

COUNSELLING AND PROMOTION OF EFFECTIVE PARENTAL UPBRINGING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA: THE COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Raising children is a challenge and a difficult mission in our today's society, but with the right tools, parents could find resources to help children become resilient today and balanced adult tomorrow. One of such tools is counselling, through which parents are helped to use parenting skills as resources for the harmonious physical, cognitive and psychosocial upbringing of their children. Counselling is seen as a compass that indicates the direction to follow to optimize the parent-child relationships. When a parent feels that he or she is losing direction in child rearing, he or she may use this counselling, which could bring him or her back into the relationships with his/her own child. This paper therefore focused on counselling and promotion of effective parental upbringing in secondary schools. The paper clarified some concepts which include parental upbringing and counselling. The paper discussed the factors affecting parents while raising their children. It also highlighted principles of effective parental upbringing and ways to promote effective parental upbringing through parental counselling. The roles of counsellors and counselling implications towards promoting effective upbringing were also discussed. The paper therefore recommended among others that counsellors should devote their time in providing effective services to the parents and school children as well.

Keywords: Counselling, Promotion, Effective Parental, Upbringing, Students.

Introduction

There is no doubt whatsoever that counselling is a very important tool in the upbringing of a child. Infact, without counselling, the child may grow wild, uncontrollable and becomes a problem to himself, the family and the society. This is because counselling helps individuals to explore and confront specific life dissatisfying issues by enabling them gain deeper understanding of their concerns, and also discover and implement effective ways of resolving such concerns (Oguzie, Oguzie, Nnadi, Mokwelu & Obi, 2019). However, it is surprising to note that despite the blessings of Nigeria as a nation, Nigeria is still sprawling in the pots of

internal problems of development especially in the education sector. The education sector tends to be in shamble, coupled with social dismemberment, youth restiveness, economic strangulation, political confusion, religious disharmony and ethical disintegration.

Concerned citizens (Alikor, 2022; Onwuka, 2021) have expressed worry that the Nigerian nation is in disarray and in pitiable condition. Hence, the center can no longer hold. From armed robbery, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, ritual murder, herdsman and farmer conflicts, same sex marriages, religious intolerance, gender inequality, corruption, general insecurity and lack of respect for human lives. There is also apathy, disenchantment, hunger, hopelessness, frustration anguish, depression and a general cry for what was once a beloved country. There is a gloomy picture and a bleak future of once upon a country Nigeria, all these are the result of poor upbringing of a child.

Poor child upbringing is the inability of the parents or the guardians to train up a child into the accepted societal standard. Poor child upbringing could stem from child neglect or abandonment into the hands of house helps, day-care centers and other staff who are paid for the hour to take up the responsibilities of such homes (Okoroafor & Njoku, 2012). These could be due to love of money which forces parents out of the house struggling, hustling and chasing money in all directions in order to compete and be like others. Money has become the dominant of life in Nigeria. Poor child upbringing could lead to non-recognition of the roles of the agencies of education, the family, the school, the church, and the peer group in the proper and complete education of the child. Globalization, the quest and adoption of foreign values have led to the neglect and misplacement of traditional values which helped to engrave education in the heart of children (Nwamuo, 2022). The authors added that the effect of foreign movies and social media has helped in adulterating and vulgarizing the local culture. They have given rise to same sex marriages, practice of lesbianism, and single parenting which are alien to our culture. The unscrupulous practice of incest is gradually creeping into our culture and is being adopted as normal within a subset of the society. There is also insufficient care, improper education, the non-injection of pure oxygen in the early stages of a child's upbringing and the improper use of the right manure in nurturing the child.

All these vices are orchestrated and championed by the youths, secondary school students inclusive, who could be assisted through proper counselling and good parental upbringing, hence, counselling seems to be a major tool for promoting good and effective parental upbringing. This paper therefore x-rays counselling for promoting effective parental upbringing among secondary school students in Abia State Nigeria. This paper is discussed under these subheadings: parental upbringing, secondary school students, concept of counselling, parental counselling, counselling implications, conclusion and recommendations.

