Wicked youth: thinking of the moral absence of teenagers essay

Business, Decision Making

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Morality is vital for every individual.

It is the foundation of one's personality and personal decisions in life. Adolescence is the stage of life where most issues of morality arise. The basis of morality among teenagers springs from their beliefs, culture, religion, and social influences. There are many influential factors that influence teenagers to deviate from the usual moral standards, including peer pressure. There are also instances when innovation and technology play a great role in moral absence among teenagers. These factors make them forget what is moral and ethical.

Thus, it is highly important to determine what is right or wrong in order to fully understand the concept of morality among teenagers. Hence, this paper aims to discuss the moral absence phenomenon of the teenagers when it comes to network morality, sexual morality, social morality, citizen consciousness, and teenager crime. Making decisions are considerably tough for individuals who are in their teenage years. Every decision made will contribute to their personality and will have an effect in their adulthood. Wicked Youth: Thinking of the Moral Absence of Teenagers Introduction. Morality is defined in many ways by different philosophers across the world.

However, the personal concept of morality varies from person to person, and is based on decisions and influences in the lives of individuals. Adolescence, being the stage of formation among individuals, requires great focus in terms of morality. Absence of one's morality causes damage to the personality formation and the whole aspect of one's individuality. Hence, morality is a vital issue because it deals with the goodness of a person and

the correctness of behavior. In this fast changing world, the concept of morality has been changed overtime. In the lives of teenagers, moral absence is an issue that should not be taken for granted. There are causes and effects of this moral dilemma.

Factors that contribute to personality change among teenagers can be traced from family upbringing to environmental and technological factors. Being exposed to immoral activities will certainly make teenagers adopt an inappropriate way of living. As a result, not only do these immoral actions affect the teenagers involved, the people around them will also put at risk, as well as the society where they live. One of the moral issues today involves today's technological advancements. This concern is referred to as network morality. At present, the youth are privileged to have access to the World Wide Web and other innovated media.

Such advantage is often abused by teenagers and causes them to neglect the concept of morality. Sex is another concern where the issue of morality surfaces. Sex morality is one of the most serious problems among teenagers in society today. Nowadays, the absence of sex morality has become a common occurrence, as individuals at a younger age abuse sex and happily experiment with sexual activities. Such immoral practice could cause them to acquire AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Moral concerns that involve society fall under social morality, which is based on history. The personality of teenagers, as well as their behavior and actions, are shaped by their cultural history and traditions. These traditions are deeply rooted in a society's perception of morality.

However, many teenagers today choose to go against these traditions. There are instances when freedom is abused by teenagers, abandoning their traditions in the process. This deviation negatively influences other people in the society.

Citizen consciousness is another moral issue that is developed during the stage of adolescence. This is because everyone should be responsible in following the rules and regulations which should be carried over until maturity and adulthood. As young citizens of the society, teenagers are expected to demonstrate behaviors in accordance to what is legal and moral. However, many of today's teenagers develop moral absence in terms of citizen consciousness. There are times when teenagers choose to go against the law, including driving without a license and drinking alcohol when they have not yet reached the legal age. The consequences of these actions will make teenagers lose their sense of responsibility and moral character. Juvenile delinquency and teenage crime are also behaviors that typify moral absence.

There are many contributing factors that will make a teenager turn to juvenile delinquency, such as economic, social, cultural, and individual factors. Teenage crimes are often linked to parents who neglect providing proper guidance to their children. Juvenile delinquency can go as far as serious crimes such as drug addiction and robbery, among others. Moral absence among teenagers is caused by many factors. These contributing factors may include the way they were raised by their families, the kind of friends they hang out with, and the type of environment where they grew up.

The absence of morality among teenagers should be addressed in the best means possible. There are many solutions available to bring back the moral of teenagers.

It is never too late to expose them to the correct behavior and the right attitude founded in moral principles. Defining Morality Morality is an ambiguous term which can be defined in two ways: descriptive and normative. Gert (2008) attempted to provide a descriptive definition of morality: " Morality is often distinguished from etiquette, law, and religion, all of which are, or involve, codes of conduct put forward by a society. " This is in contrast to a normative definition of morality that Gert (2008) sought to clarify: " a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons" (Gert, 2008). By examining the two given definitions of morality, there are essential features present in the original descriptive definition but are not present in the normative definition.

The commonality of the descriptive and normative definition of morality is the notion that guides individuals to good behavior and how to avoid inflicting harm to other people (Gert, 2008). Ethics and morality go relatively hand in hand. Being ethical is often related to being moral.

