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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out whether religious animated films affect the overall moral development of the child if they are exposed to the animated genre repeatedly over a particular period. The 21st-century child continues to suffer from moral dislocation, premised on the society on which s(h)e has found himself. Sexual misconduct, Exam malpractice, bullying, Lies, stealing, pride, and narcissism to mention but a few are poor morals found among children in today's world. A study that primarily considers how religious animated films could correct multiple elements of the morally dislocated child is indeed necessary. We used selected episodes from the religious Animated film series, Become Jehovah's Friend, produced by the Jehovah's Witnesses Organization available on the website www.jw.org as a case study. Twenty (20) sample groups were randomly selected for the study. However, fifteen (15) groups participated. Fifty-nine (59) children participated in the 15 sample groups. The study was conducted in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria. Online links to the animated clips were sent to each sample group. Parents were asked to download and show the animated clips repeatedly to their children for two weeks (14 days). At the end of the exercise, Parents confirmed that children between the ages of Five (5) and fourteen (14) years old, participated. The findings hold some promise. Children learned that, stealing and telling lies are wrong and that forgiveness and obedience is a virtue. Religious Animated films are positively associated with overall measures of moral achievement and with potentially long-lasting effects. Become Jehovah's Friend Animated film series can inculcate the right moral impressions that can relocate lost morality that would be long-lasting in the life of the child.

Keywords: Animated Film, Become Jehovah's Friend, Sapele, The Child, Religion, Morality

Introduction

In 2015, Blessing Adjeketa carried out research on *Animation Films and Child Development in Nigeria*¹. In the interviews session of the research, he was thrilled to hear parents and children say they have seen animated characters that speak Youruba, Isoko, Ibo, and the Urhrobo languages (Some Nigerian

¹The research is my M.A theses submitted to the department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka



Languages among the over 250 local languages in Nigeria). And that all these sets of animated films are religious animations produced by Jehovah's Witnesses. Parents commended the effort of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization for producing animated films in different Nigerian languages. One of the parents said: "Doing a voice-over in the language of the receiving culture even though the characters were not black made my kids better comprehend the theme of the films. The Jehovah's Witnesses idea must be commended"². The favourable commendations that the animated films received in the 2015 research prompted this current study. In this study, we seek to find out if religious animated films produced by the Jehovah's Witnesses are capable of impacting on child moral development.

The 21st century is witnessing a deterioration in social, educational, and especially moral values among the younger generation of ages between 3 and 16 years. These deteriorations must not be overlooked because it has ruinous implications not only for the child but for the entire nation. For better moral development to take place, a child needs to be taught to start making the distinction between the good and the bad at an early age. Because of the busy schedule of many parents in the 21st century, the primary responsibility of imparting moral discipline to children now rests on school teachers and the media. I³ can remember many years ago when I was in primary school. Parents sometimes come to the schools to report children's misconduct. Parents at the time were of the view that the punishment from the teachers would have more effect on the children.

A few years later as an elementary school teacher, teaching social studies, at the Abazere Primary School, Ugbukurusu Community, Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria, a mother of one of my pupils came to the school and asked me to discipline his son⁴ for being disobedient and fighting his peer without a real reason to do so. When I asked Christian why he was disobedient and indulged in fighting, his response was: "Uncle, I want to be like Bruce Lee."⁵ No doubt, my pupil, Christian, has been watching Martial arts films at home. I disciplined Christian with some strokes of the cane in the presence of his mother and other pupils for being disobedient and also warned him to stop fighting with his peers. Thereafter, I told Christian's mother that teachers do not teach children fighting skills, nor do we encourage them to fight, but, we try as much as possible to teach them to be obedient to their elders. I told her to go back home and monitor the media content her son feeds on.

Teachers, in elementary schools, primary and post-primary tend to focus more on formal education⁶. They lag in teaching moral values to children⁷. The reason

²Adjeketa, B (2015). *Animation Films and Child Development in Nigeria; A Study of Sapele, Delta State*. M.A Dissertation, Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University

³The personal experiences in this paper were those of the first author, Blessing Adjeketa

⁴Her son's name is Christian. And he is 9 years' old

⁵Bruce Lee was an American born film actor who was known for martial arts. He is one of those who popularize martial art movies in the 1970s.

