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## Table of Contents

<b>List of Contributors</b>	<b>vii-ix</b>
<b>Editorial</b>	<b>x-xii</b>
<b>FAMILY INTEGRATION AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT</b> Prof. Stephen Oladele Ayankeye	1-22
<b>EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON FAMILY LIFE</b> Benson Ohihon Igboin	23-47
<b>IMPLICATION OF GLOBAL SEXUAL RIGHTS REVOLUTION ON THE FAMILY INSTITUTION</b> Sharon Slater	48-60
<b>EFFECTS OF POSTMODERNISM ON CHRISTIAN PARENTING IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY</b> Elijah Adeyinka	61-76
<b>BANDURA'S SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY AND PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION FOR FAITH DEVELOPMENT OF OLDER CHILDREN</b> Oluwakemi Olajumoke Amuda	77-90
<b>VIOLENCE AGAINST FEMALE GENDER IN EKITI STATE: BIBLICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES</b> Ayinde, Abosede Hellen	91-111
<b>THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY FAMILY INSTITUTION AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT</b> John Ayo Oladapo, PhD	112-128

<b>EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR DISPELLING CONFLICTS IN MARRIAGE</b>	
Princess O. Idialu PhD. & Raphael A. Idialu PhD	129-141
<b>PARENTING AND ITS IMPACT ON TEENAGE DELINQUENCY</b>	
Foluke Omobonike Odesola, PhD	142-154
<b>FAMILY AND EDUCATION, SITUATING THE NIGERIA EXPERIENCE</b>	
Ogbeni Sylvester	155-168
<b>ETHICO-RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY ON IN VITRO FERTILISATION TO MINIMISE INFERTILITY AMONG INFERTILE CHRISTIAN COUPLES</b>	
Otun Michael Oluwajuwonlo	169-181
<b>SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG YOUTH AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Itakorode Olanrewaju Andrew F.	182-193

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## Editorial Note

Undoubtedly, the human family is one of the most threatened units of our individual and communal existence. Many have argued that the family's failure or success reflects the order in the development of society. This unvarnished truth and the consequences of ignoring it account for establishing a journal devoted exclusively to family life - *International Journal of Family Life and Societal Development*. This journal, conceived as a means and avenue to express concern and interrogate pressing family issues and proffer solutions, is not a confessional one; it takes discursive and practical approaches to issues on family life from interdisciplinary perspectives.

In this maiden volume, Stephen Ayankeye argues that there is a nexus between family integration and societal development. Inversely, a disintegrated family will lead to the underdevelopment of society. He further argues that there are factors that engender family integration but that those factors are now being challenged. He recommends ways of ensuring that the challenges are tackled. Benson Igboin interrogates the effects of social media on family life. He argues that society is dynamic, and globalisation has ambivalent impacts on family life. While it is now practically impossible to insulate family life from social media, he concludes that reasonable and responsible deployment of social media will enhance family unity and connectedness. Sharon Slater's article examines the integration of family and the family's protection in Nigeria and Africa. Slater argues that the assault on children and families in Nigeria is propelled by the global sexual revolution, to which many parents in Africa have not given sufficient attention. She notes that this revolution should be viewed from a human rights perspective to challenge its causes and effects on African families, particularly young people. She thus recommends that parents and the African government have critical roles to play in safeguarding the sexual health of their children.

On his own, Elijah Adeyinka examines the effects of postmodernism on the African family system. He points out that postmodernism's tilt

towards relativism adversely impacts family life. In order to stem the tide of postmodernism's inroad into the family, he suggests that family life should be guided strictly by enduring biblical principles. Oluwakemi Amuda's article intervenes by highlighting the critical role of effective communication within the family. She argues that when there is adequate and mutual communication in the family, faith is developed, which results in the development of the whole person. For Abosede Ayinde, violence against the female gender in the family and society has remained unabated. Ayinde notes that contemporary society has been unable to arrest violence against the female gender. She also examines the biblical basis of violence against the female gender and recommends ways to ameliorate it. John Oladapo echoes the argument that the challenges of the modern family system directly link with societal development. He argues that the African family system is being critically neglected, and the consequences are dire and visible. He, therefore, recommends the need to pay urgent attention to those values that sustained the family system before modernity unleashed its forces on it. Princess and Raphael Idialu reaffirm the argument that effective communication in the family has a way of dispelling and resolving conflict. They examine effective communication skills to demonstrate that family health will be maintained and sustained when emplaced. Foluke Odesola articulates that parenting is critical to the healthy growth and development of the child. Effective parenting, she argues, leads to arresting juvenile delinquency. As a result, she recommends that effective parenting is a sine qua non for guiding the child through the challenges that the teenage period of development poses.