This is because ethics is used to study the systematized moral domain of a person. Individuals have their own sets of ethical and moral principles which are developed overtime. These sets of moral conduct and behavior are manifested according to culture, religion, belief and norms. Most rules of morality are based on universal laws favored by the majority. Nevertheless,

one's definition of morality differs in terms of culture, religion, profession, and community. Hence, although all moral codes are subject to various cultures, there are also values that can be found in every culture. These are moral facts that are linked to clear standards of ethical behavior (James, 2006).

There also exists a deep connection between religion and society's concept of morality (James, 2006). Various religious beliefs hinder an person from doing things that will cause harm to others. There are divine laws set by a certain religion in order not to violate one's autonomy to do things according to their own free will (James, 2006). Morality is an issue of significant importance to everyone in society (Kidder, 2003). It effectively makes people do good things and decide based on ethical principles that will generate greater happiness for all. Due to these principles of morality, making decisions in life becomes difficult for most people. This is because balancing the concept of right and wrong is extremely important for every outcome of the decisions that they make (Kidder, 2003).

According to Kidder (2003), people face tough decisions everyday. The issue here is to choose the most important thing that will favor most people. The right way to assess this is by determining the morality and value of one's decision. Kidder (2003) emphasized this point in his article: " sound values raise tough choices and tough choices are never easy" (p. 14). Morality and Adolescence As an individual grows, development takes place.

It is a continuous process affecting every aspect of life. Most psychologists describe this change as part of humans' belongingness and coping up with others (Atkinson, 1993). Development is not only evident on the physical aspect; it can also be traced on the ways by which individuals attempt to socialize with others and at the same time act based on moral principles. Adolescence is the transition stage from childhood to adulthood (Jones & Meyer, 2007). Adolescence is the stage of life where most teenagers experience changes which affect their personality.

These changes in their interests and attitudes which take place may either resolve problems or may result in conflicting issues (Jones & Meyer, 2007). The social and personality development of teenagers occurs during adolescence and guides them to maturity (Atkinson, 1993). The sociocultural theory by Lev Vygotsky explains how " growing up individuals in different societies acquire different skills" (Thomson, 2005). Parents and teachers also play a great role in shaping the personality of adolescents (Thomson, 2005). This is also the stage of life wherein teenagers seek to conduct some experimentation and engage in new habits and passions (Lewis, 2008).

During this stage, values are also received by individuals from their surroundings. These values are highly important in their personal growth; it is the foundation of their concept of morality (Thomson, 2005). Some teenagers have qualities and behavioral patterns that often clash with values and traditional norms. Teenagers are often impulsive, moody, aggressive, and careless (Pickrell, 2006). Boys who are in this stage are often seen to have behavioral problems.

They often go against authority and blame other people for their misdeeds. On the other hand, girls are frequently observed to have emotional problems and stress related issues. They are also prone to nurture suicidal tendencies and use drugs (Pickrell, 2006). During the adolescence phase, the need for peers arises, as teenagers feel the desire to enjoy doing activities both inside and outside the classroom. Some of them are inclined to be afraid of being left behind by their peers.

As a result, they are forced to risk themselves and take part in activities that their friends engage in, even if it these activities illegal and immoral. Such activities include binging in alcohol, using illegal drugs, browsing pornographic websites, driving while under the influence of any substance, driving without a license, and committing teenage crime, to name a few. Choosing to neglect the moral constraints of their actions, their curiosity causes them to give in to their peers' invitation. Causes and Effects of Moral Absence among Teenagers There are studies showing how the functioning of the brain affects the behavior of a person.

From here, one can infer that moral absence is not only caused by social factors; biological factors play a part in this phenomenon as well (Pickrell, 2006). Increasing the connectivity in the brain of teenagers makes it hard for them to decide immediately and be sensitive with the feelings of others. Another biological factor is the excretion of hormones which can also be the reason for moral absence. Teens have irregular production of hormones which affects their mood.

This causes the brain to delay maturity and may lead the teenagers to make harsh decisions (Lewis, 2008). Encouraging teenagers to be morally attentive and ethically inclined is really hard because of the society's situation nowadays. The prevalence of corruption and crime can make them believe that these activities are not in any way wrong, causing them to stray from moral acts. Commanding them to be law-abiding citizens is also one great challenge because a lot of adults do not manifest obedience to the laws that are imposed (Lewis, 2008).

Poor communication between parent and child will also lead to moral absence. Parents should be responsible enough to teach the right behavior to their children. Unfortunately, many parents who are expected to guide their children are busy doing their jobs and leave the responsibility of taking care of their children to nannies (DeBord, 1999).

