E-ISSN: 1115 - 8425 P-ISSN: 3027-012X
MPRI-JAEE | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION IN EDU.
VOL. 06 NO. 8 – OCTOBER. 2024

SOCIETAL INFLUENCES AND ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT AS DETERMINANTS OF MORAL DECADENCE AMONG STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (SPECIAL), OYO

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DOI Unique ID: 10.70382/mejaee.v6i8.009

Abstract

The research entitled "Societal Influences and Academic Environment as Determinants of Moral Decadence among Students with Hearing Impairment in Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo" investigates the effects of societal and academic factors on the moral conduct of students with hearing impairments. The study adopted a descriptive survey research approach, sampling 300 students using purposive sampling and utilising three measures to assess moral decay, societal values, and academic influences. The findings indicated a

Keywords: Societal Influences, Academic Environment, Moral Decadence, Students with Hearing Impairment

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significant prevalence of moral decline, characterised by behaviours such as academic dishonesty and substance addiction. The research indicated that societal values exhibited a negative correlation with moral decay, whereas the academic environment demonstrated a substantial positive impact. Statistical investigations, encompassing Pearson's correlation and multiple regressions, validated a significant combined effect of societal and academic influences on students' moral behaviour, explaining 98.4% of the variation. The study finds that addressing these elements is essential for mitigating moral decline among students with hearing impairments.

Introduction

Background to the Study

Moral decadence, characterized by a decline in ethical values, has become an increasing concern in modern society, especially among vulnerable groups like hearing-impaired students. These students, already facing communication barriers, are particularly susceptible to moral challenges due to their limited access to conventional moral guidance. In Oyo metropolis, where cultural norms and expectations heavily influence the behavior of young individuals, the moral compass of hearing-impaired students is increasingly being shaped by external pressures.

Societal influences, including peer groups, social media, and cultural trends, play a significant role in shaping the behavior of students, whether hearing-impaired or not. However, for hearing-impaired students, these influences may be even more pronounced due to their unique social experiences. Isolation from mainstream educational settings and the lack of tailored moral guidance can lead to increased reliance on peers and external sources of information, (Nurhisam, 2018). These societal factors often promote values that may contradict traditional moral standards, contributing to moral decay within this group. The academic environment also serves as a critical determinant in the moral development of hearing-impaired students. Schools are supposed to be safe havens where students not only acquire knowledge but also learn values

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and social norms. However, when academic environments fail to provide inclusive moral education and supportive structures for hearing-impaired students, the gap widens, leading to potential moral lapses.

According to Oliver (2017), the escalating worry in recent years revolves around the issue of moral decadence among Nigerian tertiary students most especially special need students. Due to the fast-paced changes in society and the changing academic landscape, it appears that moral values that used to unite people are deteriorating, especially among young people with special needs. It is imperative that Nigeria government and the general public take immediate action to address and rectify the moral decadence prevalent in our educational institutions. This is necessary because the decadence has a detrimental impact on students' academic pursuits and their overall well-being. Moral decadence can lead to the erosion of individuals' moral virtues, values, and ethics. The loss of societal values can result in a range of immoral behaviours, such as theft, prostitution, corruption, and delinquency. The problems arising from moral decadence diminish the worth of education and the integrity of academic institutions. They also undermine societal growth, disrupt peace and security, and promote indiscipline and anti-social behaviour.

According to Iroegbu (2019), Nigeria is a nation abounds in cultural diversity and traditional principles, which is currently undergoing a profound change in its social fabric. The advents of urbanization, globalisation, and the widespread adoption of digital technologies have introduced new standards and actions, which pose a challenge to the conventional moral framework. Young Nigerians are faced with moral challenges that frequently challenge their ethical limits, in addition to economic pressures and increasing socio-economic inequalities. In the light of this context, the impact of social elements, such as family dynamics, peer connections, media exposure, and cultural changes should not be undervalued in moulding the moral attitudes and behaviours of tertiary students.

For individuals with special needs, particularly hearing-impaired students, the factors influencing moral decadence are uniquely intensified due to communication barriers and limited access to conventional moral education. Family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the moral foundation of these students. When families lack awareness or the ability to provide proper guidance tailored to the needs of hearing-impaired children, the moral structure can weaken. In households where communication is strained due to the child's impairment, moral direction may be less effectively conveyed, leading to a higher risk of moral decay (Spencer, 2023). Peer relationships also exert significant pressure on hearing-impaired students. Often marginalized or isolated from mainstream social groups, they may seek companionship within smaller, less regulated peer circles or online communities. These social connections can lead to the adoption of unfavorable behaviors, as hearing-impaired students might be more inclined to conform to peer influence to feel accepted. Without appropriate guidance and intervention, the moral compass of these students may shift towards negative behaviors.