Ogbeni Sylvester examines the role of education in the development of the family. Although education costs are high and hardly affordable, he argues that education is essential to the family and society. He suggests ways through which parents could navigate the challenges the cost of education has posed in contemporary society. Michael Otun introduces the ethical and religious dilemma many Christian couples face in deciding whether or not to resort to IVF in

their quest to procreate. He argues that the decision is not easy because of many interpretations of scriptures and pressures that are brought to bear on couples. He thus concludes that couples should weigh the moral implications of IVF before taking their final decision. Finally, Andrew Itakorode Olanrewaju examines the causes and effects of drug abuse among youth. He argues that despite concerted efforts to discourage the youth from engaging in substance abuse, the reality on the ground shows an increase in the number of those involved. He recommends that parents and government should intensify efforts towards ensuring that the youth are dissuaded from abusing drugs because of their harmful effects on them and society.

Benson Ohihon Igboin  
Editor-in-Chief

# EFFECTS OF POSTMODERNISM ON CHRISTIAN PARENTING IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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## **Abstract**

Postmodernism has influenced many aspects of human life, especially in raising godly children, which is the centre of Christian parenting. The effects are apparent in Nigerian society, and it now becomes a challenge to raise godly children from Christian homes in the postmodern society characterised by pluralism, globalisation, and strong individualism. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the effects of postmodernism on Christian parenting and draw out implications for Christian parents in Nigerian society. The methodology adopted is literary research, whereby information is acquired within specific relevant literary works. Books, journals, and articles are consulted for relevant information for the study. It is discovered that postmodernism is a cultural phenomenon that eliminates absolute truth, making all things relative to an individual's beliefs and wishes. It is a culture of relativism that upholds self and emphasises what pleases an individual without concern for others. It has affected Christian parenting in the areas such as creating adequate time for the children; moral values and principles being attacked; Christian parents exercising discipline and authority over their children; giving room for permissive child-rearing. The paper concludes and recommends that children, through their parents, learn how to live a godly life in the postmodern age, and this is by helping them develop a cohesive Biblical worldview. Christian parents must set an example of Christian living based on the standards of truth flooded by postmodern ideologies so that children can also embrace and follow suit.

Key Words: Effects, Postmodernism, Christian parenting, Nigerian society.

## **Introduction**

The emergence of postmodernism has influenced Christian parenting greatly, creating a severe challenge towards raising godly children in Nigerian society. This researcher witnessed a recent case of a 14-year-old boy practising money rituals at this tender age. His guardian found a ritual soap (*igba ose*) in his room. When challenged, he was bold enough to talk back to his parent about “what they were looking for in his room.” By the way, should a 14-year-old boy be granted a room to himself by his parent to practice whatever he likes? That is the level of absolute freedom children of this postmodern age are beginning to live, which some parents feel unconcerned about. Christian parenting and Child upbringing have become increasingly complex in postmodern society because family values are fast eroding. Some Christian parents are shifting attention from using the Word of God and Christian principles to raise their children to use postmodern ideologies. The postmodern world is characterised by pluralism, globalisation, and strong individualism and is also shaped by democracy, religious freedom, consumerism, fashion and increasing access to news, social media and entertainment (Garmaz & Čondić, 2017, 334). This has been posing a severe challenge to raising godly children in contemporary society and making Christian parenting more demanding, as there is a clear difference between the youth of today and those of past years. It has become difficult for young ones to please God and hear His voice and that of their parents amid other voices being presented to them in society.

