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**Role of attachment style and moral identity in ethical behaviour among secondary school adolescent students in Nsukka, Enugu State**

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**Abstract**

This study examined the role of attachment style and moral identity in ethical behaviour among adolescent students. A total of 666 adolescents were selected from six (6) secondary schools in Nsukka. They comprised 365 male students (54.8%) and 301 female students (45.2%). Their ages ranged from 13 to 17 years with mean age of 15.4 (SD = 1.230). Results of the analysis revealed that mother trust/communication significantly and positively related to ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .27, p = .005$ ). Mother alienation significantly and negatively related to relativism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.12, p = .005$ ). Father's alienation significantly and negatively related to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.08, p = .005$ ). Peer's trust/communication significantly and positively related to relativism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .09, p = .005$ ). Peer's alienation significantly and negatively related to relativism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.18, p = .005$ ). The results also showed that moral self significantly and positively related to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .08, p < .005$ ). Moral integrity did not determine idealism and relativism domains of ethical behaviour. In attachment style, mother attachment is the highest contributors to the development of ethical behaviour followed by father and then peer; while moral self-play major role in moral identity in development of individual's ethical behaviour.

**Keywords:** Ethical behaviour, attachment style, moral identity, moral self, moral integrity

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## Introduction

Current perception in the Nigerian society suggests that ethical and unethical behavior is a matter of choice and there are no criteria for demanding ethical behavior. The turmoil inherently tends to distract people from the ethical obligations and purposes of life. Odo (2022) identified that currently people formalize theft, lies, cheating, and other unethical practices in our society and classify them as opportunities, or etiquette. People tend to consider the state of their social connection before deciding whether to exhibit ethical behaviour. Most research conducted on ethical behaviour focused on business and leadership ethics rather than development of general ethical behavior (Odo, 2022). To this end, the present researchers feel the need to investigate the role of attachment style and moral identity in ethical behavior from adolescent developmental stages.

Our contemporary society is flooded with immoral vices, indecency, and inhumanity in the sense that growing individual needs a pattern of ethical development that impact the consciousness of humanity. Ethical behaviour refers to true or proper behaviour (Odo, 2022). Trevino et al. (2006), opined that ethical behaviour is decided based on generally acknowledged norms of behaviour. Ethical behaviour helps children in building a robust personal and socially inclined moral view that helps them to manage circumstances, incompatibility, ambiguity, and to develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behavior wear others (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training & Youth Affairs, 2008). Odo (2022) reported the existence of gap in establishing judgment over ethical behaviour from developmental perspective. Kohlbergs' theory of moral development was adopted to understand the developmental process of ethical behaviour. Kohlbergs' theory stipulates that people go through three levels of moral development, and each level is characterized by two stages making it six stages of moral development (Kohlberg, 1969). Internalization of moral principles was the key concept in understanding moral development which implies that development in ethical behaviour also changes from externally controlled to internal self-generated behavioural standards.

The present study of ethical behaviour concentrated in narrowing it to ethical ideology and action. The major two dimensions of ethical behaviour are idealism and relativism. However, ethical behaviour that contains dimensions of idealism and relativism suggests differences in adolescents' perception, and adjustment in ethically difficult conditions and their conclusions towards ethical issues (Forsyth et al., 2008). Adolescents who hold idealist perspective maintains a perfect choice in generally preferred ethical behaviour than growing individual who choose relativists idea; that put so much consideration of self in making choice that eventually keep them away from standard ethical rules (Forsyth, 1992). Davis et al. (2001) indicated that individuals with idealism perspective easily and readily conscious to understand people's feelings about the rightful situation and actions; tentatively considering that perfect outcomes can usually be gotten with the right action. People with a relativistic attitude is negatively related with having a dogmatic idea of ethical behaviour which involves personal ethical philosophy relying totally on doubt; assuming that the best is always mixed with bad. Odo (2022), states that many individuals affected by the global culture feel that ethical behaviour is a matter of choice because there is less standard pattern of ethical behavioural development. This is why many young people tend to choose relativism which is strictly on self-centeredness over idealism which is the base of ethical behaviour.

