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## Children's Literature and Moral Education: The Ethical Issues of Moral Developments in Sixteen Nigerian Selected Texts

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### Abstract

*The need for effective and instructive approach in children's moral education in the turn of the century or growing millennium buttresses the significance of this article 'Children's Literature and Moral Education: The Ethical Issues of Moral Developments in Sixteen Nigerian Selected Texts.' Various learning theories namely, Gestalt and Piaget theories are suited for the interpretations of these sixteen selected works. Sociological approach is also applied which aims at exploring those ideas in the texts and confines it to the society imbued to impact significantly. The sociological criticism unveils literature, society and social ideas while the research methodology is library. From the findings, scholars and writers are charged to rise up to the challenge facing moral education program to chart a sustainable course for children's moral upbringing in schools and society. It also espouses social problems or juvenile delinquencies. If the suggestions muted here are strictly adhered to, the topic under consideration will go a long way to address some of the lingering issues concerning children's immoralities that are problematic and traumatic in unjust society.*

**Keywords:** Children's Literature, Moral Education: Ethical Issues, Moral Developments and Selected Texts

### INTRODUCTION

The word Literature is a work of art derived from imagination. It is also viewed "as a mirror of society" (Osonwa and Nnaji 2015: 165) which governs activities of 'man and environment (plants and social activities).' For Patience Nnaji, it "is a symbolic transformation of experience, it provides a powerful medium for a man to perform one of his primary activities, his symbol – making functions" (2013: 10). By 'symbolization' (Hafner 1977: 167) as quoted in Nnaji Patience in the sense that "neither philosophy nor

empirical science can provide" (2013: 10) solution to the kind of problems literature is meant to solve in 'Statement of Problem' and 'Literature Review' of scholarship.

Education is thus a sine qua non in the development of a society or country; a tripod stands which holds the vision and economy of any nation. Simply, it can be viewed as "the process of developing knowledge and ability in learners for personal and societal

enhancement” (PGDE PDE 2002: 10). Because of moral laxity in schools, moral instructions, guiding and counseling have been enshrined in the curriculum of education to reduce immorality in the society where punishment cannot deter or prevent young children from crime but to an extent reduce or control it.

In Nigeria, the pattern of education as Phelps Strokes communities (who visited East and West Africa) lamented was only a book conscious type which also faulted the missionaries for tapping from the prescriptive syllabus of British and American systems (PGDE PDE 2002: 6-65). The need to inculcate morals in school children have giving rise to many fictive masterpieces namely drama, novel, poetry, short story etc, in order to address this topical issue affecting them or against juvenile delinquency also rising up to the challenge of maintaining piece, law and order in an unjust society.

Children’s education through literature is a vital tool for imparting morals and sharing of feelings or beliefs. This is often structured in moral class discussion which sometimes focuses on cultural dilemma to enhance reasoning approach in moral education. Sex education borrowed from Britain and America was ridiculed owing to the rising profile of teenage pregnancies in the two countries (Ejinkonye 2013: 9) and other nations that adopted the system. In these selected texts namely Chidimma Mmadueke’s *The Fate of an Orphan*, Ann Iwuagwu’s *Arrow of Destiny*, Maxwell Onyekachi’s *Vengeance of the Spirit*, Oluchi O. Nnadi’s *The Pains of Early Marriage*, *The Lost Paradise* by Benedicta Ulinfo, Chinelo Ifezulike’s *The Costly Mistake* and *One Good Turn Deserves Another*, *Looking for a Job* by Chika Jerry Okeke, *The Incorruptible Judge* by D. Olu Olagoke, Generic Chuks’s *The Priceless Jewel*, *God Answers Okey’s Prayer* by Chdi Ebiringa, Akponine-Samuel, Ben’s *Habiba, the Kind Princess*, Chukwudi Obianuru’s *The Wicked House Girl*, Sulaimon Ibitoye’s *Akanni the Pampered Boy*, Justice Iwuanyanwu’s *The Silenced Voice* and Stanley Onuoha’s *My Child My Home*. Efforts shall be made to review and to explicate some of the moral approaches or meanings imbued in these selected texts which impart to children and the audience in the society respectively.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The article explores various learning approaches that motivate namely Gestalt, Piaget theories and sociological criticisms. These approaches are used to highlight meanings of the works the authors intended or confined to impart to the audience, young children and their parents especially this computer age or century of innovation in science described as ‘madness.’

Gestalt stimulus response (S-R) approach hinges on the idea of insight. It is also a psychological thought or trend which triumphs as growing criticism of S-R theories in the 1940s and 1950s. This theory opines that we react to pattern by environment or society. In such situation, the learner observes the circumstances behind deploying his initiative (reasoning), experience and ability to confront the problem. In this study, conscious efforts and insights are taped from these erudite authors or scholars who contributed immensely to the topic under consideration.

Piaget theory also unveils the mystery behind this paper. That is, the basic purpose of gaining knowledge to apply and to adapt to the environment (Society) or come to terms with social challenges or problems the article impinged on.

The focus on epistemology (knowledge) underlines the importance of Piaget’s work as deployed here to suit explanation of this article. The aim is to discover new fact(s) as the theories focus on society and social ideas which shares synergy with Gestalt and sociology of the society bent on discovery, learning and communicating morals espoused from the selected texts to the children to young children.

Sociological criticisms give vital information to unravel those ideas, attitudes, time and social challenges which face the topic under discussion and their authors in the society. The dynamics of social milieu as singled out revolves on sociology which in a way then needs serious attention. These approaches are suited also impactful to explore this topic in a dynamic society.

