



INFLUENCE OF ETHICAL AND VALUE EDUCATION TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN DELTA STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION



Mbonu, Obianuju Adaobi (Ph.D.)

Department of Educational Management and Policy
School of Education, Federal College of Education
(Technical) Umuze, Anambra State
E-mail: vinachi2001@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study examined the influence of ethical and value education towards the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools. Three research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The population for this study comprised all the 11,479 teachers from 488 public secondary schools in Delta State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 574 teachers and 244 secondary schools to ensure representation across different schools and educational zones within Delta State. The primary instrument for data collection was a researcher structured questionnaire developed based on the research purpose, containing 31 items and titled: "Influence of Ethical and Value Education towards Development of Students' Leadership Skills Questionnaire (IEVEDSLSQ)". The questionnaire was subjected to both face and content validation by three experts in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations from the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. A pilot study was conducted in three secondary schools in Delta State outside the sampled area to test reliability. The score obtained after the pilot test was calculated using the Cronbach's Alpha method to ensure internal consistency of the questionnaire which yielded coefficient values of 0.80, 0.83 and 0.89 for the three clusters respectively; and which were summed up to give an overall acceptable threshold reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Data collated were analyzed using frequencies, mean scores rated at 2.50 and standard deviation. Findings of the study generally revealed that although ethical and value education had high positive influence on the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools; its integration into the curriculum was to a low extent due to several challenges. It was further discovered through one of the findings of this study that extent to which ethical and value education was integrated into the secondary school curriculum for development of students' leadership skills in Delta State was to a low extent. From the findings of this study, recommendations were proffered. And they included among others that the Delta State Post Primary Education Board (PPEB) should ensure effective high extent of integration ethical and value education into the secondary school curriculum in every subject area such as: Social studies, Christian Religious Studies (CRS) including Islamic Religious Studies (IRS), Government, Civic/citizenship education, Security education, Business studies, Guidance and counselling including life skills programmes, hidden curriculum such as the co-curricular activities and all other pre-vocational studies, science and technology, cultural and creative arts, for development of students' leadership skills in Delta State. This course should be matched up with regular capacity-building programmes and workshops to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively deliver ethical and value education in secondary schools.

Keywords: Influence, Ethical, Value, Education, Development, Students, Leadership, Skills

Introduction

Leadership skills are increasingly recognized as essential attributes for young people to effectively navigate the complexities of modern society and contribute meaningfully to national



development. They are critical competencies that enable students to influence others positively, solve problems, communicate effectively, and make ethical decisions (Okafor, 2023). Secondary schools provide a key environment where leadership skills can be cultivated through curricular and co-curricular activities. In secondary schools, the cultivation of leadership skills among students is critical for preparing responsible future leaders capable of ethical decision-making and societal transformation (Ajayi & Okoro, 2022). Research indicates that leadership development in schools improves self-confidence, critical thinking, and social responsibility among students (Ajayi & Okoro, 2022). However, the integration of leadership training into secondary education varies significantly depending on the quality of ethical and value education programmes (Ifeanyi, 2023). Ethical and value education plays a pivotal role in this developmental process by fostering moral reasoning, integrity, and social responsibility, and these qualities underpin effective leadership skills (Ugwoke, Eze, & Obasi, 2023). Ethical education according to Marshall and Robinson (2021), refers to structured learning that promotes understanding and application of moral principles, such as honesty, fairness, respect, and justice. Ethical education involves teaching principles that distinguish right from wrong and encouraging adherence to moral values such as honesty, respect, fairness, and responsibility (Marshall & Robinson, 2021). Meanwhile, value education encompasses the transmission of societal, cultural, and personal values that guide behavior and interpersonal relationships. Value education further encompasses a broader spectrum of social, cultural, and personal values that guide behaviour and decision-making (Khan, 2022).