Young people's behavior in the context of ethical ideology must be considered in their development, where ethical behavior appears to be interpreted from a personal, family, and cultural point of view, especially in our multicultural Nigeria. To prove claims, people tend to engage in actions they perceive as ethical. This is evidence of aversion to the known moral conscience of our modern society, including political and economic corruption, social illness,

personal, professional, and institutional/organizational ethical turmoil. The wrong notion of ethical application has created many illegal heritages. At the individual level, moral decadence has left many with a lack of integrity. It obscures the vision of young and old, making it difficult to distinguish right from wrong (Uzoigwe, 2013). Even at the corporate level, people try to justify unethical behaviour and corrupt practices to the extent that those who exhibit ethical behaviour becomes ashamed of being morally upright to maintain moral awareness (Bazerman & Banaji, 2004).

#### *Attachment Style*

Adolescents need long-term support from adults and peers who have access to a variety of legitimate opportunities to care for them and guide them to imbibe ethical behavior (Hamburg & Hamburg, 2004). This has led to the question of whether attachment styles relate to ethical behavior in modern society or not. In modern society, it is easy to find many young people who are dissatisfied and confused about gaining ethical behaviour. Parents are always busy in their office work forgetting paving the way for adolescents to develop ethical responsibility and duty (Ibeagha, 2006). Attachment is a concept of development, incorporating the idea that the early close relationships that a child experiences provide a psychological template for the relationships that an individual ultimately forms in adulthood (Bowlby, 1982).

Bowlby (1980), describes the attachment system as a system activated by environmental threats that threaten the survival of an individual, creating a need for action to seek protection and intimacy from others. The combination of non-attachment threat sources and lack of access to caregivers amplifies distress and causes the highest levels of attachment activation (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). This means that lack of secure attachment is a threat, and secure attachment is also a response to other threats. This can be the result of trust /communication or alienation that exists in an individual relationship. Therefore, attachment security is a condition for being protected from threats and recognizing fewer threats. On the other hand, anxiety about attachment leads to individuals being exposed to more threats and recognizing more threats. This condition makes anxious individuals ethically vulnerable (Chugh et al., 2014). Adolescents with good parental relationships are less likely to engage in a variety of unethical behaviors such as fighting, stealing, cheating, and dangerous sex (Autseeser et al., 2006).

#### *Moral Identity*

In addition, ethical strength requires identity and loyalty (Erikson, 1964). Moral identity stands here in respect of predicting adolescent ethical behavior. It is an important source of moral motivation and leads to greater coherence between adolescent moral principles and actions (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Bergman, 2004; Blasi, 2004; Hardy, 2006; Hardy & Carlo, 2005). For example, a stronger sense of moral identity predicts a higher level of volunteerism (Aquino & Reed, 2002), perceptual and reflexive moral attention (Reynolds, 2008), empathy (Detert et al., 2008), and other forms of prosocial behavior (Hardy, 2006; Sage et al., 2006). Higher moral identity and self-esteem yielded lower rate of aggression (Barriga et al., 2001); a reduction in unethical behavior such as liars and academic misconduct (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007); separation (Deter et al., 2008), and lower out group persecution tendencies (Reed & Aquino, 2003).

Identity is rooted in the core of one's existence, including being loyal to oneself in action, and is associated with respect to understanding of reality (Erikson, 1964). Moral identity is defined as a self-schema organized around the association of a set of moral characteristics such as honest and compassionate (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Lapsley and Lasky (2001), state that a person with a moral identity is one whose moral schema is chronically

available, easily prepared, and easily activated for information processing. Shao et al., (2008), note that moral identity plays an important role in moral function by influencing how people interpret and respond to situations involving moral judgments and ethical decisions. Blasi (1984), describes moral identity as individual differences in which doing the right thing reflects to some extent in the central or distinct characteristics of a person's self-sense. Consistent with this, Black and Reynolds (2016), identify two elements of an individual's moral identity as moral self and moral integrity.

The following hypotheses were tested:

*Hypothesis 1:* Attachment to mother in trust/communication and alienation will significantly and positively relate to their ethical behaviour.

*Hypothesis 2:* Attachment to father in trust/communication and alienation will significantly and negatively relate to ethical behaviour.

*Hypothesis 3:* Attachment to peer in trust/communication and alienation will significantly and positively relate to ethical behaviour.

*Hypothesis 4:* Moral self and moral integrity will significantly and positively relate to ethical behaviour.

