positive behaviour and discouraging indiscipline among students in the Delta South Senatorial District.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study includes the following:

1. The study would contribute empirical evidence to the body of knowledge on moral education's role in addressing student deviance and discipline management.
2. The study would provide school administrators and teachers with practical strategies for integrating moral education into school curricula and improving student discipline.
3. Policymakers and curriculum developers would benefit from recommendations on designing, implementing, and monitoring effective moral education programmes in secondary schools.
4. Parents and guardians would gain insights into the importance of moral upbringing and the need for home-school collaboration in shaping student behaviour.
5. The study would assist counselors and researchers in developing targeted behavioural intervention programmes for students in conflict-prone and socially challenged communities.

Methodology

Research Design: The study adopted a descriptive research design. As described by Nwankwo (2016), this approach involves systematically selecting a sample from a population with common characteristics and generalizing the results to the larger population.

Area of the Study: The study was carried out in the Delta South Senatorial District, one of the three senatorial zones in Delta State, located in the South-South region of Nigeria. This district consists of eight Local Government Areas: Bomadi, Burutu, Isoko North, Isoko South, Patani, Warri North, Warri South, and Warri South-West. Delta South is known for its intensive oil exploration and production activities, as well as its numerous rivers that support maritime operations. The area is home to various industrial, commercial, administrative, healthcare, maritime, technological, construction, and educational institutions, making it one of the most urbanized, cosmopolitan, and industrialized regions in Delta State.

Furthermore, the highly urbanized, commercial, industrial, maritime, and technological landscape of the Delta South Senatorial District has made it home to numerous government-owned educational institutions across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Notable among these are the Delta State University campus in Oleh, the Delta State University of Science and Technology in Ozoro, and the College of Marine Technology in Bomadi. Additionally, the district also houses or hosts the Nigeria Maritime University, located in Okerenkoko. Delta South Senatorial District in Delta State hosts 122 public secondary schools, unevenly distributed across eight local government areas: Bomadi having 10, Burutu with 20, Isoko North with 24, Isoko South having 21, Patani with 10, Warri North with 11, Warri South having 18, and Warri South-West with eight (8) public secondary schools. This distribution underscores the study's relevance to public secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District of Delta State.

Population of the Study: The study population consisted of all 122 principals, 244 vice principals, 2,847 teachers, and 35,252 students across the 122 public senior secondary schools in Delta South Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria, as reported by the Delta State Senior Secondary Schools Board (2022), totaling 38,465 individuals. These groups were chosen based on their roles and experience in moral education, which is essential for addressing student deviance and promoting effective discipline management within secondary schools in the district.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: A sample size of 330 respondents participated in the study, comprising 15 principals, 15 vice principals, 75 teachers, and 225 students drawn from 15 public senior secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District. The sample was obtained using a six-phase multi-stage sampling technique. First, cluster sampling divided the district into five clusters based on local government areas: Bomadi, Isoko South, Patani, Warri North, and Warri South-West. In the second phase, three public senior secondary schools were randomly selected from each cluster, totaling 15 schools. Third, one principal from each school was purposively selected. Fourth, one vice principal was randomly chosen from the two vice principals available in each school. Fifth, seven teachers were randomly selected from each school staff list. Finally, quota sampling was used to allocate 15 students from each of the 15 public secondary schools that were selected, giving a total of 225 students. This sampling procedure resulted in a final study sample of 330 respondents.

Instrument for Data Collection: Data collection was conducted using a 32-item self-designed questionnaire titled "Moral Education as Antidote for Deviance and Effective Management of Discipline among Students Questionnaire" (MEADEMDSQ). The MEADEMDSQ employed a four-point rating scale to assess the extent of moral education's influence on students' behavior: Very High Extent (VHE = 4 points), High Extent (HE = 3 points), Low Extent (LE = 2 points), and Very Low Extent (VLE = 1 point). Additionally, another four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, Strongly Disagree = 1 point) was used to measure respondents' opinions on effective discipline management. The MEADEMDSQ instrument was divided into three sections: Section A covered respondents' demographic information (school administrators (comprising principals and vice principals), teachers, and students); Section B contained 21 items on moral education variables; and Section C featured 14 items focusing on the variables of effective management of discipline.