As a result, teenagers use rebellion as a way of getting their parents attention to address their concern that money alone is not enough to show their care. A lot of parents do not realize the importance of instilling values to their children (DeBord, 1999). Some movies, advertisements, television programs, and video games also cause teenagers to be immoral. This is because of the content of the aforementioned materials that prompt the younger ones to do things which are not right. Negative effects of these media-related materials include teenage violence and crime.

Vulgarity is also present in various media, specifically those that promote sex, which, in effect, later on result in teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, and

abortion (Lewis, 2008). The stage of adolescence is the hardest part to convince people that what they are doing is immoral, reckless and detrimental for them (Drake, n. d.). This is because teenagers are not contented with the lessons given to them by their parents and teachers. They wanted to try things for themselves and prove the world that they can do things their way. Moral absence is a conflict faced by majority of teenagers.

It is their choice that determines the outcome of their action and the concept of right versus wrong (Kidder, 2003). Introspection is needed before making any decisions because it is not only the teenagers who are at risk because of moral absence. Their families and the society as a whole are also affected by their immoral actions. The following discusses moral absence phenomenon among teenagers: Network Morality The youth of today are privileged to have access to the Internet and other innovated media. However, this privilege is often abused by teenagers, causing them to ignore the fact that their action is wrong.

At present, there are many websites which encourage teenagers to participate in activities that go against the concept of what is moral and ethical. Many of these websites contain pornographic materials which negatively influence the teenagers. In an on line article written by Hamill (2008), internet pornography is mentioned as one of the factors also that lead teenagers to lose their virginity at a very young age. This is because the curious teenagers are more likely to imitate what they see on the web in order to experience what they have seen for themselves (Hamill, 2008).

Meanwhile, lack of sex education in schools also causes teenagers to make websites their alternative source of information regarding sexual activities and issues (Hamill, 2008). Exposure of teenagers to internet pornography also increases the rate of pregnancies (Hamill, 2008). Enticing them through pornographic materials will really increase their curiosity and sexual desire that may lead to rise in the number of teenage pregnancies (Hamill, 2008). Most cases of genital diseases and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) occur as teenagers emulate what is seen on pornographic websites. These harmful materials on the internet also changes behavior of teens and destroy their morality to the extreme (Hamill, 2008). To stress his point, Hamill (2008) stated that " the internet is where you get the most extreme stuff, sometimes live and in action, and it serves to normalize abusive acts.

" Male teenagers are more involved in network morality issues than females. This is because young male are more exposed to such technology, and there are more websites designed to gratify the male preferences. Seeking out and engaging in sex is also one way to prove masculinity for some teenagers. Morality is at stake because of these immoral materials over the Internet. These amoral materials do not only pertain to pornographic websites, but also to websites containing violent information. In some cases, there are network scams that victimize other people, most specifically teenagers who are innocent and incapable of fighting back. Sex Morality The battle versus sexual immorality is really tough at present.

Majority of teenagers engage in pre-marital sex and other sexual perversions. Abominable practice is defended by teenagers who practice

liberalism. This is a clear disobedience of the rules of various religious since sex is considered to be sacred and should only be done after marriage. As a result, purity has lost its significance because sex is now made available anytime. To explain the reason behind this, Abrams (2004) stated, " The flesh is always drawn to forbidden things than it desires for the things that are righteous" (p. 201). Sex can be seen anywhere, whether implicitly or explicitly.

It is visible in advertisements, movies, and television shows. It can also be heard in song's lyrics and written in erotic novels. Sexual materials are also being sold to minors.

These materials have become the means for teenagers who practice casual sex encounters to accept the absence of morality in their actions, leading them to think that these actions are as not immoral. Sex is now considered a fad that should be done over and over. When teenagers have never had a chance to gain experience in sex, they become be the laughing stock of their peers. Some cases of sexual immorality are against the will of teenagers. Consequently, peer pressure drives them to do things which are immoral and unethical (DeBord, 1999). Sexual encounter is part of human nature. However, in the case of teenagers, it is not encouraged to practice having sex at such a young age. Although there are experiences during puberty like wet dreams and menstruation that serve as the readiness of an individual to perform sexual activities, these are part of the natural process of growing up.

