# INFLUENCE OF ONLINE ADOLESCENT LITERATURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL VALUES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BOMADI LGA, NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

*This study investigates influence of online adolescent literature for Sustainable Development of moral values in secondary school students in Bomadi local Government Area. Five research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The sample size was two hundred and sixty-four (264) respondents. The sample was selected using simple random sampling technique. A Questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. Twenty students who were not part of the study was used to determine the reliability. A reliability index of 0.77 was got using Cronbach Alpha, which confirmed that the instrument was reliable. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The result of the study revealed that exposure to a wide range of online literature featuring diverse characters and themes can foster empathy, tolerance, influences students' soft skills; respect for elders, honesty and tolerance between male and female students. It also revealed that there are challenges associated with online adolescent literature ranging from lack of supervision, false information, online predators etc. which hinder sustainable development of moral values of students. These can help educators to make informed decisions about the texts they incorporate into their e-learning platforms. The study recommends that educators and curriculum planners should endeavour to upload relevant literatures to their e-learning libraries with sufficient and relevant novels on adolescent literatures and emphasis should be made on the need for students to read online adolescent literatures for Sustainable Development of moral values.*

**Key words:** Online, Adolescent, Literature, Sustainable Development, Moral values.

## Introduction

In today's digitally connected world, online adolescent literature has emerged as a powerful medium that can help to shape the moral compass of secondary school students and sustain the development of Moral Values. As the internet becomes an integral part of their lives, young individuals are increasingly exposed to a vast array of literary digital content, ranging from e-books, webcomics, interactive storytelling, blogs, and social media platforms where young people engage with narratives, characters, and themes. The accessibility, diversity, and interactivity of these online materials offer a unique context

for adolescents to explore moral dilemmas, ethical choices, and cultural perspectives. Aurang, Arab, Qaisr, Waseem, Faisal, and Basharat, (2016) assert that literature is a very effective means of exposing the realities of human life to the young people. It shows them characters with similar feelings and issues, and gives insight into how they might be dealt with or solved. They further stress that, the young adults need books that will promote a sense of respect for the human dignity, awaken social values and justice, honesty, tolerance and other ethical values. The goal of learning transcends academic performance; it includes the morals of students.

In the digital age, the proliferation of online platforms and the widespread availability of adolescent literature on the internet have significantly impacted the educational landscape. The influence of literature on the development of moral values in adolescents has been a subject of scholarly interest for decades. However, with the advent of online adolescent literature, the dynamics of this influence have evolved, presenting new opportunities and challenges for educators, parents, and researchers.

The transition from childhood to adolescence is a critical phase of human development marked by significant cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this period, adolescents are more susceptible to external influences, making it an opportune time to shape their moral values. Literature, as a powerful medium, can play a pivotal role in this process.

The sustainable development of moral values is essential for nurturing responsible, compassionate, and socially conscious citizens. Moral values encompass a range of virtues such as empathy, honesty, tolerance, respect for diversity, and a commitment to social and environmental sustainability. These values not only guide individual behaviour but also contribute to the well-being of communities and the broader society.

Naom, Jojanneke, Yavor, and Thed, (2017) assert that Prior studies have concentrated on assessing and investigating students' academic achievements with no significant effort made to investigate the effect of learning on morals. Duruaku (2016) observes that low moral standard in our senior secondary schools could be attributed to lack of adequate use of young adult literature in teaching the students in senior secondary schools. Since morals among students are not taken into cognizance as do their academic performance, there is a gap which needs to be filled on the morals of senior secondary school students. Hence, this work delves into the influence of online adolescent literature on the development of sustainable moral values in secondary school students.

## Review of Related Literature

### Morals among Senior Secondary School Students

Molly (2015) asserts that the period of senior secondary school is a stage of formation of morals, self-awareness, gaining a worldview position, and self-determination. So, for him it has become imperative that secondary schools are the best place to inculcate good morals in the young adults. The ideas about the importance of morality among senior secondary school students are associated with the obligatory and mutual observance of moral standards with the severity of their group-centric orientation.

Aminigo and Nwaokugha, 2010 point out that, implementing moral standards in behaviour based on the strategy of reciprocity, senior secondary school students experience a sense of emotional satisfaction. On the basis of increasing ethical criticism, senior secondary school students need to critically reassess and rethink the world. Ime and Unwanaobong (2010) opine that, the moral development of a senior secondary school student is a starting stage. Studies of morals are devoted mainly to the study of the process by which an individual student assimilates socially approved norms, rules and restrictions and begins to focus on them in his/her behaviour.