Together, ethical and value education nurture students' character development and instill foundational attitudes that contribute to their leadership capacities. According to Marshall and Robinson (2021), ethical and value education plays a fundamental role in shaping the character and moral compass of students, which forms the foundation for effective leadership. Together, these educational approaches aim to nurture holistic development and prepare youth for responsible citizenship and leadership roles (Ugwoke, Eze, & Obasi, 2023). In the context of Delta State secondary schools, there is growing interest in how ethical and value education programmes influence students' leadership skill development. Leadership skills typically include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, empathy, fairness and justice, responsibility, transparency, effective management of resources, innovative, creativity, open-mindedness, punctuality in activities, accountability, accessibility, decisive and strong mindedness, trustworthiness, truthfulness, tactful and the ability to motivate and guide others (Okafor, 2023). These skills are essential for youth empowerment and sustainable national development, particularly, in Nigeria, where youth population growth necessitates focused investment in leadership cultivation (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Several studies reported the strong relationship between ethical/value education and leadership skill development. For instance, Ugwoke et al. (2023) argued that ethical education instills the moral virtues necessary for trustworthy and effective leadership. Similarly, Khan (2022) suggested that value education cultivates respect for diversity, empathy, and teamwork - key traits of successful leaders. Empirical evidence from Nigerian secondary schools demonstrates that students exposed to comprehensive value education exhibit higher levels of leadership readiness (Nwosu & Chukwu, 2022). Despite the recognized importance and benefits of ethical and value education on development of students' leadership skills, there is limited empirical research assessing the direct impact of ethical and value education on leadership skills among secondary school students in Delta State. Existing literature suggested that challenges such as inadequate curriculum integration, limited teacher training, and socio-cultural barriers affected the effectiveness of ethical and value education (Nwosu & Chukwu, 2022; Eze & Obi, 2023). Eze and Obi (2023) further highlighted some cases of socio-cultural conflicts where community values may sometimes contradict school teachings, leading to resistance. Ogunyemi and Adeyemi (2021) pointed to insufficient teacher training and inadequate instructional materials as significant obstacles affecting effective implementation and integration of ethical and value education in schools. Moreover, lack of clear policy frameworks and inconsistent curriculum integration further weaken the delivery of ethical and value education (Nwosu & Chukwu, 2022). Moreover, some studies indicate that students'



leadership development is often inconsistent and lacks systematic reinforcement through value education programmes (Ifeanyi, 2023). To maximize the impact of ethical and value education on leadership skills development, several strategies have been outlined by a few scholars and which includes continuous professional development for teachers which is vital to equip them with pedagogical skills specific to moral education (Ogunyemi & Adeyemi, 2021). Active involvement of parents and community stakeholders can help align cultural expectations with school values, reducing conflicts (Eze & Obi, 2023). Additionally, integrating ethical education into leadership training programmes and promoting experiential learning through student organizations and leadership activities enhance skill acquisition (Ajayi & Okoro, 2022).

Given the above concerns, this study aims to empirically investigate the influence of ethical and value education on the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools. In Nigeria, the youth constitute a large demographic segment, making their empowerment through education a national priority (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Delta State, with its diverse cultural landscape, presents unique opportunities and challenges for implementing ethical and value education. While some studies have examined value education broadly within the State (Ifeanyi, 2023), few have specifically analyzed its influence on leadership development, leaving a critical gap. This study sought to address this gap by focusing explicitly on the Delta State secondary school context. The study also sought to evaluate the extent of ethical and value education implementation, its positive impacts on leadership skills acquisition, and the challenges that hinder its effectiveness. This investigation provided insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to strengthen ethical and value education frameworks that promote leadership skills development, thereby, contributing to sustainable youth empowerment and national progress.

Statement of the Problem

Leadership development among secondary school students is crucial for nurturing responsible citizens and future leaders who can drive sustainable development in Nigeria. Ethical and value education provides the moral foundation necessary for effective leadership by promoting integrity, empathy, and social responsibility. However, despite its recognized importance, evidence suggests that the implementation of ethical and value education in Delta State secondary schools is inconsistent and faces significant challenges. These challenges include inadequate curriculum integration, insufficient teacher training, lack of resources, and socio-cultural barriers that impede the effective transmission of ethical values necessary for leadership skill development.