Concept of Parental upbringing/parenting

The term parenting could be referred to as the responsibility of ensuring that the child is well trained in the society. According to Okoroafor and Njoku (2012), parenting could be referred to as social act, a responsibility, a process and a role that is essential for the society to ensure social stability, harmony and progress. It is an act that demands a high degree of commitment, sacrifice, diligence, devotion, drive, perseverance, attitude, knowledge tolerance, and

determination. Parenting. According to Grey (2016), it would be referred to as the aspect of raising a child aside from the biological relationship. Parenting is a process, a task, a function and a challenge that is bestowed on an individual who becomes a father or a mother. It involves giving of care, training, nurture to children and young ones like teenagers and adolescents. The true nature of parenting is such that is an uphill task that may not be easily done satisfactorily or excellently, by any parent because it is quite demanding, tedious, expensive and requires a rare sense of tolerance, perseverance, dedication, commitment, sacrifice, determination and hope among others (Okoroafor & Njoku, 2016). It is therefore imperative to state that parenting is a necessary task before every father and mother that hopes to live up to his other expectation or responsibilities. It is interesting to note that the extent to which a parent could perform lies on the degree to which he or she is willing and able to take up challenges of parenthood and the results on the child or children afterwards. Robert (2008) stated that parents encounter a lot of issues and problems in raising children, these problems centered on how to maintain good parental relationships with the children, how to spend quality time with the children, and problem of communication with the family. This is why Ashish (2014) recommended that the only way to encourage desirable behaviours, praise, and encouragement, non-verbal attention are some skills most parents should learn or gain. This will help to strengthen parent-child relationships.

Parent-child relationships are the type of relationships that promote togetherness and the wellbeing of the child and that of the entire family. Grey (2016) referred parent-child relationships as relationships that involve emotional, physical, social, financial status, social and cognitive development. The author stated that the rising incidence of behavioural problems among children could be as a result of poor parent-child relationships. Hence, poor parent child relationships have led to the inability of some parents to train their children to become socially adjusted to life demand and demand of the society (Ashish, 2014).

There are some skills that parents could practice to establish positive parent-child relationships, which include validation, balance and listening.

1. Validation

This is the most developmental supporting parental skills for parents. Validation simply means to acknowledge without judgment the feelings of another as acceptable and as real for them. This also means giving nurturing attention to children rather than trivializing or punishing such child or children when they express their views or make them look like extreme reactions. Validation is accepting the children adolescents' feeling as real as they appear rather than telling them not to feel as they do. Validation simply requires a verbal and non-verbal consideration response along with their boundaries and limits.

2. Balance

Balance is the ability to be flexible in setting rules and expectations. Children and adolescents need boundaries and limits they could go for their safety and growth but they need grace also in those areas of life to dictate their mistakes and the consequences that naturally results from those mistakes. Adolescents need room to experiment with autonomy and independence while trusting that their parents have their backs should something go wrong. This particular balance is tough for many parents and may require supports from other parents and even counsellors at times.

3. Listening

Listening is a basic skill that worth mentioning when it comes to parenting. Often times, parents become worried and frustrated by their children and adolescents' behaviours that they forget to use the skill. Children and adolescents are humans too, so they need to be listened to. All parents and others need to hear from them and listen to their feedbacks.

Common parenting styles

There are different parenting styles which parents may adopt in raising children. These parenting styles could drastically affect children on how they grow up into adolescents or adults. Despite the best intentions and deepest rooted desire to be a super dad or mum, sometimes something gets hard on the way (Grey, 2016). This is why many people sometimes struggle with parenting styles. Sometimes, failing to execute parenting style properly could create negative impact on children, this is when counselling comes into play.