Rote and Smetana (2017) stress that; a morally developed personality is characterized by the unity of moral consciousness, feelings and behaviour, which predetermines a systematic approach to the study of the moral sphere of a person and its moral development.

Respect, honesty, kindness, tolerance, and self-discipline are objectively excellent human attributes that make up decent morality. As a result, the stronger one's character is, the more virtues he or she possesses (Salam, 2015). Character education is the deliberate endeavour to cultivate virtue, and it is necessary for the development of a moral society. Character is also defined by Salam (2015) as moral perfection and firmness, with integrity referring to a solid adherence to a set of moral ideals.

James, (2017) focused on young people's values during transition because of the importance of this period in the development of a child's character and the lack of consistency in the provision of character education in senior secondary schools.

Youth Moral Values in a Changing Society “Train a youngster in the way he should go, and when he grows older, he will not wander from it” (Prov. 22: 6). This proverb is just as important for teenagers as it is for young adults. In a world that is always changing and adopting new trends, it is critical for youths to uphold the moral principles instilled in them by their families and schools. According to James (2017), while societies continue to evolve, there are fundamental principles that societies desire to stick to.

Being ethical or morally conscious entails adopting norms or principles to govern students' behaviours and conduct in society. Moral education is also a teaching method that encourages students to reject evil in favour of good deeds.

Values, according to Raisa (2020), determine people's identity and cultural continuity. Truthfulness, patience, obedience, honesty, integrity, hard effort, responsibility, respect, tolerance, loyalty, public spirit, freedom, respect for human rights, and human dignity, in his opinion, are all moral values. Justice, fairness, and equality are also included. In order to foster character development, good moral upbringing, and moral health in persons, moral ideals should be taught.

Many scholars like Ime and Unwanaobong (2014); Aminigo and Nwaokugh (2010); and Raisa (2020); define morals according to society and individuals living in the society. They make generalization in their understanding of morals without making any reference to the senior secondary students. It is on that note that this work in order to fill the vacuum left by these scholars decided to define morals in the students' perspective. Thus, moral is the accepted code of student conduct in the school and outside the school environment. It is the principles of right and wrong behaviour that the student is expected to know so as to live a good life and exhibit good behaviour.

**Relationship between online adolescent Literature and Morals**

According to Johansson (2011) morals refer to deliberate instruction in basic values, and it is best to integrate them into the curriculum and the community. He identifies some common values that should be incorporated into the curriculum such as compassion, fairness, kindness, honesty, respect, perseverance, courage, justice, loyalty, empathy and acceptance. He asserts that, moral development has become topic of interest to educators and parents. Johansson (2011) suggests that schools should teach children how to cultivate morality, values and civic awareness because it is absolute necessary to cultivate morality in children's character. This is achieved by exposing the children to a wide variety of literature. He recommends incorporating young adult literature into school curriculum. Here, Johansson (2011) emphasizes on children, but not on senior secondary students and that is what this study aims to look into. How morals could be taught and learnt by students in order to be responsible and all-round holistic citizens.

According to Nilsen and Donalson (2011), adolescent literature is anything that readers between the ages of 12 to 18 years would choose to read, they are literature written, published and marketed to young adults. Adolescent literature is basically optimistic. Elena (2020) agrees that, many young adult novels deal basically with young adults, they help them to develop to their fullness. He agrees that, young adult literature has happy and optimistic endings giving hope and comic relief to the young adult. Nilson (2015) in

his opinion said that, there are no definite boundaries on the period of young adulthood, but this research disagrees with him but agrees with Nilson and Donalson (2011) who said that, it is between the ages 12 to 18 years. This is because this work has its focus on senior secondary school students whose ages fall within the range known as young adults.

According to Raisa (2020), the main reason given for using literature in character education is the relevance to the lives of the young adults that literature can influence. Because many researchers emphasize that, values exist in literature and in various genres. There is also evidence that the negative consequences of transition can affect personality development and continuity (Harter, 2010).

In terms of content, as Chelsea (2017) points out, current young adult novels deal with topics of ethnicity and race, faith and religion, markers of gender and sexuality, challenges of home and society, political and religious choices, and concerns about money and the future. Furthermore, according to Bushman and Haas (2010), the theme and subject matter of adolescent Literature correspond to concerns in young adult personal, social, intellectual, and cognitive development, and that teacher can utilize adolescent Literature to connect them to contemporary issues such as gender or orientation bias.

Children's personalities and values are said to be significantly influenced by a combination of personal and social interactions with parents, by contacts with people outside the family such as peers, schools, books they read and movies they watch.