⁶By formal education, we mean learning to read, write, draw, and understand basic educational concepts

⁷Geoffrey, C, et al. (ND) Social Factors For Moral Decadence In Schools: The Case Of Morogoro Municipality Tanzania.

for this is that classes are overcrowded and teachers cannot give individual attention to students and thereby cannot teach morality to students⁸. What is important to many primary and secondary academic institutions is good performance in academic subjects. Acquiring better moral behaviour is secondary to school owners and teachers. Their focus is on training students in subjects that will make them pass national examinations and make the school more famous by having high performance compared to other schools⁹. Many children lag behind proper parental guidance especially as it relates to association and morality. The urgent need to provide extra materials for caregivers especially parents, to assist children to develop positive morality is evident in the lifestyle of some parents like Christian's mother (mentioned before), who because of lack of parental guidance, is unaware that her son loves violent films.

Many parents like Christian's mother are mostly absent due to work and family responsibilities, leaving children (like Christian) to often turn to their peer groups for social help and frequently switch to film for entertainment and recreation¹⁰. While these are not bad, the problem with the media, particularly, film and television images is that the deviances of society are made much closer and easily accessible. Safety concerns are being raised in media-heavy communities; issues such as cyberbullying, young children being exposed to violence, and sexually explicit material, as well as extreme or inappropriate behaviours, are being highlighted¹¹. For younger children, the longing for association is often stronger than the urge to do the right thing. The need to direct them to make friends with the right associates and learn to do the right things is a crucial responsibility for caregivers, especially parents.

Parents are in the best position to convey and direct instructions on norms, customs/traditions, and the right ways of thinking. Which means that they are primarily responsible for developing and improving the child's morality. However, while parents teach children at home, the school teacher also helps to improve what the child has learned at home. While growing up in the early 1990s, my parent taught me about what is 'rights and what is wrong'. Among many morals, I remember that respecting the rights of others is a virtue. The importance of respect for elders and the need, to be honest, was emphasised. When I got to the school, my teachers taught us how to read, write and explain basic educational concepts in various subjects. However, when a student lies or steals, for example, he is corrected with some strokes of the Cain and warned not to repeat the act the next time. This principle was what I applied in the case of my pupil, Christian. Besides physical discipline which some African parents and caregivers use in moral correction, animated films could serve as a better medium of moral education. This paper explores this possibility.

<https://Ssrn.Com/Abstract=3915075>

⁸Anam J, Rukhsana, K and Nashi, K. (2020). Effect of School System and Gender on Moral Values and Forgiveness in Pakistani School

Children. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Science* Volume 2, Issue 4 pp13-24

⁹Ibd7

¹⁰Ndakwa, D. (2013). A simplified guide: The making of a new student. Nairobi: Pavement Publishers.

¹¹Ibd2

Literature Review

Morality

Every society has essential rules/ethics which are followed by all. These guidelines are considered good, right, and acceptable, hence, members of society are bound by them. Young children too, are not exempted from upholding moral ethics. When societal ethics are grossly disregarded even by children, moral decadence is said to be present and society is said to be morally dislocated. In all societies, people knowingly and unknowingly disregard important moral values. They put on behaviours that show poor morality. Such ones are promoting moral dislocation in society.¹² Moral dislocation occurs at different levels. Political officeholders are accused of looting public funds. In high schools, school teachers and university lecturers are seldom caught in the financial exploitation of students, sexual assault, and selling of 'degrees. Students also engage in sexual misconduct, substance abuse, improper clothing, cultism etc. Telling lies, disobedience, and stealing are also some improper conduct found among children in elementary schools. No matter who is involved and the level of involvement, poor and unacceptable conduct is moral dislocation¹³

The issue of morality and moral dislocation in many societies has become very controversial. Modern society seems not to know the disparity between what is morally right and wrong.¹⁴Ugwu a scholar on child morality described morality as "the astuteness of one's conduct and behaviour which enhances good conduct and fair relationship".¹⁵ It is believed that morality socially upholds principles, concepts, ideals, actions, laws, and regulations that culture deems reasonable, correct, and appropriate and under which members of the community are tied.¹⁶ Children are not exempted from being members of the community. They occupy the major part of the population of a nation. For example, in India, children below 15 years constitute almost half of the country's population. In Nigeria, 43.2% of the population ¹⁷are children below 14 years. The population of Nigerian children (male) aged 0-14 years is 39,151,304/ and female 37,353,737¹⁸. Because of such a large population, the moral development of the child like every other adult is a must. A child's moral development involves learning to differentiate between right and wrong; use the information to make the right conclusion while facing complex choices; and

¹²Afuye A. (2015). Moral Decadence in Tertiary Institution. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 6(13), 234-245.

