Teachers' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Moral Strategies for Character Formation in Public Secondary Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Philosophers and educationists contend that education is critical in inculcating learners with moral values for character formation. Moral education for character formation is not an issue of personal choice but is fundamental to society in promoting economic growth, prosperity, and order. However, there are a number of problems that hinder the process of reaching the identified ideal of character formation. Some of the challenges are associated with curriculum content and the strategies applied by teachers. In school, moral education for character formation is promoted through the teaching of subjects such as Christian Religious Education, Hindu Religious Education, or Islamic Religious Education; however, they are exam or Cognitive-oriented. This is manifested in unacceptable behaviors that are exhibited by students, such as school arson, drug and substance abuse, obscene behavior, and exploitation of school and other public resources. Therefore, this article sought to investigate teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of moral strategies for character formation in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. Phenomenological theory guided this study. On the other hand, the phenomenological hermeneutical method was applied in the study. The study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design to explore teachers' perceptions of moral education strategies for character formation in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. This design was chosen because it enables the researcher to gain insight into participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon without prejudices and preconceptions. It utilized an interpretive paradigm to understand teachers' perceptions of their social realities, focusing on subjective experiences and perspectives related to moral education. Purposive sampling was used to recruit 15 participants from seven public secondary schools. Unstructured interviews were employed to collect the data. The data collected was analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six steps. The study established that there was mixed reaction on the effectiveness of strategies used in moral education for character formation. The minority of the participants observed that all the strategies were ineffective, while the majority indicated that guidance and counseling, although less proactive, is the best strategies for moral education for character formation. The few who mentioned punishment indicated it was the best method, although illegal and illicit in the current Kenyan schooling context. The study concluded that moral education strategies in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya, are largely ineffective, with only a few approaches like class meetings, student leadership, and clubs fostering deeper student engagement. Most strategies are implemented reactively and lack consistent emphasis, limiting their impact on character formation. A more proactive approach and better implementation mechanisms are needed to improve effectiveness. The study recommends that teachers in Kakamega County be trained to use multiple moral strategies that require extensive student participation and include practical and reflective methods to promote character education. Moreover, moral education should be an integrated approach to ensure that students receive ethical education in many areas of learning to strengthen their morality in applying moral education in many facets of their learning.

Keywords: *Character Formation, Moral Strategies, Hermeneutics, Phenomenology.*
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I. INTRODUCTION

Historically, education has been responsible for imparting societal values, norms, customs, and expectations. According to Birhan et al. (2021), education is vital for maintaining and transmitting a community's cultural legacy, values, customs, and primary role of providing information and skills. The emphasis of philosophers and educationists is that education is a potent tool for fostering moral ideals that are essential for the advancement of society and that it does more than just transmit information.

Providing students with a solid moral foundation for character formation has always been a priority, both before and after sovereignty (Stephen, 2021). Before independence, African Indigenous Education was founded on five philosophical pillars aimed at promoting a peaceful society, preparing the youths to grow morally upright, and were used to aid in the passage of worthwhile values as conceptualized in communalism, perennialism, functionalism, preparationism, and wholisticism respectively (Ocitti, 1973). Accountability,

honesty, patience, empathy, decency, and teamwork were promoted through guidance and counseling, verbal warnings, ridicule, and deterrence in African society (Nsamenang, 2005).

After independence, in recognition of the importance of moral education for character formation, the government of Kenya came up with constitutional policy documents and commissions to amplify the importance of moral education for character formation. In 2010, the Constitution bestowed the entire chapter six to contemplate the integrity question, which is supreme for morals (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The Basic Education Act was also enacted in 2014 to achieve unity, inclusion, cohesiveness, compassion, and participation to offer basic education and eradicate incitement to violence and xenophobia by promoting the right understanding of moral and cultural diversity through teaching. Education has grown significantly recently, yet people's moral standards have severely declined (Stephen, 2021). This being the case, where is the problem?

Kenya has attempted to achieve the goal of moral education for character formation, but it has not been effective. It begs the question of why it has taken many years after independence to achieve the goal of moral education for character formation. This being the scenario, where is the problem? Mwanzia (2019) pointed out that the Ominde Report of 1964, the Gachathi Commission of 1976, the Kamunge Commission of 1988, the Constitution of Kenya 2010, and the Basic Education Act of 2014 were reconstructed to recognize the importance of promoting moral education for character formation. However, the researcher adds that implementing moral education necessary for character formation has faced myriad obstacles. Stephen (2021) supports that implementing moral goals in education in Kenya is an unsolved problem left to teachers who are experts in teaching.

