Bringing up Properly Molded Children by Parents/Guardians and Teachers

A Paper Delivered at the
Annual Conference of the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) Lagos Chapter.
Held at
Faculty of Education Auditorium
University of Lagos

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Date: November 8-10, 2011
Introduction

The birth of a child is heralded with joy and celebration in most countries since children are regarded as the most precious gifts from the Almighty God. Children represent the future generation; thus they must be properly molded for their future roles. According to (Olusakin, Nwolisa & Babatola 2010), “parents have the greatest part to play in this molding process as the first socializing agents of the child”. Most parents have high expectations about their child’s future and exact efforts to raise a responsible, healthy and fulfilled child that would become an achiever later in life that African child is still exposed to all forms of abuses including malnutrition, denial of basic education, gender discrimination, inadequate healthcare and exploitation that is forced labour. The irony of the whole scenario is that in spite of this, millions of African children still live in penury and abject poverty as they are continually denied one or more of their right to survival, good health, protection and education.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) calls anybody who is beyond 18 years a child and that is the official position of Nigeria.

Rights of the Child in Nigeria

Nigeria is located on the coast of western Africa and has a surface of 923,768 square km. It is Africa’s most populous country with an estimated population of about 120 million, with an annual growth rate of 2.9%. The country consists of over 400 ethno-linguistic groups. The major languages spoken include Yoruba, Ibo, Fulani, Hausa, Edo, Ibibio, Tiv, Efik, Nupe and Igala. Nigeria is a Federal Republic composed of 36 states and one Federal Capital Territory (Abuja).
The states are further subdivided into 774 local government areas. For several years Nigeria has been criticized for the human rights and children’s rights violations perpetuated on its territory. Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (thereafter the CRC) on April 16th 1991 and has ratified other international instruments that generally affect the rights of the child. The Child Right’s Act 2003, passed into law in the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), and defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years. However, according to Art 2 of Children and Young Persons Act, enacted in Eastern, Western and Northern regions (hereafter referred to as CYPA, a “child” means a person under the age of fourteen, while “a young person” means a person who has attained the age of fourteen years and is under the age of eighteen years” (CRC, 2003). The UN Child Rights perspective emphasizes four basic rights:

- The right to life.
- Survival and development rights: These include rights to adequate food, shelter, clean water, formal education, primary health care, leisure and recreation and cultural activities.
- Protection rights: These include protection from all forms of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and cruelty, war and abuse in the criminal justice system.
- Participation rights: These include freedom of expression on matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life. The right to information and freedom of association.

Children have also been severely affected by the economic crises faced by the country in 1999, which has led to an increase in the number of children living in poverty or extreme poverty. Among other dangerous consequences, poverty made more children to live and/ or work in the
street and has increased their vulnerability to trafficking. Moreover, there is a severe lack of financial resources allocated to the protection and promotion of children’s rights. Consequently, mechanisms for protection and promotion of children remain “weak, uncoordinated and not in line with Nigeria’s obligations under the CRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women”. According to (William, 2010), Nigeria’s efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goal 4, which is aimed at reducing neonatal deaths by two-thirds in 2015, with the neonatal deaths of 284,000 per annum, it is obvious that Nigeria has not made enough progress on MDG4. The country tops the list of neonatal deaths in Africa followed by Congo with 130,000.

Policy on Rights of the Child

The convention on the rights of the child agreed on the following:

(1) Every child has the right to life and be allowed to survive and develop.

(2) Every child is entitled to a name, family and nationality.

(3) Every child is free to belong to an association or assembly according to law.

(4) Every child has the right to express opinions and freely communicate them on any issue subject to restrictions under the law.

(5) Every child is entitled to protection from any act that interferes with his or her freedom and reputation.

(6) Every child is entitled to adequate rest; recreation (leisure and play) according to his or her age and culture.

(7) Every child is entitled to good health, protection from illness and proper medical attention for survival, personal growth and development.
(8) Every child (male or female) is entitled to receive compulsory basic education and equal opportunity for higher education depending on individual ability.

(9) Every child must be protected from indecent and inhuman treatment through sexual exploitation, drug abuse, child labour, maltreatment and neglect.

(10) No child should suffer any discrimination on account of ethnic origin, birth, colour, sex, language, religion, political and social beliefs, status or disability.

Children’s day event is celebrated in many places around the world. It is a day set aside to celebrate childhood. On Children’s Day, tribute is paid to all children in the world. Children are loved by one and all. They win over our hearts with their angelic eyes and innocent smiles. It makes one realize that maybe that’s the way God wanted us to be. The holiday is meant to honour children and minors.