Furthermore, there is a paucity of empirical data specifically examining how ethical and value education influences the development of students' leadership skills within the Delta State context. Most existing studies focus broadly on value education or leadership development separately without establishing a clear connection between ethical education programs and tangible leadership outcomes among students. This lack of focused empirical investigation limits the ability of educators and policymakers to design targeted interventions that could enhance leadership capacities through ethical and value education. This study sought to fill the identified gap by providing an empirical investigation into the direct influence of ethical and value education on the development of leadership skills among secondary school students in Delta State. By examining the extent of ethical and value education implementation, assessing its impact on leadership skills, and identifying implementation challenges, this research contributes valuable insights to inform more effective educational policies and practices aimed at fostering youth leadership development in the Delta State region.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of ethical and value education towards the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools.

Specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the extent to which ethical and value education was integrated into the secondary school curriculum for development of students' leadership skills in Delta State.
2. Ascertain the extent of the influence of ethical and value education on the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools.
3. Identify the challenges hindering the effective implementation of ethical and value education affecting the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent is ethical and value education integrated into the secondary school curriculum for development of students' leadership skills in Delta State?
2. To what extent does ethical and value education influence the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools?
3. What are the main challenges hindering the effective implementation of ethical and value education affecting the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools?

Methods

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to empirically investigate the influence of ethical and value education on the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools. The survey design is appropriate because it allows for the collection of data from a large sample to describe existing conditions and examine relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population of the study comprised all the teachers in the public all secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. According to the Delta State Post Primary Education Board (PPEB, 2024), there are approximately 488 public secondary schools with an estimated teachers' population of 11,479. Justification for choosing only teachers is because the study concerns them and their students whom they have one-on-one instructional contact in the classroom. Since teachers implement education policies at the classroom level, they are in better position to describe the influence of ethical and value education on the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 574 teachers and 244 secondary schools to ensure representation across different schools and educational zones within Delta State. The primary instrument for data collection was a researcher structured questionnaire developed based on the research purpose, containing 31 items and titled: "Influence of Ethical and Value Education towards Development of Students' Leadership Skills Questionnaire (IEVEDSLSQ)". The response items in the questionnaire arranged into three sections was measured using a 4-point scale ranging from Very High Extent (VHE) or Influence (VHI) – 4 points, High Extent (HE) or Influence (HI) – 3 points, Low Extent (LE) or Influence (LI) – 2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE) or Influence (VLI) – 1 point, used to answer only research question 1 and 2 respectively. Response items in the questionnaire measured using a 4-point scale such as: Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) – 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 point, was used to answer only research question 3. The questionnaire was subjected to both face and content validation by three experts in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations from the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. A pilot study was conducted in three secondary schools in Delta State outside the sampled area to test reliability.

The score obtained after the pilot test was calculated using the Cronbach's Alpha method to ensure internal consistency of the questionnaire which yielded coefficient values of 0.80, 0.83 and 0.89 for the three clusters respectively; and which were summed up to give an overall acceptable threshold reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating a high level of internal consistency (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Approval was sought from the school authorities, that is, principals before data collection. Three trained

research assistants were used to distribute and collect copies of the questionnaire to the sampled teachers in the selected schools, ensuring informed consent from participants and confidentiality of their responses. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents (that is, teachers) in person and with the help of some research assistants who were teachers from the sampled secondary schools. These research assistants who had direct contact with their colleagues were briefed about the essence of the study, which gave room to them to speak with and convince their colleagues to fill the questionnaire. Most of the respondents filled the questionnaire immediately on the spot; while an interval of two working days was given to those who could not fill the questionnaire on the spot. However, it took a period of three weeks to distribute and collect all the 574 questionnaires for data analysis, which accounted for a 100% rate of return. Data were analyzed using descriptive **statistics** (frequencies, mean statistics and standard deviation statistics) to answer research questions about the extent of integrated, influence on development of students' leadership skills and challenges of ethical and value education implementation. However, any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered as high extent, high influence or agree; while any item below 2.50 was considered as low extent, low influence or disagree. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent is ethical and value education integrated into the secondary school curriculum for development of students' leadership skills in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean Scores and SD of Teachers concerning the Extent to which Ethical and Value Education is Integrated into the Secondary School Curriculum for Development of Students' Leadership Skills in Delta State