## EMPIRICAL STUDY

The study uses seventeen selected Nigerian texts namely Chidimma Mmadueke’s *The fate of an Orphan*, Ann Iwuagwu’s *Arrow of Destiny*, Maxwell Onyekachi’s *Vengeance of the Spirit*, Oluchi O. Nnadi’s *The Pains of Early Marriage*, *The Lost Paradise* by Benedicta Ulinfo, Chinelo Ifezulike’s *The Costly Mistake* and *One Good Turn Deserves Another*, *Looking for a Job* by Chika Jerry Okeke, *The Incorruptible Judge* by D. Olu Olagoke, Generic Chuks’s *The Priceless Jewel*, *God Answers Okey’s Prayer* by Chdi Ebiringa, Akponine-Samuel, Ben’s *Habiba, the Kind Princess*, Chukwudi Obianuru’s *The Wicked House Girl*, Sulaimon Ibitoye’s *Akanni the Pampered Boy*, Justice Iwuanyanwu’s *The Silenced Voice* and Stanley Onuoha’s *My Child My Home* to explore the topic under discussion. The critical approach is vested on observation of moral facts and investigation on how the title of the paper and aforementioned or selected texts impact significantly for social development. It also explains the relevance of this topic to social reality particularly how it will assist children in the society for moral development in the turn of the century. The ideas or the authors’ experiences and critical reviews of the texts are designed to yield positive results or impacts across borders on children and the society. This unveils the context of this article of rising moral decadence in the millennium.

Of importance, the method used to achieve the significance of this paper to social reality consists of moral suasion and social changes for a dynamic society. The empiricism aids to unravel, to explain or to weigh the relevance of the paper on the tripod stand or vision of moral education, its usefulness and after thoughts of the assumptions in order to convey the impacts in the society where it will create awareness. The paper is a product of time especially how sociology of texts will acquaint orientation on the part of children in society to acquire basic morals for social uplifts.

A cursory glance in most of the schools’ curriculum depict the fact that moral standard is fallen due to high rising corruption in the society which sometimes drive away children from school. There is need for something to be done to save the educational system from such mess. These shall be articulated in the preceding paragraph segments below.

Chidimma Mmadueke’s *The Fate of an Orphan* was set in Uloma Village. The playwright exposes maltreatment Amara (depicting vulnerable children) faces in the hands of her foster mother Mrs. Okwueme when her biological mother Queen left or abandoned her at Motherless Babies’ Home or orphanage because of the sin she committed prior before she married to King of Uloma Village. The drama ridicules the reason most orphans are exposed to hatred (Amara) or accusation leaning on, “... father’s property because

your father's families love her so much" (2012: 28). The insults most orphans are subjected by their foster parents are conveyed for sober reflection (2012: 25-26):

OKWUEME: Am I the one that made you an orphan? So you want me to become childless. .... Go and find your mother. I am not your biological mother. I have warned you several times to leave my children for me but you wouldn't listen! Go away you witch.

AMARA: (sadly) What did I do to deserve all these maltreatment, mother? Where do you want me to go? You know I don't have anywhere else to go or to call my home. (Pauses) Why do you hate me so much, mother? You are the only family that I have since I was born. You are the only one I know as my mother. Why can't you accept me as your own daughter?

It also focuses on mannerism or politeness strategy in addressing elders as (2012: 29) "you being and my elder sister is not a license for you to talk to me any how you want."

Of importance, the drama revolves on 'prayer', charity', sacrifice and 'faith' as what see most vulnerable orphans or the less privileged children and their parents 'through in difficult times' in unjust society. According to one of the characters named Mma, "Mama, I want you to know that no condition is permanent" (2012: 27). Thus, Juliet, the unknown person cared and paid Amara's hospital bills while Queen's (Amara's mother) charity, prayer and sacrifice paved way to find her lost child. Queen (Amara's mother) affirms that "God made me to understand that through my charity to the poor and the needy, I would find you. I have spent my life wondering where, when and how to find you. You are my daughter. You are mine." (2012: 75) Thus, Mrs. Okwueme, Mara's foster mother ended in regret which sounds note of lessons or warnings to wicked foster parents thus "if I had known, I wouldn't ... treated Amara the way I did. I have no longer have peace of mind. Everything around me is in shambles because of my wickedness towards her." (2012: 82) God blessed Amara and Nma with families to prove that faith and destiny cannot be altered.

Thus, *Arrow of Destiny* by Ann Iwuagwu focuses on Cynthia Ijeoma Enejor, from Igalla, Kogi State who was tossed or driven by storms and dangerous seas of the modern world when her uncle's wife (Fitimi) forced her to leave the lovely care of the family especially her uncle. She nearly adrift while searching for her 'purpose in life' and greener pastures to survive due to harsh poverty situation and hostile environment she found herself into.

The novel is didactic especially the meaning of 'life' when there is "no peace of mind" (2011: 3). Cynthia strongly avers that "This city has refused to smile on me no matter how hard I tried. I will never be happy if I continue to live here. I need to leave immediately at least. Let me see what a change of environment would do to me, she muttered with a sigh." (2011: 16)

The moral significance dwells on perception of individuals or people about the society. It is also a recurrent decimal for many orphans, street urchins or poor people who fall back to blame society. This idea is also peculiar in Nnamdi Anumih's *Street Merchants* where Okaka, Job, Steve etc held society responsible for their predicaments. The morality of the novel rested on this axiom especially the need to save children's life leaning on Mr. Boma's intended sacrifice to Cynthia. The text impinges on a moral undertone where there is a reward in the sense that "a person

who saved another person's life should be acknowledged ... "(Iwuagwu, 2011: 16).