Validation of the Instrument: Two educational experts from the Department of Foundation and Arts Education at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education evaluated the MEADEMDSQ instrument to determine its face and content validity. The validators carefully reviewed the study's topic, objectives, research questions, and questionnaire items to assess clarity, readability, and relevance. Their constructive feedback and recommendations were incorporated to improve the instrument's overall quality, accuracy, and reliability.

Reliability of the Instrument: The reliability or internal consistency of the MEADEMDSQ instrument was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha (α) technique. To achieve this, 50 copies of the questionnaire were administered to a pilot group of 50 respondents, consisting of 5 principals, 5 vice principals, 15 teachers, and 25 students from 5 public senior secondary schools in Edo State, which were not part of the main study area. After completion, all responses were retrieved, coded, and analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.861, indicating that the instrument was reliable and appropriate for data collection in the main study.

OSEMWENGIE, BLESSING

MORAL EDUCATION: ANTIDOTE FOR DEVIANCE AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE...

Method of Data Collection: Data for this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data comprised responses gathered through the structured MEADEMDSQ instrument, administered directly to the study participants or respondents, like administrators (i.e., principals and vice principals), teachers, and students. On the other hand, the secondary data were sourced from textbooks, academic journals, articles, newspapers, magazines, lecture notes, online publications, and maps. The primary data collection involved a face-to-face direct delivery method across the 20 selected public senior secondary schools, allowing the researcher and her engaged research assistants the opportunity to offer explanation and necessary guidance and clarification during the process. Out of 330 distributed questionnaires (15 principals, 15 vice principals, 75 teachers, and 225 students), 309 valid responses were retrieved, representing approximately a 94% return rate, and these validly retrieved copies of the MEADEMDSQ instrument were used for the final data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis: The data obtained from the MEADEMDSQ instrument were coded and analyzed using mean and standard deviation with a criterion mean cut-off of 2.5. All statistical analyses were conducted with the aid of SPSS version 26.0.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does moral education influence students' behaviour and reduce deviant acts in secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent moral education influences students' behaviour and reduces deviant acts in secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District

S/N	The extent moral education influences students' behaviour and reduces deviant acts in secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District includes:	N = 309					Decision
		Students behaviour	Mean	SD	Reduce deviant acts	Mean	
1	Moral education has helped reduce the rate of truancy among students in my school		3.65	.57	3.68	.54	HE
2	Regular moral instruction discourages students from engaging in violent behaviours, such as fighting and bullying		3.66	.58	3.70	.48	HE
3	Moral education lessons promote respect for teachers, school authorities, and fellow students		3.68	.57	3.67	.45	HE
4	Students exposed to moral education are less likely to engage in acts of theft or property vandalism within the school		3.60	.62	3.60	.53	HE
5	Moral education has improved students' attitudes towards obeying school rules and regulations		3.64	.60	3.70	.45	HE
6	Participation in moral education activities has reduced cases of examination malpractice among students		3.65	.60	3.71	.45	HE
7	Moral instruction encourages positive peer relationships and reduces the influence of cultism and gangsterism in school		3.71	.54	3.68	.47	HE
Grand Mean			3.66	0.58	3.68	0.48	HE

HE (High Extent) = ≥ 2.50 while LE (Low Extent) < 2.50.

The result in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation on the extent to which moral education influences students' behaviour and reduces deviant acts in secondary schools in the Delta South Senatorial District. The mean scores for students' behaviour ranged from 3.60 to 3.71, while the mean scores for reducing deviant acts ranged from 3.60 to 3.71. All the items had a decision rating of "High Extent" (HE), indicating that respondents generally agreed that moral education plays a significant role in shaping students' behaviour and minimizing deviant acts.