Apart from the foretasted scenarios, the daily occurrences depict a society of moral limbo. Cases of arson in schools, examination cheating, premarital pregnancies, bandit attacks, corruption, and leaders uttering insults, among many others, are prevalent in Kenya. In the presence of the above immoral cases and many others, it's clear that moral education for character formation has not been achieved in schools.

Furthermore, Osabwa (2016) argues that moral education in Kenya is demanding. The demand is based on the daily happenings of immoral tendencies such as corruption; Ariri (2008) noted that parents, students, and teachers conspire to cheat in exams. Additionally, Wanjala (2014) pointed out that Kenyan traffic police have been alleged to accept bribes, thereby contributing to road fatalities. Also, Anuro (2014) indicates that physicians sell drugs for public health facilities. Again, Likoye (2014) pointed out that learners emulate their teachers' actions. For example, learners copy from teachers when they strike for their grievances to be heard. From the above observations, the young generation will perpetuate the vices from their daily experiences. The above being the case, schools are yet to achieve the normative dimension of education.

Since 2020, moral degradation in Kenya has been an issue of concern. Reports from mass media indicate immoral tendencies such as arson in schools are increasing compared to previous years, premarital pregnancy, drug abuse, indecency, rape, theft, and misuse of public resources, are worsening in Kenya and therefore require direct pathways (Gogo, 2020). Kakamega County faces significant moral challenges, particularly in relation to child defilement, substance abuse, domestic violence and indiscipline cases. The poverty level in Kakamega County stands at 49.2%, which is equivalent to around 809,500 residents living below the poverty line(Liu, 2014 Liu, 2014). This economic hardship is closely linked to various moral issues, including high rates of child defilement, substance abuse, domestic violence and indiscipline. The prevalence of such issues is high, often linked to socio-cultural and economic factors such as substance abuse and family dynamics. Consequently, it is against the above backdrop the researcher carried out a study on teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of moral strategies in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Moral education plays a crucial role in shaping the character of students. In Kenya, several institutions and initiatives have been made to regulate and amplify the need for moral education for character formation in Kenyan schools. For instance, several education commissions have been established to emphasize the necessity of Moral education for Character formation since independence. The Constitution of Kenya 2010, the Education Act of 2014, and various task forces are keenly interested in the character formation of Kenyan youths. In addition, the basic education curriculum framework 2017 emphasizes value education and moral competencies such as collaboration and meaningful citizenship.

Despite the inclusion of moral education in Kenyan secondary schools' curriculum, a comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness in character formation is deficient. Teachers' experiences, challenges, and perceptions in implementing moral education programs and strategies remain understudied. Many obstacles exist in realizing the moral ideal for character formation in education. These obstacles are related to curriculum content and strategies of practicing teachers. Curriculum content areas such as Christian Religious Education, Hindu Religious Education, and Islamic Religious Education, primarily intended to promote moral education for character formation, are approached from cognitive and exam-oriented perspectives. This is evidenced in the observable and undesirable behaviours of learners in school, such as school arson, premarital pregnancy, drug abuse, public indecency, rape, and misuse of school and public resources. Kakamega County has experienced significant issues related to moral degradation among students; with high rates of premarital teenage pregnancies, school unrest, and arson cases, the challenges manifest the moral lacuna in education.

Therefore, against the above backdrop, the researcher embarked on a study on teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of moral strategies in public secondary schools in Kakamega, Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

To examine teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of moral strategies in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review
2.1.1 Phenomenological theory

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the founder of phenomenological theory, posited that phenomenology seeks to explore and describe the structures of consciousness and human experience as they are perceived, emphasizing the importance of intentionality and the suspension of biases through a method called "epoché" to reach pure understanding. Further, the theory was pioneered by Max Van Manen (2002), and it was reinforced by Smith (2008), Chaffee (2005), and Harris (1976). Etymologically, phenomenology originated from two Greek words, phainómenon and logos, which means "that which appears "and "study," respectively. When used in conjunction, the phrases signify a philosophical investigation of the underlying mechanisms underlying human perception and awareness.

Thus, Husserl's work was focused on identifying how signifying structures, presentations and occurrences enter consciousness as ways of acting, which turned into the focus of phenomenology. After that, the concept of existentialism came into form based on Husserl's perception of phenomenology and was taken to the next level by Heidegger and Sartre. The description of phenomenology is the orientation of phenomena in the appearance of general cognition, such as observation, memory, and thinking (Max van Manen, 2002). Churchill and Wetz (2003) describe phenomenology as both methodological and theoretical. The theoretical part consists of transcendental, ethical, existential, and hermeneutic branches. Unlike transcendental phenomenology, which discusses the understanding separate from connections to the world (Smith, 2008), existential and hermeneutical branches correspond to this work considering the teachers' connections with the world and, more specifically, the ways teachers' experiences define their experience of moral education.