According to Tu & Li (2024), media exposure presents an additional challenge for hearing-impaired students. The pervasive nature of social media, television, and online platforms can introduce these students to content that normalizes unethical behavior. However, due to their limited ability to engage with conventional media content critically, hearing-impaired students may be more susceptible to misunderstanding or misinterpreting the moral messages they encounter. This, combined with societal shifts towards more progressive beliefs and the dilution of traditional values, creates an environment where moral relativism flourishes, further undermining established moral standards among hearing-impaired students.

For hearing-impaired students, the academic setting functions as a complex environment where societal influences are magnified. In Nigerian institutions, schools are expected to serve as spaces for both intellectual and moral development. However, for hearing-impaired students, this dual role of

academia may be compromised due to the absence of inclusive and accessible moral education tailored to their needs. While lectures and extracurricular activities aim to develop their cognitive abilities, the lack of proper support systems for these students may lead to the erosion of ethical considerations. As they pursue academic success and career goals, they may find themselves navigating a culture where moral standards are subjective and less prioritized, exacerbating moral challenges for this vulnerable group.

Ugoagu (2017), agreed that the decline in moral values within academic environments, especially for hearing-impaired students, is a serious concern. Corruption, one of the significant manifestations of moral decadence, affects students across all backgrounds, including those with special needs. For hearing-impaired students, this decline is even more detrimental as it adds another layer of difficulty in their already complex academic experience. Examination malpractice, absenteeism, bullying, and other forms of misconduct are prevalent, and without targeted interventions, hearing-impaired students may be at greater risk of participating in or being negatively affected by these behaviors. This not only undermines their educational journey but also the broader societal progress, as they struggle with the same ethical dilemmas as their hearing peers but with fewer resources and guidance, (Samson & Allida, 2018).

In addition to the challenges within the academic environment, hearing-impaired students face broader societal issues that reflect a national decline in ethical principles. The normalization of unethical behavior, such as corruption, destabilizes society and impedes national progress. Hearing-impaired students are not immune to these societal shifts; rather, they may be more vulnerable due to their marginalization, (Britwum, Britwum, Nyamekye & Adjei, 2020). The academic environment, rife with moral challenges such as drug misuse, bullying, and unlawful sexual activity, further threatens the moral fabric of this group. Without a strong support system, the moral decadence present in

academic settings risks becoming ingrained in their experiences, limiting their potential for personal and academic growth.

Operationally, moral decadence is any behaviour that contradicts the ethical values and norms that govern an individual and the society at large. This includes drug abuse, disrespect to elders, stealing among others. It is of great concern to note that our campuses are mostly associated with such social vices that are capable of endangering educational institutions. As a result of all these vices stated above, students are mostly seen dropping out of school, some may drop out as a result of poor performance in their academic or school activities, and some may end up as truck pushers, beggars, fraudsters, prostitution, thieves among others. If urgent rehabilitation and counselling are not given, the society will eventually decline in the growth and development of both economic and social-political affairs of the state, (Adebisi, 2018).

Numerous factors have been associated with moral decadence which include; genetic factors, ineffective parenting and environmental factors (Santrock, 2005), poverty, lack of education, family orientation and drug abuse (Mbatia, Jenkins, Singleton & White, 2009), social media, cultural heritage and technological advancement (Rwechungura, Olotu, Mathias, Minja & Goodluck, 2010). Keneth (2011) posits that our educational system is losing its moral and social values as a result of the existence of moral decadence in the school environment. The exhibition of moral decadence among secondary school students showed a negative impact on the academic performance of secondary school students in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana (Britiwum, Britiwum, Nyamekye, Adjei, 2020). Students practice examination malpractice, cultism, truancy, sexual misconduct, dishonesty and these hinder the progress of their academic performance (Njoku, 2016).

