



INFLUENCE OF FAMILY ETHICAL EDUCATION ON SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC RIVERS STATE-OWNED UNIVERSITIES



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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of family ethical education on sustainable national development in Rivers State-owned universities, emphasizing two key constructs: family role modeling and direct moral instruction. Ethical education, primarily initiated within the family setting, plays a critical role in shaping students' moral framework and developing responsible citizens. The study adopted a descriptive survey design involving 548 respondents, including 148 parents who are lecturers from Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and 400 students in both institutions. A self-structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Family Ethical Education on Sustainable National Development in Rivers State University Questionnaire (IFEESNDQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was validated and achieved acceptable reliability indices. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and z-test statistics at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that both family role modeling and direct moral instruction significantly influence sustainable national development from the perspectives of parents and students. While both groups acknowledged the high extent of influence, the z-test indicated no significant difference in perceptions regarding role modeling. However, a significant difference was observed in the perception of the influence of direct moral instruction, suggesting variability in how moral values are transmitted and interpreted. The study recommended among others, that parents should consistently demonstrate ethical behavior in their daily actions by serving as role models where honesty, respect, empathy, and responsibility is the sure word.

Keywords: Family Ethical Education, Role Modelling, Direct Moral Instruction and Sustainable National Development.

Introduction

Education is a cornerstone for nurturing responsible and well cultured individuals who can advocate for the needs of the next generation to come through an amplified family education. According to Okafor (2021), the family is the first agent of socialization and the primary source of moral instruction. The family as the first settlement of a child is indispensable for developing student character and nurturing students moral reasoning. By the foregoing, students' behavior and sense of responsibility can be nurtured through family ethical education. Family ethical education is the process of teaching and instilling acceptable principles, morals and behaviors to children within the family tree. It is the kind of education that helps students' develop the capacity for critical thinking and rational decision-making. When ethical values such as integrity, fairness, and accountability are instilled at



home, students are better equipped to deal with the pressures and challenges they may face within the school and society (Omoniyi & Adefolalu, 2019). This training becomes effective in fostering moral development, responsibility, respect, and integrity among family members, particularly among individuals preparing for higher education which in- return prepare them to engage in meaningful dialogue among friends and teachers in any given situation. Thereby encouraging an atmosphere where students can reflect critically on their actions and understand the consequences of their choices. Based on this, students would uphold the principles of respect for oneself and for others through family role modelling and family direct moral instruction which serves as mechanisms for transmitting ethical values to students. Thereby availing them a better opportunity to comprehend the importance of respect, honesty, integrity, responsibility and empathy. These attributes are Inevitable to impact the ways students approach their academic pursuits and interact with their peers, teachers and society at large as well as achieving a meaningful sustainable national development. Sustainable national development refers to a development process that aims to improve the well-being of a country's population while prioritizing a child social-emotional development that fosters co-friendly practices where individuals feel valued by others. So that future generation can meet an environment free of rancor and conflict. Also, it involves the balanced integration of economic growth, environmental protection and social inclusion with the goal of achieving long-term prosperity and stability for all members of society. Particularly in societal cohesion, and the reduction of social vices such as corruption and crime considering the diverse ethnic groups in Rivers State. Rivers State is known to house multifaceted localities with people from different cultural background. However, the values imparted by these families can either strengthen or undermine the efforts made in schools towards promoting discipline, academic success, and national development. A study carried out by Ajayi (2022) shows that students from homes where ethical values are prioritized are more likely to contribute positively to the development of their communities thereby, helping them to stand as role models to their class mates and the younger generation to come. This would in turn help them to showcase higher levels of academic performance, good conduct, and a sense of responsibility in their communities (Makoju, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The family as the foundational place of every parents is meant to play a significant role in shaping the values, attitudes, and competencies of young people. It serves the primary domain where students acquire essential social norms, cultural values, and life skills that support responsible citizenship for sustainable national development. Despite the recognized importance of family ethical education in fostering responsible citizens for national growth, there appears to be a growing decline in moral values among students in these institutions. Mostly, these disparities emanate as a result of the way and manner students are raised which stem from differences in parental involvement in value acquisition, parental socio-economic status, to parental educational background. Based on this phenomenon, some students seem to exhibit behaviours such as poor civic responsibility, academic dishonesty, discrimination, insubordination, records falsification, cheating, bullying, stealing, lying, truancy, among others which may be accorded to weak parental upbringing. This attitude does not only impact the immediate school environment but also have long-term consequences on students' personal development as well as the broader society. Nonetheless, if these behaviours are not managed, it may lead to students' academic retrogression, low self-esteem, suspension, expulsion, dropout, bad reputable to the school, and a negative name tag. Consequently, making their behavior awful and pitiful to maintain a sustainable national development. Based on this backdrop, the study seeks to investigate influence of family ethical education for achieving Sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities.