## Method

### *Participants*

The participants for the study included 666 young people selected from six (6) secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area. Out of the 30 secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government, six schools were selected through simple random sampling. One hundred and eleven participants were drawn from each school selected for the study through simple random sampling technique. Participants were selected from JSSII, SSI and SSII classes using their class register through systematic random sampling technique. JSSIII and SSIII were examination class, and majority of the students were out of school during the time of the research. While majority of student in JSSI were below the age required by the researchers. The participants consist of 365 male students representing (54.8%) and 301 female students representing (45.2%) of the sample size. Participants' age bracket ranged between 13 to 17 years with mean age of 15.4. They include: 13 years=56 (8.4%), 14 years=99 (14.9%), 15 years=180 (27.0%), 16 years=176 (26.4%), and 17 years=155 (23.3%).

### *Instruments*

Three instruments were used for the study. The ethics position questionnaire developed by Forsyth (1980). It consists of 20 items designed to assess individual classification according to ethical ideology and action. The scale is divided into two sub-scales: idealism and relativism. The idealism score is obtained by taking the mean of items one (1) through ten (10). The relativism score is obtained by taking the mean items eleven (11) through twenty (20). The items sample include: "People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree, and risk to another should never be tolerated, irrespective of how small the risk might be". The scale is rated in five-point Likert scale format to indicate the extent the participants agree or disagree with the items. A pilot study was conducted by the researcher to validate the entire instrument used. One hundred (100) adolescents participated in the pilot study. Fifty (50) participants from Nsukka High School (males) and fifty (50) participants from Urban Girls Secondary School Nsukka (females) were used for the pilot study. Their ages ranged between (13-17) years of age with mean age of 15.4 years and standard deviation of 1.230. The confirmatory factor

analysis was performed using the Maximum Likelihood method with promaxrotation. This confirmed the two-factor structure of the EPQ. The correlation of the subscales of the EPQ (Idealism and Relativism) is  $r = .61$ . This is relatively high, suggesting that the subscales may form a single factor. The researcher obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .83 for idealism, .71 for relativism, and .86 for the entire EPQ scale.

#### *Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA-R)*

An inventory revision of parent and peer attachments was developed by Gullone and Robinson (2005), and originally by Armsden and Greenberg (1987). This scale measures various properties of adolescents' relationships with parents (mothers, fathers, or guardians playing these roles) and peers, such as trust, quality of communication, anger and alienation. The inventory consists of mothers, fathers, and peers with 25 items questionnaires, each containing three subscales: trust, communication, and alienation. For the parent and peer questionnaire subscale, the trust consists of 10 items, the communication subscale consists of 9 items, and the alienation subscale consists of 6 items in each questionnaire. Instruments are evaluated on a Likert scale that is rarely or never true, not very true, sometimes true, often true, and almost always true. Examples of items in the questionnaires include: My mother respects my feeling.

The present researcher conducted a factor analysis for each of the subscales mother, father, and peer. The rotated three factor solution obtained by Principal Axis factoring method showed that whereas all the items of alienation loaded on one factor (Factor 3), those of trust and communication were not as consistent. The rotated factor solution was further investigated to clarify the three proposed factors. The three-factor solution did not show a good fit: the chi-square score was significant: chi-square goodness of fit = 292.21,  $df = 228$ ,  $p = 0.003$ . The rotated three-factor solution obtained by the Principal Axis factoring method showed that all items of Alienation loaded on one factor (factor 2). The proportion of trust and communication was not very consistent in the entire scale, father, mother and peer. In a confirmatory factor analysis of the IPPA-R two-factor structure led to the adaptation of the instrument as a two-factor structure in the present study that includes Bonding (Trust/Communication) and Alienation. The Bonding (Trust/Communication) had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 and Alienation was 0.71. There was a negative correlation between the two factor scales. Therefore, when measuring a configuration, it is necessary to consider the scale based on its composite scale.

