Psychosocial Factors as Predictors of Moral Disengagement among In-School Adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis

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Abstract: The range of the problem of moral disengagement is wider than it seems, everything pertaining to the behaviours or attitudes, which the adolescents exhibit today either in school such as truancy, bullying, examination malpractice. Moral disengagement may lead to disaster socially, psychologically and academically especially to the adolescents. The study investigated psycho-social factors as predictors of moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis. The study adopted a survey research design. Six secondary schools were selected using stratified random sampling while simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 300 students. The instrument that was used in the collection data was the questionnaire. Inferential statistics of Pearson's product moment correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression were used to analyse the data at level of significance of 0.05. Findings revealed that there was significant positive correlation between parenting styles and moral disengagement (r =0.382, p<0.05) and self-esteem (r =0.570 p<0.05). It was also revealed that parenting styles and self-esteem jointly contributed 32.1% to the prediction of moral disengagement. Also, the two psycho-social factors relatively contributed to moral disengagement in the following magnitude; self-esteem ($_\beta$= 0.605, t= 7.460, P<0.05), parenting styles ($_\beta$= .233, t= 3.898, P<0.05). Consequently, it was recommended that parents should instill the right morals in their children and wards as this would make them to exhibit behaviours that conform to the school, environment and their society at large.

Keywords: Psychosocial, Parenting style, Self-esteem, Adolescents, Moral disengagement

Introduction

Changes in the brain during adolescence enable young people to think about the world more profoundly and abstractly (Zygaitien, 2011). This way of thinking influences how teenagers perceive the environment, how they want to engage with it, and how they begin to shape the morals and principles that will guide them throughout their lives (Barnabas, Tobias & Gabriel, 2013). Seeing the world in grey, recognizing the rationale for laws, developing their moral code, and being more interested in big questions are some of the most common shifts in thinking about morality and principles that occur during this life stage. Adolescent moral beliefs are often questioned, as stressful emotions and impulses that are normal at this age manifest erratically, and various experiences are interpreted with strong emotions (Hart & Carlo, 2015).

Moral disengagement is described as thinking about antisocial behavior that represents an attempt to put it in a positive light, mitigate the effects, or otherwise lessen the perceived negative valence of a socially unacceptable act (Bandura, 1996; cited in Cuadrado-Gordillo and Fernández-Antelo, 2019). It can also be described as a collection of social cognitive processes that enable people to justify reprehensible and harmful to social safety behavior in order to maintain their self-image and reduce cognitive dissonance. It is described as how adolescents rationalize behaviour that is at odds with their own moral principles. It is described as the propensity to justify one's behavior in order to maintain one's self-esteem while minimizing individual responsibility for the harm done to others (Bandura, 1999). Moral disengagement has been studied in many parts of the world and in relation to other psychological aspects such as prosocial behavior and prosocial moral thinking, hostility, antisocial sports behavior, intimidation and cyberbullying, approval of human abuse, and so on (Perren and Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012; De Caroli and Sagone, 2013). According to Obermann (2011) Adolescents with higher levels of moral disengagement are more likely to be violent toward their peers at school and at home, as well as having more positive attitudes toward violence.

One of the psychosocial factors that could influence moral disengagement is parenting styles. Parenting styles are the approaches or strategies that parents use to raise their children or children. Parenting style refers to the methods or approaches that parents use to raise their children. There are dimensions of styles adopted by parent in raising their children namely; authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991; Yasmin, 2015). These approaches or patterns in raising children could trigger the habit of moral disengagement among adolescents. The style of parents in raising their children, especially their adolescents' child is very important because their style can also be adopted by their children. A situation where a child is abusively raised by his/her parents, such child could repress those acts and later begin to manifest those acts on his friends and also on his/her children.

Self-esteem is described as one's assessment of oneself, or how one feels about oneself in almost any situation (Rosenberg, 1965 as cited in Pharr, 2017). Adolescents may build high, low and inflated self-esteem. Adolescents with high self-esteem see themselves as achiever and tend to shun any form of moral disengage behaviours (Jensen, 2011). Low self-esteem and a sense of

conformity have been identified as high risk factors for depression as it also correlates moral disengagement such as bullying, fighting, slapping, lying among others as they always give moral justification for such acts (Ward, 2015).