Aim and Objectives of the study

The study aimed to investigate the influence of family ethical education on Sustainable national development in in Rivers State owned universities. Specifically, the study sought to;



1. determine the extent to which family role modeling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities
2. examine the extent to which family direct instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. To what extent does family role modeling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities?
2. To what extent does family direct instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significance difference between the mean rating of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family role modeling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities.
2. There is no significance difference between the mean rating of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which direct instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities.

Conceptual Clarifications

Families are the prime institutions where children learn to inculcate the habit of upholding values, and moral principles which shape their character and guide their actions throughout life. Through this form of education, ethics are considered most because ethical education plays a pivotal role in the moral development of children, shaping their values, attitudes, and behaviors as they grow into responsible citizens. Fredricks and Difronzo-Heitzer (2022) asserts that ethical education is a component that affects how we make decisions including those of an ethical nature. This form of education is fundamental for sustainable national development because it fosters the cultivation of values that are essential for the well-being and stability of societies. There are different measures of family ethical education however, this article focused on role modelling, discipline and consequences, and direct moral instruction as they serve as important mechanisms for transmitting ethical values to children. These practices not only guide the personal development of individuals but also contribute to the broader social fabric that influences sustainable development at the national level.

Family role modelling is coined out from Bandura social learning theory which uphold that children learn by observing and imitating the behaviors of adults, particularly by those they trust, such as their parents or caregivers. Role modelling is the act of demonstrating ethical behavior through one's actions and behavior. It is perhaps one of the most effective forms of ethical education within the family context in helping children navigate ethical dilemmas. Knowing that parents are the first set of people children meet that ought to be an exemplary life for children to imitate good virtues. According to Vogl and Freese (2020) when parents instill human traits that reflect positive social values for children to abide, Anggadwita (2019) affirms it helps creates a strong shield against extremist ideas or abnormal intellectual and behavioral trends. Contrarily, a study carried out by Mansfield (2023) to investigate parental influence on children's social behavior within the context of a doll house revealed that parents may depicted positive role models for the socialization of their children, while the majority of children tend to imitate and perceive their parents as positive role models, one child may not blindly imitate the parents and may exhibit behaviors that deviate from parental expectations.

Direct moral instruction also known as moral education is the clear inculcation and transmission of moral knowledge, values and principles through discussions. It requires teaching children about concepts of honesty, fairness, empathy, justice, and respect for others. Direct moral instruction can also be regarded as moral education that allows parents and guardians to provide moral support to their wards. A study by Killen and Smetana (2015) highlights that direct moral instruction can help students develop the ability to engage in moral reasoning and evaluate different perspectives on ethical issues. Using this approach, children would be taught by their parents on the significance of weighing the consequences of their actions and considering the perspectives of others. This reflective process enhances children's ability to think critically about ethical issues and make informed, morally sound decisions. Conversely, the study of Nucci (2017) opines that moral instruction, when delivered in an engaging and thoughtful manner, can have a profound impact on students' moral development. However, Walaa (2024) carried out an empirical study on the crucial role of families in instilling positive social values in children, which is essential for building a compassionate and committed future generation capable of giving back to society in various fields, particularly in human services, the study revealed that families of some children are not interested in explaining and encouraging social values among their children thereby leading to the increasing moral decadence. This no doubt may hamper in maintaining a sustainable national development.