#### *Moral Identity Questionnaire (MIQ)*

Moral Identity Questionnaire was developed by Black and Reynolds (2016). It consists of 20 items constructed to measure moral self and moral integrity. Items 1-8 measures Moral Self subscale while items 9-20 measures Moral Integrity. Moral integrity subscale measures the desire to make intention and behaviour constant, and how much value participants put on behaving based on moral principles. The Moral integrity domain of MIQ measures integrity in the idea of size of personal and public behaviour. Examples of the items include: "Once I've made up my mind about what is the right thing to do, I make sure I do it," and "There is no point in going out of my way to do something good if no one is around to appreciate it". The scale is rated in a 5-point Likert scale format from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores indicate greater importance placed on moral values and integrity.

The present researcher conducted a factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy estimate of .74 and Bartlett's test of sphericity estimate of 647.94 ( $df = 190$ ,  $p < .001$ ) showed the adequacy of the data for factor analysis. The unrotated two-factor

solution obtained by Principal Axis factoring method shows that the entire items in the MIQ could not be combined as a single factor considering that items 4 and 5, for instance, did not load on the first factor which most of the other items loaded significantly on. The rotated factor solution was further explored for clarity of the proposed two factors. The rotated two-factor solution obtained by Principal Axis factoring method showed that the two-factor solution proposed by Black and Reynolds (2016) that assigned items 1-8 to the domain of Moral Self and items 9-20 to the domain of Moral Integrity was almost perfectly replicated except for item 11 which loaded significantly on both factors (although with a negative loading on the second factor).

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the Maximum Likelihood method with Promax Rotation. The two-factor solution was confirmed, although the chi-square value was significant, showing a poor fit: chi-square goodness-of-fit = 208.16,  $df = 151$ ,  $p = .001$ . The confirmatory factor analysis which was performed using the Maximum Likelihood method with Promax Rotation confirmed the two-factor structure of the MIQ. Items 1-8 loaded significantly on one factor while items 9-20, in exception of item 11, loaded significantly on the second factor as originally proposed. The pilot study conducted by the researcher yielded a Cronbach's Coefficient alpha of .70 for the entire scale; .75 for moral self sub-scale and .83 for moral integrity sub-scale.

### ***Procedure***

#### *Ethics Approval and Informed Consent*

All procedures followed were under the scrutiny of ethical committee on human experimentation in university of Nigeria Nsukka. Approval was obtained in concordance with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in (2005). We obtained informed consent from all principals and students at the sampled schools. The researchers selected six (6) secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area through simple random sampling technique. By listing all the schools, the schools were selected independently from the list in a single stage. The researcher sought for the permission of school principals and the assistance of form teachers in selecting the participants from their class registers through systematic sampling technique. Students were selected from the class list in the interval of three. Each of the students selected was given a set of questionnaires to elicit their response on ethical behaviour, emotion regulation, religious commitment, attachment style and moral identity. To ensure a high rate of return, the researcher distributed and collected the questionnaire on the spot. Seven hundred and ninth one (791) copies of questionnaire were distributed, and thirty (30) participants selected from class register were absent, forty (43) failed to return while twenty-eight (28) wrongly filled the questionnaire. After the data compilation, twenty-four (24) participants between ages 18 to 20 years were deleted in the preliminary analysis. Thus, 666 out of 791 questionnaires were used for the study.

### ***Design/Statistics***

Cross-sectional design was adopted for the study. Multiple regression analysis was used to statistically test the hypotheses for the study.

## Results

Table 1: Correlational matrix table between dependent variable (ethical behaviour) and independent variables (parents and peer attachment, and moral identity)

Model	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Gender	—	—	—											
2 Age	15	1.2	-.36	—	—									
3 Mother TC	61	11	.01	-.02	.26*	—								
4 Mother alien.	28	4.5	-.05	-.01	-.08	-.04	—							
5 Father TC	58	13	-.04	-.03	.19**	.62**	.07	—						
6 Father alien.	30	5.0	-.05	.01	-.07	.00	.51**	.02	—					
7 Peer TC	69	14	.12**	-.09	.25**	.52**	-.05	.59**	.01	—				
8 Peer alien.	21	5.1	-.12**	.00	-.01	.13*	.43**	.26**	.52**	.11**	—			
9 Moral self	39	6.5	.01	.01	.24**	.17**	-.20**	.14**	-.19**	.21**	-.13**	—		
10 Moral integrity	35	8.6	-.07	-.04	.15**	-.15**	.35**	-.07	.32**	-.14**	.32**	-.30**	—	
11 EB Ideal.	34	5.8	-.04	.01	.20**	.31**	-.08	.22**	-.14**	.27	.06	.20**	-.20**	—
12 EB Relat.	27	6.7	.14**	-.02	.16**	.30**	.16**	.27**	.05	.17**	.21**	.04	.05	.48**