The study also draws from contributions of phenomenology from Max van Manen and Max Scheler; their ethical phenomenology accords with the principles of distinctiveness and accountability. Among those, Van Manen emphasizes notions such as alterity or the infinite and is inspired by Emmanuel Levinas, who claimed that moral responsibility arises from human frailty. However, existential and hermeneutic phenomenology forms the backdrop for the methodology of this study, as they both seek to explicate the significance of analysing the lived experiences of individuals and articulating abstracted meanings of existence (Bailey et al., 1954). This study explores moral education practices of secondary school teachers using a phenomenological approach, the 'lifeworld,' in which teachers exist and operate, ontological-internal and ontic-external as seen from the works of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl as elaborated by Chaffee (2005). Numerous philosophical theories have deployed polarities to address the matters, including absolutism realism by Heraclitus and Plato and phenomenology that enabled the study to evaluate sociable and moral education not only as a theory but as the experience of teachers (Copleston, 1953).

Phenomenological theory is important in this research as the theory permits the researcher to understand and explain the orientation of participants involved in moral education for character formation. Having its origin in intentionality, as suggested by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology needs to understand participants' experiences of the phenomenon under study; this is central when comparing teachers' ways of thinking about moral learning. In contrast to the theoretical approaches, through tools like epoché, phenomenology helps to analyze the participants' experiences without imposing prior assumptions, which addresses the issue of how values are lived.

2.2 Empirical Review
2.2.1 Perspectives of teachers on moral education for character formation

This section reviews relevant literature on teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of pedagogies on moral education for character formation and approaches or systems in place of moral education for character formation.

2.2.2 Perspectives on the effectiveness of the Pedagogies of moral education for character formation

Freire (1970) discusses several forms of education in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He sees all current pedagogy as a result of a lack of other options. It indicates that society's conditions and ambitions must be considered when teaching. Education must be treated with respect, and teachers must remember the technique while planning lessons. Instead of perceiving the students as passive receivers of information, the educator sees them as contributing members who positively impact their learning path.

Besides the educational banking notion, Freire (1970) emphasizes the necessity of every pedagogy guided by a complete theoretical framework. As part of any teaching, a concept like this should be used to guarantee that students are learning something meaningful. The pedagogy's vocabulary also includes terms that might inspire new methods of understanding and doing. For him, language has the power to either empower him or emasculate him. In his book *Pedagogy of Hope* (published in 1995), this author states that language shapes awareness of lived experience. Therefore, it is essential to consider public consciousness while designing an educational program to make communication easier for students. It's also important to him that teachers and students have a mutually respectful relationship, encouraging conversation and empowerment of the learning experience (Freire,1970).

As a whole, Freire argues that every teaching should take into account the particular requirements and circumstances of the students. He believes people-driven (representing social ambitions) curricular material should be taught at a student's level. Intersubjective contact and critical awareness can only be fostered via a dialogical approach. To justify the informed practice, pedagogy must be grounded on a comprehensive philosophy of education (Freire,1970).

Osabwa (2017), in a critique of the pedagogies of character formation in post-independent Kenyan schools, employed a critical method in examining the pedagogies in schools on moral education. The study established that the pedagogies in place fall short of content and methods for realizing good character among the learners. Further, the study recommended sound practices and pedagogical theories based on a comprehensive program. Osabwa concluded that curriculum developers and policymakers are largely to be blamed for inappropriate pedagogical practices geared towards moral education for character formation.

Akanga (2014) interrogates the methods for character development using the pragmatic approach. In his study, he emphasizes that appropriate pedagogies need to be adopted to minimize cases of social devices among youths. He adds that African indigenous education (AIE) underscores the need for moral education by doing. AIE had its methods of instilling moral values such as verbal warnings, decorum, and discipline. However, due to the new life trends in contemporary society, AIE methods are rarely used. This is because concerned stakeholders for moral education are busy with their schedules. Kireet (2008) agrees with Akanga that pedagogies are fundamental in the specific area of learning with regard to knowledge acquisition. Moral education for character formation is not an exception; it requires appropriate pedagogies. However, the major setback for moral education for character formation is the nature of the methods employed in schools.

Akanga's research aimed to determine the extent to which technical and vocational training concepts may be used in Kenyan schools as a basis for morality. The study employed analytical, phenomenological, and contextual data collection and analysis techniques while adhering to the practical view of learning as its

conceptual framework. There is a need for a fresh approach to moral teaching in Kenyan schools, and research has found that the current mechanisms are to blame for the lack of discipline in the schools. For this purpose, the author of the study suggests that schools in Kenya use an educational approach based on the principles of practical educational philosophy.