¹³Muraiwo, M.B. and Ugwnba, U.E (2014). *Moral Misconduct Among Students of Higher Institution in Nigeria: A Case of Elected Higher Institution, in Imo State, Nigeria*. Owerri: Oasis Publisher

¹⁴Ibd 7

¹⁵Ugwu, C.I. (2010) Folklore in Igbo Society: A Panacea to the Threat of Home Video. *African Journal of Local Societies Initiative*, pp. 45-51

¹⁶ Francis, B. Edwin, A. Francis, N and Bright, A.B (2020). Perceived Causes and Effects of Moral Decadence among Some Selected Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*. Vol 8 Issue 5 pp245-251

¹⁷Ibd16

¹⁸Ibd2

having the freedom and strength to act in line with the right choice (i.e., to “do the right thing”) regardless of whether it may be the suitable thing to do.¹⁹

Nigeria has three main religious groups, Christianity, the Muslim, and Traditional African religious practitioners. All three religions emphasize acceptable moral values. They embrace moral values with ultimate importance to endorse and control the deeds of an individual, a society, and mankind. Children at a very early age are attached to the religion of their parents. Nevertheless, the moral character of many in today’s Nigeria is questionable even with the high level of religiosity. The young ones are not exempted. Children are deviating from having a good character to behaviours grossly frowned upon. Stealing, Exam malpractice, lies, lack of love for neighbours, and lack of forgiveness, are on a speedy rise. Disrespect for older ones, unwillingness to help the elderly (goodwill), a me-first attitude, bullying, viewing and reading pornographic books/films, and other immoral practices, are also low moral standards found among children. These poor moral characters are found among children in elementary to tertiary schools. Thus, fundamental moral standards in society are falling, and unethical conduct/moral decadence appears to be on the rise despite the nation’s high level of religiosity.

Commendably, some parents and school authorities have tried to pay closer attention to children’s moral development, and some schools have introduced counseling units for children to be of good moral character²⁰. Well-meaning individuals, scholars, religious heads, organizations, and educational bodies have also put in greater effort to prepare materials that would help parents and instructors raise good children and ensure that good morals are revived among young ones in society. In Nigeria, religious studies (Bible Knowledge (BK), Christian Religious Studies (CRS), and Islamic Studies (IS) have been introduced and adopted as educational subjects and a means through which students learn and gain good morals. Many schools also have a formal routine of teaching moral lessons. Many government and public schools in Nigeria also hold morning assemblies in which moral lessons are delivered to children before other educational activities for each day begin²¹

Organizations and individuals are putting in real effort to help their children find a rich and satisfying moral life. Parents especially face a lot of challenges trying to inculcate the morals of good and bad into the hearts of their children. Many parents, guidance, and some school authorities have established some moral rules and regulation at home and school which serves as a guide to children. Yet, achieving the set goal seems difficult because of the continuous increase of moral breakdown in society. Religious institutions have also put in effort and device steps to combat poor mortality among children. One such religious organization is the Jehovah’s Witness.

¹⁹Ibd8

²⁰Ibd 16

²¹ Gill, R. &Jaswal, S. (2007). Impact of parent Education and Occupation on Children for Learning Values Through Teaching Values Programme. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 21(3), PP185-189.

The Jehovah's Witness Legacy on Child Morality

For many years, the Jehovah's Witness Organisation has put in real effort to publish Bible-based materials that would help build child mortality. The Bible-based materials teach young ones the right morals with the aid of bible stories. For example, in 1978, the Jehovah's Witness Organisation published a bible lesson book titled, "*My Book of Bible Story*". The stories contained in this book include *A Good Son and a Bad Son*, *Twins Who Were Different*, *Dinah Gets Into Trouble*, *Joseph's Brothers Hate Him*, and many more stories. The story of *A Good Son and A Bad Son*, for example, is that of two brothers, Cain and Abel. Abel loves God and his brother, but Cain is bad; he does not love his brother and so he killed Abel out of jealousy for him. Because Abel had gained praise from God and obtained favour. God is not pleased with persons like Cain so after Cain killed his brother, God punished him by sending him far away from the rest of his family.