Note: Mother, Father and Peer TC= Mother, Father and Peer Trust/Communication, Mother, Father and Peer alien= Mother, Father and Peer Alienation, EB Ideal=Ethical Behaviour Idealism, EB Relat=Ethical Behaviour Relativism

Results shown in Table 1 indicate that gender negatively correlated with age ( $r = -.362, p < .001$ ), positively related with peer attachment style in trust/communication domain ( $r = .123, p < .001$ ) and negatively related with peer attachment style in alienation domain ( $r = -.118, p < .001$ ) and negatively correlated with ethical behaviour in relativism domain ( $r = -.138, p < .001$ ). Mother attachment style in trust/communication domain positively related with idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $r = .311, p < .001$ ), and relativism domain of ethical behaviour ( $r = .301, p < .001$ ). Attachment style to mother in alienation domain positively related to only relativism domain of ethical behaviour ( $r = .157, p < .001$ ). Attachment style to father in trust/communication domain positively related with both idealism ( $r = .223, p < .001$ ) and relativism ( $r = .273, p < .001$ ) domains of ethical behaviour. Attachment to father in alienation domain only negatively related with idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $r = -.140, p < .001$ ). Attachment to peer in trust/communication domain positively related to both idealism ( $r = .271, p < .001$ ) and relativism ( $r = .174, p < .001$ ) domains of ethical behaviour. Attachment to peer in alienation domain only positively related with relativism ( $r = .210, p < .001$ ) domain of ethical behaviour. Moral self of moral identity domain positively related with only idealism domain ( $r = .200, p < .001$ ) of ethical behaviour. Moral integrity of moral identity domain negatively related with only idealism domain ( $r = -.201, p < .001$ ) of ethical behaviour. Idealism domain of ethical behaviour positively related with relativism ( $r = .476, p < .001$ ) domain of ethical behaviour.



**Table 2***Hierarchical multiple regression for predictors of ethical behaviour (Idealism and Relativism)*

Predictor	Step1			Step2			Step3			Step4		
	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t
<b>Idealism</b>												
IPPA-mb	.15	.27	6.8									
IPPA-ma	-.01	-.01	-.15									
IPPA-fb				-.01	-.02	-.42						
IPPA-fa				-.01	-.08	-2.2						
IPPA-pb							.04	.09	1.9			
IPPA-pa							.04	.04	.87			
Ms										.05	.11	2.8
Mi										.08	.08	2.0
$R^2$	.117			.123			.129			.139		
$\Delta R^2$	.110			.114			.117			.126		
$F$	.000			.093			.107			.006		
$\Delta F$	24.47			2.379			2.241			7.572		
<b>Relativism</b>												
IPPA-mb	.15	-.23	-6.0									
IPPA-ma	-.18	-.12	-3.2									
IPPA-fb				-.06	-.12	-2.4						
IPPA-fa				.03	.02	.60						
IPPA-pb							-.00	-.01	-1.4			
IPPA-pa							-.24	-.20	-4.6			
Ms										.02	.02	.56
Mi										.04	.05	1.2
$R^2$	.129			.138			.162			.166		
$\Delta R^2$	.052			.009			.024			.003		
$F$	.000			.035			.000			.269		
$\Delta F$	19.856			3.382			9.547			1.317		

 $\Delta R^2$  = Change in  $R^2$ ;  $\Delta F$  = Change in  $F$ 

In Table 2, it was indicated that gender which was entered as a control variable negatively related to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.13$ ,  $t = 3.3$ ,  $p = <.001$ ). Mother attachment in trust/communication positively and significantly related to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $t = 6.8$ ,  $p = <.005$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in mother attachment in trust/communication domain, idealism domain of ethical behaviour increases by 27 unit. Mother attachment in alienation domain did not relate to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.006$ ,  $t = -.15$ ). Father attachment in trust/communication did not relate to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.02$ ,  $t = -.42$ ). Father attachment in alienation negatively related to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.08$ ,  $t = -2.2$ ,  $p = <.001$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in father attachment in alienation, idealism domain of ethical behaviour decreases by .08 unit. Peer attachment in trust/communication positively related to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $t = 1.9$ ,  $p = <.001$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in peer attachment in

trust/communication, idealism domain of ethical behaviour increases by .09 unit. Peer attachment in alienation did not relate to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .04, t = .86$ ). Moral self-domain of moral identity positively and significantly related to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .08, t = 1.9, p = <.001$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in moral self-factor of moral identity, idealism domain of ethical behaviour increases by .08 unit). Moral integrity domain of moral identity did not relate to idealism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .05, t = 1.0$ ).