Sustainable national development refers to a holistic approach that balances economic advancement, social equity, and environmental stewardship to ensure long-term societal well-being. A critical component in achieving this vision is the ethical foundation of citizens, which begins in the family setting. Family ethical education is the process through which parents and guardians impart moral values, norms, and behaviors to their children, shaping their attitudes toward societal responsibilities. Omoniyi and Adefolalu (2019) also assert that when children are exposed to sound ethical principles at home, they are more likely to make decisions that favor societal harmony and development. Ethical education within families helps reduce social ills like corruption, dishonesty, and civic irresponsibility, which often hinder national development. Killen and Smetana (2015) emphasize that moral reasoning developed through parental instruction enhances children's capacity to act ethically in complex societal contexts. Thus, when families prioritize ethical upbringing, they contribute directly to building a citizenry capable of fostering inclusive growth, social justice, and democratic governance. Ultimately, family ethical education forms the moral backbone required for any nation to achieve sustainable development.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design which involves collecting and analyzing data from selected few individuals who served as the representative in the study. The population is 1754 academic staff of both Ignatius Ajuru University (424) and Rivers State University (1330). The purposive sampling technique was used to draw 492 parents who are lecturers in Rivers State Owned universities and 2,125 year one and two students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample size was 548 respondents. Taro-Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 400 students and 30% was used to obtain 148 parents who are lecturers of both institutions.

A purposive sampling technique was used to elicit 148 parents who are lecturers in faculty of education Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University and a simple random sampling technique was used to draw 400 year 1 and year 2 students from both institutions. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled: "Influence of Family Ethical Education on Sustainable National Development in Rivers State University Questionnaire (IFEESNDQ)" with 16 questionnaire items based on the research questions. The instrument was structured in line with the modified rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE)= 4 points, High Extent (HE)=3 Points, Low Extent (LE)= 2 Points and Very Low Extent (VLE)= 1 point respectively. The face and content validity were test run by experts in Measurement and Evaluation

and the Department of Educational Management all in Rivers State University. Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to test the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded reliability indexes of 0.78, and 81 respectively. The researchers and two trained research assistants distributed copies of 548 questionnaires and retrieved on spot. Though the exercise was carried out within the period of two weeks. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions with a criterion mean of 2.50. Items between 3.50 and above were considered Very High Extent, 2.50 – 3.49 were considered High Extent, 1.50 – 2.49 were regarded as Low Extent while 0.50 – 1.49 were seen as Very Low Extent. The null hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. Analyzed data therefore with calculated z-value greater than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 was rejected and below was accepted.

Result

Research Question 1: To what extent does family role modeling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State Owned Universities

Table 1: Mean Responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family role modelling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State Owned Universities.

S/N	Item	Parents = 148			Students= 400		
			SD	Remarks		SD	Remarks
1	It serves as a catalyst for helping students uphold ethical principles.	3.22	0.90	HE	3.71	0.91	VHE
2	Providing academic support to students helps them stay focused and successful.	2.28	0.85	HE	2.91	0.78	HE
3	Encouraging strong family principles helps equip students to stay resolute to school values.	3.40	0.87	HE	3.40	0.77	HE
4	Modelling problem solving capabilities enables students to conquer academic adversity	2.75	1.05	HE	3.11	0.70	HE
5	Showing respect to people at home builds a platform for students to do same at school.	3.55	0.62	VHE	3.72	0.51	VHE
6	It makes them become teachable to function well in society.	3.47	0.64	HE	3.68	0.53	VHE
7	It enables students to make wise decision that contributes positively to national growth.	3.24	0.90	HE	3.25	0.83	HE
8	It helps students to be well informed about the consequences of their actions	3.57	0.61	VHE	3.74	0.51	VHE
9	It helps students to desist from undesirable behaviours.	2.82	0.89	HE	2.97	0.76	HE
Grand Mean		3.26	0.81	HE	3.22	0.70	HE

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 1 shows that responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family role modelling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities with a grand mean of 3.26 and 3.22 respectively. As appeared on the table, the grand mean is above the decision mean of 2.50. Hence, the result shows that parents who are lecturers and students are of the opinion that family role modelling influence sustainable national development in Rivers state owned universities a high extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent does family direct moral instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State Owned Universities

Table 2: Mean Responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family direct moral instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State Owned Universities.

Parents = 148			Students= 400				
S/N	Item		SD	Remarks	SD		Remarks
10	It helps in fostering collaborative spirit that helps student understand their role in making positive difference in the nation.	3.36	0.74	VHE	3.46	0.59	HE
11	It empowers students to become self-reliant and productive	3.33	0.73	HE	3.23	0.61	HE
12	It empowers students to resist negative external influences	2.55	0.79	VHE	2.55	0.67	VHE
13	It is a catalyst for reducing moral degradation	3.57	0.58	VLE	3.75	0.51	VHE
14	It paves way for students to make sound judgements to real life situation when confronted	3.48	0.64	HE	3.73	0.53	VHE
15	It serves as a catalyst for preparing student to be responsible individuals	3.49	0.60	HE	3.66	0.57	VHE
16	It exposes students to develop cores values that guides their behavior in life	3.38	0.78	HE	3.37	1.18	HE
Grand Mean		3.31	0.69	HE	3.12	0.80	HE

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 2 shows that responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent family direct moral instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities with a grand mean of 3.31 and 3.12 respectively. As appeared on the table, the grand mean is above the decision mean of 2.50. Hence, the result shows that parents who are lecturers and students are of the opinion that family direct moral instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers state owned universities a high extent.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family role modelling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities.