The significance of raising children in a Christian home has gradually lost its value. It is sad to notice that Christian virtues being inculcated into children are fading away due to postmodernism because some Christian parents no longer pay good attention to them as they pay attention to postmodern activities in society. Christian parenting focuses on raising children based on the standard set and avenues provided by God through His Word (Deuteronomy 6:7-8). It is one of the major aspects of Christian life and responsibilities that involves Christian parents towards raising another generation of godly seeds. The effects of postmodernism can be noticed in all

aspects of the Christian life because it has changed the worldview of people, their understanding of truth and reality, and their approach to some of the essential questions of life; the effects have not left out the aspect of Christian parenting. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the effects of postmodernism on Christian parenting and draw out implications for Christian parents in Nigerian society. Thus, an attempt is made to examine an overview of postmodernism and the concept of Christian parenting. An attempt is also made to highlight and discuss the effects of postmodernism on Christian parenting and draw out the implications of these effects for Christian parents in Nigeria.

### **Overview of Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is regarded as a historical term that succeeds modernity. The term “postmodernism” means “after modernism.” It is also used to describe philosophically the current era, which came after the age of modernism (Adu-Gyamfi 2015, 1). Modernism, however, is the age that came after pre-modernism. Its worldview came to the limelight through objective knowledge and scientific method (Forghani, Keshtiaray & Yousefy 2015, 98). It is the age where authority and traditions that were accepted in the pre-modern age are questioned. According to Ayandokun (2015, 49), “modernity affirms that truth is only authentic based on facts or anything that can be proved scientifically, putting more trust in reason and critical thinking to solve world's problems.” Scientific proof is employed to discover the facts and truth about particular life issues. Modernism, however, gave birth to secularism which is seen as a system of ideas that rejects the primacy of religion in corporate life.

Postmodernism, as agreed by quite some authors, is a reaction to the inability of modernism to fulfil its promise of using human reason alone to make humankind better and also make the world a better place and, more so, a reaction against the intellectual assumptions and values of the modern period. Gyamfi (2015, 2) opines that, among other beliefs, modernism has the belief that absolutes exist. However, postmodernism reacts to this by first eliminating absolute truth and making all things relative to an

individual's beliefs and wishes Ogundapo (2015, 26) corroborates that postmodernism dismisses the existence of absolute reality and truths of experience and life which modernism attempts to reveal and deeply concerned itself with the concept of human progress by being suspicious of it.

Postmodernism means many things to many people in different fields of study. Scholars in disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, cultural studies, economics, education, and theology have different opinions of the term. Coming up with a clear definition of the term will violate the postmodernist's idea that there are no definite terms, boundaries, or absolute truths (Ogundapo 2015, 26). Despite different interpretations and definitions of postmodernism, "there is a general consensus that it is foremost a cultural phenomenon which is noticeable in the society" (University of Pretoria, <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/30427/02chapter2.pdf>). The different perspectives it represents to different people include that the term is a cultural worldview, a school of thought, a system of observation, and a sceptical interpretation of culture (Olaniyan 2015, 100). It is also seen as an attempt at creativity and reflection characterised by self-identification and unique language (Ogunsola 2020, 211). It is a culture of relativism that upholds self and emphasises what pleases an individual without concern for others. Ayandokun (2021, 30) corroborates that people turn out to be their authority and take what they feel is right for them. They believe that it is only what a person feels that counts and must be believed.

Among the postmodern ideologies, two are essentially noticeable. One is the teaching that all moral values are relative based on the fact that what an individual sees as the best should be the criterion for what is right. Postmodernism is highly relativistic and maintains that values are culturally determined, which means that ethics is not seen in terms of the absolute transcendent standards of the Bible or even concerning what is good for society (Porteous, <https://seminary.reformed.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/A-Christian-View-of-Post-Modernism.pdf>). There is no specific standard for the right way of living or doing things. Everybody lives based on what he/she considers the best way to live and behave, as seen in contemporary society.



The second ideology revolves around tolerance for every kind of religion and practice. All religion is seen as the same, and all religious practices are proper. Individuals can conclude what to believe or which religion to follow after listening to arguments and suggestions from various religions (Awoniyi 2016, 82). With this, postmodernity challenges the claim that Jesus is the way to God and that the Bible is absolutely the message of God to humanity. To impose one's views, beliefs or practices on others is against the principle of tolerance and, therefore, morally wrong. Alongside this is the principle of choice, where actions or practices are permissible based on choice. Thus abortion is often justified because it is the woman's choice. Similarly, euthanasia is defensible because it is the patient's choice.