Review of related literature

The mechanism of moral disengagement is a socio-cognitive one which an ordinary person can commit a harmful act against someone, when the act is normally considered by that person to be immoral or unethical (Gini, Pozzoli and Hymel, 2014). Among youth who bully others (and those who participate as a bystander), the ability to engage in harmful acts of victimization lies in the ability of the bully to selectively activate and disengage personal moral controls. Moral disengagement's disinhibitory power in promoting violent behavior, as well as its clear associations with a number of antisocial behaviors in adolescence and adulthood, have been demonstrated in studies (Fontaine, Fida, Paciello, Tisak, & Caprara, 2012; Caprara et al., 2013). Moral disengagement can be broken down into eight different strategies that can be used to mitigate or diminish the severity of self-censure-inducing behaviors: moral justification, favorable distinction, diffusion of guilt, relocation of responsibility, euphemistic labeling, victim dehumanization, assignment of blame, and distortion of consequences (Caroli and Sagone, 2014). Moral justification is a mechanism by which harmful action is justified by presenting it as serving a socially valuable purpose. The beneficial analogy refers to behaviors that are seen as more extreme in order to divert focus away from the detrimental consequences of individual outcomes. Diffusion and displacement of responsibility enable adolescents to share responsibility for harmful behaviors with their peers in order to reduce the severity of single-person behaviour (Bussey, Fitzpatrick & Raman, 2015).

In a study conducted by Chen (2010) on the impact of parenting styles on moral disengagement among adolescents revealed that Chinese mothers' hierarchical attitudes were found to be positively associated with low power parenting strategies and negatively associated with high moral disengagement, while authoritarian attitudes were found to be negatively associated with high moral disengagement. Authoritative attitudes were also associated with a healthy parent-child reunion after a breakup, whereas authoritarian attitudes were associated with moral disengagement. Lyons-Ruth and Block (2006) conducted a research on the impact of parenting styles on moral disengagement among adolescents. The researchers made use of 164 adolescents that were randomly selected and the result revealed that there was significant influence of parenting styles on moral disengagement among adolescent. The researchers posited further the type of parenting style adopted by parents goes a long way in determining if adolescents would disengage the self from morally acceptable behaviour.

Chinese children, according to Quoss and Zhao (2005), are generally happy with their parents' authoritarianism because they are morally disengaged. Despite their distaste for family law, Chinese children rated their parent-child relationships higher when their parents were more authoritarian. This was in stark contrast to the American study, which found that children valued their relationships highly only if their parents were authoritative and democratic. Similarly, Chao (2004) conducted a study on the influence parenting styles on moral disengagement among adolescents in China. The finding revealed that there was significant influence of parenting styles on moral disengagement among adolescents.

Overholser (2005) in his finding shows that children could exhibit high moral disengagement problems due to low self-esteem with their peer. Furthermore, a positive correlation between self-esteem and moral disengagement has been reported by Wetzel (2004) in that high level of self-esteem have been associated with high level of peer moral disengagement in college students. Self-esteem was found to be one of the most important positive factors for students' moral disengagement. Overholser (2005) found that self-esteem have been found to increase the impact of peer moral disengagement among students. Brinkman (1995) for example found that self-esteem could not help to cope with academic life stressor and lightened the burden of moral disengagement among college students. High self-esteem was linked to a lower frequency of moral disengagement among female adolescents, according to (Sánchez, Alvarez, Sánchez, and Casal, 2013).

Lower self-esteem was linked to earlier moral disengagement, a history of risky sexual conduct, and other erratic behavior, according to (Ethier, 2006). Boden and Horwood (2006), found a significant association between lower self-esteem and high risk for moral disengagement behaviour in late adolescence and early adulthood. In another study conducted by Mi-Ja and Sung-Je (2014) among Chinese high school students on the effect of teenage self-esteem on moral disengagement. The authors sampled 267 high school students using a simple random sampling technique. The result showed that there was significant positive correlation between teenage self-esteem and moral disengagement ($r=.281$, <0.05). Lee (2012), conducted a study on the influence of self-esteem and moral disengagement in South Korean adolescents. Self-esteem of adolescents with higher initial self-esteem grew slower, while that of adolescents with lower initial self-esteem increased faster over time, according to the findings. The author concluded that self-esteem had influence on moral disengagement among South Korean adolescents.