The Bible lesson book also presented the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's brothers sold him to men who were on their way to Egypt to be made a slave. They sold him because they were jealous of him. Because Joseph remained a good person, he was taken from the prison to work in the house of Pharaoh the king of Egypt. The stories emphasise the need to be good and faithful to God and others just like Joseph and not to be jealous of the prosperity of others just like Joseph's brothers. Parents who received this book were thrilled to find that children can learn good moral values from the stories contained in the book.

In 2013, they published another bible lesson brochure titled *My Bible Lessons*. The publisher stated the purpose why the publication was produced and the target age. "what is the best gift you can give your children? There are many things you need, including your love, guidance, and protection. By far, though, the most precious gift you can give them is knowledge of Jehovah and the truth found in his word, the bible (John 17:3)²²Such knowledge can help your children grow to love Jehovah and serve him wholeheartedly, even from a tender age". The publisher also knows that whoever does not love his neighbour cannot claim to love God. 1 John 4:8 says, whoever does not love has not come to know God, because God is love. They also believe Jesus' word in Matthew 22: 37-40 which says "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second like it is this: you must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments, the whole law hangs, and the prophets. The publications were therefore designed to help young ones love God and their peers. The publisher expresses confidence that the publication will help to build the morality of little ones. It says "Many parents have found that young children respond best to brief lessons and activities. We are delighted, therefore, to provide this publication, *My Bible Lessons*. Each lesson is designed to teach in a simple manner. The artworks and accompanying text have been prepared especially for children aged three and under...we feel sure

²² Watch Tower (2013). *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. Watch Tower and Tract Society of New York; U.S.A Wallkill.

that this publication will prove helpful as you teach your children bible truth from infancy”²³.

Printed in 2013, the Jehovah’s Witness also publishes another material, *Teach Your Children*. This publication has lessons on obedience, bravery, the importance of helping people, doing the right thing, and others. Some of the lessons are, that *David was not Afraid, Josiah had Good Friends, Jesus Obeyed, and Timothy Wanted to Help People*. All the publications designed for children are aimed at parents to use to teach them. The Jehovah’s Witness believes “(Parent) must inculcate them (morality) in your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:7). Therefore, parents have the responsibility to inculcate bible lessons which are of course of good moral values into the heart of their children. From 1978 to this time, the Jehovah’s Witness Organization published other content in printed books and online on their www.jw.org website that could help improve the moral lives of little ones. The Jehovah’s Witness Organisation deeply appreciates hardworking parents and all that they are doing to try to help their children find a reach satisfying life. They also recognise that Although printed materials with colourful pictures can appeal to little ones and help reduce the rate of drowning morality, it is a fact that animation videos capture the interest of little ones and can be a powerful teaching tool. Children can learn so much in their form of years. Lessons they learn from a very young age can create impressions that last for a lifetime. It is therefore against this backdrop in 2012, the Jehovah’s Witness Organisation came up with a new method to inculcate the right morals in children. It is an animated film series titled, *Become Jehovah’s Friend*. This present study examined some of the moral lessons contained in the *Become Jehovah’s Friends* Animated series.

Theoretical Foundation

This study hinges on the cumulation theory of media effect. The cumulation effect represents one of the core ideas of communication research²⁴ it describes the process during which numerous effects accumulate over time as individuals use a certain medium or specific media contents repeatedly²⁵. Unlike the effects of a single stimuli which typically persist only in the short term, cumulative effects of media messages have long-term effects. The theory posits that cumulative exposure to a specific media content could reshape an individual’s perceptions of ideas. The central premise is that constant and repeated media messages are likely to trigger cumulative effects²⁶. The animated film genre like other communication media has immense power in shaping opinion, attitudes, and behaviour. Researchers continue to find out the wide, overarching effects

²³Ibid 22

²⁴ Neuman, W. R., & Guggenheim, L. (2011). The evolution of media effects theory: A six-stage model of cumulative research. *Communication theory*, 21(2), 169–196.

²⁵Thomas Koch, Florian Arendt (2017). Media Effects: Cumulation and Duration. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*.