**Benefits of adolescent Literature on Secondary School Students Morality.**

Literature helps to promote positive teenage development. The main value of adolescent literature is its ability to provide readers with opportunities to see themselves reflected in the literary work. Carts (2011) points out that young adulthood is inherently, full of tension. Seeing people with the same characters like themselves in the pages of young adult books is to be reassured that one is not alone after all, but, a viable part of larger community of beings who share a common humanity.

According to Beng (2018), adolescent literature is a useful tool for students who see self and mutual respect, trust, freedom, and tolerance as main conflicting issues in their moral lives. He emphasizes that; it can also help them in their academic progress, peers' group, providing support, advice, and direction. Students also seem to find the research-proven process interesting, interactive, collaborative, meaningful, and reflective. The term "adolescent literature", refers to novels written and tailored exclusively for adolescents. Contrary to common assumption, moral education is mostly directed by the family, the school's role in the moral growth of young people is considered the most essential, according to (Durkheim, 2012).

According to Akanwa (2013) literature serves three key tasks in the lives of readers: to educate, instruct, and entertain. It is also significant for a variety of reasons, including the ability to bring pleasure to readers, the ability to assist readers gain experience, the ability to sympathize with others, and the development of cognitive skills. As a result, literature has the capacity to develop values in students that will last a lifetime. Young adults should be exposed to literature early in life because they are still pliable and susceptible to influence. He backs up this claim by claiming that literature has a position in the education of young adults that no other medium can. He says that any literary work that can arouse the interest of young adults in the following areas; education, entertainment and enlightenment should be made available.

Literature plays a pivotal role in the social development of young adults as they progress from one life stage to the next. Through the reading of literary works, students interact with excellent ideas and acquire skills through various represented themes. Therefore, young adults should be encouraged to study from an early age, especially during school age. The knowledge acquired in this stage is of great help to instil the values of the child's growth process and has the ability to resolve conflicts (Arthur & Carr, 2013).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to determine the role of young adult literature on the morals of students in senior secondary schools in Bomadi Local Government Area. The specific purpose of the study is to:

1. determine the effects of online adolescent literature on the development of moral values of secondary school students.
2. investigate the extent to which online adolescent literature is accessible for students.
3. ascertain whether the reading of online adolescent literature influences students' soft skills, and tolerance between male and female students in secondary schools.
4. determine the challenges associated with online adolescent literatures that hinders the sustainable development of moral values in secondary schools.
5. ascertain the measures that can be proposed to promote online adolescent literatures that enhances moral values in secondary school.

**Research Questions**

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the investigation.

1. What are the positive effects of online adolescent literature on the sustainable moral development students?
2. To what extent is online adolescent literature accessible for students?

3. To what extent does reading of online adolescent literature influences students' soft skills, and tolerance between male and female students?
4. What are the key challenges associated with online adolescent literatures that hinders the sustainable development of moral values in secondary schools?
5. What measures can be proposed to promote online adolescent literatures that enhances moral values in secondary school?

## Method

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey method. The sample size of this study was two hundred and sixty-four (264) senior secondary school students of two schools drawn from the eleven senior secondary schools. The schools were selected through simple random sampling without replacement. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire titled "The influence of online adolescent literature on the development of sustainable moral values". The instrument was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and the reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained using Cronbach's alpha reliability method. 264 copies of questionnaire were distributed, filled properly, collated and were used for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

**Research Question One: What are the positive effects of online adolescent literature on the sustainable moral development of students?**

**Table 1: Effect of online adolescent literature on the sustainable moral development of students.**

| **Positive effect on students' moral development.** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** | **x** | No |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Online adolescent literature has positively influenced my moral development. | 124 | 64 | 42 | 34 | 3.05 | 264 |
| I believe that online adolescent literature promotes empathy and understanding of different perspectives. | 119 | 72 | 42 | 31 | 3.05 | 264 |
| My engagement with online adolescent literature has helped me to talk politely to my elders. | 132 | 41 | 53 | 38 | 3.01 | 264 |
| My frequent reading of online literature has taught me how to be descent in dressing. | 128 | 74 | 33 | 29 | 3.14 | 264 |
| Online adolescent literature has enhanced my soft skills and critical thinking skills. | 129 | 58 | 32 | 45 | 3.02 | 264 |
| **Pooled mean** | | | | | | **3.05** |

Table 1 revealed the effects of online adolescent literature on the sustainable moral development of students. The items in the table revealed that mean scores are above the criterion bench mark of **2.50** and a pooled mean of **3.05**, which is an indication that online adolescent literature has effect on the sustainable moral development of students.