Theoretical framework

Independent variables   Dependent variable
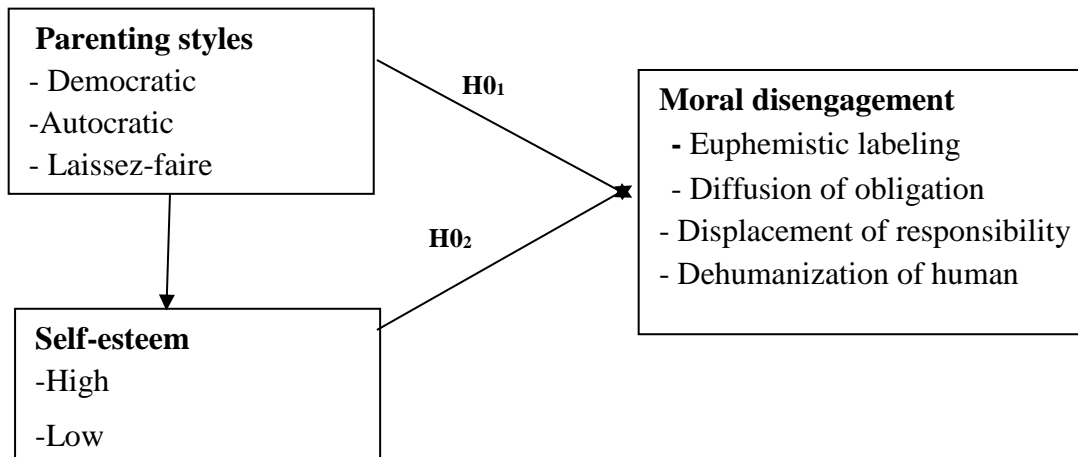
Source: Researcher, 2021

The theoretical framework above showed the inter-correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable. It also revealed the joint and relative contribution of the psychosocial factors on the dependent variable (moral disengagement).

Problem statement

For some decades now, the issue of moral disengagement among adolescents has been an issue for parents, teachers and other stakeholders. The number of adolescents involved in moral disengagement is increasing in epidemic proportion as this is affecting the growth and the development of the society. Hence, the range of the problem of moral disengagement is wider than it seems, everything pertaining to the behaviours or attitudes, which the adolescents exhibit today either in school such as truancy, bullying, examination malpractice or in their immediate environment such as fighting, pilfering, theft among others, can directly or indirectly be attributed to their environment factors. Moral disengagement may lead to disaster socially, psychologically and academically especially to the adolescents. Moral disengagement among adolescents is associated with several psychosocial indicators for well-being including: aggression, bullying, yelling, truancy, fighting, cyberbulling among others with peer and low social support and thus when perplexed adolescents may experience poor mental health problem which could later affect their academic work. Despite this, studies have been done by examining some factors that could predict and also reduce moral disengagement among adolescent. Irrespective of these studies conducted, the issue of moral disengagement among adolescents is still persistent. This is the gap to be filled in this study as it will provide empirical evidence on psychosocial predictors of moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis

Objectives of the study

The present study investigated the influence of psychosocial factors as predictors of moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis. The specific objectives include to:

- examine the relationship between parenting styles and moral disengagement among in- school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.
- examine relationship between self-esteem and moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis
- investigate the joint contribution of parenting styles and self-esteem on moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.
- investigate the relative contribution of parenting styles and self-esteem on moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

Hypotheses

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between parenting styles and moral disengagement among in- school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and moral disengagement among in- school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

$H0_3$: Parenting styles and self-esteem will not jointly contribute to the prediction of moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

$H0_4$: Parenting styles and self-esteem will not relatively contribute to the prediction of moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was adopted. This type of research design involves the interpretation of facts without manipulating any variable. One of the advantages of survey research and relevance to the present study is the fact that it makes evaluation of existing condition as well as collection of factual information possible.