N = 574 Secondary School Teachers

S/ N	Please determine the extent to which ethical and value education have been integrated into the secondary school curriculum in subject areas of:	VH E	HE	LE	VL E	X	SD	Decision
1.	Social studies taught specifically at the junior secondary school level with appropriate educational resources for development of students' leadership skills	89	100	201	184	2.16	1.04	Low Extent
2.	Christian Religious Studies (CRS) including Islamic Religious Studies (IRS) using appropriate educational resources for enhancement of students' leadership skills	93	96	209	176	2.18	1.04	Low Extent
3.	Government taught at the senior secondary school level employing sufficient instructional resources for students' acquisition of salient leadership skills	58	125	187	204	2.06	0.99	Low Extent
4.	Civic/citizenship education taught both at the junior and senior secondary school levels utilizing appropriate educational resources for development of students' leadership skills	85	119	156	214	2.13	1.07	Low Extent
5.	Security education taught at the junior secondary school level mobilizing appropriate resources for improvement of students' leadership skills	64	75	280	155	2.08	0.92	Low Extent
6.	Business studies taught both at the junior and senior secondary school levels employing adequate tools for enhancement of students'	82	111	194	187	2.15	1.03	Low



	leadership skills							Extent
7.	Guidance and counselling including life skills programmes necessary for development of students' leadership skills	68	132	207	167	2.18	0.98	Low Extent
8.	Hidden curriculum such as the co-curricular activities provided through clubs and other assemblies for practical exposures in order to reinforce important leadership skills on students	104	66	223	181	2.16	1.06	Low Extent
9.	All other pre-vocational studies, science and technology, cultural and creative arts subject areas taught in the secondary schools using adequate instructional resources important for development of students' leadership skills	59	109	177	229	2.00	1.00	Low Extent
Overall Mean Score & SD =								Low Extent
								2.12 1.02 Extent

Analysis of data in Table 1 revealed that none of the items were rated above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the secondary school teachers to show that they agreed with all the statements. All the items from 1 -9 were rated below the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the teachers to show that they disagreed with all of the statements. The grand mean of 2.12 and standard deviation (SD) of 1.02 indicates closeness in the responses of the teachers showcasing that extent to which ethical and value education is integrated into the secondary school curriculum for development of students' leadership skills in Delta State was to a low extent. From this result, it is indicated that because of the low extent of integration of ethical and value education into the secondary school curriculum, this affected the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does ethical and value education influence the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools?

Table 2: Mean Scores and SD of Teachers concerning the Extent to which Ethical and Value Education Influence the Development of Students' Leadership Skills in Delta State

N = 574 Secondary School Teachers

S/ N	Please determine the extent to which ethical and value education influence the development of students' leadership skills. Extent of the influence of ethical and value education towards:	VH I	HI	LI	VL I	X	SD	Decision
10	improving students' ability to make morally and fair decisions	182	221	93	78	2.88	1.00	High Influence
11	enhancing students' use of open communication including teamwork skills essential for effective leadership	211	173	73	117	2.83	1.13	High Influence
12	assisting students to acquire values in order to demonstrate greater responsibility in school activities	225	193	69	87	2.97	1.06	High Influence
13	encouraging students to take initiative in leadership roles	184	217	91	82	2.88	1.02	High Influence
14	helping students' to become competent in resolving conflicts or disputes peacefully among classmates, colleagues, or peers	234	180	81	79	2.99	1.05	High



								Influence
15	enabling students to acquire leadership skills of responsibility, service to others, and teamwork developed through ethical education which prepare students for present and future community involvement, community-based leadership including civic engagement	188	230	94	62	2.95	0.96	High Influence
16	encouraging students to view leadership as service-oriented and value-driven , shifting perceptions from power to responsibility	202	200	102	70	2.93	1.01	High Influence
17	encouraging elected or appointed as senior prefects, class captains, or heads of clubs to acquire certain skills such as accountability, equity, justice, equality, fairness and effective decision making, in order to lead by example, resolve conflicts peacefully, and respect others' opinions, which are hallmarks of effective leadership	167	241	84	82	2.86	0.99	High Influence
18	helping students to acquire essential leadership attributes such as ethical decision-making, empathy, and moral judgment	235	193	58	88	3.00	1.06	High Influence
19	promoting students participation in assemblies by improving their public speaking, confidence, and value reinforcement , which are core leadership communication skills	189	233	86	66	2.95	0.97	High Influence
20	encouraging role modelling behaviour, including motivation to lead ethically which attracts integrity-based rewards	247	179	54	94	3.01	1.09	High Influence
Overall Mean Score & SD =							2.93 1.03	High Influence