Kireet (2008) states that character formation is a situation where affective activities and volition are key; hence, pedagogies other than discussions and lecture methods are appropriate. Further, he advocated for Yoga and sports as the best pedagogies for moral education. However, Yoga is an oriental practice among the people of the West; hence, it won't be appropriate in Kenya for moral education. In sports, immoral characters have been witnessed, such as corruption, ideological differences, and physical wars among the Kenyan teams. This poses the question of how sports can be effective for moral education and character formation.

Around the 19th century, Christian Missionaries established schools to educate Africans on basic skills and religious practices. The Bible was used as a tool for reverence in evangelization in school. The Schools used songs and preaching. Prayer and recital of liturgies were the methods of instruction; students were allowed to engage in limited debate and inquiries. Their instructors were authoritative and considered their students' empty slates or tabula rasa, which were to be written (Ojiambo, 2018). However, Paulo Freire revokes the approach of the banking concept, which he terms inhuman, and advocates methods that are humane to achieve or solve issues at hand (Nyangaresi & Kauka, 2021). In our current education system, the pedagogies employed are cognitive-based and are not normatively anchored to achieve moral education; hence, numerous deviant tendencies in schools provoked the current study.

Munene (2016), in evaluating the relationship between teaching moral values and their application by learners in Kenyan secondary schools, established that the poor state of immoral cases in secondary schools results from poor pedagogies employed for moral education for character formation. The study employed only critical methods to gather and analyze the effectiveness of teaching moral values.

The ideal pedagogy for any instruction entails dialogue and significant learner participation; most of the reviewed pedagogies in moral education for character formation fall short of active learner participation. The clarity of the most recent studies in moral pedagogy can be best addressed through phenomenological research, which this study employed.

2.2.3 Perspectives on the effectiveness of the strategies in place of moral education for character formation

Osabwa (2016), in an analysis of the pedagogical approaches to character formation in Kenyan schools in search of an alternative, employed the Socratic Method, analytical method, and conceptual analysis in his thesis. The study found that the approaches in place have deficits in terms of implementation and design. Further, the study recommended a comprehensive review of the existing approaches so that they are formulated in line with integral character education trends.

Muthamba (2017) sought to determine whether learners in learning institutions in Kitui central deanery are developed to make morally correct decisions for their activities. According to the study findings, the inhabitation of moral education in ordinary curriculum execution in the lesson and outside lessons approaches comprises accessing guidance and counseling services in schools, religious gatherings, life skills teachings, and involvement in communal services. However, the findings indicated that the approaches are inconsistent or keep changing with time due to the lack of seriousness attached to moral education for character formation. Further, teachers prioritize content coverage at the expense of moral approaches. The findings further noted that 81% of the participants agreed that moral education for character formation approaches was inadequate. Other participants in the study recommended more time for effective moral education for character formation.

Akanga (2014) advocates the infusion and integration approach to moral education for character formation. Teaching moral education for character formation in Kenya adopts a multi-disciplinary approach. Several approaches are used to try to instruct students on the required moral tenets. One more effective approach to moral education is the usage of infusion and integration.

The approaches so far deliberated about implementing moral education for character formation assumed a rational approach. A lot of infusion and integration is termed 'concealed curriculum' to complement these approaches. In principle, several undertakings in the school might essentially contribute to the execution

of moral education for character formation in non-rational wisdom (Samson & Allida, 2018). Students' engagement in clubs and organizations, as well as school laws and guidelines, are among these activities: intentional communal service, benevolent administrations, co-curriculum outings, expeditions, and comedy and music festivals.

Stephen (2021) identifies approaches to moral education in Kenya. The approaches include Religious Education, Social Education Ethics, Life skill education, Guidance and counseling approach, Infusion and Integration, school rules and regulations, participation in Clubs and Societies, Charitable organizations, and voluntary community service. However, he points out that the approaches have faced numerous challenges in implementing the Goals of Moral Education for character formation. He suggests that there is a need for immediate possible approaches, hence the study gap.

In brief, the reviews are significant in moral education for character formation. However, there is an evident lack of consistency, inadequately trained personnel, and unwarranted overemphasis on content coverage at the expense of meaningful moral socialization.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

The study employed descriptive phenomenological design to explore teachers' perceptions of the strategies of moral education for character formation in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. The design is effective because it aims to gain insight into participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon without prejudices and preconceptions. It made use of the interpretive paradigm to understand teachers' perceptions of their social realities. This paradigm enables the researcher to learn participants' subjective views. Three elements of this paradigm were explored: ontological orientation to delineate teachers' realities, epistemological orientation to shed light on their claim's knowledge, and axiological orientation to understand what guides them.