Population

The target population for this study consisted of all in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state. The populations under this study were secondary school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis in Oyo state, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Multi stage sampling technique was used in the study. Ibadan metropolis has five (5) local governments out of which, three local governments were selected using stratified random sampling techniques. The three local governments that were selected are; Ibadan North, Ibadan North West and Ibadan South East. Thereafter, three public and three private secondary schools were selected from the three participating LGA. In all, six secondary schools were selected from the three LGA in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo state using purposive sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was used to select fifty (50) participants from each of the school. The sample size comprised of 300 participants. This technique was adopted because the target participants have homogeneous characteristics and they have equal chance of being picked for the study.

Instrument

Questionnaire was the instrument used in the collection of data. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A contains bio-data that sought information on personal data of the respondents. Section B contains the moral disengagement scale which was developed Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli (1996). The scale was adopted to measure how adolescents rationalise behaviours that are odd by providing their own moral principles. It consisted of 32 items with a Cronach Alpha of 0.82. Section C measured parenting style which was developed by Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen and Hart (2001). The scale was adopted to measure how the different type of parenting styles could influence moral disengagement. It consisted of 32 items with a Cronach Alpha of 0.84. While measured self-esteem which was developed by Rosenberg (1965). It consisted of 10 items with a Cronbach alpha of .95.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher administered the instrument to the respondents in their respective schools with the help of a trained assistant researcher. After the copies of the questionnaire have been filled out by the respondents, they were collated for analysis. Only 295 questionnaires were retrieved and were used for the study. Pearson's product moment correlation (PPMC) and regression analysis were used to test the four hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Demographic information of the Respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	137	46.4
	Female	158	53.6
Religion	Christianity	166	56.3
	Islam	124	42.0
	Traditional	5	1.7
Parents marital status	Intact	277	93.9
	Divorced	18	6.1

Table 1 shows that 137 (46.4%) were males and the rest 158 (53.6%) were females. This means that females participated more in the study than their other counterpart. one hundred and sixty-six (56.3%) were Christians while 124 (42.0%) were Muslims and the rest 5 (1.7%) were traditionalist. This means that Christians participated in the study than their other counterparts. Also, 277 (93.9%) of the respondents' parents were intact while 18 (6.1%) were divorced. This means that respondents whose parents' marital statuses were intact participated more in the study.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between parenting styles and moral disengagement among in- school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

Table 2: Relationship between parenting style and moral disengagement

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	R	Sig	Remark
Parenting styles	45.56	8.42	295	293	382**	0.000	Sig.

Moral disengagement	85.88	26.40					

Pearson's correlation coefficient was adopted and the results indicated that there is significant positive relationship between parenting styles and moral disengagement (r = 0.382**;p <0.05). This means that parenting styles had great impact on moral disengagement. Therefore, Ho1 is rejected.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and moral disengagement among in- school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

Table 3: Relationship between parenting style and moral disengagement

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	R	Sig	Remark
Self-esteem	39.26	7.25	295	293	570**	0.000	Sig.
Moral disengagement	85.88	26.40					

Pearson's correlation coefficient was adopted and the results revealed that there is significant positive correlation between self-esteem and moral disengagement (r = 0.570**;p<0.05). It could be inferred that the way one sees him/herself could influence moral disengagement. Therefore, Ho2 is rejected.

H0₃: Parenting styles and self-esteem will not jointly contribute to the prediction of moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

Table 4: Joint contribution of Parenting styles and self-esteem moral disengagement

R	R Square		Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.577ᵃ	.333		.321	21.242

A N O V A						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	27576.039	2	13788.020	72.731	.000	Sig.
Residual	55356.328	292	189.576			
Total	82932.367	294				

Table 4 revealed the significant joint contribution of the independent variables (parenting styles and self-esteem) on moral disengagement. The result generated a coefficient of multiple regressions of R = 0.577 and multiple R-square = 0.333. This means that the two factors brought together accounted for 32.1% (Adj.R² = .321) variance in the prediction of moral disengagement. The other factors accounting for the remaining variance are above the scope of this study. The result revealed that there was a significant joint contribution of the independent variables on moral disengagement, $F_{(2, 292)} = 72.731$; P<0.05.. Therefore, Ho4 is rejected.