**Research Question Two: To what extent is online adolescent literature accessible for students?**

**Table 2: Extent to which online adolescent literatures are accessible for students**

| **Accessibility of online adolescent literature.** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** | **x** | No |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adolescent literatures are accessible for students. | 58 | 77 | 88 | 41 | 2.57 | 264 |
| Online adolescent literature is easy for students to find and access. | 125 | 74 | 42 | 23 | 3.14 | 264 |
| Online adolescent literature is affordable for students. | 83 | 65 | 62 | 54 | 2.67 | 264 |
| Varieties of online adolescent literature are available to students. | 79 | 67 | 66 | 52 | 2.64 | 264 |
| I am satisfied with the user-friendliness of platforms provide online adolescent literature to students. | 101 | 65 | 48 | 50 | 2.82 | 264 |
| **Pooled mean** | | | | | | **2.76.** |

Table 2 revealed the extent to which online adolescent literature are accessible for students. The items in the table revealed that mean scores are above the criterion bench mark of **2.50** and a pooled mean of **2.76**, which is an indication that online adolescent literature are accessible for students.

**Research Question Three: To what extent does reading of online adolescent literature influence students' soft skills and tolerance between male and female students?**

**Table 3: Influence of reading online literature on students' soft skills and tolerance between male and female**

| Effect on students' soft skills and gender tolerance | SA | A | D | SD | x | No |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading of online adolescent literature encourages honesty among students. | 129 | 58 | 32 | 45 | 3.02 | 264 |
| Reading online adolescent literature can foster tolerance and understanding between male and female students. | 132 | 41 | 53 | 38 | 3.01 | 264 |
| Reading online adolescent literature has positive influence on students' respect for elders. | 124 | 64 | 42 | 34 | 3.05 | 264 |
| The characters in adolescent literature foster gender equality. | 128 | 74 | 33 | 29 | 3.14 | 264 |
| Adolescent literatures help to bridge the gap in understanding between male and female students. | 119 | 72 | 42 | 31 | 3.05 | 264 |
| **Pooled mean** | | | | | | **3.05** |

Table 3 revealed the extent to which reading of online adolescent literature influences students' respect for elders, honesty and tolerance between male and female students.
The items in the table revealed that mean scores are above the criterion bench mark of **2.50** and a pooled mean of **3.05**, which is an indication that online adolescent literature influences students' respect for elders, honesty and tolerance between male and female students.

**Research Question Four: what are the challenges associated with online adolescent literature that hinders the sustainable development of moral values in secondary schools?**

**Table 4: Challenges associated with online adolescent literature that hinder the sustainable development of moral values in secondary schools.**

| **Challenges to sustainable development of moral values.** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** | **x** | **No** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Some character portrayal in online literatures have negative influence on students' ethical decision-making. | 79 | 67 | 68 | 50 | 2.64 | 264 |
| Online literature platforms may host a wide range of content that is inappropriate or morally questionable for adolescents. | 125 | 74 | 42 | 23 | 3.14 | 264 |
| Online literature sources may disseminate false or misleading information, which can confuse adolescents and challenge their understanding of moral values. | 60 | 75 | 88 | 41 | 2.57 | 264 |
| Parents may not always be aware of the online literature their children are consuming, leading to a lack of supervision and guidance in navigating morally challenging content. | 83 | 67 | 60 | 54 | 2.67 | 264 |
| Some online platforms may expose adolescents to potential dangers, such as interactions with online predators, which can compromise their moral development. | 102 | 64 | 48 | 50 | 2.82 | 264 |
| **Pooled mean** | | | | | | **2.76.** |

Table 4 revealed the challenges associated with online adolescent literatures that hinder the sustainable development of moral values. The items in the table revealed that mean scores are above the criterion bench mark of **2.50** and a pooled mean of **2.76**, which indicates that there are challenges associated with online adolescent literature ranging from lack of supervision, false information, online predators etc. which hinder sustainable development of moral values of students.