Table 3: z-test analysis of difference between the mean responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family role modelling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities.

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	SL	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Parents	148	3.26	0.81	446	0.05	0.53	± 1.96	Not Significant
Students	400	3.22	0.70					

Table 3 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family role modelling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities. The z-calculated value was 0.53 while the z-critical value of ± 1.96 using 446 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-calculated value was less than the z-critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted which indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of lecturer's and students on the extent to which family role modelling influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of lecturers and students on the extent to which family direct moral instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities

Table 4: z-test analysis of difference between the mean responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family direct moral instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities.

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	SL	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Parents	148	3.31	0.69	546	0.05	2.74	± 1.96	Significant
Students	400	3.12	0.80					

Table 4 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean responses of parents who are lecturers and students on the extent to which family direct moral instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities. The z-calculated value was -2.74 while the z-critical value of ± 1.96 using 546 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-calculated value was greater than the z-critical value, the null hypothesis was not accepted which indicated that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of parents who are lecturer's and students on the extent to which family direct moral instruction influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities.

Discussion of Findings

The result revealed that to a high extent, both parents who are lecturers and students are of the opinion that family role modelling influences sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities. This is in consonance with the view of Ajayi (2022) who stated that students from homes where ethical values are prioritized are more likely to contribute positively to the development of their communities. Findings of the study also showed that to a high extent that both parents who are lecturers and student are of the view that family direct moral instruction influences sustainable national development. This is in agreement with Killen and Smetana (2015) study who highlighted that direct moral instruction can help students develop the ability to engage in moral reasoning and evaluate different perspectives on ethical issues.

The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean response of parents who are lecturers and students on the influence family role modelling on sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities. The finding is in agreement with Mansfield (2023) who revealed that while the majority of children tend to imitate and perceive their parents as positive role models, one child may not blindly imitate the parents and may exhibit behaviors that deviate from parental expectations.

The findings also revealed that there is a significant difference between in the mean response of parents who are lecturers and students on the influence family direct moral instruction on sustainable national development in Rivers State owned universities. The finding is in agreement with Walaa (2024) who noted that the families of some students are not interested in explaining and encouraging social values among their children thereby leading to the increasing moral decadence. This suggests that while observational learning is widely accepted, variations may exist in how explicit moral teachings are received and valued.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that to a high extent family ethical education influence sustainable national development in Rivers State owned Universities. This implies that the role of family ethical education in promoting sustainable national development within the context of Rivers State-owned universities is pivotal. Hence, the study reaffirms that instilling ethical values through family systems is essential for achieving long-term societal stability and growth. It has been revealed that family structures, particularly through role modeling and direct moral instruction, significantly influence students' attitudes, decision-making, and academic behavior. The ability of students to exhibit socially responsible behaviors, navigate academic challenges in an ethical manner, and contribute positively to societal development is largely rooted in the foundational values acquired at home. This confirms that the family remains the first and most influential environment where moral and ethical values are imparted to enable students adopt positive behaviors observed from their parents and caregivers. This continuous exposure to morally upright conduct help students internalizes values such as integrity, honesty, respect, and accountability.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Parents should consistently demonstrate ethical behavior in their daily actions by serving as role models where honesty, respect, empathy, and responsibility is the sure word. This would help to provide a live template for children to emulate. This consistent modeling not only reinforces expected conduct but also helps children internalize these values, which they carry into school and broader society.
2. Parents should regularly engage their children in conversations about moral values and ethical decision-making. This includes discussing real-life scenarios that encourage students to think critically about right and wrong, the consequences of actions, and the importance of integrity



and fairness. Such intentional guidance enhances children's moral reasoning skills and strengthens their ability to make sound ethical decisions independently.

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