There are four major parenting styles as noted by Okoroafor and Njoku (2012), they include: **Authoritarian parenting:** Authoritarian parenting involves laying down rigid set of rules that children should follow. This style also makes the word of the parents to be law and the children must follow them to the letter. This style uses punishment to condition children.

Authoritative parenting: Authoritative parenting involves creating a conducive environment of positivity for children. The parents here still make it clear that the children should follow rules for a reason. Children are also made aware of the reasons behind those rules. Most importantly the feelings of the children are taken into consideration.

Permissive parenting: Permissive parenting is seen as a parenting of being lenient. Here, rules are still made for the children to follow, while the enforcement of the rules are not consistent and inconsistency shows lack of seriousness.

Uninvolved parenting: Uninvolved parenting has parents who do not care or play an active role in the child's upbringing. In most cases, the parent has little knowledge about what is going on with the child. Many uninvolved parents are not able to actively provide for the children's physical, emotional and psychological needs. These parenting styles could have impact on the behaviours and mindsets of children heavily. As such, parents must be mindful of their actions and behaviours which are related to their styles. Hence each parenting styles have distinct characteristics and could leave negative impression on the children.

Factors affecting parenting

The factors include the following:

1. Parents level of education

In Nigeria, the literacy level is still below average when compared with the developed Western nations. This problem is affecting parenting in Nigeria because many parents would have been in better position to understand their children well and be able to impact positively on them by inculcating into them some laudable traditional values; with some good Western values that are necessary in this modern and globalised world. Parents who acquire good formal education are better equipped to offer their

children good training by inculcating into them good traditional and Western values that they need to succeed in life. Educated parents are more likely to read their children's books than their less-educated counter parents, enhance their children's development and human capacity by drawing on their own advanced language skills in communicating with their children. They are more likely to expose their children to those things they need to know in life (Sara, 2005). Well-educated parents help in socializing their children in order to enable them attend high level of academic success.

2. Parent Economic Status

The poor economy of the country has been an impediment to good/effective parenting in Nigeria. Poverty is believed by many people to be on the increase and parents with all the responsibilities they carry may be the worst hit in Nigeria. Poor parents lack money to do things for their children and therefore may not be able to control the actions of their children who often seek other sources of getting the things they need at home or in school, by any available means whether positive or negative.

3. Number of children in the family

Family size could also affect parenting and parental upbringing. Melissa (2013) observed that the number of children in the family and their ages have implications on parenting. In fact, the greater the number of children, the greater the responsibilities expected of the parents (Melissa, 2013). Large family size is typically associated with the problems of undesirable family conditions involving poor role models (examples, poor parental relationships, parental criminality and indiscipline) (Fischer, 2015). According to him, large family size leads to inability of parents to supervise their children. Parents have problems of managing misbehaviours of their wards, anticipating and planning for their children, self-regulation skills, parental support skills and many others (Sara, 2010). This is the reason Davies (2000) noted that the home determines the emotional, physical, social, and spiritual wellbeing of any individual.

4. Overindulgence

Overindulgence means giving the child excessive power to get whatever he or she demands or do whatever he or she wants to do. The children to whom everything is given belong to the category that is suffering from overindulgence. If parents deny these children wishes, they become aggressive and try to manipulate their parents to give in through provocative behaviour (breaking things, refusing foods, crying continuously even threatening to run away or commit suicide). Some children often measure self-worth by the number of things they possess. They associate what they have with being loved and how important they are. These children get so used to "possessions" to the extent that they may feel threatened in the relationships when parents deny them something. From infancy, parents should dictate what their children could have, when, how, which, where and in what quantity to cut short their level of curiosity in getting or possessing things anyhow.

5. **Over-domineering**

This occurs when parents exert total control and influence on many things their children do. They do not give their children opportunity to learn from mistakes because they make all the decisions. The children are trained to believe that they are not meant to take a step without their parents' directives. Such children grow up without confidence in their own judgments (Okoroafor & Njoku, 2012). They always need someone to tell them what to do and how to do it. This group of children may in future, have problem with making positive and intelligent decisions, as this may affect what they could achieve in life. Hence they may end up being rebels at home, in school and in the society at large.