**Research Question Five: What measures can be proposed to promote online adolescent literatures that enhances moral values in secondary school?**

**Table 5: Proposed measures to promote online adolescent literatures that enhances moral values in secondary school.**

| **promote online adolescent literatures that enhances moral values.** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** | **x** | **No** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organize virtual workshops for authors, where the importance of moral values like empathy, kindness, respect and integrity in adolescent literature would be discussed. | 120 | 64 | 46 | 34 | 3.05 | 264 |
| Integrate selected online adolescent literature into the school curriculum to encourage reading and discussions around moral themes. | 118 | 73 | 42 | 31 | 3.05 | 264 |
| There should be accessibility restrictions to some Online sites that endanger students' moral values. | 130 | 42 | 54 | 38 | 3.01 | 264 |
| Involve parents by providing them with resources related to the literatures being studied, encouraging conversations at home about moral values. | 126 | 74 | 34 | 30 | 3.14 | 264 |
| Parents should pay close watch to their adolescents to monitor the kind of literatures they read. | 126 | 59 | 33 | 46 | 3.02 | 264 |
| **Pooled mean** | | | | | | **3.05** |

Table 5 revealed the proposed measures to promote online adolescent literatures that enhances moral values in secondary school. The items in the table revealed that mean scores are above the criterion bench mark of **2.50** and a pooled mean of **3.05**, which indicates that some measures can be put in place to promote online adolescent literatures that can enhance moral values in secondary school.

**Discussion of the findings**

This study set out to investigate the influence of online adolescent literature on the sustainable development of moral values among secondary school students in Bomadi Local Government of Delta State. Result obtained from research question one indicates that online adolescent literature has effect on the sustainable moral development of students. This is in consonant with Beng (2018), who states that adolescent literature is a

useful tool for students who want to build their moral values of self and mutual respect, trust, and tolerance. Result for research question two shows that online adolescent literatures are accessible for students. This was confirmed by Beng (2018), who revealed that teenagers have easy access to online information because they are always browsing with their smart phones. Result for research question three revealed that online adolescent literature influences students' soft skills; respect for elders, honesty and tolerance between male and female students. This is in line with Raisa (2020), he maintained that moral values determine people's identity and cultural continuity. He went further to say that truthfulness, patience, obedience, honesty, integrity, hard effort, responsibility, respect, tolerance, loyalty, public spirit, freedom, respect for human rights, and human dignity, Justice, fairness, and equality in his opinion, are all moral values. Result obtained from research question four indicates that there are challenges associated with online adolescent literature ranging from lack of supervision, false information, online predators etc. which hinder sustainable development of moral values of students. As Duruaku (2016) observes that low moral standard in our senior secondary schools could be attributed to lack of supervision, false information and lack of adequate use of young adult literature in teaching the students in senior secondary schools.

Result obtained from research question five revealed that some measures can be put in place to promote online adolescent literatures that can enhance moral values in secondary school. From the findings of the study, it can be deduced that online adolescent literature has effect on the sustainable moral development of students; literatures are available and accessible for students. Online adolescent literature influences students' respect for elders, honesty and tolerance between male and female students. The findings indicate that there are challenges associated with online adolescent literature ranging from lack of supervision, false information, online predators etc. which hinder sustainable development of moral values of students and some positive measures to promote online adolescent literatures that can enhance moral values in secondary school is very important.

**Conclusion**

The influence of online adolescent literature on the sustainable development of moral values among secondary school students is a topic of significant relevance in today's digital age. It can serve as a powerful tool for instilling empathy, critical thinking, and ethical principles.

Therefore, it is imperative for educators, parents, and society as a whole to be actively involved in guiding the online reading experiences of secondary school students. By fostering a culture of responsible reading, promoting discussions on moral dilemmas presented in literature, and encouraging the selection of age-appropriate, value-aligned content, we can harness the potential of online adolescent literature to contribute to the

sustainable development of moral values in our youth. In doing so, we can empower the next generation to navigate the digital world with integrity, compassion, and a strong moral compass, ultimately shaping a more ethical and sustainable future.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. There is need for schools to creating an e- library of high-quality online adolescent literature. These materials should align with the moral values we aim to instill in our students and provide diverse perspectives to encourage critical thinking.
2. Internet services should be made available for schools to enable students to have access to the e- library.
3. There is need for teachers to incorporate the themes and lessons from online literature into the curriculum. English and literature classes, in particular, can serve as platforms for discussing moral dilemmas and ethical choices presented in the literature.
4. Teachers should dwell more on the plot, theme and characters in the novels, so that students will be able to derive what will enable them build moral values.
5. Students should be guided, and emphasis should be made on the need to read young adult literature.
6. More time should be allotted on the school time table for the reading of young adult literature.
7. Encourage open and respectful discussions among students about the moral issues raised in the literature. Teachers should create a safe and inclusive environment where students can share their perspectives and engage in thoughtful debates.
8. Use online literature as a tool to develop critical thinking skills. Encourage students to analyze characters' motivations, consequences of their actions, and the ethical decisions they make within the stories.

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