In relativism line of Table 2, it was indicated that gender which was entered as a control variable positively related to predicted relativism factor of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .14, t = 3.6, p = <.005$ ). Mother attachment in trust/communication negatively and significantly related to relativism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.23, t = -5.8, p = <.005$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in mother attachment in trust/communication, relativism domain of ethical behaviour decreases by .23 unit. Mother attachment in alienation negatively and significantly related to relativism factor of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.12, t = -3.2, p = <.001$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in mother attachment in alienation, relativism factor of ethical behaviour decreases by .12 unit. Father attachment in trust/communication negatively and significantly related to relativism factor of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.11, t = -2.4, p = <.001$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in father attachment in trust/communication, relativism factor of ethical behaviour decreases by .11 unit. Father attachment in alienation did not relate to relativism factor of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .02, t = .59$ ). Peer attachment in trust/communication did not relate to relativism factor of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.006, t = -.14$ ). Peer attachment in alienation negatively and significantly related to relativism factor of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = -.18, t = -4.6, p = <.005$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in peer attachment in alienation, relativism factor of ethical behaviour decreases by .18 unit. Moral self-domain of moral identity did not relate to relativism factor of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .02, t = .55$ ). Moral integrity domain of moral identity did not relate to relativism domain of ethical behaviour ( $\beta = .05, t = 1.2$ ).

## Discussion

The result of the study indicated that adolescent attachment to mother trust/communication predicted ethical behaviour in both idealism and relativism domain of ethical behaviour. Why attachment to mother alienation did not predict idealism but predicted relativism domain of ethical behaviour. Adolescent attachment to father trust/communication did not predict ethical behaviour of both idealism and relativism domains. Why attachment of father alienation negatively predicted idealism domain of ethical behaviour but did not predict relativism domain of ethical behaviour. Adolescent attachment to peer trust/communication did not predict ethical behaviour in both idealism & relativism domains of ethical behaviour. Why attachment to peer alienation did not predict idealism domain but negatively predicted relativism domain. This implies that adolescent's state of connectedness to their mother in trust and communication domain lead them to maintain generally accepted ethical behaviour; but adolescent's state of connectedness to mother in alienation domain do not make them to accept general moral philosophy rather, they accept personal moral philosophy which believe that good is always mixed with bad thing.

Adolescent attachment to father trust/Communication did not predict ethical behaviour of both idealism and relativism. Why attachment of father in alienation domain negatively predicted idealism domain of ethical behaviour but did not predict relativism domain of ethical behaviour. This implies that adolescent's state of relatedness to father in

trust/communications have nothing to do with their ethical behaviour. This implies that adolescent's state of relatedness to father in alienation domain do not make them to accept general moral absolutism rather they accept ethical behaviour that consider that good are always mixed with bad. The result also indicated that adolescent attachment to peer trust/communication did not predict ethical behaviour in both idealism and relativism domains, while attachment to peer alienation domain did not predict idealism domain but negatively predicted relativism domain. This implies that adolescent's state of connectedness to peer in trust/communication has nothing to do with their generally accepted ethical behaviour. Adolescent's state of connectedness to their peer in alienation do not make them accept moral absolutism rather it makes them forcefully accept personal moral philosophy assuming that good is always mixed with bad.

The results further indicated that moral self-predicted idealism and did not predict relativism domains of ethical behaviour. Moral integrity did not predict both idealism and relativism domains of ethical behaviour. This implies that adolescent's who maintain the self-concept of good behaviour from moral self domain, maintain the absolutism of moral standard rather than personal moral philosophy, but adolescents who imbibe self-concept of good behaviour from moral integrity domain do not have any influence in their ethical behaviour. This implies that without moral self in moral identity, individual will not exhibit ethical behaviour.