*Arrow of Destiny* revolves on the agony of a first year student of a secondary school, a child who lost her mother who was buried abroad, leaving her father alone The novel highlights the unforgettable pains on lack of 'motherly love' (2011 : 33-34) on the ground that she lacks 'what to expect' at the moment. It also reflects on the issue of over pampering or spoon feeding a child without knowing the damaging or destroying effect. There is a popular adage that says 'spoil the rod and spare the child.'

*Arrow of Destiny* also educates sign of puberty for a girl-child as it reflects or bothered on the first experience of menstrual circle (menstruation) which is not something to be ashamed of. Chimamanda questions such cultural practices and why things are not viewed properly in her epistolary novel *Dear Ijeawele*. Though gender, race and culture have overriding influence on American and African cultures, which is why the issue of transgender poses a threat to another especially in the impartation of sound moral education to girl-child or children in general. Probably, it is not when "we shall be feminist" (*Christian Voice* 2017: 46) as Chimamanda avers that shall provide solution to lingering gender, sexuality, race and moral problems which seem to plunge society into a mess. Taking cognizance of instructive approach for moral education in schools may reduce the stress on how these children are imparted knowledge or ideas which may not turn out against the society.

In many curriculum of education today, sex education has been introduced very early in some schools which are not the right approach. The basic things or roles should start from the mother or parents as said 'charity begins (at) from home' before shifting responsibility to the teachers.

Of importance, Uncle Asuwe's remark is a vital tool to inculcate basic moral training of a child sequel to the fact that "people are created with different destinies. There no two persons with the same mark on their palms. As the marks are different, so are human destinies also different." (Iwuagwu, 2011: 36) The morality of the novel pings or espouses the evils of child abuse or maltreatment of vulnerable girl-child in African society which is also obtainable in other countries of the world. Barrenness and mysticisms are depicted as trauma on the side of monitoring couples, a means to rendering them childless. The didactic or moral approach is designed to ridicule witch-doctors and prophetesses who scatter or render some families useless with 'no peace of mind' again.

The moral education on early marriage, consequences on girl-child education and health are critically conveyed in *Arrow of Destiny*. In African societies, many innocent children fall victims of fake promises or 'arranged marriages' at the tender age of sixteen. A similar situation is Michael Henchard in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Oliver Goldsmith's *She stood to Conquer* where Tony Lumpkin escaped his mother's trick to marry Miss Constance for him because she is a wealthy jewelries. The moral lesson indicts willingness on the part of many girls to take risks or pay the price of answering a graduate thinking it is the solution for the future only to end up in flattering or deceit marriage. The emphasis on marital peace as misconstrued does not end in getting money or child. The moral aspect hinges on no hurry in life as God's time is the best. Cynthia ended up happily marrying Boma with triplets after divorce.

Maxwell Onyechachi's *Vengeance of the Spirit* exposes the dramatic irony of bride price in African culture. The dilemma of Okoro who wants to force her daughter Ngozi to marry a wealthy Obiekwe who proposed to her for marriage in order to reject Okpoko who ran into financial mess is satirized for moral lesson. The battle line is drawn between power, spirit of money, fame, fate, culture and consequences of choice made which can mar or promote healthy marriage. The heroine's (Ngozi) ridicules on why the root of all evils ('thoughts and actions') was created may further raise arguments which can provoke unjust society. The question may be asked, why should sentiments come in or allow overrule in marriage or love in the society? Factually, inability to complete 'bride price' (Onyekachi 2013: 49) is wrongly placed or blame on birthright. Thus, Ngozi's laments on "why can't someone choose something that she likes and the people will support her choice and be happy with her, also ... why?" justifies the power of love casting aside sentiments or delay. She asserts on the positive truth that, "You don't seem to understand what it means to marry a man whom you had never loved .... It is one terrible experience in a woman's life." (2013: 5) Thus, Ngozi ended up in a tragic death at the hand of Obiekwe whom her parents forced her to marry.

Oluchi O. Nnadi's *The Pains of Early Marriage* is also set in Eastern Nigeria. The heroine Destiny espouses the ugly experiences of girl-child marriage before proper education. The novel unfolds polygamy and snobbish characters of Destiny's father. Destiny's mother felt disappointed for not meeting up with domestic and other needs of the family which she (Destiny) saw it in the revise direction and consoled her. It also showcases what some women as breadwinners encounter in life to train their children at the derail or demise of some inconsequential husbands.

This literary masterpiece (*The Pains of Early Marriage*) makes use of coincidences in terms 'desirable' and 'available' to ground the intent of protagonist. That is, dropping out of school as desirable to assist her mother in farm work as the available means or solution. The major theme revolves or focuses on the pains of marrying at tender age of fifteen with a man of thirty-three years she called a 'Brother' 'due to fear or gap in age' (2013: 17) which do not expose such girls to maturity, choice or selection, toleration or accommodation of individual differences and definition of marriage in terms of wife, women and mother.

Thus, the novelist educates young girls on menstrual circle which some are ignorant. It laughs to scorn such practices in society where young tender girls are confined to cook, serve foods, wash clothes or clean the environments or obey their husbands at the demand of sex without any plan to further their education in order to secure future for their children. Later, Destiny went back to school and graduated but the issue of marriage never bothers her due to psychological and emotional traumas of her past experiences. She resorts only banking on hope for her future loving husband to emerge which becomes optical disillusionment.