These signs of physical maturity should not be interpreted as a preparatory signal to start engaging in sex. Because of moral absence in sex, rape has become a common activity for juveniles. Although it is not surprising, it is still frustrating to know that there are teenagers who are no longer virgin at a very young age. Innocence is no longer valued because they are in a hurry to grow up and mature. Sexual morality should be taught at a very young age to avoid any sexual misconduct during adolescence. Renewing their faith and getting themselves involved in spiritual activities will certainly help teenagers avoid the temptations of earthly desires. Having a clear conscience will guarantee one a peaceful life that is free from guilt and burden from the past (White, 1996).

Social Morality Social morality is based on history. The personality of teenagers is often founded from the kind of living passed on from one generation to another. There are instances when freedom is abused by teenagers that made them lose tradition. Because of their disobedience, the moral absence in their actions has led them to influence other people in the society. Social morality bridges the gap among culture because of respect to diversity of beliefs. Social morality is rooted not only from the society but also within the family history.

It involves being raised by his/her family and how sympathy is applied as a means of relating with others. The aim of social morality is to foster harmony among people and be passionate in promoting patriotism (Drake, n. d.).

However, personal morality is attributed to social morality. One cannot be moral towards other people without having his/her own sets of moral and ethical principles. Moral absence depends on situational context. Teenagers tend to view social morality issues as something natural which for them can either be followed or disobeyed. The effects of their act often make them engage in things that really cause resentment in the end.

For instance, social immorality often leads teenagers to misconducts which they sooner regret. Since social morality is achieved through imitation, the youth of today have to decide for themselves which should be followed (Drake, n. d.). With social issues like homosexual relationship, pre-marital sex, using of contraceptives and same sex marriage that are not fully accepted by the society, some teenagers decide to follow the latest trends just to fit in and be accepted by their peers. Sexual morality has an atrocious effect to social morality. This is made through imitation or through discrimination.

Teenagers are easily influenced by what is ongoing around them, such as having sex at a young age or using contraceptives to avoid being pregnant. It is not only the personal identity and family that makes up the concept of social morality among teenagers. Morality is also based upon religion and social norms.

What makes it confusing is when the time that they mingle with other teenagers from different religion. Apparently, there are activities done in other religion which is morally right for them but is considered wrong by

other religion. One example of this is polygamy among Muslims which is not accepted by other religions such as Christianity.

Society honors and respects the moral code of other society which, most of the time, put teenagers in a conflicting situation. Laws also make it hard for them to understand why there are things that cannot be done or why it is not yet time to do things that older people can do. Morality and law are exclusive. There are cases that morality cannot always be legislated or the other way around, not all laws are based on morality. Citizen Consciousness Teenage-hood is also the time when individuals feel that the world is against them. They feel deprived of freedom to do activities and the need to decide for themselves.

They are not allowed to drink alcohol or drive cars which make them feel trapped in ignorance. Consequently, teenagers feel suffocated and break away from the chains of rules and legalities. Challenging the authority and doing restricted activities will give them more fun and enjoyment. As they desire to become mature as early and fast as possible, they tend to exhibit behavior that can be observed in adults, including vices that are detrimental to the health. These vices include binge-drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, which they do at first for them to feel more mature, until they become addicted. The stage of adolescence is also the stage of socialization for teenagers. They will choose to spend time with a circle of friends who can stay with them until adulthood. Thus this is also a critical time wherein individuals can be influenced to join gangs and fraternities that partake in

activities that are illegal and/or immoral, such as the use of prohibited drugs which bring about psychological problems to teenagers.

These illicit drugs may even lead them to death. This problem is generally linked to pressures from peers and self ideologies. Citizen consciousness is formed during the stage of adolescence. This is because everyone should be responsible in following the rules and regulations which should be carried over until maturity and adulthood. As young citizens of the society, teenagers are expected to demonstrate behaviors in accordance to what is legal and moral. However, there some of them develop a sense of immorality or moral absence as they choose to disobey the law instead. Being young and active, teenagers love freedom and want do enjoy every privilege given to them. Consequently, some of them abuse this freedom and privilege, leading to a reduced citizen consciousness.

Citizenship consciousness is important in educating people with the rights and responsibilities of the whole nation (Chen ; Reid, 2002). It is a way of encouraging people to do what is right and legal. Citizenship education must be imposed among schools to give teenagers full awareness about current affairs and laws that are newly imposed (Chen ; Reid, 2002). Rules and regulations are set by lawmakers to serve as foundation of moral values and harmony among people in the society. Moral values are guiding principles to avoid a chaotic society (Kidder, 2003). However, laws cannot resolve every single issue alone.

