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**APPLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION (UNO) DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE LIGHT OF ST. THOMAS THEORY OF MORALS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SOUTH-EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the application of the United Nations Organization (UNO) declaration of human rights in the light of St. Thomas theory of Morals in secondary school education system in South east geo-political zone. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Proportionate random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 563 teachers of the study. In the data analysis, two null hypotheses were tested alongside the item by item analysis of the research questions. The results of the first null hypothesis ( $H_{o1}$ ) revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on the extend St. Thomas theory of morals is applied to address human rights abuse in secondary schools in Nigeria. Hence both male and female teachers believed that St. Thomas Aquinas' theory of morals is applied in the secondary schools to address the human rights abuses in Nigeria. The theory of moral sin embedded in the moral and civic education curriculum in secondary school now in Nigeria. The result of the Second null hypothesis ( $H_{o2}$ ) showed that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on how the United Nations declarations of human rights are enforced in Nigeria secondary schools. The researchers recommended that the school administrator and teachers at the secondary school level ensure that the human rights abuses stop amongst the students. They should ensure that the UN declarations of human rights are fully operational and enforced in their schools.*

**Keywords:** United Nations Organization, human rights, St. Thomas theory, Morals, secondary school education.

**Introduction**

Every human person deserves fundamentally, the right to life, liberty and security of his person and property, Nwobodo (2008). This is perhaps why the Americans after their war of independence in 1776, saw the need to include in the second paragraph of the declaration of human right, that we hold this truths to be self-evident, that all men are

created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among them are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness (Ike, 1997).

In line with these facts, Article 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights by United Nations Organisation (UNO) states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. It further states that no one shall be held In slavery or servitude and no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and everyone has the right to recognition as a person before the law. Unfortunately, however, these fundamental human rights have been violated thereby increasing the abuse of human rights in the society. It is therefore regrettable that inspite of the efforts made by so many philosophers and the United Nations and other brands of disciplines too, by the elaboration and definition they gave to human rights, human rights are not being enforced. This has resulted to many abuses as regards the dignity of human person.

In Nigerian situation and Nigeria secondary schools in particular, a lot of human right abuse have bedeviled the system which ranges from unbridled involvement of teachers in professionally unethical behaviours such as molestation of female students by teachers, giving severe physical punishment using degrading language on the student and teachers' neglect of the students. This infringe on the human rights of the students as human beings. Failure to provide adequate infrastructure for students for learning also infringes on the rights of students since they have the right to education.

United Nations Organization defined human rights as universal legal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actions which interfere with fundamental freedoms and human dignity. According to Nickel (2010), human rights are moral principles or norms that describe certain standards of human behavior and are regularly protected as legal rights in municipal and international law. Hospers (1967), also defined right as a moral principle defining and sanctioning a man's freedom of action in a social context. For him, man has some basic rights not by permission of society but by virtue of his nature as a rational being.

However, these rights can always be retrieved by the society when abused. Sheed (1953) also gave his own definition of rights as what man is entitled to, not what society is willing to let him have. Right here does not mean what a person would like to have or what a person can manage to get or what the state thinks it can safely allow him. But it

means what a person must have in order to function fully and freely as man and as his own claim.

Great scholars in the distant past have undertaken a great deal of studies, directed at human rights and its abuses and how to deal with it. Prominent among them is a renowned philosopher and moralist in the medieval period, St. Thomas Aquinas. He made a great contribution to the world of learning by immortalizing the concept of justice and rights by giving a wide acceptable definition and elaboration which has been most recognized and accepted generally.

For St. Thomas, right implies justice. It is an object of justice. He used justice as right which means adjusted; well-fitting in place. If someone has a right, he has that which is adjusted to him, something is referred to him as to no one else; something belongs to him. Thus, justice is concerned with giving each one what belongs to him, his right. He also believed that for a man to have right, he is by reason of the natural law, morally bound to the attainment of the ultimate good, which is God himself. Therefore, a man is obliged freely to order himself to this ultimate end. It follows that all those things that are necessary for the fulfillment of this obligation should belong to him. This means that man has rights because he has a nature that is freely ordered to the fulfillment of his ultimate good. Each man possesses rights because he is a person, a whole in that he is the master of his own act that are to bring him to his ultimate good and end.

Murray (1963) citing St. Thomas highlighted the objective right which he said is a thing as tangible as a basket of groceries, the solid walls of a house or the gray sunshine of a spring day. On the other hand, he talked about the subjective or moral right as the moral faculty of doing, having or omitting something, it is by this that we lay claim to the objective right.