*The Lost Paradise* by Benedicta Ulinfo focuses on love and psychopathological phenomenon. It was set in Lagos, a luxurious apartment where Desmond acquired for Vivian his fiancée as sign or token of love. Thus, 'adores' (2013: 1) as used in the novel refers to understatement also likened to 'wish' syndrome which has never done any good to gold digging ladies or hookup girls.

Desmond's kindness attracts Vivian to accept his marriage proposal which later rebounded because of Frank. The novelist uses Vivian's humility and humanitarian which turns to selfish

after meeting Frank coincidentally; a man who came to eat at their restaurant and this passes a moral message to young ladies or children.

Peer group influence is another traceable factor the author Ulinfo grapples with to contend this morality. Susan's influence led Vivian astray also compelled her to be materialistic for comfort and changing of wardrobe or even calling twenty thousand naira 'meager' all in the name of maintaining level (status) and erasing fears of returning back to former life. This compels Vivian to be too demanding to Desmond. The text maintains that if young ladies know what is good for them, then, they'd "better not play any games that will risk relation ..." (2013: 23). The moral question aspect boils on whether it is wrong for one (2013: 28) to like money after lacking it for many years? Vivian forgets that the 'devil' she knows is better than angel she does not know as Desmond will never "see a dying soul and rescue" (2013: 30) in life. Lucy's declaration that Susan is a pro at her game; Vivian a learner materializes as her world crumbles before her eyes because of Susan. This tally with the title and moral message emanating from the novel that "He who abandons his paradise in search of greater heavens must tread with wisdom or end up in Lucifer's kingdom. I will surely say ...; I told you so" (2013: 31). Thus, Vivian's plot to frustrate Desmond, continue gold digging or searching on how to win Frank's hand in marriage and become a millionaire boomeranged her fortunes.

Benedicta Ulinfo uses language that is simply and replete in Pidgin English convey this message as in: "You do hold on to this guy real tight" (2013: 3), "You dey craze! Na wetin concern you concern wetin dey think?" (2013: 5) and "Definitely, as long as there would be cute classy guys at the restaurant.... Na boy matter go kill you ... (2013: 6).

*The Costly Mistake* by Chinelo Ifezulike is a vital instrument or evocative didactic novel used to instill or impart morals also to catch children young in society through career counselling. The settings are Obosi and Onitsha in Anambra State where the three prominent schools namely Metropolitan Grammar, Ogbunike Boys' High School in Obosi and St. Charles' Special Science School Onitsha were located. The novel leans on hard work to inculcate moral virtues to the children on the need to acquire basic education to face challenges in life. It focuses on Daniel and his friends (Michael, Udoh, Uche and Obah) who graduated from Little Star Primary School, Obosi and were determined to go further. They went to collect their Entrance Examination result slips in high spirit. As fate may have it, Udoh, Uchenna and Daniel were given admission to into Metropolitan Grammar School Obosi, Michael to Ogbunike Boys' High School whereas Obah, St Charles' Special School Sciences Onitsha.

On the contrary, fate plays crucial roles in the novel. Uchenna accepted his fate and worked hard to be a medical doctor, Udoh, a politician, Uchenna, an engineer while Daniel left as a boarder who could not hid to his parents' advice to study hard. The novel touches on one of the philosophical facts or assertion that "There is no formula for success in life ... no magic ... except in story books or film" (Ifezulike 2017: 6). The choices one makes in life especially group influence mars or matters a lot and this is tailored to reflect on the Igbo maxim or adage, 'show me your friend and I will tell you who you are.'

The novel in exploratory manner reviews authentic portraiture of life in the boarding schools where survival of the fittest emerged

victoriously. It also, depicts certain punishments or callous treatments meted out to fresh or new students which make their blood to boil. The use of nicknames, upside interpretations of some acronyms, slangy expressions, current affairs, jokes, funs, riddles, poetic insults, bullying, punishment of junior ones etc are part of school and academic life. The importance of joining quiz club, debate and mastering vocabularies or slangy expressions like 'prep' (Ifezulike, 2017: 78) and 'disease from exam malpractice', bribery and uttering of results etc.

The use of proverbs and idioms in the text enhance promulgation or promotion of language and customs where moral suasion of young children in African or Igbo culture is attained. For instance, 'it is firewood one fetched during the dry season that one would use in the rainy season', 'a headless flies follows the corpse to the grave', 'your destiny is in your hands', 'you are the architect of your fortune and the master of your fate', 'don't live any stone unturned', 'our people have a saying that when a child is misbehaving there is an adult somewhere who has failed in his duties or who should be held responsible for such bad behavior', 'I cannot throw away the palm kernel cracked for me by the benevolent god or stay by the riverside and wash my hands with spittle', 'the power of the leopard is in its claws', 'there is no sweet without sweat' etc (Ifezulike, 2017: 45, 8, 37, 38, 81, 83, 85, 88 and 106).

The novelist as a teacher focuses on "undue emphasis attached to paper qualification" (Ifezulike, 2017: 95) as problem affecting children in the society especially in academic and labour markets. The moral border line indicates the fact that those who possess illegal certificates found it irrelevant in the labor market to what Anthol Fugard referred to as 'sizwe bansi is dead' (the spirit of the nationhood is dead if one is possessing a certificate one cannot defend) as one of the moral messages in the drama Ikechi Adindu highlighted (Nwokochah and Ebeogu 2000: 203). The solution focuses on supervision or instruction of teachers to know their lapses in order to affect these ugly trends or menace.