John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0217>

²⁶Ibid 25

that repeated exposure to this emerging media could have²⁷ on children, especially in developing societies

Research Method

The research population for this study is 20 sample groups. The sample group is made up of 56 children between the ages of five years and fourteen years of age. We employed the sociological research method and used the simple random technique to select sample groups for the study. The sample groups were randomly selected within Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria. Each family formed a sample group for the study. After seeking permission from each family head, we sent an online link from the www.jw.org website to each group. We employed the heads of each group (family heads) to download any episode of their choice. They were asked to show the clips repeatedly to their children for two weeks (14 days). In other, for me to get a result, we requested group heads to communicate with me either through calls, text messages, or email after two weeks. For those we had physical contact with, after two weeks, we initiated a discussion. Selected responses from the children and parents in the groups were presented and analysed. We aimed to see if this brand of religious animated films (*Become Jehovah's Friend*) lessons could implant the right morals in children after repeated viewership. The secondary data used were collected from published materials and reports. These materials formed part of the literature review.

Research question

Can religious animated films serve as a means of moral education?

Data Presentation

Table showing: *Sample groups, number of participants, lessons downloaded, lessons shown, frequency each lesson is shown, parental guidance, lessons learned, and effect on children*

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| List/number of Sample groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| No. of participants in each group | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| No. of Lessons downloaded | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |

²⁷Porismita B. (2015) Media Effects Theory. *The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, First Edition. Ed. Gianpietro Mazzoleni. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. DOI: 10.1002/9781118541555.wbiepc156 2015 201

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-----------|--------------|------|------|---------|----|--------------|----------|-----------|-------------|------|------|------|----------|
| No. of lessons shown | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Title No. of lessons Downloaded | 1, 4 | 1, 20, 21 | 1,3, 8,4, 40 | 4, 2 | 4, 0 | 1, 2, 1 | 4 | 1,4, 20, 40, | 1, 4, 20 | 1, 21, 40 | 20, 21, 38, | 1, 4 | 1, 4 | 1, 4 | 1, 4, 40 |
| Number of morals learned | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Frequency of times each lesson is shown | 7 | 5 | 24 | 16 | 10 | 23 | 19 | 20 | 5 | 5 | 15 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 6 |

The table above shows the number of families made up of the sample groups, the number of children in each sample group, the number of lessons each sample group downloaded, the number of lessons each sample group showed from the lessons downloaded, the specific lessons downloaded from the web site, the number of time each lesson is shown, if parents view the animated lessons with the children, if the animated lessons had a positive effect on children, and the lessons learned.

In the table, row one shows the number of families that were sampled. Each family makes up a sample group. Twenty (20) families (sample groups) were contacted for the study but fifteen responded. The families (sample groups) who responded were given numbers from 1 to 15. From the first row, the total number of sample groups stands at 15. From the 15 sample groups presented in the table, row two showed that samples group five (5) and eleven (11) have 2 children each. Samples four (4) eight (8) and fifteen (15) have three (3) children each. Samples two (2) three (3) and ten (10) have four children and samples one (1), six (6), seven (7), thirteen (13) and fourteen (14) have five children each. Also from row two, while the highest number of children in the 15 samples is 5 numbers, the lowest number is 2. The total number of children in the 15 samples is 59.

In row three of the table, each family downloaded at least two animated lessons from the website, www.jw.org. The highest number of lessons downloaded by each group is 5 (sample group 3) and the least is 2 (sample groups 7, 9, 12, and 13). Row four shows that the sample group who downloaded 5 animated lessons showed four out of the five and those who downloaded two lessons showed all two lessons. However, sample groups 5 and 13 who downloaded three lessons each showed only one.

Row five shows the lessons each sample group downloaded from the website. They are lesson 1, 4, 20, 21, 38 and 40. From the total of six (6) lessons downloaded, 11 sample groups downloaded lesson 1. Nine sample groups downloaded lesson 4, six different groups downloaded lesson 20, four sample groups downloaded lesson 21, two downloaded lesson 38 and four sample groups downloaded lesson 40. The titles of the downloaded lessons are: 1, Obey your Parent, lesson 4, Stealing is Bad Lesson 20, Be Truthful, Lesson 21: You can be Patient, Lesson 38: Love your Neighbour, and Lesson 40, Jehovah Forgives.

Row six is the same as row four. Row six shows the moral lessons learned in numbers. Like in row four, the lessons learned by each group correspond with the lessons shown by each group. This means that in every animated lesson watched, there is a moral lesson learned.