H0₄: Parenting styles and self-esteem will not relatively contribute to the prediction of moral disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

Table 5: Relative contribution of parenting styles and self-esteem on moral disengagement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	22.612	12.567		1.799	.075
	Parenting styles	.166	.043	.233	3.898	.005
	Self-esteem	.917	.123	.605	7.460	.000

a. Dependent Variable: moral disengagement

Result from Table 5 shows that the following independent variables have relative effect in the following magnitude; self-esteem (ᵦ= 0.605, t= 7.460, P<0.05), parenting styles (ᵦ= .233, t= 3.898, P<0.05).

Discussion

It was revealed that there was a significant correlation between parenting styles and moral disengagement. This means that the type of parenting styles adopted by parents could make adolescents to be morally disengaged. The finding lends credence with that of Chen (2010) who conducted a study on the impact of parenting styles on moral disengagement among adolescents and reported that authoritarian attitudes were positively associated with low power parenting strategies and negatively associated with high moral disengagement in Chinese mothers, while authoritative attitudes were associated with the opposite trend. Authoritative

attitudes were also associated with a healthy parent-child reunion after a breakup, whereas authoritarian attitudes were associated with moral disengagement. It was also found that there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and moral disengagement. This means that the way adolescents perceive themselves could make them to engage in immoral behaviour which could have negative effect on their studies. The finding corroborates that of Overholser (2005) in his finding who reported that children could exhibit high moral disengagement problems due to low self-esteem with their peer. Furthermore, a positive correlation between self-esteem and moral disengagement has been reported by Wetzel (2004) in that high level of self-esteem have been associated with high level of peer moral disengagement in college students.

The finding also revealed that parenting styles and self-esteem jointly contributed to the prediction of moral disengagement among adolescents. This means that both variables play great part in determining if adolescents would be morally disengaged. The finding supports that of   Quoss and Zhao (2005) who conducted a study and reported that since they are morally disengaged, Chinese children were usually content with their parents' authoritarianism. Despite their distaste for family law, Chinese children rated their parent-child relationships higher when their parents were more authoritarian. This was in stark contrast to the American study, which found that children valued their relationships highly only if their parents were authoritative and democratic. The finding was also in line with that of Overholser (2005) who reported that self-esteem was found to increase the impact of peer moral disengagement among students.

It was also found that parenting styles and self-esteem relatively contributed to the prediction of moral disengagement among adolescents. This means that each of the variables is major determinant of moral disengagement among adolescents. The finding validates that of Lyons-Ruth and Block (2006) who conducted a study on the impact of parenting styles on moral disengagement among adolescents. The researchers made use of 164 adolescents that were randomly selected and reported that there was significant influence of parenting styles on moral disengagement among adolescent. The researchers posited further the type of parenting style adopted by parents goes a long way in determining if adolescents would disengage the self from morally acceptable behaviour. The finding also substantiates that of Ethier (2006) who reported that lower self-esteem was predictive of earlier moral disengagement, history of risky sexual behaviour and other aberrant behaviour. The finding also supports that of Boden and Horwood (2006) who reported a significant association between lower self-esteem and high risk for moral disengagement behaviour during late adolescence and early adulthood.

Conclusion and Recommendations
It could be concluded that parenting styles and self-esteem had great influence on moral disengagement among in-school adolescents. It could be recommended that:

1. Parents should instill the right morals in their children and wards as this would make them to exhibit behaviours that conform to the school, environment and their society at large.
2. Schools should inculcate in their students the roles of morals and values as this would make students to shun any form of aberrant behaviours and prepare them for future life challenge so as to become a better and successful persons.
3. Components of self-esteem should be included in the school curriculum so as to foster self-esteem in the students. In-school adolescent who has a high self-esteem may not engage in immoral behaviours that could endanger his/her future desires.
4. Every school must have formidable counselling units to assist the children who have one problem or the other and who tend to exhibit behaviours that are not morally justified.

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