In all, the language of the text is superb. It is within the target audience (children). The English language in use is mixed with varieties of Nigerian English as in "let me escort you" (Ifezulike, 2017: 73) instead of saying, see me off. The usage is based on the context of situation or language in use.

Again, *One Good Turn Deserves Another* by Chinelo Ifezulike explores Mezie's (every intelligent child's) determination to come first in the class examinations to collect the first prize. Set in Eziamma Primary School, Ifezulike captures the role of some poor parents to orientate, feed and educate their wards not minding the economic circumstances. In a polite strategy or courtesy, the author maintains that easy social relationship of children can enhance family social relationship using Mezie as a mouthpiece.

Ifezulike explores the zeal many parents inspired with other counterparts to celebrate their children's success in order to encourage them in life. The novel focuses on excursion, picnic, and leisure time or 'time of play' as academic, moral and exercises that should not be ignored completely in school curriculum which underlines the fact that 'all works and no play makes Jack a dull boy.'

On the contrary, the novel espouses what many young brilliant children encountered at the expenses of their mothers when the breadwinners of the house died unexpectedly leaving some greedy uncles carting everything away and refusing assistance only to

discourage their late brothers' children simply because theirs are not intelligent. In any disappointment, there is a lesson in disguise. Mezie's honesty, errands and help to discover Mr. Olikeze's money fetched a laurel of honor that saw him to university with lucrative job. Thus, Mezie came to pay homage to Mr. and Mrs. Onyeka (his mentors) when they were in need of help which reflects on the title of the novel, *One Good Turn* ....

The language of the text is embellished in idiomatic expressions like, 'a / the toad does not run in the daytime for nothing.' Also, 'it is God that drives away flies in for a cow without a tail', 'it is conditions that bend crayfish' and 'a child, ... cannot pay for her mother's milk' which are good to cite while discussing or teaching children's literature.

*Looking for a Job* by Chika Jerry Okeke exposes internet fraud of 10, 000 jobs as advertised in Nigeria using Enugu State as the setting. The dramatist ridicules the deplorable situations of the two young job seekers depicted in their old fashioned attires roaming the streets in search of white cola jobs. Kemi's argument on graduates who depend on expo for interview as to what they can offer in returns if eventually employed needs to call for sober reflection. This in fact, indicts some of the so called graduates roaming the streets whether they were actually brought up or seen the four walls of the institutions whiling away their time for nothing. The 'bed test' before employment in Meg Obiomah's novel *In the Nick of Time* is what Onyema in Chika Okeke's drama, *Looking for a Job* exposes linking it to 'long leg' (2007: 21; 7) syndrome in order to pull the chain and get a job by picking "one of those interviewers and become his girl friend" (2007:7; 41). The issue of job been booked or hijacked by influential men in the society for their relations or friends is another inhibiting factor for unemployment desired or qualified applicants.

The drama also focuses on rebranding 'syndrome' (2007: 12) of the first come first serve which is not tolerated in Nigeria or Africa due to impatience. One of the characters namely Ikeobi laments on the calibre of addicted graduates in the country also wonders if going to "school makes some people run mad and crazy. That is, if addiction (alcoholics and drugs) and sleeping with ladies are compulsory courses in higher institutions." It is true that some graduates with porous minds get job easy while scarcity of jobs compelled most educated graduates to turn to beggars. Onyema intends to go outside the country to seek for a greener pastures as lazy as he is or to what next after discarding robbery?

The playwright engages readers in argument to tell the world that "not all Nigerians are bad" (2007: 18) also castigates job displacement especially those that misfits in banking sectors while genius or intelligent 'graduates turn' "a main road to a football field" (2007: 25). It also laughs to scorn some churches as hide outs or avenues of exploitation and easy money ventures or acquisitions of wealth.

Afam blamed himself for not acquiring basic education that would have transformed his business also Onyema for rendering 'school useless' for not utilizing his erudition as job creator / giver not seeker or being a employed by employers of labour as the case may be. Onyema was eventually sacked as Mathematics teacher. He contributed to his harvest of shame running round naked at Ogbete Main Market at the ransom of #50, 000 which marred his reputation and career. After hitting a school girl to death with his bicycle which saw him nearly languish in police cell, he becomes a repented soul. He confesses his 'liability' in which no right

thinking person would have associated or accepts as he makes this solemn confession after Ngozi disappointed to marry Uche his classmate at the eve of the wedding which left him between the Devil and deep sea.

On another analogy, Meg Obiomah *In the Nick of Time* ridicules the 'travail in job market' (2015: 89) in African society. The writer ponders on the troubles, frustration and agonies encountered by some female job seekers who are undergraduates and consequent 'bed test' described as 'cold war' (2015: 90). The average novel also reviews sexual harassment, false allegations and unfair treatment meted out to some female job seekers by their employers. It also espouses racial segregation in terms of the number applying for job, gender distinction, discipline and class of degree one is holding in the labor market and preference of male than female in competitive positions (2015: 1). These have led to submission to the demands of sex or engagement in prostitution to survive (Anumihe 2010:169). The antagonistic contradiction is not women and social order but abuse of rights. The fact that their interests are affected explains their agony.