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, and Strain Theory both offer valuable insights into how societal influences and the academic environment contribute to moral decadence in tertiary institutions. Social

Learning Theory emphasizes that students learn behaviors by observing and imitating role models, and if they internalize unethical behaviors from peers, media, or cultural norms, it can lead to a decline in moral standards. Strain Theory, on the other hand, highlights how societal structures, such as socioeconomic inequality, can pressure individuals to engage in deviant behaviors when they cannot achieve culturally valued goals through legitimate means (Borch, 2021; Dennison, 2024 & Lew, 2019). In the Nigerian context, factors like poverty, corruption, and limited educational resources increase the likelihood of such deviant behaviors. This study aims to explore how these societal and academic influences collectively shape the moral behavior of hearing-impaired students in Oyo metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

Although Nigeria boasts a wealth of cultural heritage and robust traditional beliefs, there is growing concern about the erosion of moral values among students in tertiary institutions, particularly those with hearing impairment. This concern stems from the increasing prevalence of unethical behaviors, such as academic dishonesty, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, and disregard for societal norms, which point to a gradual decline in moral standards. Among students with hearing impairment, the challenge becomes even more complex due to unique socio-cultural and academic dynamics. Societal influences, including peer pressure, exposure to media, family backgrounds, and community expectations, play a critical role in shaping students' moral compass. Equally significant is the academic environment, where institutional policies, campus culture, and educational methodologies can either reinforce or weaken students' ethical development. Despite the evident rise in moral decadence, few empirical studies have thoroughly investigated how societal and academic factors contribute to the moral decline among students with hearing impairment in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This knowledge gap hinders the formulation of effective strategies to address the issue. Given that

students with hearing impairment are a vulnerable group facing unique communication and social challenges, it is imperative to examine the extent to which societal influences and academic environments are contributing factors to moral decadence.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to find out if societal influences and academic environment are determinant of moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo. The objectives of the study are to:

i. identify the prevalent moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo,
ii. determine how societal values and practices contribute to moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo,
iii. ascertain the joint influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo,
iv. determine the relative influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive research design of survey type was. This is because the researchers did not manipulate any of the variables of interest in the study.

Population of the Study

The population for the study was comprises of all the students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study sampled three hundred (300) students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo. The sample size was drawn using purposive sampling technique to select three hundred (300) students with hearing impairment from the tertiary institution.

Research Instrument for Data Collection

Three Self developed instruments that measure Prevalent Moral Decadence among Students in Tertiary Institution, Societal Values and Practices that Promote Moral Decadence and Practices and Values in Academic Environment were used as an instrument and the instrument is in 4 liket scale which includes Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagreed. Prevalent Moral Decadence among Students with hearing impairment consist of ten (10) question items which is in four liket scale, the Societal Values and Practices that Promote Moral Decadence contained fifteen (15) question items which is in four liket scale and Practices and Values in Academic Environment also contained fifteen (15).

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

The research instruments were subjected to face and content validity. Each item will be tested to ensure the item is phased clearly and properly, as well as to determine if it applies to the intended construct. The items were assessed to confirm correct scoring and that the instrument scaling is suitable for the content of the structure. The instrument was also given to two experts in the department of Education Psychology for validation and their input was taken into consideration. A pilot test was carried out which involves administering the questionnaires to thirty 30 tertiary institution students. These students were not included in the final study. After retrieving the questionnaires, the items on the instrument was coded and inputted into the Statistical Package

for Social Science (SPSS), and Cronbach's Alpha reliability was used to ascertain the internal consistency/stability of the questionnaires and the value was 0.78.

Administration and Method of Data Collection

The researchers paid a preliminary visit to the tertiary institution beforehand in order to solicit permission and mutual cooperation of the institutions authorities, the researcher hired two researches that distributed the instrument and offered guidance to respondent where necessary. Data collection lasted for one month as due diligence was ensured to get almost all the sampled students.

Method of Data Analysis

The statistical tools to be used for the analysis of data collected from the sample in this study will be both the descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics, through mean and standard deviation will be used to answer the raised research questions. While the inferential statistics through, the Pearsons Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analyses will be employed in data analyses at 0.05 level of significance to test the formulated hypotheses.

Findings

Research Questions

This section answers the research questions that guide the study:

Research Question One: What are the prevalent of moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo?

Mean and Standard Deviation of the prevalent of moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

Table 1

	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Cheating during examinations is normal thing in my institution.	1.68	.757
2	Substance abuse (e.g., alcohol, drugs) is common among students in my institution.	3.30	.844
3	Engaging in academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, is widely accepted by students in school.	3.23	.884
4	Many students prioritize social activities over their academic responsibilities.	3.16	.968
5	Cases of bullying and harassment are frequently reported in my institution.	2.96	.994
6	Involvement in cultism or secret societies is a growing concern among students in my school.	3.19	.986
7	Sexual misconduct and exploitation are prevalent among students in my tertiary institutions	3.33	.659
8	Many students engage in fraudulent activities to meet their financial needs.	3.23	.884
9	There is a lack of respect for authority and institutional rules among students.	3.09	1.043
10	The moral standards of students in tertiary institutions have significantly declined in recent years.	3.19	.986
	Grand Mean	**3.04**	