Row seven shows the frequency of time a sample group showed each downloaded lesson. Sample group three recorded the highest number of time the animated lessons was shown to members of his group. This sample group downloaded four different animated lessons and they showed them repeatedly 24 times within two weeks. This means that the sample group showed lessons 1, 4, 38, and lessons 40 approximately two times daily. Sample groups 2, 9, and 10 showed up to 5 times for the two weeks. This means that this group showed approximately two times every three days.

General Comment and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out whether religious animated films affect the overall moral development of the child if they are repeatedly exposed to a lesson over a period of time. While sending out the link to the sample group, we included how each sample group could access the animated lessons using their personal computer or mobile devices. The steps are as follows. Step 1, type www.jw.org on your device web browser. Step 2, click on the three vertical lines icon on the top right of the page. Step 3, click on bible teachings. Step 4, click on the three vertical lines icon on the top right of the page (same as in step 2). Step 5, click on children and scroll down. Step 6, Under activity collections, click on Become Jehovah's Friend. Step 7 choose any animated lessons of your choice and press the icon to play on the displayed lesson. Or, in step 8, click on the title under the image of the lesson change the language from English to the language of your choice, and press download. The animated lesson will automatically be saved to your device.

Five (5) sample groups among the 20 selected could not watch any of the animated lessons because the steps to download the videos were tedious for them. Fifty-nine (59) children from Fifteen (15) households (sample groups) were sampled for the study. The Animated lessons shown to children are six (6). The six lessons were selected by parents from the online website of Jehovah's Witness. From the 15 sample groups, 10 downloaded the English version, 12 downloaded the Nigerian pidgin version, and 3 downloaded the Yoruba version. One (1) group downloaded the Igbo version and one downloaded the Urhobo language version. This means that some groups downloaded more than one language from the website.

Those who responded to the questions apart from children; included parents and caregivers, male and female from different backgrounds, who have at least one child living with them in the same household. Some of the parents are civil servants, others are businessmen and women. The animated lessons were shown to children between the ages of 3 and 14. Gabriel Abayomi, (head of the sample group four) mentioned that all his three children (ages 3, 7, and 9 years) watched two animated lessons out of the three lessons he downloaded. He mentioned that he downloaded the English version of the cartoon. According to him, his children speak and better understand the English language better than

other languages available on the website. Agnes (sample group nine) the wife of Johnson, says that her children watched the Nigerian pidgin version of the animated films. "I love the animated videos not only because of the themes but the lessons are very short and straight to the point. Because they were short, my children repeated the lessons as many times as they could within the day. Although I only watched with them twice for the two weeks, I left my phone with them to watch the lessons at any time. My children learned a lot from the animations. The short lessons have greatly affected their behaviour. They have become more obedient. After watching lesson one (1) with them, I instructed them to keep watching the lesson. Our daughter who is 14 years old now responds better to her mother when sent to wash the dishes in the kitchen (Osaze Magnus). My only son who is 8 years old would not always want to clean up the house in the morning. But now, he willingly joins his mother to clean the house whenever it is dirty (Theophilus Okpadah). I have planned with my wife to download more lessons into our phones. And we will do our part to teach them the main moral themes each lesson contained and encourage them to repeatedly view them" (Theophilus Okpadah). Also, Felicia Magnus, a mother, said: "The animated lessons have had a positive effect on my 9-year-old daughter. Before now, she would not redo a task that she failed to do well. But now, she accepts to redo them when given reasons to do so. She is more obedient now and does almost all the work I gave her to do. I am more proud of her now. Please send me more links to other animation lessons if there are any. These animations worked like magic for my daughter". Marvellous (4 years old, sample group nine) revealed that: "I have three toys, my mommy bought them for me. From now on, I will keep them well after I finish playing with them so that they will not injure my daddy and my mommy. I will always listen to my mommy and daddy because it will make them happy". Like Caleb (one of the main characters in most of the animated lessons), who displayed obedience in lesson one of the animated series, children showed repentance after watching the animated lessons. The lessons changed them from being rude and disobedient to being good and obedient. The lessons make it clear that children should respond and obey their parent's instructions.