Analysis of data in Table 2 revealed that all the items from 10-20 were rated above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the secondary school teachers to show that they agreed with all the statements. None of the items were rated below the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the teachers to show that they disagreed with any of the statements. The grand mean of 2.93 and standard deviation (SD) of 1.03 indicates closeness in the responses of the teachers showcasing that ethical and value education had high positive influence on the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools. Hence, effective teaching and exposure to ethical and value education, highly influenced the development of students' leadership skills.

Research Question 3: What are the main challenges hindering the effective implementation of ethical and value education affecting the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools?



Table 3: Mean Scores and SD of Teachers concerning the Main Challenges Hindering Effective Implementation of Ethical and Value Education affecting the Development of Students' Leadership Skills in Delta State Secondary Schools

N = 574 Secondary School Teachers

S/ N	Please determine the challenges hindering the effective implementation of ethical and value education affecting the development of students' leadership skills	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
21	Lack of trained teachers affects the quality of teaching of ethical and value education in school	209	186	94	85	2.90	1.05	Agree
22	Inadequate teaching materials or educational resources which limits effective implementation of ethical and value education delivery	166	251	59	98	2.84	1.03	Agree
23	Socio-cultural or religious beliefs sometimes conflict with the universal ethical and value principles taught in school	221	204	50	99	2.95	1.08	Agree
24	Insufficient time allocated in the school timetable hinders effective implementation of ethical and value education implementation	261	177	88	48	3.13	0.96	Agree
25	Students show little interest or motivation in ethical and value education lessons making its implementation difficult	87	99	212	176	2.17	1.03	Disagree
26	Little time is allocated in the over-loaded Nigerian curriculum to practical ethics and value-based activities that nurture leadership skills such as responsibility, empathy, and critical thinking	201	210	73	90	2.91	1.05	Agree
27	Insufficient initial teacher education in ethical and value education for students' leadership development	147	301	76	50	2.95	0.86	Agree
28	Lack of parental involvement in reinforcing teaching in ethical and value education thereby making its implementation difficult	212	224	87	51	3.04	0.94	Agree
29	Weak monitoring and evaluation system on assessment of how effectively ethical and value education is being taught to significantly impact on students skills acquisition likewise leadership behaviour	214	229	49	82	3.00	1.01	Agree
30	Students may receive conflicting messages based on the corruption, dishonesty, injustices and moral decline in broader society which undermines	181	207	97	89	2.84	1.04	Agree

what is taught in schools, therefore, making it harder to internalize ethical values and apply them in leadership roles

31	Schools lack clear policies or support structures for promoting ethical education or enforcing value-oriented programmes	228	197	66	83	2.99	1.04	Agree
Overall Mean Score & SD =						2.89	1.04	Agree