***Threshold:** mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Very Low State; 1.500-2.499 = Low State; 2.500-3.499 = High State and 3.500 to 4.500 = Very High State*

Source: Fieldwork 2024

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Table reveals that the prevalence of moral decadence among students of tertiary institutions is on the high state. Among the prevalence of moral decadence among students of tertiary institutions, sexual misconduct and exploitation are the most prevalent among students in their tertiary institutions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.33), followed by substance abuse ($\bar{x}$ =3.30), then engaging in academic dishonesty ($\bar{x}$ = 3.23), such as plagiarism, as it is widely accepted by students in tertiary schools. Many students engage in fraudulent activities to meet their financial needs($\bar{x}$ = 3.23). In like manners, there are decline in moral standards ($\bar{x}$ = 3.19), involvement in secret societies and cultism ($\bar{x}$ = 3.19), lack of respect to school authorities ($\bar{x}$ = 3.09) , many students prioritize social activities over academics ($\bar{x}$ = 3.16) as cases of bullying and harassment were frequently reported ($\bar{x}$ = 2.96) and cheating becoming a norm in tertiary institutions during examination($\bar{x}$ = 1.68).

Research Question Two: What are the prevalent societal values and practices that promote moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo?

Mean and Standard Deviation of the prevalent societal values and practices that promote moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

Table 2

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	**Cultural values influence my decisions and behaviors.**	2.95	1.043
2.	Preserving cultural heritage and history is important for future generations.	2.93	.998
3.	My cultural background significantly shapes my identity and life choices.	2.83	1.095

4.	The values taught by my family are crucial in guiding my decisions.	2.99	1.149
5.	Meeting my family's expectations is a major priority for me	3.05	1.033
6.	Family traditions play a vital role in my life.	2.99	1.149
7.	The guidance I receive from my parents is important in shaping my behavior and decisions.	2.83	1.095
8.	Sometimes, I do things or act to satisfy the wishes of my peers	2.93	.998
9.	Media representations influence my perception of societal norms	3.03	1.071
10	I often find myself discussing media content with others	3.07	1.032
11	The media I consume reflects my personal values	3.05	1.033
12	I trust the information provided by mainstream media outlets	2.07	.999
13	Media has a significant impact on my views about current events	2.82	1.066
14	Religious beliefs shape my values and behaviors	2.83	1.095
15.	I actively participate in religious activities.	2.95	1.043
	Average Weighted Mean ($\bar{x}$) = 2.888		

***Threshold:** mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Very Low State; 1.500-2.499 = Low State; 2.500-3.499 = High State and 3.500 to 4.500 = Very High State*

Source: Fieldwork 2024

Table reveals that the prevalent societal values and practices that promote moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College

of Education Special Oyo is on the high state ($\bar{x}$ = 2.888).Among the prevalent societal values and practices were discussion of media content which was found to be the most explored by the students($\bar{x}$ = 3.07), followed by the priority of meeting family's expectations ($\bar{x}$ = 3.05), reshaped personal values by media ($\bar{x}$ = 3.05), media representations influencing their perception of societal norms ($\bar{x}$ = 3.03), family tradition playing a vital role ($\bar{x}$ = 2.99), the values taught by the family are crucial in guiding their decisions($\bar{x}$ = 2.99), cultural values influences their decisions ($\bar{x}$ = 2.95), although they also actively participates in religious activities($\bar{x}$ = 2.95), they believe preserving cultural heritage and history is important for future generations($\bar{x}$ = 2.93)but sometimes, they do things or act to satisfy the wishes of their peers($\bar{x}$ = 2.93). They also believed that the guidance they receive from their parents is important in shaping their behavior and decisions ($\bar{x}$ = 2.83),as well as religious beliefs shape their values and behaviors($\bar{x}$ = 2.83), just as cultural background significantly shapes the identity and life choices($\bar{x}$ = 2.83). Despite this, media has a significant impact on their views about current events ($\bar{x}$ = 2.82), since they trust the information provided by mainstream media outlets ($\bar{x}$ = 2.07).

Hypotheses

H_o1: There is no significant joint influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

Regression Analysis of joint influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo

Table 3

R=.992

R^2=.984

Adj R^2=.984

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	21306.658	2	10653.329	9157.097	.000[b]
	Residual	345.529	297	1.163		

	Total	21652.187	299			
a. Dependent Variable: moral decadence						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Environment, Societal practices/values						

Source: Fieldwork 2024

The above table shows that a significant joint influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo exist ($F_{(2,297)}$=9157.097, p=.000). The null hypothesis that there is no significant joint influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo is therefore rejected. The result also yielded R-squared value of .984 implying that it accounted for about 98.4% of the variables. The remaining percent accounted for the extraneous variables not considered in this study.