In other words, the idea that a man could have a right which, as natural inalienable and indefeasible, have some kind of sanctity and validity transcending that of ordinary positive law is what led philosophers to question and speculate about what we really mean when we say that a person has rights to this or that object, or a person has right which is endowed in him. Therefore, a man has rights which are natural.

These rights can also be strengthened and acknowledged through the practice of religious instructions or moral instructions in our secondary schools and also our homes. This will help them live better lives.

Moreover, there is a continual need to remind the people of their obligation and duty towards these rights. This could be achieved by means of constant talks and discussions over the radio and television or any medium of communication. With this in mind, the individual will gradually absorb them unconsciously thus; it will become the way of life for the individuals in the society. It will certainly have some psychological impact on their behaviour.

In line with St. Thomas' theory of right which he expounded for us and which every society is supposed to maintain in one way or the other, these rights should be taught, strengthened and practiced in all human structures and organizations. The United Nations in support of St. Thomas theory should try to enforce these rights through the help of the states the law courts and schools. The awareness of the definition of rights will enable the individuals to inculcate them in their lives.

According to Syse (2007), right evolves into a subjective claim indicating that one possesses a personal property entailing that one is due for something or one needs to be protected from some action. This subjective right as an individual property or characteristic found in the person corresponds to the modern account of human right. Syse (2007) also suggests that an objective right is "what is right" in contrast to a subjective right which is "a right". Aquinas calls the foundation of human nature the natural moral laws and it is upon this ontological foundation that one develops a realist theory of natural rights.

This suggests that Aquinas hints from these natural properties rooted in human nature could be developed as a theory of subjective natural rights. Contemporary philosophers like Veatch, Finnis, McInerney and Syse, among others, argue that a philosophical derivation of rights from medieval moral theory is possible by proposing that a subjective right might be that which protects the objective development of the dispositional properties or basic human goods. Finnis once argued that one has an obligation not to teach that which is known to be false, because false statements violate the subjective right to know true propositions which persons with a rational disposition possesses intrinsically.

He offered the same principle for political, academic and religious leaders. This subjective right to the truth is based upon the classic position "a conception of human dignity and worth, precisely as it bears on the interpersonal act of communication".

The United Nations St. Thomas and some other philosophers have offered us some strong definitions and explanations of rights; therefore, there is need for people to be constantly and continually reminded of the importance of these rights in a bid to reduce drastically, cases of its abuse in our society and schools. Due to lack of enforcement of human rights, men have trampled upon them. This is exemplified in the nature of our secondary education system which is full of violence, torture, rape, and discrimination of various forms in all aspects of the system. It is therefore necessary to define, enforce as well as deepen our understanding of those rights so that people may come to be aware of them in full.

Based on the foregoing, the United Nations declaration of human rights and St. Thomas theory of morals should be applied in our secondary school education by enforcing human rights and reducing to the barest minimum, its abuse in secondary schools in South-East geo-political zone.

### **Statement of the Problem**

One of the reasons why students do not achieve as they should is because they have a variety of human rights abuse problems confronting them. Human rights abuse is one such thing that disturbs the equilibrium of our school system. These worrisome unethical behaviours such as bullying, molestation of female students by teachers, giving severe physical punishment, rape, sexual abuse and using degrading language on students have been noticed in our school system. Occasionally, lives are lost while the school remains blacklisted. It is against this background that United Nations declaration of human rights and St. Thomas theory of morals can be applied in secondary school system in South-East geo-political zone.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of this study is to critically examine the application of the United Nations Organizations declaration of human rights in the light of St. Thomas theory of morals in secondary school education system and subsequently highlight its implications for secondary school education in South East geo-political zone. Specifically, the study sought to:

- I. Determine the extent United Nations declarations of human rights are being enforced in Nigerian schools.

2. Ascertain the extent to which St. Thomas theory of morals are being applied to address human rights abuse in secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study is limited to United Nations declaration of human rights in line with St. Thomas theory of morals in order to ascertain the extent to which it can be applied in solving related contemporary problems of human rights abuse affecting the education of Nigerian students. Finally, only secondary school teachers in South-East geo-political zone were involved in the study.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent is United Nations declaration of human rights enforced in Nigerian schools?
2. To what extent is St. Thomas theory of morals applied to address human rights abuse in secondary schools in South east geo political zone?