6. **Overprotection**

Overprotection occurs when parents estimate possible dangers and constantly pointing them out to the child. Some parents, particularly, mothers try to get the children, especially daughters, from engaging in physical activities and certain house chores because they believe they are strenuous. Due to over protection, many children do not have normal social contact with other children in their neighbourhood or in school. They do not participate in the activities that many other children do. Such children often live in constant fear and tend to develop lack of confidence in their own capabilities.

7. **Lack of Parental Control**

Right from the beginning of a child's life, he or she needs parental control and guidance. The presence of parental care, support and directives help to make a child gain the right knowledge and socialization that could prepare that child for the challenges of adolescence and adulthood. Parents carry out very important functions that give children the moral, mental, psychological and economic support they need to develop to normal personality. But some parents do not have power over their children hence they lack control, and this has contributed to the value problems in the country because some parents fail to inculcate the right values in their children, thereby ignoring the fact that children need effective parenting.

Effective Parenting

Effective parenting has been defined by the researchers as a process of providing care, nurture, physiological, economical needs and training for children and the adolescents. Effective parenting refers to good and resourceful parenting in which children are given the best form of care, treatment, attention, nurture and upbringing that they require to be normal, well-functioning, well-behaved and useful members of their family and society (Okoroafor & Njoku, 2012). Other phenomena in human existence, view negative parenting as the act of doing badly, being ineffective or being in such a way that it creates problems for individuals and the society at large. On the other hand, parenting could be made effective, result-oriented and positive, thereby impacting well on society for posterity. Effective parenting in Nigeria could be achieved by the combination of some elements of our traditional system of parenting and that of the Western world that are worthy of emulation (Demetriou, 2013).

In this globalised world, a developing nation like Nigeria, could not do things in isolation of other countries. It may also continue to hold on to her entire traditional systems and values. The world today is at the era of global partnership and competitiveness. This implies that individuals and nations take time and effort to set goals, objectives and plans that not only work for them but help them to be contemporarily significant at the global level. Demetriou (2013) stated that Nigeria is not a nation that throws away her laudable traditional methods of parenting that worked for us and entirely embraced the Western style of parenting. While it is agreed that some aspect of our traditional style of parenting are undemocratic and tend to infringe on the rights of children, some others help to enforce discipline and conformity to our social norms and values. The idea of flogging as a negative sanction is seen as a form of child abuse in democratic societies and therefore unacceptable and illegal. It should not be continued in the name of giving training to children in Nigeria. But on the other hand, the “over-free” style in some cases, experience non-challant approach to parenting that is seen in some Western societies which is not to the best interest of Nigeria.

Principles guiding Effective Parenting

There are some principles guiding effective parenting. They are:

1. What a Parent Does Matters

The way a parent treats and handles children matters a lot. This principle indicates that parents should act and relate to the children in such a way that they would learn and love them.

2. A Parent Should Not Be Too Loving

Parents should desist from the habit of showing too much love to their children. Steinberg (2015) insists that parents should not love a child too much, as determined by expressions of warmth and affection. Loving children too much could lead to spoiling them. There are consequences involved in over loving the children especially giving them too many things in place of love, leniency, lowered expectations, or material gifts.

3. A Parent Should Be Involved in a Child's Life

This principle involves maintaining a closer relationship with the child both physically, economically, psychologically, emotionally and mentally. Parents should be involved in everything a child does by leading, directing and correcting their mistakes. Parents should be involved in children's academics, visiting them and directing them on how to do their homeworks. It does not mean taking over the child's duties, such as homework (or correcting their homeworks before giving them to the teacher.