3.2 Study Setting

The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Kakamega County -Kenya. Phenomenologists prefer the study setting instead of the study area because the setting provides a convenient and conducive ground for participants. Lannan (2015) asserts that the study environment is cardinal for the participant to participate in the research effectively. According to the Kenya Health Information Systems (KHIS), the selected county is among the leading counties with moral degradation cases in the recent past. For instance, Kakamega County was the second largest affected by premarital teenage pregnancy cases, standing at 6,669, equivalent to 33% from January to June 2020 (Nyangaresi & Kauka, 2021).

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with in-depth information for this study. "Purposive sampling in a descriptive study is commonly used to pick persons or activities that are most relevant to the inquiry's present emphasis" (Krathwohl, 2009). Kruger (2011) adds that purposive sampling is the most appropriate non-probability sampling method for identifying primary participants. Kruger further notes that the sampling looks for experienced participants for the phenomenon under scrutiny, which this study employed.

The sampling was used to select a sample size of 15 participants. The sample size was enough for this study because it was based on two factors, which were anchored on the participants' information power and the participants' homogeneity. Further, the selection of 15 participants is coherent with other authorities on data saturation and sample margin on interviews. However, Odhiambo (2013) notes that sample size is not mandatory in phenomenological research. Besides that, he emphasizes that; … "Sample size, which is the number of researchers engaged in the study, has no universal rule. He added that other experts have advocated various sample sizes in phenomenological studies. Researchers like Ary et al. (2006), Ahnn & Anderson (1998), and Cohen et al. (2002) believe that a sample size of thirty is enough. McMillan (2008) suggests that

a sample size of five to twenty-five is enough to avoid data saturation, and Groenewald (2004) recommends a sample size of ten to avoid saturation points.

The study by Guest et al. (2006) points out that to determine the number of participants in qualitative research, two factors must be considered: the information power of the participants and the homogeneity of the participants, which is in tandem with the current study. Their study involved sixty (60) participants, but the saturation point arrived at the twelfth (12) participants because it involved homogenous subjects with in-depth information on the phenomenon under investigation.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Data was collected using unstructured interviews because they are conversational, dialogical, and open to gathering in-depth information. Phenomenologists prefer unstructured interviews because of their utility in gathering rich and in-depth information (Vagle, 2018).

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a systematic process that includes organizing, classifying, and analyzing evidence to make conclusions and judgments regarding the phenomenon of interest (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Guba and Lincoln noted that data analysis entails the use of evidence in looking at, categorizing, or tabling to answer initial propositions. This process enabled the researcher to distill vast information into central themes and meanings. Braun and Clarke (2017) employed thematic analysis on the qualitative data. In this way, it fits well with the flexible phenomenological approach targeting the identification of themes and patterns of moral education for character formation. Braun and Clarke's six-step guidelines will ensure a rigorous analysis.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study on teachers' lived experiences with strategies and their effectiveness on moral education for character formation.

4.1 Lived experiences of deputy head teachers and Christian Religious Education teachers on the strategies of moral education for character formation.

The deputy head teachers are herein coded as D1, D2, D3, and D4 while Christian Religious Education teachers coded as T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T6,T7,T8,T9,T10,11.They listed strategies such as school culture(D2), punishment T9, rewards (T11), guiding and counseling (T1, T3,T4, T5,T7, T8,T9, T10and T11), human consciousness (D2), spiritual direction (D2), motivational talks (D1, D2 and D3), role modeling (T1), mentorship programs (D1 and (D2), sacrament of confession and reconciliation (D2), use of peer groups (D2), teaching religious values (D2), pastoral care (T6 and T10) , clubs and societies (T3), debates (D1), games and sports (T3), inviting guest speakers (D1), going for benchmarking in other schools (D1, D2 and D3), parental meetings, (T1,T7), Class Meetings (T7), school rules (T2) Personal experiences (T4, T5), Leadership (D2, T6) and life skills (T1) .

The findings of the study concur with Muthamba's (2017) strategies, which comprised accessing guidance and counseling services in schools, religious gatherings, life skills teachings, and involvement in communal services. However, the findings indicated that the strategies are not proactive and no seriousness is attached to moral education for character formation. The findings are also similar to those of Stephen (2021), who identified various strategies for moral education in Kenya. The strategies included Religious Education, Social Education Ethics, Life skill education, Guidance and counseling approach, Infusion and Integration, school rules and regulations, participation in Clubs and Societies, Charitable organizations, and voluntary community service. However, he pointed out that the strategies have faced numerous implementation challenges. He suggested that the government should develop a legal framework for implementing strategies for moral education for character formation.