### **Concept of Christian Parenting**

Children and child upbringing are a significant part of human life. God has designed that every human being will bear children and replenish the earth (Gen 1:28). Except for a specific condition, every human being is a parent or will become a parent one day. Kunhiyop (2008, 196) opines that African Christians, where Nigeria belongs, place so much importance on childbearing. They have the belief that the command of fruitfulness in Genesis 1:28 applies to all marriages; God's blessing on His people includes fertility as found in Exodus 23:26 and Deuteronomy 7:14; children are the crown of old age according to Proverb 17:6, Psalm 128:3 and defender and provider for their parents in their old age (Psalm 127: 3-5). As a result, they value procreation far more than other aspects of marriage, such as love, companionship, and sexual pleasures.

Children may be categorised as those that are given birth to, adopted, or children that come as a result of one's faith. According to Obengo's (2019, 1) description, a child is understood to be one below 21 years. The maximum age of children who need parental care and guidance is averagely around 19 to 20 or at least before they become young adults. The age adopted in this paper is from birth to twenty. In the view of this researcher, these are the children that need adequate parental care and guidance. A parent gives care to a child as the child

grows from baby to teenage, even onto young adulthood, ensuring the child's health, teaching the child moral and cultural values and preparing the child for a life of adulthood.

Parenting is an act and responsibility being performed by parents or guardians. It is majorly about raising a child by parents or the act or process of performing the act of raising a child or children. It is a process that involves sponsoring, supporting, and promoting all areas of a child's life from infancy to adulthood which include intellectual, emotional, social, financial, and physical development (Ottuh 2011, 154). It is also regarded as the process by which parents or other significant caregivers rear and raise children in their heritage and for life in their society (Ikeler 1990, 470). These definitions emphasise raising children to become mature, giving attention to every aspect of their lives physically, emotionally, and in other ways. There are three major parenting goals as posited in the *Encyclopaedia of Psychology*. These are ensuring that a child is in good health and being protected from harm, grooming a child for productive adult life, and transferring acceptable cultural values into a child's life. (Lerner and Castellino, 2000, 443). These, among others, are the tasks involved in parenting that parents must know.

Christian parenting focuses on raising children according to godly standards using the Bible and Christian teachings/doctrine as the basis for raising them. It is an act of raising children in the way of the Lord and based on godly standards. The one who carries out this act is a Christian parent. From the Christian perspective, parenting is a responsibility placed by God on parents to care for their children from birth until they are mature and old enough to be directly responsible to Him by themselves (Ishola 2016, 62). In Christian parenting, the Bible remains the permanent resource for quality parenting. Moore and Bethancourt (2017, 19) assert that the expectation of God from Christian parents is to give quality training to their children following Biblical patterns. Christian parenting engages spiritual training and discipline of children to bring out good results. It guides against raising children following the secular patterns and worldviews that negate what God directs in the Bible. Christian parents cannot raise their children anyhow but follow biblical prescriptions to bring out the correct result. They commit themselves to training, teaching, and disciplining to raise their children.

There are Bible passages that form the basis for raising children in Christian homes. One that is most referenced as God gave to the Israelites is Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. LORD the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates.

The content of this passage has remained an age-long instruction on child training and transmission of God's truth to the younger generation. As God gave this instruction to the Israelites, they never took it with levity as it is strictly attached to transmitting God's truth to the incoming generation. Ayandokun (2021, 5) opines that it is accepted as a duty by all Christian parents to be custodians of the scriptures for their children's nurture and education in the Lord. Training and guiding the young ones in the Lord's precepts would raise children who fear and love the Lord. Christian parents can therefore follow the Bible's admonition to instruct their children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord as they walk alongside them each day. Other Bible passages that support quality and godly parenting include Proverbs 3:11-12; 22:6; 22:15; 29:15; 29:17; Psalm 78:4; Joel 1:3; Ephesians 6:4; 1Timothy 5:8; 1Tim 3:4; Matthew 18:10; Matthew 19:13-14; Hebrew 12:11; Titus 2:4 & 7 among others.