*The Incorruptible Judge* by D. Olu Olagoke was a drama primarily meant to entertain yet the moral undertone is underlined (1962: 4). It focuses on a young school-leaver Ajala Oni who submitted an application for a job to The Establishment Officer J. Ade Agbalowomeri who demanded 'kola' (1962: 16), a bribe of five pounds before assisting him to secure the vacancy. With the advice of Femi Ajanaku his classmate, Ajaloni reported the matter to the police and the corrupt officer was arrested. He tried his possible best to bribe the sitting or trial judge Mr. Eniola Faderin through his father-in-law Eniola Durudayo and Chief Bobameto, an influential Chief but all to no avail. The erring officer was convicted and sentenced to three years in imprisonment with hard labour not minding side attractions from sympathizers.

The language is lucid or clear; written in conventional English meant to carry every reader or pupil along.

*The Priceless Jewel* by Generic Chuks revolves on the need to be upright and not to succumb to greed and illegal means to acquire wealth in the society. It is a novel of growth (buildings or Erziehungs Roman) which showcase children or youths as major characters. The importance of girl-child education especially in a patriarchal society that attached importance to male education is resolved to strike a balance or patriarchal harmony. The role of Teacher Okafor is commendable in the text especially how he inculcates morals to the youths also turns her only daughter (First Nigerian female graduates) as university graduates which becomes an eye opener to the people or community of Olomina who lust for titles and worldly things.

The playwright epitomizes or romanticizes the aesthetics of 'ebony black colour' (2011: 45) beauty that extols African culture. Teacher Okafor regards his only daughter Angy as 'priceless jewel' also blessed her marriage with Ayo.

The novel epitomizes the need for girl-child education and women empowerment as a means of promoting balance also maintaining peace in stratified society. This paves for a millennium goal for a productive, prosperous and progressive society against social stratification, maltreatment and segregation.

*God Answers Okey's Prayer* by Chdi Ebiringa is another didactic novel set in two communities of Ezeani namely Nduhu and Irodi. It focuses on over pampering of children and use of house keeps

doing everything like domestic chores or works in the house (using Uzo's parents as example) also use of drivers to convey them to school.

The author emphasizes on one of the earliest kindergarten song on 'early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy and wealthy and wise'. It also revolves on the role of assigning duty or morning functions to children before they left for school for moral, physical and mental well being.

The morality of the novel pinged on the effects of affluence and poverty on the growing up children in society. This reminds the audience what children of the poor suffer especially those who begged for leftovers like Okey to bath and to wash their clothes who triumphed in life than the rich ones. It also leans on 'not good' refusing to help those in need to pass moral instruction to the youths or children. The text focuses on how to "be kind to those you meet on your way up because you may meet them on your way down" (Ebiringa 2001: 20). This touches on the moral axiom that "no condition is permanent" (2001: 32) as the episodes between the poor and the rich revolve in sober reflection.

It also exposes the evils of social stratification where society is classed between the "haves" and 'haves not.'" It pinged on racial segregation of living settlements or housing patterns between the rich and the poor in the society (using Mr. Nze and Nwaka - Uzo and Okey's parents as reference) and how the children of the affluence maltreat the poor.

Of great concern, it focuses on prayer as masterpiece. It emphasizes on the need for children to help and to pray for their parents' prosperity in whatever honest business or job doing to train them. Thus, children are advised to start from the onset to perform certain domestic chores like fetching water, firewood, washing plates, sweeping the house, attending errands etc, not to learn by force or readjust at the reversal of any misfortune of their parents as seen in the case of Uzo in the text.

Akponine-Samuel, Ben's *Habiba, the Kind Princess* is a tale of five chapters which focuses on humility, kindness, obedience, service and philanthropy especially the need for children of the affluent (like Habiba's) to help the poor ones in the society. It espouses the truth that "not everybody is opportune to know what hunger and poverty is" (2018: 3) especially some children of the rich who have not experience any hardship or live in rural areas with the poor. The tale is designed to impart moral lesson. The writer uses politeness strategy of Habiba to correct her step-mother's (Queen Ara) lack of love and greed in order to stop her from further embarrassing interrogations intending to stop her helping a poor disadvantaged friend. Thus, "who is this parasite that is always coming here to eat? .... "She is my friend .... I invited her o come ..." (2018: 4).

The need to consider or think about other poor people out there attracted the sympathy of Habiba's father (King Alalade, King of Ilabo Kingdom) who gave his farmlands also reduced burdens of tax load to the poor parents. Habiba's concern to her indigent friend Amina is willed to impart moral virtues or lessons to children as both friends paid each other in kindness and cash in this scientific innovative era or simply, age of madness in computer and creativity.

On a sober reflection, the tale touches on disobedience, dictatorship, maltreatment, neglect and imposition of heavy taxation on the people by the wicked King Adeloye, the

illegitimate brother of Alalade, the dethroned former King. It also emphasizes on the importance of humility and tolerance which King Adeloye lacks compared to King Alalade.

On a good note, it revolves on the adage, “one good turn deserves another.” Thus, the ‘charity or hospitality’ Habiba rendered to Amina compelled her father to search for her safety. It also exposes evils of selfishness, wickedness and man inhumanity to man experience in society globally. Queen Ara’s charity to King Adeloye is viewed as act of perfidy or betrayal on the wheel of progress of her husband which instructs children and humanity also amazed everyone when the tyrant King was dethroned by the resistant youths to ensure peace and tranquility to the kingdom.