4.2 Discussion of the lived experience of D1-D4 and T1-T11 on the strategies in school for moral education for character formation.

It was established that of the 13 strategies listed above, only three are most likely to engage students at their existential level: class meetings, student leadership, clubs, and societies. These three strategies allow students to express themselves more than the other ten top-down strategies. The top-down model of moral education tends to be more authoritarian, based on adult perspectives, and less subjective. A phenomenological approach to morality calls for a more subjective and situational orientation to moralization. From a pedagogical perspective, moral education in Kenya is more teacher-centered than learner-centered, yet learners form moral habits more with each other than with teachers. Excessive presence of teachers in moral education is likely to lead to superficial assimilation of moral values, which are simultaneously temporary. Too much presence of adults in children leads to artificial behaviors and excessive conventionalism (Kohlberg, 1976).

The most popular strategy outside academics and religious education is guidance and counseling. This strategy presumes the authority of a teacher as a socializer and representative of wider society. It is unclear whether the counseling process is predominantly done by professional counselors in school or regular teachers who are not sufficiently trained in guidance and counseling. Counseling for moral aims transcends conventional counseling rules that professional and regular counselors might consider out of order, such as proactive and metacognitive counseling.

In the discussion on strategies for moral education, the tension between top-down, authoritarian approaches and more student-centric, subjective methodologies becomes evident. Acknowledging that class meetings, student leadership, clubs, and societies are more likely to engage students at their existential level reflects the need for a more phenomenological approach to morality (Dewey, 1916; Bandura, 1991). Scholars such as John Dewey and Albert Bandura have emphasized the importance of experiential learning and student engagement in the moral development process. Dewey, in his seminal work "Democracy and Education," argued for an education that is life itself, echoing the sentiment that learning should extend beyond the confines of the classroom (Dewey, 1916). Bandura's social learning theory also underscores the influence of peer interactions on moral development (Bandura, 1991). The critique of the top-down model aligns with contemporary educational philosophies that advocate for learner-centered approaches.

On the other hand, the prevalence of guidance and counseling as a popular strategy indicates a reliance on authoritative figures, possibly teachers, as moral guides. This aligns with the views of scholars like Lawrence Kohlberg, who emphasized the role of authority figures in moral development (Kohlberg, 1976). However, the discussion raises questions about the qualifications of those conducting counseling for moral aims, as the conventional counseling rules might need adjustments. The tension between authoritative guidance and more participatory, student-engaged approaches highlights the ongoing struggle within education systems to find a balance between tradition and progressive pedagogies. A shift towards a more balanced and inclusive approach, incorporating authoritative guidance and student engagement, seems imperative for effective moral education for character formation.

In this context, the inclusion of guidance and counseling in moral education strategies draws attention to the role of authoritative figures, aligning with Kohlberg's stages of moral development, where external authority plays a crucial role in shaping moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1976). However, the discussion also underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of counseling for moral aims, challenging conventional counseling rules. The tension between authoritative guidance and participatory, student-engaged approaches reflects the broader educational discourse balancing traditional and progressive pedagogies (Dewey, 1916; Kohlberg, 1976). As the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (2017) emphasizes extended outcomes and hinges on progressive and pragmatic philosophies (Heto, Odari, & Sunu, (2020), there is a growing recognition of the need to adapt counseling approaches to suit the complexities of moral education in diverse educational settings.

4.3 Critical evaluation of the lived experience of D1-D4 and T1-T11 on the strategies in school for moral education for character formation.

The majority of the participants appeal to the transmission model as the basis of their strategies. Transmission subsumes that authority can influence the learners' morals. This state of affairs leads to a breach

of subjectivity, freedom, and active transformation. The suffocation of subjectivity and freedom interferes with phenomenological existence.

4.4 Lived experiences of D1, D2, D3, and D4 on the Effectiveness of the strategies in schools for Moral Education for character formation

The results were presented as follows; D1 indicated that guidance and counseling is effective where caning is not allowed. Further, the participant alluded that punishment helps to prevent the students from repeating the same. However, since the ban on corporal punishment in schools, guidance and counseling have been of great benefit, although it is mainly used when an immoral act has been identified.

D2 argued that they are effective, though some contribute negatively; for instance, in sports, students access drugs and believe that drugs give them the energy to play, which negatively impacts their attitudes and behaviors.