### **Effects of Postmodernism on Christian Parenting**

Christian parenting is no longer as it used to be before postmodernism due to the effect melted on it. This section highlights and discusses some of the effects of postmodernism on Christian parenting: Christian parents do not have adequate time for teaching their children, and children are not having adequate time for learning because of postmodern activities; Moral values and principles are being attacked in the postmodern world; looking down on moral

traditions which begin from home; adverse effect on parents who ought to set themselves as good examples to their children; effect on the level at which Christian parents exercise discipline and authority on their children; postmodernism gives room and encourages permissive child-rearing.

As learning and teaching children take time, Christian parents do not have adequate time for these in the postmodern society as there are many postmodern activities, such as entertainment and other social activities, that are taking the time that should be given to teaching the children. Moreso, many activities also take children's time to adequately learn the basics of life that will make them mature and responsible. Ishola (2016, 62) identified four keys to effective parenting: positive family relationships, communication between parents and children, meaningful involvement and interaction, and caring relationships. Adequate time is not being created for these in the postmodern society. As a result, it has been challenging to bring children from a self-centred lifestyle to a God-centered and others-centred basis for living, leading to frustration for Christian parenting in Nigerian society.

Moral values and principles are being attacked in the postmodern world. Ayandokun (2021, 21) notes that some children, teenagers, youths, and adults today are engrossed in personal pleasure above intellectual inquiry. In a postmodern world filled with godless philosophies, the emotional needs of children are subject to noise and wild behaviours. As a result, children, especially adolescents, are losing their grip on reality, their fight to preserve individuality slowly falls away, and a passion for conformity rises from deep within (Dobson & Bauer 1990, 6). They become victims of a peer-dominated society that often leaves them lost and confused. As parents fail to take cognizance of this, the rate at which children conform to what they see around them, mainly immoral behaviours such as theft, arm robbery, rape, sexual assault and harassment, is alarming without following the directives of their parents. For instance, there are teachings in the postmodern society that children listen to, which negate what their parents hold.

Another effect of postmodernism on Christian parenting is the looking down on moral traditions which begin from home. One of the

aims of postmodernists is to cause young people in every area of culture to reject the moral traditions which have always undergirded society (Ayandokun 2021, 22). Moral traditions that begin from home gradually fade away in Nigerian society. Moral value, sometimes termed “home training,” is gradually losing its significance in Nigerian society. Examples are the culture of respect, values about work, loving and caring for others, moderation and friendship, which result in good character at home and in society. Christian parents in Nigerian society no longer care about these, and any parent who emphasises these moral traditions is termed “old school.” Meaning he/she is obsolete and not conversant with what is happening in a civilised society.

Postmodernism adversely affects parents who should be good examples to their children. The children copy what they see them doing, so Christian parenting becomes difficult when parents fail to live according to godly standards. Some parents desire that their children be brought up godly but fail to set an excellent example of this. Katharine Kersey observes that the most substantial influence on a child is how his or her parents live their lives, and since the child is first influenced by those who care for him, they shape his life in more ways than they realise or even wish for (Kersey 1988, 199). In the postmodern society, parents live the way they want, and their children watch them and live even worse than they are living.

Postmodernism has also affected the level at which Christian parents exercise discipline and authority on their children. As noted earlier, one of the critical features of Christian parenting is discipline, but the level at which parents affect discipline on their children in the postmodern world has reduced drastically. This is because children have been given to freewill in the postmodern society. Before the advent of postmodernism, children used to fear their parents and bow to their authority, but in the postmodern age, parents fear their children and possibly adore or worship them. The researcher has observed and heard some Christian parents say that if they do not allow their children to do what they intend to do, things that please or satisfy their desire, they might run away and leave them to go wherever they feel. Before postmodernism, disciplinarian parents

were more pronounced; but the reverse is the case in this postmodern age. More so, discipline in schools that compliments home training is no more allowed in Nigerian society. Any report of discipline or punishment brought by children to their parents from school makes parents pick up a fight with their teachers. As a result, teachers are sometimes less concerned with children's wrongdoings in school.