4. A Parent should Adapt Parenting to Suit the Child

Parents should adapt a parenting style peculiar to his or her family. No two families are the same and most of all treat each child as a peculiar personality. For example, an irritable twelve-year-old who could not concentrate could be depressed or have sleepless days or nights. One should device a different means of support for such a child, instead of dwelling on complaints.

5. Establish and Set Rules

Children should be guided and managed by giving them certain rules to follow. A family should set up specific rules and be firm on them. Steinberg (2005) stated that there should be boundaries set for the children which would attract discipline if violated. Steinberg further stated that parents should always be able to answer three questions: (1) "Where is my child?" (2) "Who is with my child?" (3) "What is my child doing?" this means that children must let their parents know where they are, who they are with and what they are doing at all times. The implication is that children reared without (reasonable) rules or boundaries enforced may have difficulty disciplining themselves later in life.

6. A Parent should Foster Child's Independence

Apart from setting rules and limits, parents should encourage independence. This helps the children gain a sense of self-direction as well as successful and autonomous in adult life.

7. A parent Should Be Consistent in Setting Rules

Parents should be consistent in setting rules and disciplining their children. Steinberg stated that consistency is the most important disciplinary tool, suitably sharpened by clear identification of the parent's non-negotiable patterns of parently. Hence the authors stated that the parent's authority should be based on wisdom, not power. Inconsistency leads to confusion.

8. A Parent Should Avoid Harsh Disciplinary measures

Parents should avoid harsh discipline. Children are made to be disciplined not to be punished. Parents should draw the difference between discipline and punishment. Steinberg (2005) stated that parents may use any form of discipline but not physical punishment. It has been observed that children who are physically abused are more likely to be bullies and use aggressiveness to solve disputes with others.

9. A Parent should Explain Family Rules and Decisions to the Child

Both children and adolescents should be made to know and understand why certain rules are made. Hence parents should take their time to explain rules and the reasons behind their adhering to those rules, as it does not remove anything from the parents clearly explaining such rules and traditions, which could endanger the cooperation of parents and their children. Children especially adolescents are more likely to cooperate when rules are explained and letting them know the reasons why certain things must be done in such ways.

10. A Parent Should Treat a Child with Respect

Respect is reciprocal an adage said, it also applies to parenting. Parents should accord respect to their children. Parents should also speak politely and lovingly to them, pay attention when children are speaking, and treat them kindly. They should try to please the children and make them happy. This is therefore extended to them as children are expected to treat others the way their parents treat them and their relationship with the child will be a foundation for their relationship with others (Steinberg, 2005; Davis, 2005).

Secondary School Students

Secondary school is the level of education after the primary level. The students at this level of education are mainly adolescents. These adolescents are faced with storm and stress with a lot of challenges. This gives their parents a lot of concern, these students face a number of problems which dishearten them, thereby leading them to sheer desperation among the students' community, giving rise to students' unrest. At this stage of their education, there are many issues they have to deal with such as study, time, money, relationships, job hopes and lot more. Many students may not admit their problems due to various reasons and this affects their future prospects. Usually, students face general symptoms of emotional imbalances as part of growing up as adolescents and these become more pronounced because of the hectic student's lives. All such negativity could be effectively controlled with the aid of an effective parenting counseling assistance.

Concept of parental counselling

Parental/Family counselling is one of the many forms of counseling and therapy. This counseling focuses on children and family issues. It deals with parenting issues could be troublesome. Parental counseling is part of a psychological counselling performed with parents and children to explore and discover ways to use resources effectively in order to optimize the parent-child relationship (Demetriou, 2013). Parental counselling is one of the most important tools that a parent has to adapt to perform his or her parental roles or to manage different moments or to maintain parent child relationship. A study by Sumaya and Alay (2018) aimed at measuring the effectiveness of parental counselling on parent child-relational problems. The study revealed that parental counselling could play a significant role in improving parent-child relationships. This study indicates that parental counselling is very important. Through parental counselling, one observes and understands how the child's development is structured. Parents have very important roles in the child's physical, cognitive and psychosocial development, favouring or impeding the developmental processes. In this sense, parenting could be considered in a dimension of protection, when it is functional for development or in a dimension of risk and compromise, when it is dysfunctional and abusive. Through parent counselling, parents could be supported in their roles in discovering and improving individual resources in acquiring specific parenting skills and self-assessment skills for a better understanding of the child. Parental counselling is one of the tools through which preventive and corrective actions could take place in a child's development.