There are many theories of intellectual reasoning that often involve personal views about morality. Each person is unique, with a corresponding level of understanding, logic, wisdom and intelligence. Hence, citizenship consciousness demands ethical fitness, human virtues, core values and moral principles in every decision that is made (Kidder, 2003). Thus, personal choices out of moral absence are made when laws and regulations are set aside (Kidder, 2003). These decisions that they made which are not grounded in morality bring about the most severe problems caused by today's teens: teenage pregnancy, crimes, car accidents, smoking, and substance abuse, among others. For instance, once their mind is affected by drugs that they intake, they will easily forget what is legal from illegal, what is moral from immoral. Such situations will really create great controversies when it comes to moral decision of right and wrong (Kidder, 2003). Teenager Crime Teenage Crime is more commonly known as juvenile delinquency.

It is a term used legally to individuals within the age of 14 to 21 years judged under criminal law (Juvenile, 2007). Moral absence makes one a juvenile offender as it covers violations against legality and social norms. The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency affirms that: youthful behavior or conduct that does not conform to overall social norms and values is often part of the maturation and growth process and tends to disappear spontaneously in most individuals with the transition to adulthood; a great majority of young people commit some kind of petty offense at some point during their adolescence without this turning into a criminal career in the long term (" The Riyadh Guide," 1990). Teenagers are affected by many

factors when dealing with relationships. They are often aggressive and risky with the things that they do and the people that they interact with. The stage of adolescence is more prone to developing a criminal personality because of lack of proper guidance and values nourishment. It can lead to behavioral problems like delinquent activities and committing crimes.

Teenagers who commit crime often forgot everything about right and wrong. Decision making includes an in depth analysis of once action (Kidder, 2003). Moral absence often leads to teenage crime because of impulsiveness. Teenagers often do things because they are busy thinking of the cause of the problem instead of the solutions. Conclusion Moral absence is one of the major problems in teenagers. They are in the stage of life wherein they seek more of themselves and add meaningful experiences to their lives. Moral absence depends on a situational context.

If teenagers tend to act against network morality, sexual morality, social morality, and others, and they view their actions as natural, then there is moral absence. In general, every human being has natural moral inclinations such as the ability to decide between right and wrong. Communication plays an important role in every family.

It is a tool used to convey love, understanding and support for each other. This is the main key to avoid confusions among teenagers. Poor communication leads to unhappy family relationships like weak emotional bonding, excessive family conflict, and ineffective problem-solving (DeBord, 1999). The decision is up to the teenagers themselves to choose which path

to take and what should be done. Families should inculcate a set of moral code to their children and put it into practice. When the basic unit of the society is bound by moral codes of conduct, then it will result in a more advanced nation. There are possibilities of feeling selfish when making decisions on morality. This is because of the motives of one's action.

Personal choices and motives are often the basis of moral decision. When rooted in moral absence, these decisions instigate violations of the laws of the society as a whole. Teenagers can be easily manipulated by other people to do things which are immoral. They are also more prone to temptation because of confusions and curiosity. On the other hand, there are teenagers who are raised according to strong sets of values which has greater control of their actions. Moral values serves as a protection for people to do things that will make or break their lives.

There are researches showing that teenagers do not possess the same qualities like adults when it comes to controlling their emotions and actions. Some of them are also generally fickle-minded and do not concentrate in doing what is just. Once concentration is taken for granted and norms have been set aside, teenagers tend to go and decide individually. This will take effect usually on the absence of an adult who should have guided them in doing things and deciding. Adolescents are less mature and have minimal control in their feelings and actions. This is because they are still on the stage of developing their emotions, identity and judgment.

As a result, teenagers are usually unable to assume the mistakes of what they do. They are in the state of mind where they wanted to taste and experience everything. There are also major decisions that cannot be given easily to teenagers like voting during national elections and doing medical decisions. Hence, it is up to them to establish their personal moral foundation which will be carried until their maturation. Freedom is given to avoid sufferings. However, moral absence among teenagers arises when teenagers abuse their freedom.

The issue of freedom is being used by teenagers to defend the consequences of their actions and why they end up committing immorality. Hence, as a growing and developing individual, teenagers must combine freedom with responsibility and discipline. Moral absence makes one wicked. This is a moral and ethical dilemma that damages relationships and hinders personality growth.

Decisions made out of moral absence may result in unfavorable and immoral behavior, such as those that involve network, sex, and social morality, as well as citizen consciousness and teenage crime. There are means and ways to avoid immorality. Support of parents, authority, and the whole community is needed to raise teenagers and make them good and law abiding citizens. The teenagers also need to increase their awareness on laws, cultural norms, and values, as these are essential in learning and accepting moral principles that can guide them to the right path.