Alongside this, postmodernism gives room and encourages permissive child-rearing. Many Christian parents are permissive to postmodernism trends and do not emphasise the Bible and salvation in the priorities of training they give to their children, which is, however, dangerous and disastrous (Ayandokun 2021, 31). This is becoming more prevalent in some Christian homes with the understanding that parents would not want their children to go through specific rigours and sufferings. Permissive parenting is a situation whereby parents lessen the act of discipline over their children and do not bother to demand specific responsibilities from them (Baumrind 1991, 56). Persistence in this act has made many children from Christian families have little or no knowledge about doing house chores as the responsibilities have been shifted to house help. Some of these children eventually engage in the service of people to help them even when married.

### **Implications for Christian Parents in Nigeria**

In view of the effects of postmodernism on Christian parenting highlighted above, this section of the paper draws out some implications for Christian parents in Nigerian society.

Christian parents should be aware that most of the features in contemporary society, especially Nigerian society, are features of postmodernism: As opined by Olaniyan (2015, 99), the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world is undoubtedly a postmodern era whether an individual subscribes to postmodernism worldviews or not. Christian parents should be sensitive to some postmodern features so as not to subscribe to them and guide against them in their children's lives. Christian parents can find fulfilment as they try to raise godly children in this trying culture by acknowledging the critical nature of the postmodern world (Jeremy,

<http://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/intilling-biblical-values-in-a-postmodern-world-1159764.html>). They should not fold their hands to allow their children live and behave anyhow which may harm their lives.

Christian parents should pay deliberate attention to the Word of God in raising children that will meet godly standards: The Word of God is constant when reconciling between parents who live with postmodernist thoughts and children living with postmodernist thoughts. The word does not change even if the world is changing, and it remains relevant across every age of human beings. One thing is that it should be made to address the reality of the postmodern age in which human beings now live. Christian parents should engage their children with the deeper truths in God's Word, as it is the only viable tool for Christian parenting (Ayandokun 2021, 10). The Word of God is a practical resource that can help guide against the postmodern philosophies that children are highly vulnerable to. Therefore, Christian parents must teach the whole truth of the Bible to all their wards.

Christian Parents should be ready to take more responsibilities in teaching, training, and disciplining their children: These could be done by establishing rules and values that will serve as a guide for living. Among Africans, some values support biblical principles such as respect, loyalty, faithfulness, and chastity. Christian parents should embrace these earlier without waiting until their children are grown up and exposed to postmodernist ideologies. Every lousy trait must be dealt with early enough to help the children emerge as well-behaved children. According to Ayandokun (2013, 31), being trained with values begins at home, while the church and Christian schools can be added advantages.

Christian parents should develop traits from biblical points of view that will enhance their effectiveness in parenting: Among these traits, as Steiger gave (<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/a-biblical-basis-for-the-7-traits-of-effective-parenting>) include love. God's love in parents helps them counteract their natural selfishness and relate intimately with their children. Children can also learn God's love through the sacrificial commitments their parents teach them to make

and much more make to them. Another is value and respect. Christian parents should not treat their children as useless because nothing encourages them more than being respected and valued. Refusing to use offensive language on their children is one of the ways parents can respect and value their children, as language habits can influence the ability to model respect to the children. Another trait is being intentional about raising godly children irrespective of what goes around. Being intentional is making decisions as parents about how they will own the spiritual atmosphere in their homes. Alongside this, parents must develop the trait of setting boundaries and limits for social media, behaviour, and relationships, not allowing a culture of whatever form to determine what is healthy for their family.

### **Conclusion**

The effects of postmodernism on Christian parenting are evident in Nigerian society. These effects have been posing severe challenges towards raising godly children that can be vouched for in contemporary society and who can become a generation that meets God's standards. Though several books have been written on Christian parenting in contemporary society and the postmodern world; yet, nurturing children in a Christian way is not being achieved. This paper has highlighted some of the effects of postmodernism on Christian parenting, and some implications have been drawn for Christian parents in Nigerian society, which, if taken into consideration, can help raise and nurture children based on the godly standard. Children need to learn how to live a godly and better life in the postmodern age, and this is by helping them to develop a cohesive biblical worldview.

In the same vein, Christian parents have to set an example of Christian living based on the standards of truth flawed by postmodern ideologies so that children can also embrace and follow suit. This is because children tend to do what they see their parents doing, and a godly or standard way of living is easier caught than taught. Christian parents must commit to God's truth if their children are expected to adopt and follow those values. They must align their actions with what they are teaching their children about the absolute truth of life.



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