Parental counselling serves as a reminder to parents so as find out the things they need to prioritize in the child's upbringing. It helps families build the values that could make them stronger as a whole, thereby making the family to share values and stronger bonds. Parental counselling provides opportunities for a collective effort of the parents to solve their family problems. It helps family members come together to address their family issues. It gives opportunities for openness in the family (Demetriou, 2013). It creates room for the family members to talk on a deeper level which could help ease talking to others on a personal level and hence make family members more comfortable with each other. Some of these issues needed for parental counselling are the following:

- ❖ Coping with significant life issues
- ❖ Dealing with personal problems
- ❖ Dealing with conflicts

- ❖ Substance abuse and addiction
- ❖ Relationship problems

The Counselling Implications

Counselling means a therapy that involves assisting an individual in sharing his/her problems with the counsellor and after taking note of the problems and identifying strategies to assist him on the best ways to cope up with their problems. The counsellor is a well-known trained person, who is capable to handle do counselling as he or she puts in his or her best efforts to acknowledge the clients as a person with problems as well as identify the psychological problems of the individual that gives him mental instability and emotional pain (Demetriou, 2013). The role of the counsellor is very important. He/she could find out the root of a particular problem and figure out the possible solutions for the problem. The counselor also helps people to choose the best course of action by helping him remain positive in his life. Counsellors could be said to be touch bearers of the students and their parents (Demetriou, 2013). They may easily identify their problems and help them accomplish the career and academic goals of the students as well as enhance their personal development, thereby improving their interpersonal relationships.

Counsellors have multifaceted roles to play in student's lives and those of their parents especially in shaping the career of these students. Counsellors may equally provide health advices to parents and their entire members of the family. They could provide helpful advice and parenting styles to the parents so that they could manage their children's bad activities at home and give them a positive mind to think rationally. Counsellors should arrange a one-to-one meeting with the parents to initiate good relations between parents and the school counsellors.

Conclusion

Nigeria as it is now is derailed and there is need to bring a significant remedy in corruption, robbery, illiteracy, indiscipline, morality, terrorism, kidnapping, poverty, and other social vices among the adolescents including secondary school students. The paper has discussed some of the issues in parenting and how to promote effective parenting through counselling. It is therefore believed that effective parenting is an effective or feasible means through which these social vices could be curbed.

Recommendations

The authors have discussed the topic extensively and made the following recommendations:

1. School counsellors should provide opportunities and resources for counselling students in school, and make counselling more accessible for them.
2. A good collaboration between the teacher, the counsellor and the parents may help parents employ more appropriate parenting practices and thus promote the adaptive behavioural development of their children.
3. Parents, teachers and counsellors should teach students to balance pleasure and work. So that they could handle social pressures, taking too many classes, alcohol/drugs, among other social vices.

4. Seminars, workshops, and symposia on family size should be organized for parents. This would make them aware of family size as it influences secondary school students, thus making parents to also control the family size through birth control mechanisms.
5. The government and other relevant agencies should create opportunities for parents to be properly educated.
6. Counsellors should organize free workshops and seminars for parents to benefit from their wealth of knowledge.
7. Family/parental counselling sessions should be made available for all parents in their localities even in their religious gatherings or meeting so that majority of the parents could benefit from it.
8. E-counselling through the internet should be advocated so that those that do not have time to go for counselling session should do so from the comfort of their homes.
9. Counsellors should devote their time in providing effective services to the parents and school children as well including rendering counseling services through radios, televisions and other mass media.

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