All 15 sample group heads (parents) believed that religious animated films have a significant effect on children's morality. This means that the themes in the lessons parents downloaded are morally good. The lessons have a good plot that changes children for the better. The responses of most respondents showed that they believe in the efficacy of religious animated films on the child's morality. The lessons learned are Obedience (sample group 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15), Stealing is Bad (sample group 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15), be Truthful (sample group 2, 4, 8, 9, 11), Patience (sample group 2, 6, 10, 11), Love (sample group 3, 11) and Forgiveness (sample group 3, 8, 10, 15).

There is a significant relationship between repeated exposure to religious animation films and moral development. The various comments from parents and children make it clear that what kids see viewing the *Become Jehovah's Friend* animated series, affects their overall morality and the way they see the world. Repeated exposure spurs them to imitate the characters in words and the actions of the animated character. They adopt the right morals presented in the animated lessons.

Summary and conclusion

Schoolchildren who usually read novels, and magazines, and watch television, are most likely to imitate and be influenced by the characters they read about or watch²⁸. Negative influence from peers and some media content leads children to fail to uphold cultural, social, or religious moral standards that are considered good and acceptable within society. Massive weakening in fundamental morality among many children has resulted from poor parental guidance. An unregulated media landscape where media content is not censored is also responsible for the decline in child mortality²⁹. However, well-thought-out religious education through animated films improves child morality³⁰.

Primarily, children first develop a moral code at home through the influence of parents and family members who are their first teachers and value builders.³¹ While some parent does not spare the rod in correcting their children who morally default, others have sought formal ways to teach children the right social, cultural, and religious values.³² Much better than the physical teaching at home, in the classroom setting, and from printed books, animated films have proved to be a powerful tool for children to learn positive morals from and also easily when exposed to them repeatedly.

Become Jehovah's Friend animated series is a product of religious education. A positive attitude towards this medium of moral education encourages good morality among children. Frequent exposure of children to the animated series helps bring back the lost morality among children. The *Becoming Jehovah's Friend* series is a real gift to parents and caregivers. Through these Bible lessons, children learn to be open-minded, kind, respectful, organised, and peaceful, and develop other qualities like obedience. These videos do not only entertain children or simply pacify children for a short period. The lessons help children grow in their relationships with peers and family members. *Become Jehovah's Friend* series is a viable tool for Parents, especially single parents who are not readily available for their children hence disregarding their responsibility for the proper moral education of their children. The animated lessons, though shot in their timing would do the job of moral education for absent and single parents. Like other moral education mediums,³³ they could function as a child media counselor and provide the best moral education. Continuous exposure to Religious animated films especially, the *Become*

²⁸Soet, M. (2005). *Perception of the Causes on Indiscipline Among Secondary School Students in Mount Elgon District*. M.ED thesis
University of Eastern Africa, Baraton

²⁹Ibd 16

³⁰Ibd7

³¹Ibd8

³²Odeh, J.C, (2013). Moral decadence among catholic youths in Abakaliki Diocese. Unpublished M. ED Thesis of EBSU, Nigeria

³³Muraiwo, M.B. and Ugwnba, U.E (2014). *Moral Misconduct Among Students of Higher Institution in Nigeria: A Case of Elected Higher Institution, in Imo State, Nigeria*. Owerri: Oasis Publisher

Jehovah's Friend series, and consistent guidance would place children in a position to choose the right type of behaviours.

Findings

1. Religious animated films are a viable source of moral education for children. Moral education through religious animations, moulds the character of children and introduces them to positive moral changes. Continual exposure of the child to religious animated films help minimise violent tendencies, lies, stealing, and sexual misconduct caused by parental neglect, peer group, and the media. It helps them to also develop strong moral principles
2. Religious animated films are agents of character building. Younger children learn and acquire habits more quickly and take their best character as their role models. The right moral lessons the *Become Jehovah's Friend* animated lessons build on children not only benefit them and their immediate families but also, are machinery for creating a peaceful and forgiving society. The animated film series is a powerful tool in the hands of parents and guardians as it is an appropriate 'home schooling' instrument. The timing and nature of each animated lesson allow parents to watch the cartoons with their children.

Recommendations

1. Families should include religious animated film lessons in home activities, explore animated media together, and discuss the moral values and content the films hold.
2. Family heads need to offer guidance and counseling on each animated character during and after watching any animated videos. This would help younger ones to learn, and better understand the characters, themes, content, and situations in which the films were created.

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