### **Research Hypotheses**

- H0<sub>1</sub>** There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on how the United Nations declarations of human rights are enforced in Nigerian schools.
- H0<sub>2</sub>** There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on the extent St. Thomas theory of morals is applied to address human rights abuse in secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Methods**

The descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. This research design was adopted because Nwobodo (2008) and Ofordile (2002) adopted the design for similar studies and were successful. The target population for the study comprises all the 322 teachers currently teaching in 1,960 secondary schools in the five states of South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. A sample of 563 teachers were randomly selected and used for the study. The sample was selected through disproportionate stratified random sampling techniques. Probability proportionate sample size method (Nwanna, 2008) was adopted in selecting 2.5% of the population. This 2.5% of the population was purposely chosen so as to enable the researcher handle the sample size effectively. The sampling of the respondents was done according to gender using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The 24% of the sampled teachers were male

while 76% were females. Hence in Enugu State, 43 males and 138 females were randomly sampled; 44 males and 138 female, teachers were randomly sampled in Anambra State while in Imo State, 48 males and 152 female teachers were randomly sampled. This brings effective number of sampled subjects to 135 male teachers and 428 female teachers used for the study.

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher developed a questionnaire instrument which was used. The instrument was composed of 12 items and has the form of a four-point rating scale. The instrument was organized into two sections. The instrument was facially validated using three lecturers of Philosophy and five experts in educational Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined, using Cronbach Coefficient alpha technique which yielded a coefficient of 0.76.

The administration of the instrument to the sampled subjects was done by 21 trained research assistants who administered the questionnaires to the subjects directly by hand. The administration and collection of the instrument provided data for analysis. The analysis of the data was done using mean and t-test statistic. The benchmark for any item to be selected as having plausible relevance for the purpose of the study is that the item should gain a mean score of 2.5 and above.

### **Results**

Analysis of data in respect of research questions one and two were represented in Tables 1 and 2 while those in respect of hypotheses one and two are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

The item by item analysis of table I show that Thomas Aquinas' concept of human rights and justice has been observed in the secondary schools. Students are allowed to use available school facilities and their properties are protected by the school management. Students were taught what is right according to their curriculum.

The result shows also that the school administrators see it as an obligation to allow students freedom to do what is right and avoid what is wrong in the school environment. (*Bonum facendum et procequendum est malum vitandum*). The result shows also that certain objects of enjoyment and entertainments like groceries, cell phones and musical instruments are prohibited by the school management to avoid distractions from pure academics and intellectual development of the students. To a very great extent, the students are allowed to exercise their natural rights of interpersonal

communications that will improve healthy relationships among themselves and their teachers. But students are not allowed to engage in destructive communication acts in the school environment. Students are not permitted to insult their seniors, their teachers and the non-tutorial staff of the school. It was discovered that students were strictly controlled in terms of their rights to seek the ultimate good (God) as St. Thomas puts it.

The analysis of research question two is contained on table 2, which discussed the United Nations Human Rights' abuses in the secondary schools. It was observed that the following human rights are abused: right to life, especially in the issue of kidnapping school children. The right to liberty is abused, right to security of students, right to servitude, right to subject students to torture and sexual abuse. Moreso, students are subjected to severe physical punishment in the secondary schools.

Students in the other hand are accorded rights of recognition when they perform exceptionally well. In some secondary schools, students study with poor dehumanizing infrastructures like poor library, poor laboratory, poor writing materials, poor toilets, unventilated classrooms and leaking roofs.

When the two hypotheses were tested, the results of the first null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on the extent St. Thomas theory of morals is applied to address human rights abuse in secondary schools in Nigeria. In other words, the first null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) was not rejected because the test statistics ( $t_{cal}$ ) value 0.968 is less than the critical value 1.96. The implication of this result is that both the male and female teachers of this study area believe that St. Thomas Aquinas' theory of morals is applied in the secondary schools to address the human rights abuses in Nigeria. St. Thomas theory of morals is embedded in the moral and civic education curriculum in secondary schools now in Nigeria.

The result of the second null hypothesis was not rejected because the t-test statistic ( $t_{cal}$ ) value 1.11 is less than the critical value 1.96. The hypothesis results show that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on how the United Nations declarations of human rights are enforced in Nigeria secondary schools.

**Application of the UNO Declaration of Human Right in the Light of St. Thomas Theory of Morals in Secondary School Education System in South-East Geo-Political Zone.**

**Table I: Thomist’s Theory of Morals in Secondary School Educational System**

S/N	Item Description	$\bar{X}_1$	$\bar{X}_2$	$\bar{X}$	Decision		
					GE	SE	VSE
1	Do you see student’s right as justice?	3.5	3.1	3.3	GE		
2	Are the rights properly felt in the schools?	3.1	3.5	3.3	GE		
3	Do you give students what really belong to them?	2.3	2.1	2.2	SE		
4	Do you give the students their right to seek the ultimate good (God)?	2.0	2.5	2.3	SE		
5	You do not allow the students things that are necessary for the fulfillment of their obligation like freedom to do what is right to them.	3.91	3.0	3.4	GE		
6	Do you allow them to omit certain things they feel unnecessary for their development?	4.0	3.1	3.5	GE		
7	Do you allow them enjoy use of some objects like groceries?	2.6	2.4	2.5	SE		
8	You allow them their natural rights of interpersonal act of communication in the school environment.	4.0	4.0	4.0	VGE		
9	Does the school admin help students protect their properties?	3.5	2.66	3.1	GE		
10	Do you teach students what is right always as a right?	2.3	2.4	2.4	SE		