D3, some approaches are effective, but not all of them are. The participant argued that academic issues are given more emphasis at the expense of moral values. Further, the participant posited that the strategies are handy, especially guidance and counseling when a problem has been identified. It's on the same note learners are referred to guidance and counseling.

D4 argued that they would be effective if implemented well. There are many strategies in school, but the challenge is actualizing them. The participant further noted that schools are not interested in the moral aspects; instead, they are after imparting knowledge to learners and have no time for moral strategies.

4.5 Lived experiences of T1-T11 on the Effectiveness of the strategies in school for Moral Education for Character formation

Their anecdotal reports are presented below.

T1 noted that the strategies are effective because they have facilitated and brought up learners with good character. However, they are given less time or emphasis.

T2 argued that they are effective if implemented in the proper manner, and this depends on the policies that are in place by the implementers. Implementation and actualization depend on leaders of goodwill.

T3 posited that they are not effective because they are misplaced priorities (emphasis is on passing exams and individual performance).

Participant 4 narrated that they are effective when approached in the right manner.

T5 indicated that strategies are effective when handled by professionals. For instance, professional counselors have been able to shape the characters of some learners after taking them through several sessions. Despite the case, immoral behaviors are on the rise in schools due to numerous factors such as drug abuse, the permissiveness of society, poor parenting coupled with single parenthood, lack of role models, and westernization, among others.

T6 noted that guidance, counseling, and punishment seem to be effective. Punishment helps to deter learners from repeating mistakes, the current society is exposed to vices such as drug abuse, which have a great negative influence on discipline in school. To address the issue of punishment effectively, the government is handy by instituting control measures on drug production in society and advertisements on social media.

T7 argued that they will only become effective when stakeholders come together to implement and actualize them. The current society is changing quickly and what is moral today might not be moral to the next generation. Therefore, guest speakers with a wide range of experience should be invited to talk to students. On the other hand, students should constantly be reminded of matters concerning morals as often as possible.

T8 narrated that they are effective because moral principles are part of the discussion in guidance and counseling. To be sincere, the strategies will be more effective if all stakeholders play their roles. For instance, parents should play a role in raising morally upright children. In doing so, the school will have a humble time perpetuating moral principles. However, if one of the stakeholders fails, the whole process will be a mess.

T9 narrated that they are effective, but they need improvement. For example, the same methods used during our time are still used among the current learners. There is a need to adopt the traditional strategies used by our grandmothers to instill morals in the current generations. Also, parents should not only rely on

the school to guide their children on morals; rather, they should be taught the importance of bringing up children with good moral values in society.

T10 noted that the strategies are ineffective and need the support of other moral groups, such as pastors, parents, and the community. Participant 10 stated that;

They are not working; they are there, but their implementation is not there or usually runs short; we build on physical speech, character, and academic formation, which are the four pillars of development—even sports help to release tension. Football working in a team brings out teamwork and rejects selfishness.

Due to their ineffectiveness, there is an increase in moral vices in schools, such as devil worshippers, among other immoral vices.

T11 indicated that only a few are effective. Most of them are on paper and are emphasized in case of an outbreak of an immoral tendency in schools or society.

4.6 Discussion of the lived experiences of D1-D4 and T1-T11 on the Effectiveness of the strategies in school for moral education for character formation

It was established that guidance and counseling is the most effective approach (D1, D3, T5, T6, and T8). However, the participants did not provide hard or solid evidence of the assessment that led to such conclusions. Instead, participants narrated anecdotal examples of students who said they had improved in discipline. These anecdotal examples are not necessarily replicas of the student's behavior in the schools visited; neither can they be applied to third-party learners. Historically, Punishment has been used to correct unwanted behavior in any given society. They have worked and they still work, especially in extreme cases. In an average school setup, immoralities usually are little activities that learners engage in that may not warrant punishment, yet they surmount hardened immoral dispositions in the long term.

While guidance counseling is the most mentioned strategy, participants indicated that normal traditional counseling strategies, which are more reactive, were applied. For ideal 21st-century counseling, there is a need for the counselor to be guided by progressive, integrated, proactive, and inclusive frameworks. This framework leads to effective counseling strategies for 21st century moral education. Failure to address the effectiveness of the strategies on moral education will likely lead to moral collapse and subsequent dysfunctions in social structures.

Many teachers subsequently express interest in more holistic strategies integrating moral education across subjects and experiences (Anam et al., 2019). This includes dilemmas, child-centered pedagogy, democratic school governance, co-curricular activities, service learning, peer modeling, and engaged community partnerships. Embodying moral ideals in day-to-day student experiences and relationships is viewed as crucial. Cheng et al. (2021) summarize that teachers realize "character and values are caught, not taught. The informal and hidden curriculum must align with the stated values in the formal curriculum. Scholars reinforce this need for a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to moral education.