Specifically, moral education was reported to help reduce truancy (Mean = 3.65, SD = 0.57), discourage violent behaviours like fighting and bullying (Mean = 3.66, SD = 0.58), and promote respect for teachers and peers (Mean = 3.68, SD = 0.57). Furthermore, it was seen to reduce theft and vandalism (Mean = 3.60, SD = 0.62), improve students' compliance with school rules (Mean = 3.64, SD = 0.60), and minimize examination malpractice (Mean = 3.65, SD = 0.60). Notably, moral instruction also fostered positive peer relationships and reduced the influence of cultism and gangsterism (Mean = 3.71, SD = 0.54). The grand mean scores of 3.66 for students' behaviour and 3.68 for reduction of deviant acts further confirm that moral education has a high positive influence on promoting good behaviour and curbing deviance among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District.

Research Question 2: How does moral education contribute to the effective management of discipline and character development among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on how moral education contributes to the effective management of discipline and character development among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District

S/N	How moral education contributes to the effective management of discipline and character development among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District includes:	N = 309				Decision
		Effective management of discipline	Mean	SD	Character Development	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Moral education helps students develop self-control that enhances discipline in activities	3.59	.53	3.63	.50	HE
2	Regular moral instruction encourages students to demonstrate honesty and integrity in their academic and social conduct	3.61	.52	3.67	.48	HE
3	Moral education fosters respect for authority, peers, and school property	3.67	.47	3.72	.49	HE
4	Exposure to moral values helps students cultivate empathy, tolerance, and positive interpersonal relationships.	3.62	.53	3.63	.50	HE
5	Moral education promotes responsibility and accountability, making students more aware of the consequences of their actions.	3.59	.52	3.69	.49	HE
6	Integration of moral lessons helps reduce anti-social behaviours such as bullying, cheating, and disrespect	3.73	.45	3.82	.42	HE
7	Moral education supports the development of ethical reasoning, enabling students to make sound moral decisions and exhibit good character	3.58	.54	3.68	.49	HE
Grand Mean		3.63	0.51	3.69	0.48	HE

HE (High Extent) = ≥ 2.50 while LE (Low Extent) < 2.50 .

OSEMWENGIE, BLESSING

MORAL EDUCATION: ANTIDOTE FOR DEVIANCE AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE...

The results presented in Table 2 highlight the significant role of moral education in enhancing both discipline management and character development among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District. The mean scores for all the items ranged between 3.58 and 3.73 for effective discipline management and 3.63 to 3.82 for character development, with corresponding standard deviations indicating minimal variability in responses. The grand means of 3.63 and 3.69 for discipline management and character development, respectively, suggest that respondents (principals, vice principals, teachers, and students) overwhelmingly agreed that moral education positively influences students' behaviour. Specifically, moral education was perceived to enhance students' self-control, respect for authority, empathy, responsibility, and ethical reasoning, all critical elements in promoting discipline and good character in schools.

Research Question 3: What are the specific moral education strategies adopted by schools for promoting positive behaviour and discouraging indiscipline among students in the Delta South Senatorial District?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the specific moral education strategies adopted by schools for promoting positive behaviour and discouraging indiscipline among students in the Delta South Senatorial District

S/N	The specific moral education strategies adopted by schools for promoting positive behaviour and discouraging indiscipline among students in the Delta South Senatorial District, Nigeria include:	N = 309				Decision
		Promoting Positive Behaviour	Discouraging Indiscipline	Mean	SD	
1	Schools organize regular moral instruction classes to teach students values like honesty, respect, and responsibility	3.69	.47	3.72	.46	HE
2	Teachers integrate moral lessons into daily classroom discussions and subject teaching	3.67	.48	3.78	.44	HE
3	School assemblies are used as platforms for delivering moral talks and reinforcing positive behaviours	3.75	.45	3.79	.44	HE
4	Guidance and counseling units offer moral guidance sessions to address students' behavioural challenges	3.71	.46	3.80	.43	HE
5	Schools implement reward systems to recognize and encourage exemplary conduct among students	3.69	.48	3.77	.45	HE
6	Teachers and administrators use peer mentoring and role modelling to promote positive character traits	3.74	.45	3.87	.37	HE
7	Schools invite religious and community leaders to give motivational talks on discipline and good character	3.75	.44	3.68	.48	HE
Grand Mean		3.71	0.46	3.77	0.44	HE