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on the extent St. Thomas theory of morals is applied to address human rights abuse in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Mean		Sample size		T-Test		Decision
Male	Female	Male	Female	t-cal	tcv	
S <sub>1</sub>	S <sub>2</sub>	n <sub>1</sub>	n <sub>2</sub>			
		135	428	0.968	1.96	Accept

The hypothesis was accepted that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on the extent St. Thomas theory of morals is applied to address human right abuses in secondary schools.

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on how the United Nations declarations of human rights are enforced in Nigerian secondary schools.

Mean		Std. Dev.		Sample size		T-Test		Decision
Male	Female	S <sub>1</sub>	S <sub>2</sub>	n <sub>1</sub>	n <sub>2</sub>	t-cal	tcv	
3.6	3.5	0.8	1.2	135	428	1.11	1.96	Accept

The second hypothesis was also accepted implying that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on how the United Nations declarations of human rights are enforced in Nigerian secondary schools.

**Table II:UNO Human Rights Abuse in Secondary School Educational System**

S/N	Item Description	GE	SE	$\bar{X}_1$	$\bar{X}_2$	$\bar{X}$	
1	The UNO human right to life is abused in secondary schools.			4.0	4.0	4.0	GE
2	The UNO right to liberty is abused in our secondary schools.			3.7	3.5	3.6	GE
3	The UNO right to security of persons is abused in our secondary schools.			2.15	2.0	2.1	SE
4	Students are not enslaved or held on servitude in the secondary schools.			3.7	3.0	3.4	GE
5	Students are not subjected to torture or to cruelty in the secondary schools.			3.5	3.5	3.5	GE
6	Students are not subjected to inhuman treatment in the secondary schools using degrading languages.			3.76	3.8	3.8	GE
7	Students are subjected to severe physical punishment in the secondary schools.			4.0	4.0	4.0	VGE
8	Students are accorded right of recognition as human beings not mere animals.			4.0	4.0	4.0	VGE
9	Students are molested sexually in the secondary schools by teachers.			4.0	3.8	3.9	GE
10	Students study with poor dehumanizing infrastructures in the secondary schools: poor library, poor laboratory, inadequate seats and desks, poor writing boards, poor ventilated classrooms, leaking roofs, etc.			3.6	3.8	3.7	GE

	Sample Size	Male	Female	Total
		135	428	563
1.	$\bar{X}$	3.1	2.8	
	SD	1.0	0.8	
2.	$\bar{X}$	3.6	3.5	
	SD	0.	1.2	

1. 
$$t_{cal} = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}} = \frac{3.1 - 2.8}{\sqrt{\frac{1.0^2}{135} + \frac{0.8^2}{428}}}$$

$$= \frac{0.3}{\sqrt{.0089}} = 0.31$$

$t_{cal} = 0.968$

$t_{cv} = 1.96$  accept no significant difference

2. 
$$t_{cal} = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}} = \frac{3.6 - 3.5}{\sqrt{\frac{0.8^2}{135} + \frac{1.2^2}{428}}}$$

$$= \frac{0.1}{\sqrt{.0081}} = 0.09$$

$t_{cal} = 1.11$

$t_{cv} = 1.96$  accept no significant difference

$$\frac{x-y}{y} \quad \begin{matrix} 70 \\ 32 \end{matrix}$$

**Summary of Findings**

From the analysis of this study found that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on the extend St. Thomas theory of morals is applied to address human rights abuse in secondary schools in Nigeria.

The study also found that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on how the United Nations declarations of human rights are enforced in Nigeria secondary schools.

### **Conclusion**

Base on the findings of this study, it was concluded that both male and female teachers believed that St. Thomas Aquinas' theory of morals is applied in the secondary schools to address the human rights abuses in Nigeria. The theory of moral sin embedded in the moral and civic education curriculum in secondary school now in Nigeria.

### **Recommendation**

The researchers recommended that the school administrators and teachers at the secondary school level ensure that the human rights abuses stop amongst the students. They should ensure that the UN declarations of human rights are fully operational and enforced in their schools.

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APPENDIXES