Above all, it focuses on humility and service to the poor or most vulnerable in society which saved Habiba and her family from the wicked plans of her father’s uncle. In summary, it reflects on moral axiom of Christian ethics which teaches the need to abstain from blood shade also to condemn evil as Queen Ara was disrobed as a queen by her husband.

*The Wicked House Girl* by Chukwudi Obianuru explores nefarious atrocities committed by some house girls or helps who break marital homes via sorceries or witchcrafts. It espouses the inconsequential attitudes of some career women or bankers leaving a care free lives in the hands of their house girls or maids only to regret at the end or latter when it is too late.

The book or story focuses on Charity’s nefarious attitudes against Mama Ben and her husband, Uncle Joshua. The character of the maid lies within the psychological domain of her friends who flirt, stole and misled her in the city she enjoyed. Thus, the friends introduced her to witchcraft in order to control Mama Ben which later backfired as a lesson in disguise to all every parent and house help. The writer exposes the evils of bewitching, robbery, poisoning of sweets and removing item like clothing used to initiate children in the occult society or kingdom. It also reviews the ugly situations, terrors or voodoo practices unleashed by these so called house girls in society.

Sulaimon Ibitoye’s *Akanni the Pampered Boy* explores cross cultural or mixed marriage, environmental adaptation and child’s upbringing in Oriwu community. The novel focuses on the protagonist Akanni who was born in London and came to Nigeria at six years. Apart from adapting to environmental and cultural factors, the novelist espouses issue of (2008: 39) marrying a caste who chases (her husband’s) relations or family members away. Akanni’s mother sees him as the ‘only mirror she is looking at daily basis’ (2008: 29) which affected his child’s upbringing. As a matter of fact, Akanni’s father decided to change his will before death as a deterrent also frustration to his stubborn and wicked wife. Later, the only son joined gang and committed bank robbery which he was executed. The moral axiom or undertone of this novel hinges on spoilt the rod and spare the child which was tampered with mercy to the detriment of the child. Akanni bit off his mother’s ear as a lesson or punishment of not given him adequate training which could have spared his life.

Justice Iwuanyanwu’s *The Silenced Voice* focuses on vanity of mundane riches obtained through foul means. The novel was set in Ire Kingdom where a prominent selective philanthropist but a stingy man, Chief Uzorji was humiliated. The hero Ikechi Ideato went out early hours of the night to check or ‘inspect’ (2019: 3) his traps in the bush near to Chief Uzorji’s compound only to discover how the Chief conspired with other men to kill Oluchi (daughter of

Mazi Ibeh) her relation for ritual and buried her in a nearby bush at the compound thinking nobody sees them. Ikechi reported the matter to her parents and to the police as kidnapping incidence. Thus, “what is hidden to mortals is very clear to gods” (2019: 8) as the truth of the Ikechi’s madness spell was revealed by the Chief Priest pointing at ‘a great evil’ man ‘in Ire living among’ in the Kingdom.

The novelist emphasizes that whatever we do here on earth has reward even in heaven. It also espouses or exposes the evil deeds of the so called ‘philanthropist but individual misanthrope, bastion’ of various kingdoms / societies who robbed, defrauded and kill the poor to enrich themselves or enlarge their coasts and rank and file. Ikechi’s madness was reversed and the spell of madness reverted back to Chief Uzorji (as nemesis caught him), he died and his decomposed body was carried by irate youth to the evil forest while his son in the city was arrested, prosecuted and jailed by the court. At the end, the poverty stricken boy Ikechi was elevated or honored by giving some portions of the royal farmlands and the community continued to progress tremendously.

Stanley Onuoha’s *My Child My Home* is a Christian novel also a book written in Parts A and B. It is set in Owerri City with compelling and interesting sceneries of free education by then government. Told in flashbacks, the author focuses on good moral conduct or obedience of Chidinma which “placed her in a good position” (2016: 4). It also emphasizes on the role of hard work, obedience, dedication and determination to succeed in life. It revolves on school morality and the need to ‘stay away from anything’ (2016: 11) that will attract punishment or expulsion which also pinged on obedience to the rules and regulations of the school.

The thrust of Onuoha’s text touches on the pains and agonies of forced or early marriage or over ambitions of ‘the children of the fourth world’ who are in a hurry to elope and boycott customary practices especially bride price as Ifeoma Okoye highlighted. It also reflects on loss of virginity and education on the part of the girl-child (Chidinma) due to fake marriage proposal with intension to travel overseas backfiring.

It also explores the need for children to be smart because opportunities revolves and not static. The case of Chidinma’s ‘smartness’ attracts her favour as she apprenticed to a handiwork (tailoring) after being derailed from studies or deceived by overseas suitor. Her efforts to revise the situation hinged on hard work and moral reflecting on the adage that ‘in any disappointment, there is a lesson attached to it. The author exposes the psychological trauma of deceit many young girls faced while in school which seem to affect their marriages.

The importance of the fiction conveys on a good note the moral axiom that “destiny could be delayed, but could never be denied” (2016: 26). The author espouses the need for mothers or parents to enact storytelling, tongue twisters, ‘tell tell me’ (gwam gwam gwam in Igbo language), moonlight stories or songs which focuses on pride, greed, betrayal, laziness, stubbornness to inculcate morals and to catch these children young for Christ and humanity. The text posits that “When Chidinma’s twin grew up to become 10 years old, she called them, sat them down and began to narrate a story to them about a certain man, lady Nneka, and her best friend, Chika; how Chika betrayed Nneka because of money” (2016: 27).