HE (High Extent) = ≥ 2.50 while LE (Low Extent) < 2.50 .

The data in Table 3 highlights the specific moral education strategies adopted by schools for promoting positive behaviour and discouraging indiscipline among students in the Delta South Senatorial District. The mean scores for promoting positive behaviour ranged from 3.67 to 3.75, while the mean scores for discouraging indiscipline ranged from 3.68 to 3.87. The grand means of 3.71 for promoting positive behaviour and 3.77 for discouraging indiscipline indicate that all strategies were rated at a "High Extent" (HE) level by respondents. Specifically, the findings show that schools commonly organize regular moral instruction classes to teach students values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility (Mean = 3.69, SD = 0.47), while teachers integrate moral lessons into daily classroom discussions (Mean = 3.67, SD = 0.48). School assemblies also serve as effective platforms for delivering moral talks and reinforcing desired behaviours (Mean = 3.75, SD = 0.45).

Furthermore, the role of school guidance and counseling units in offering moral guidance sessions to address students' behavioural challenges was strongly acknowledged (Mean = 3.71, SD = 0.46). Additionally, the implementation of reward systems to encourage exemplary conduct (Mean = 3.69, SD = 0.48), use of peer mentoring and role modelling by teachers and administrators (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.45), and the invitation of religious and community leaders to deliver motivational talks (Mean = 3.75, SD = 0.44) were all identified as effective strategies.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 shows high mean scores (ranging from 3.60 to 3.71) on the extent to which moral education influences students' behaviour and reduces deviant acts such as truancy, violence, vandalism, and examination malpractice. The grand mean of 3.66 for behaviour and 3.68 for reducing deviance indicates widespread agreement among respondents. This suggests that moral education programs play a crucial role in shaping students' moral reasoning and deterring them from engaging in anti-social behaviours. According to Ogunleye (2021), integrating structured moral education reduces students' involvement in deviance and fosters a safer school environment. Similarly, Adebayo and Okonkwo (2023) stress that consistent moral instruction reduces incidents of violence, cheating, and other forms of misconduct, promoting a peaceful school climate necessary for learning.

Table 1 further revealed the grand mean scores of 3.66 for students' behaviour and 3.68 for reduction of deviant acts, further confirming that moral education has a high positive influence on promoting good behaviour and curbing deviance among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District. This finding aligns with research by Okafor and Nwosu (2022), who highlighted the effectiveness of moral education in instilling discipline and ethical values among Nigerian students. Similarly, Adeyemi (2021) emphasized that consistent exposure to moral lessons improves students' respect for school rules and social norms.

Table 2 results reveal that moral education significantly contributes to discipline and character formation, with grand mean scores of 3.63 and 3.69, respectively. The high ratings for items like fostering self-control, promoting honesty, respect for authority, and reducing anti-social behaviour highlight moral education's impact in developing socially responsible students. This aligns with Ezeani and Nwankwo (2022), who noted that moral education enhances discipline management and nurtures positive character traits such as empathy and accountability. Furthermore, Samuolis and Lavrakas (2018) assert that consistent exposure to moral values builds

ethical reasoning capacity among students, which is essential for lifelong character formation and positive social adjustment.