Analysis of data in Table 3 revealed that all the items from 21–24 and 26–31 were rated above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the secondary school teachers to show that they agreed with all the statements. Only item 25 were rated below the acceptable mean score of 2.50 by the teachers to show that they disagreed with this statement. The grand mean of 2.89 and standard deviation (SD) of 1.04 indicates closeness in the responses of the teachers showcasing that these obstacles were the main challenges hindering the effective implementation of ethical and value education, therefore, affecting the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools. Moreover, the result indicated that students show of little interest or motivation in ethical and value education lessons did not make its implementation difficult.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of this study generally revealed that although that ethical and value education had high positive influence on the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools; its integration into the curriculum was to a low extent due to several challenges. It was further discovered through one of the findings of this study that extent to which ethical and value education was integrated into the secondary school curriculum for development of students' leadership skills in Delta State was to a low extent. This finding indicated that because of the low extent of integration of ethical and value education into the secondary school curriculum, this affected the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State. This included that the extent of integration of ethical and value education into the secondary school curriculum in subject areas like Social studies taught specifically at the junior secondary school level, Christian Religious Studies (CRS) including Islamic Religious Studies (IRS), Government taught at the senior secondary school level, Civic/citizenship education taught both at the junior and senior secondary school levels, Security education taught at the junior secondary school level, Business studies taught both at the junior and senior secondary school levels, Guidance and counselling including life skills programmes, Hidden curriculum such as the co-curricular activities provided through clubs and other assemblies for practical exposures, including all other pre-vocational studies, science and technology, cultural and creative arts subject areas taught in the secondary schools; mobilizing appropriate educational and instructional resources, for reinforcement and development of students' leadership skills, were all to a low extent. This finding corroborates and connects with the findings of Nwosu and Chukwu (2022) study which confirmed that lack of clear policy frameworks and inconsistent curriculum integration weakens the delivery of ethical and value education in schools. The finding of this study also supports the finding of Ifeanyi (2023) study which indicated that students' leadership development is often inconsistent and lacks systematic reinforcement through value education programmes in schools.

It was discovered through this finding that ethical and value education had high positive influence on the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools. Hence, effective teaching and exposure to ethical and value education, highly influenced the development of students' leadership skills. This includes that the extent of the influence of ethical and value education on several aspects of development of secondary school students' leadership skills in: improving students' ability to make morally and fair decisions, enhancing students' use of open communication including teamwork skills essential for effective leadership, assisting students to acquire values in order



to demonstrate greater responsibility in school activities, encouraging students to take initiative in leadership roles, helping students' to become competent in resolving conflicts or disputes peacefully among classmates, colleagues, or peers, enabling students to acquire leadership skills of responsibility, service to others, and teamwork developed through ethical education which prepare students for present and future community involvement, community-based leadership including civic engagement, encouraging students to view leadership as service-oriented and value-driven, shifting perceptions from power to responsibility, encouraging elected or appointed as senior prefects, class captains, or heads of clubs to acquire certain skills such as accountability, equity, justice, equality, fairness and effective decision making, in order to lead by example, resolve conflicts peacefully, and respect others' opinions, which are hallmarks of effective leadership, helping students to acquire essential leadership attributes such as ethical decision-making, empathy, and moral judgment, promoting students participation in assemblies by improving their public speaking, confidence, and value reinforcement, which are core leadership communication skills, and in encouraging role modelling behaviour, including motivation to lead ethically which attracts integrity-based rewards; were all to a high influence. The above findings indicated that ethical and value education in Delta State secondary schools positively influenced the development of students' leadership skills. This aligns with the findings Ugwoke, Eze and Obasi (2023) study, which indicated that moral education fosters virtues crucial for effective leadership, such as, integrity and social responsibility. Ethical education also instills the moral virtues necessary for trustworthy and effective leadership. The significant high influence of ethical including value education on leadership skills development supports Khan's (2022) study assertion that value education cultivates interpersonal skills essential for effective leadership. It cultivates respect for diversity, empathy, and teamwork - key traits of successful leaders. The finding of Ajayi and Okoro (2022) study confirmed that leadership development in schools improves self-confidence, critical thinking, and social responsibility among students. Hence, integrating ethical education into leadership training programmes and promoting experiential learning through student organizations and leadership activities enhance skill acquisition (Ajayi & Okoro, 2022). Thus, with effective integration and implementation of ethical and value education in secondary schools, this will enhance the development of students' leadership skills.