However, teachers also note substantial barriers to implementing holistic approaches, including academic pressures, large classes, limited resources, and low prioritization of character development in policy versus exam performance (Simatwa, 2012). Despite valuing comprehensive moral education, teachers report struggling to integrate it into practice. This reflects a critical gap between ideals and school realities that must be addressed through improved support.

Linked to the above implementation barriers, studies find many teachers lack training in ethical instruction and approaches to facilitate character growth (Fafunwa & Aisiku, 2022). They rely mainly on traditional vocational and academic content teaching without pedagogical strategies to develop values. Hidayati (2011) notes that s, "The teacher merely pays lip service to the character development of the learners. This suggests a need for enhanced pre-service and in-service professional development focused on philosophy, methods, and assessment of moral education (Cahn & Carbone, 2023).). Equipping teachers to move beyond transmissive pedagogy and integrate values acquisition across diverse learning experiences is critical for effectiveness. Additionally, as Constantinescu & Dascalu (2021) discuss, teachers must be supported to embody the moral qualities they are meant to instill in students through mentoring and ongoing ethical training. Teacher conduct serves as a powerful moral model.

4.7 Critical evaluation of lived experiences of D1, D2, D3, D4, and T1-T11 on the Effectiveness of the strategies in school for moral education for character formation

One interviewed participant revealed that the approaches are inactive and their implementations are wanting. His response states,

> **"***They are not working, they are there, but their implementation is not there or usually runs short; here, we build on physical speech, character, and academic formation, which are the four pillars of development. Even sports help to release tension. Football working team brings out teamwork and rejects selfishness.***"*

On the other hand, other participants agreed that guiding, counseling, and corporal punishment are the effective approaches, but the challenge is that punishment is legally forbidden. Their response stated that

> "*Guiding and counseling is effective where caning is not allowed. Punishment helps to prevent the pupils from repeating the same. They are effective though some contribute negatively, e.g., through sports like rugby, students access drugs and believe it gives the energy to play, this imparts negative attitudes and values.*"

Other participants felt that the effectiveness of the strategies was a bit wanting and in responding to that question, they gave the following Thoughts:

> "*Like once in a while, we have professionals in pastoral programs, there are no frequencies, only that, to some extent, they matter. When you take them out in matters of guidance and counseling, we have some differences.*"

Regarding the effectiveness of the strategies, out of 15 participants who gave their thoughts, 11 teachers accepted that strategies have been effective and four opposed the idea of their effectiveness.

The study's findings concur with the findings by Nkatha (2014), who said that CRE teaching strategies applied by the CRE teachers, such as the Lecturing method, Discussion method, and Project work method, determined change of behavior and contributed to learner's moral development. These findings differ from the findings by Moore & Kuol (2007), who found that teaching methods do not positively impact students" behavior change. Thus, the researcher agrees with the findings from the minority teachers who observed that the listed strategies are ineffective.

The three categories of appraisals indicate that moral strategies are not effective at all (category one), Mixed reaction to counseling (category two), and punishment-oriented appraisers (category three). Category one exhibits nihilist tendencies, which does not lead to excellence and finality of eudaimonia. Category two reveals actual lived experiences, and they can contextualize the effectiveness of the strategies from their practice. The belief that counseling can be done better is typical of eudaimonia Excellency; Category 3 is purely deontologist and locates experience and happiness at the level of enforcing duty through punishment, yet the effectiveness of corporal punishment, even if it was legal, does not evoke free assimilation on happiness.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

On the strategies in school for moral education for character formation, it was found out that out of the 13 strategies established, only three are student engagement, class meetings, student leadership, and clubs and societies are most likely to engage students at their existential level. These three approaches allow students to express themselves more than the other ten top-down approaches. The top-down model of moral education tends to be more authoritarian, based on adult perspectives, and less subjective. On the effectiveness of the strategies in school for moral education for character formation, it was noted that the implementation is wanting, and most of the approaches are short of action except guidance counseling. The participants did not provide hard or solid evidence of the assessment that led to such conclusions.

5.2 Recommendations

This article recommends that teachers in Kakamega County be trained to use multiple moral strategies that require extensive student participation and include practical and reflective methods to promote character education. It is emphasized that schools should implement well-specified systematic and modeling programs

in which teachers exemplify and explain virtues in realistic situations. Moreover, moral education should be an integrated approach to ensure that students receive ethical education in many areas of learning to strengthen their morality in applying moral education in many facets of their learning.

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