Table 2 further revealed that moral education was perceived to enhance students' self-control, respect for authority, empathy, responsibility, and ethical reasoning, all critical elements in promoting discipline and good character in schools. The highest mean score (3.73 for discipline management and 3.82 for character development) was recorded for the role of moral lessons in reducing anti-social behaviours like bullying, cheating, and disrespect, which aligns with the findings of Ezeani and Nwankwo (2022) who emphasized the importance of moral instruction in curbing deviant behaviours in schools. Furthermore, the results corroborate the views of Ogunleye (2021), who argued that schools integrating moral education experience fewer cases of indiscipline and stronger student-character outcomes. The findings also echo Adebayo and Okonkwo (2023), who emphasized that sustained moral education programmes significantly reduce negative peer influence and promote positive values like honesty, accountability, and respect for school rules. Thus, this study underscores the critical contribution of moral education towards fostering disciplined, well-behaved, and morally upright students, which is essential for creating a conducive learning environment and achieving sustainable educational development.

Table 3 findings emphasize that specific moral education strategies adopted by schools are effective in promoting positive behaviour and reducing indiscipline, with grand mean scores of 3.71 and 3.77, respectively. High mean ratings were observed for strategies like regular moral instruction, moral-themed school assemblies, peer mentoring, and teacher role modelling. The use of guidance and counselling units and the involvement of religious/community leaders further reinforce moral standards among students. These findings echo Eze and Nwaubani (2022), who noted that school-based moral strategies, especially peer mentoring and teacher modelling, are critical in fostering a moral climate in schools. Also, Ogunleye (2021) emphasized the value of multi-stakeholder approaches, where schools collaborate with community leaders to reinforce students' moral learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Table 3 revealed that overall, the results affirm that schools in the Delta South Senatorial District have adopted multiple, proactive moral education strategies to foster discipline and build positive character traits among students. This agrees with findings by Eze and Okoro (2022), who emphasized that combining classroom-based moral instruction with community involvement and reward systems significantly improves students' discipline and reduces deviant behaviour in Nigerian secondary schools.

Overall implication, collectively, the results collectively imply that comprehensive and sustained moral education, integrated into school routines, teaching practices, and community engagements, significantly enhances discipline, reduces deviant behaviours, and fosters positive character development among secondary school students in the Delta South Senatorial District. This supports previous findings by Hao and Brinton (2017) that moral education serves as both a preventive and corrective tool for managing student behaviour and sustaining academic progress.

Conclusion

The study revealed that moral education effectively minimizes truancy, violence, vandalism, and exam malpractice, while fostering respect for authorities, improving peer relationships, and

reducing cultism, making it vital for maintaining school discipline. Also, moral education fosters self-control, honesty, empathy, responsibility, and ethical reasoning, reducing anti-social behaviors and enhancing positive relationships, ultimately nurturing well-disciplined, morally sound students capable of making responsible decisions. The study found key strategies including regular moral instruction, classroom integration, school assemblies, counseling, reward systems, peer mentoring, and community talks, collectively fostering good character, improving conduct, and reducing indiscipline in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. The Ministry of Education should ensure that secondary schools consistently integrate moral education programmes aimed at reducing deviant behaviours such as truancy, violence, theft, examination malpractice, and cultism. Emphasizing moral instruction can effectively improve students' attitudes toward school rules, respect for authorities, and foster positive peer relationships.
2. The government should ensure that secondary schools strengthen moral education in managing discipline and character development by focusing on teaching self-control, honesty, respect, empathy, responsibility, and ethical reasoning. These moral values are essential in promoting accountability, reducing anti-social behaviours, and helping students make sound moral decisions that contribute to a disciplined and morally upright school environment.
3. Secondary school management should adopt specific moral education strategies such as organizing regular moral instruction classes, integrating moral lessons into daily teaching, using assemblies for moral talks, providing guidance and counseling sessions, implementing reward systems, encouraging peer mentoring, and involving religious and community leaders. These strategies have proven effective in promoting positive behaviour and discouraging indiscipline among secondary school students.

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OSEMWENGIE, BLESSING

MORAL EDUCATION: ANTIDOTE FOR DEVIANCE AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE...

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