H_o2: There is no significant relative influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

Regression Analysis of relative influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo

Table 4

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	-6.809	.375		-18.150	.000
	Societal Values/Practices	-.338	.027	-.539	-12.724	.000
	Academic Environment	2.057	.057	1.518	35.863	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Moral decadence						

Source: Fieldwork 2024

The table shows that the there is a significant relative influence of societal influences (t= -12.724, β =-0.539, p= 0.000) and academic environment (t= 35.863, β = 1.518, p=0.000) on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo. It implies that although societal values and practices significantly influence moral decadence, it has a negative influence on it. This means that societal values negate moral decadence exhibited by the students. It was however noted that the academic environment positively and significantly influences the moral decadence of the students in tertiary institutions. The null hypothesis that there is no significant relative influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

Discussion of Findings

The results from the findings revealed that that the prevalence of moral decadence among students of tertiary institutions is on the high state. They were seen to manifests in forms of cultism, sexual assault, academic dishonesty, adolescent pregnancy, student prostitution, sexual harassment, illicit grade trading, student protests, substance abuse, inappropriate attire, and others These corresponds with the examples of moral decadence highlighted by Nurhisam (2018) which includes cultism, sexual assault, academic dishonesty, adolescent pregnancy, student prostitution, sexual harassment, illicit grade trading, student protests, substance abuse, inappropriate attire. Moral decline is seen in industrialized and non-industrialized cultures. Rape, sexual assault, drug abuse, school violence, and murder are common among youth globally. (Nurhisam, 2018).

It was also revealed that the prevalent societal values and practices that promote moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo is on the high state. The morals of the students are expected to be influenced by several societal institutions that

promote cultures and attitudes to prevent moral decadence. Education systems reflect and shape societal values, while religious beliefs can influence attitudes toward education, family, and media consumption. Moreso, societal influences are not static; they evolve over time as societies undergo economic, technological, and cultural changes. The digital age, for example, has transformed media influence, making it more immediate and pervasive. Globalization has also introduced a diversity of cultural norms and values, challenging traditional beliefs and practices and fostering a more interconnected world, (Spencer, 2023). This justifies while social media as recorded in the study is a great tool of influence that shapes the societal values, practices and views of the students. The digital age, for example, has transformed media influence, making it more immediate and pervasive. Globalization has also introduced a diversity of cultural norms and values, challenging traditional beliefs and practices and fostering a more interconnected world.

A joint and relative influence of societal influences and academic environment on moral decadence among students with hearing impairment in Federal College of Education Special Oyo exists. The loss of societal values has been seen to result in a range of immoral behaviours, such as theft, prostitution, corruption, and delinquency. The problems arising from moral decadence diminish the worth of education and the integrity of academic institutions. They also undermine societal growth, disrupt peace and security, and promote indiscipline and anti-social behaviour, (Oliver, 2017). Moreover, the academic setting in Nigerian institutions functions as both a melting pot and a miniature representation of societal influences. Universities have a crucial role in determining the intellectual development and the morality of the future generation, as they are responsible for development of their brains through lectures and extracurricular activities. However, in the midst of the pursuit of academic achievement and career goals, ethical considerations may become

less important, resulting in a culture where moral standards are subjective and ethical principles are gradually undermined.

Conclusion

The findings highlighted that both societal influences and academic environments play a critical role in shaping students' moral behaviors. Dysfunctional family settings, negative peer pressure, and pervasive media exposure contribute to moral decline. Similarly, the academic environment, where academic dishonesty, drug abuse, and other unethical behaviors are tolerated, exacerbates the issue. The study concludes that addressing these factors is essential for combating moral decadence and fostering a more ethically responsible student population. Tertiary institutions should prioritize moral education alongside academic training to cultivate holistic development in students.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the researcher suggests the following;

1. Programs aimed at reducing the negative impact of peer pressure and media exposure should be integrated into tertiary education. Schools can collaborate with media outlets to promote content that upholds ethical standards and discourages immoral behavior.
2. Tertiary institutions should include moral and ethical education as part of their curriculum to foster students' character development alongside academic learning. Encouraging a culture of integrity and accountability is key.
3. Students with disability most especially hearing impairment should be provided with access to counseling and mentorship programs to guide them through academic and moral challenges.

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