### *Implications of the Study*

The present study has both theoretical and practical implications. For theoretical implication, the result supported Kohlberg's theory of moral development which proposed that people go through three levels of moral development, and each level is characterized by two stages making it six stages of moral development. The model made use of internalization as the key concept in understanding moral development which implies that development in moral judgment changes from behaviours that are externally controlled by internal self-generated standards and principles. The theorist noted that most adults do not achieve the fifth stage of social contract because it involves caring about the well-being of others which are part in completing ethical principles. However, the sixth and apex stage of moral development carry the propensity of individual to see and act from principled conscience and universal human right based on universal ethical principles.

The result of the attachment to parent and peer implies that mother attachment to their adolescents has the strongest influence on their ethical behaviour. This implies that mothers should be held more responsible for some of the ethical behaviours exhibited by their adolescent children. This confirms the public perception that mothers make homes and contribute the highest percentage in building the character of the adolescents since they have proven to wield the highest influence in their adolescent's ethical behaviour. This implies that mothers can improve or mar their adolescent's ethical behaviours. It implies that mothers should channel most of their resources towards influencing adolescent's development to deposit general ethical principles that will eventually guide their ethical behaviour in life for the betterment of society. From these parents and peer attachment perspective, the result implies that parents have more tasks to perform in drawing their adolescent children closer to them in order to improve on the quality of their bond (communication and trust) which the result confirmed is stronger than alienation in predicting ethical behaviour.

Non confirmation of moral integrity implies that ethical behaviour is not only determined by what individual showcase now because some behaviours can be faked. An

individual may also be protecting a reputation of integrity but in the real self, may not be a moral person. The significant result of the moral self-factor of moral identity implies that moral self domain is the major element in moral identity for ethical behaviour.

The result implies that moral identity in the life of Christians is hidden in self, and individual reputation is never a guarantee for his/her ethical behaviour. It implies that most of the people who guide and protect their reputation of goodness may not actually be good people, especially as the participants in this work are Christians. This shows that the act of goodness or ethical behaviour does not require public applause or ego boasting. An individual who has moral self may behave ethically not just to appease people but because of common goodness. However, one with moral integrity may showcase goodness on some occasions in order to protect his/her reputation of acting goodness, but in real sense may not be a good person. For instance, some people who have moral integrity without moral self may maintain professional ethics in their reputation of professionalism to maintain their certification for practice and their salary. But outside these benefits, they may not be good people and may not act ethically on some occasions when general ethics is put into consideration.

### ***Limitations of the Study/ Suggestions for Future Research***

The research is limited to the answers provided by the participants. It is difficult to tell whether participants' responses reflect those who did not participate. It was difficult to determine whether the respondent's outcome followed the exposure in time or whether the exposure was attributable to the outcome. It has been suggested that common method biases should be corrected using a time-lag design that includes separation of questionnaires used to collect data on variable characteristics into 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> waves where more than one occasion was used in distribution of the questionnaires (Tehseen et al., 2017). This type of design keeps respondents consistent between their perceptions and attitudes, making them stable and rational when answering the questions.

Another limitation of this study is the use of data sources from adolescent reports to generate results involving fathers, mothers, and peers. This creates problems with responses being tampered with and the inability of respondents to provide honest answers. This is usually related to survey design. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should consider collecting data from adolescents, mothers, fathers, and peers when addressing ethical behavior in adolescents.

### **Conclusion**

Ethical behaviour falls into two dimensions which include idealism and relativism. Those who adopt idealism perspective accept general moral philosophy with honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal, professional, and academic relationship which respects the dignity, diversity and rights of individuals and groups of people without a denial of the existence of other ethical duties, while those who adopt relativism perspective only exhibit ethical behaviour with dogmatic belief system and a personal moral philosophy with the belief that good is always mixed with bad. Adolescents' attachment to mother has been found very important to the development of ethical behaviour, while adolescents' attachment to father and peer is channelled to self-egocentric ethical disposition. Moral self together with moral integrity help in development of ethical behaviour. Moral self alone play role in development of ethical behaviour but moral integrity alone does not. If parents perform their duties satisfactorily, imbibing positive attachment style and impartation of moral identity on individuals will help in building ethical behaviour in our society.

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