It was further revealed through the finding of this study that several obstacles were the main challenges hindering the effective implementation of ethical and value education affecting the development of students' leadership skills in Delta State secondary schools. Moreover, it was also indicated through this finding that students show of little interest or motivation in ethical and value education lessons did not make its implementation difficult. However, the main challenges hindering the effective implementation of ethical and value education includes lack of trained teachers affects the quality of teaching of ethical and value education in schools, inadequate teaching materials or educational resources which limits effective implementation of ethical and value education delivery, socio-cultural or religious beliefs sometimes conflict with the universal ethical and value principles taught in schools, insufficient time allocated in the school timetable hindering effective implementation of ethical and value education implementation, little time was allocated in the over-loaded Nigerian curriculum to practical ethics and value-based activities that nurture leadership skills such as responsibility, empathy, and critical thinking, insufficient initial teacher education in ethical and value education for students' leadership development, lack of parental involvement in reinforcing teaching in ethical and value education, thereby, making its implementation difficult, weak monitoring and evaluation system on assessment of how effectively ethical and value education is being taught to significantly impact on students skills acquisition likewise, leadership behaviour, students may receive conflicting messages based on the corruption, dishonesty, injustices and moral decline in broader society which undermines what is taught in schools, therefore, making it harder to internalize ethical values and apply them in leadership roles, and schools lacked clear policies or support structures for promoting ethical education or enforcing value-oriented programmes. This finding corroborates and concurs with most empirical studies identified in the study. However, challenges such as insufficient teacher training and lack of instructional materials echoed in the findings of Ogunyemi and Adeyemi



(2021) study which indicated that inadequate teacher preparedness undermined the quality of moral education. Socio-cultural conflicts as a barrier reflects the finding of Eze and Obi's (2023) study which confirmed that cultural differences can impede the acceptance of school-taught values. The moderate community support suggests the need for stronger collaboration between schools and stakeholders, which is consistent with the findings of Ajayi and Okoro (2022) study indicating the need for inclusive approaches involving parents and community members to reinforce ethical values. Furthermore, the limited timetable allocation and student motivation issues indicated systemic challenges that require policy attention. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of comprehensive ethical and value education programmes supported by effective implementation in schools using various ethical and value-oriented leadership training programmes, swift integration into the curriculum, adequate resources and teacher capacity building to effectively develop leadership skills among secondary school students in Delta State.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that ethical and value education significantly influenced the development of students' leadership skills in secondary schools in Delta State. They both have a high positive influence on development of students' leadership skills. The findings revealed that when ethical principles and core values are effectively integrated into the curriculum and reinforced through school activities, students are more likely to develop critical leadership qualities and skills such as use of open communication and teamwork, fairness, justice, empathy, high sense of responsibility, moral decision-making, tolerance, punctuality and conflict resolution, among others. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited instructional resources, socio-cultural conflicts, and insufficient time allocation, among others, hinder the full potentials and implementation of ethical and value education programmes in the secondary schools. Addressing these barriers or challenges is essential to ensure that ethical and value education can sustainably empower youth leadership skills development, contributing positively to national development.

Recommendations

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

1. The Delta State Post Primary Education Board (PPEB) should ensure effective high extent of integration ethical and value education into the secondary school curriculum in every subject area such as: Social studies, Christian Religious Studies (CRS) including Islamic Religious Studies (IRS), Government, Civic/citizenship education, Security education, Business studies, Guidance and counselling including life skills programmes, hidden curriculum such as the co-curricular activities and all other pre-vocational studies, science and technology, cultural and creative arts, for development of students' leadership skills in Delta State. This course should be matched up with regular capacity-building programmes and workshops to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively deliver ethical and value education in secondary schools.
2. Stakeholders in the secondary schools such as principals, teachers and students should be made to understand the significant and high influence of ethical and value education towards the development of students' leadership skills by organizing constant orientation programmes, providing adequate instructional materials and resources through sufficient funding, and extracurricular activity support, in order to encourage and promote its effective teaching, acceptability and implementation in Delta State schools.
3. There is need for the PPEB in partnerships with schools and parents, local leaders and community organizations to eliminate the main challenges such as: inadequate funding, lack of trained teachers, socio-cultural or religious beliefs sometimes conflict with the universal ethical and value principles taught in schools, insufficient time allocated in the school timetable, insufficient initial teacher education, lack of parental involvement, among others, hindering effective implementation of ethical and value education, therefore, affecting the development of students' leadership skills in Delta



State secondary schools. This will also aid to promote a shared commitment to ethical and value-based education and support students' leadership development beyond the classroom.

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