At the turn of this century, these stories and songs seem to disappear like beauty which fades like the morning flowers while sufferings of single mothers (as breadwinners) and their children remained a tale of woes in the rise of the millennium. Parents should also understand that “it is not always the child you honour and cherished that excels or appreciates you” (Bogwo 2016: 115).

On an analogy, the author draws allusion from the *Bible* to impart morals to the children. For instance, “all is vanity” (*Ecclesiastes* 7: 1-29) and “nothing we bring into the world” (*1 Timothy* 6: 7-10) to illustrate the fact that greed, love of money or wealth etc, are the root cause of evils in unjust society. The part B consists of moral undertones or a passionate appeal for Nigerian youth to shun cultism and drug trafficking etc, a book that should be recommended for moral instructions in schools.

## CONTRIBUTION

In the above chapter segments, marriage, obedience, hard work, prayer, education, girl-child gender issues, and moral instruction are explored in these children’s literatures. From the memory lane, the works of the authors are commendable in terms of accuracy, understanding and delivery to the target audience especially the young children. Satire, idioms, irony, sarcasm and humor are designed to ridicule imbecility of the human nature and society.

There were lots of socio-cultural conflicts that engaged the works. One discovers the dialectics of events and situation that were wrong from the time of our fore-fathers to our parents and school curriculum which had inspired these authors to argue for social reforms through moral instructions.

Interestingly, the research is able to hint at moral instruction, its merits and demerits. There is need to support the authors on condition that any distress that worries children in the society should not be ignored and this becomes the major concern of these writers. Of note, the authors have unique visions on cultural dynamics, children and social problems.

Also, it is worthy of notes that the authors attempt to engage the contexts of situation to highlight moral instruction as a solution to the problems. Obviously, satire as aesthetic stamp of modern African drama and novel has produced new insights in these selected texts. Thus, these cultural anomalies in children’s literature should be handled with care to avoid its pitfalls dominating the anxieties of the centuries.

The texts are scribbled to exert influence on moral instructions in schools. The authors have successfully making the rest of the world to see human conditions or humanity in the Nigerian polity through African setting or background in robust of critical oeuvres which become paradigmatic situation or harbinger in most recent and incoming children’s fictions.

On a critical view stand, the texts in this exploratory research have achieved their artistic aims through the command of language to communicate audience through idioms cited in the texts without losing its significance. Idioms in this context, performance and functions achieve its ontological status even with or without face to face validation. The thematic stance of taming or amputating the English language to suit the whims and caprices of accommodating native customs and idioms are commendable in terms of language, style, diction and cultural milieu considering the practical demands of the cultural settings which the authors seem to have manipulated.

## CONCLUSION

Children’s literature should be designed to reflect on boos or literary works which are both entertaining also focus on authentic portraiture of its existing cultural values on ground in reality to the environment they live or confined.

Controversially, children are nothing without their roots or giving moral suasion or instruction as no problem arises without a solution. Thus, ignoring the past or to inculcate basic virtues through moral instruction, these children are vulnerably doom to repeat mistakes that can tarnish their image for ever. No child is born with a silver spoon or special from other children except from life or character interpretation.

The need to utilize moral instruction in schools is vital in this millennium. The authors have done their possible best to espouse these obnoxious moral laxity and contagious stigma affecting society needing change or reform in sober reflection. How syllabus domesticates or inculcates various cultures of societies have implications on moral upbringing of children were highlighted by these authors which should not be underplayed. This is because the society is revolving also attitudinal behaviours.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Modern African writers and their Western counterparts therefore need to come together with similar artifacts which reflect on morals and the past these authors have done to sensitize children, audience or readers. The authors are confined to distinguish between appearance and reality with possible means of inculcating morals in children’s literature to sanitize the society. The need is urgent to reform or modify school’s curriculum to reflect on moral short stories about culture and traditions with intent to give proper orientation, understanding and documentation. Both should engage societies in order to review these ugly trends arising from anomalous cultural practices to install durable legacy next generations will benefit.

Undoubtedly, three quarters of the world’s populations comprise children without moral education before going to school. The authors should wage their literary arsenals to fight these obnoxious cultural environments or social mores that lack moral potentials which consequently give rise to inequality, early marriage, prostitution, poor education and standard of living which limit these children’s productivity or contributions to nation-building.

Again, the role of mothers or women cannot be over exaggerated as traditional role is believed to attach importance to home-making because of their religious and cultural beliefs as backbones of rural economies in the world, sequel to vital role to ensure the wellbeing of their families (Chukwumezie 2018: 118).

Although majority of exploratory surveys are carried out in western countries, other researchers from other countries follow suit especially in the area of gender inequality in literature, education or lack of education on the part of girl-child. Available literatures from Nigeria also indicate samples of mere under representation of women. Social factors like poverty, illiteracy, influence and prostitution contributed to corruption and immorality (Chukwumezie 2018: 119).

Authors and writers should also champion the need to overhaul the society to support Wole Soyinka that language must be employed to liberate enslaved public psyche. That is to say, language must be used to checkmate power (politics) and culture (especially

marriage, obnoxious laws when abused, at most cynical and tyrannical. The literary texts so far have succeeded to review the tragedies of vulnerable or immoral children in society and their pitfalls in the face of the millennium advancing society on a right wheel or frame of mind.

Of importance, there is need to adopt the Lutheran policy that does everything in their language or mother tongue embellished in proverbs and idiomatic expressions etc. They also have language academy where other foreign or languages are interpreted or translated with ease to ensure her language does not go into extinction.

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