Children’s day is not just a day for children to stay at home or visit exciting places. There is more to the day than what is being done. It is a day for sober reflection on what have we done with the gifts given to us by God Almighty? Every child is important, even those living on the streets.

Nigeria became a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2001. The Child Right Act (CRA) was first drafted in 1993 and was adopted in 2003. As at the Children’s Day 2007, it has only been enacted into law in 24 states out of the 36 states of the Federation. Findings show that the convention has been incorporated into the national framework by legislative reform, including constitutional amendment in 50 countries.igeria ought to legislate the CRA effectively to curb the violation of child’s right as the right of a child cannot be claimed in states that have not incorporated such acts. The education of the citizenry on human rights generally and child rights specially is quite imperative. The children need to know their rights, so they can become human right conscious. Parents need to know the rights of the child in order to respect them. Law
enforcement officers need to know about child rights in order to stop confusing violations with domestic affairs. Government agencies need to know these rights to enable them to differentiate child right from child privileges and charity. Legislators too need to know these rights in order to have a reorientation on the rights of the child. Generally, human rights education will enable us to build a culture of universality of human rights and will provide the legal atmosphere that Nigeria needs to promote and enforce child rights.

The protection and promotion of the rights of the child secures a future for such a child as well as the nation at large, and the way the right of a child is handled in a country shows what the future holds for such a child and nation. The rights of the Nigerian child is far from being respected as could be seen from the increase in the number of poor beggar children in Nigerian cities, the number of children without basic education, and the number of children in one form of servitude or the other which are on the increase.

The situation is not same with most civilized nations of the world. For instance, in Britain and United States of America, the law stipulates that parents must provide for their children such necessities of life as food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical care. If they cannot or will not, State laws authorize intervention by designated authorities to ensure that children’s needs are met. Children who are physically abused by their parents may be subject of legal action in order to protect the children. Parents’ right to custody of their children may be limited or, in extreme cases terminated because of failure to provide adequate care. Laws require a father to support his minor children if he is able to do so. Failure to provide support may result in civil or criminal proceedings against him. This cannot be said to be true of Nigeria where the rights of the child is being daily trampled upon.
Since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the AU Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other relevant international instruments, Nigeria has instituted various legislative and institutional measures at both the Federal and State levels, aimed at addressing various forms of violence against children.

The CRA 2003 under Sections 21-40 provides for the protection of children against discriminatory, harmful and exploitative practices. These include the prohibition of child marriage, child betrothal, infliction of skin marks, abduction, forced, exploitative, and hazardous child labour, child hawking, begging for alms, prostitution, unlawful sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual abuse and exploitation prejudicial to the welfare of the child. The CRA further prohibits recruitment of children into the Armed Forces of Nigeria, and importation of harmful publication which portray information on commission of crimes, acts of violence, obscene, immoral and indecent publications which tend to corrupt or deprave a child.

The family courts which will operate at the High Court and Magisterial levels, and have been vested with the jurisdiction to hear all cases in which the existence of a legal right, power, duty, liability, privilege, interest, obligation or claim in respect of a child is in issue, or any criminal proceedings relating to any offence committed by a child. Under the various Criminal and Penal Codes as well as the Children and Young Persons Laws, children in conflict with the law or juvenile offenders are liable to various forms of punishment ranging from committal to remand homes or training homes for vocational training, rehabilitation and reformation programmes before release. This depends on the nature and gravity of the offence in question.

Parents and Children

Parents play fundamental role in the socialization of their children. Socialization includes all of one’s tendencies to establish and maintain relationships with others, to become an accepted member of the society at large, to regulate one’s behaviour according to society’s codes and standards, and generally to get along well with other people. This ensures the integration of the individual into society as children get socialized through their family members and significant others and that it begins early in life and is a lifelong process. The effects of children’s
deprivation can have damaging effect on the overall development of the child. Providing stable and nurturing families can bolster the resilience of children in care and ameliorate negative impacts on their developmental outcomes.

Many of the children found in remand homes were products of broken homes who enjoy little or no protection from their parents as a result they take anything the society offers them, thereby ending up as nuisance to the society. He lamented the situation whereby parents abandoned their children to the mercy of housemaids while the television has become their referral point instead of their parents. Repeated separation during very early stages of life is a stressful emotional experience, which includes a variety of neuronal and synaptic changes in limb cortical areas that may be related to behavioural alterations. Researchers in New Orleans USA reported that parental care makes such a lasting impression on an infant that maternal separation or neglect can profoundly affect the brain's biochemistry, with lifelong consequences for growth and mental ability.

Children brought up without being regularly hugged, caressed or stroked, “deprived of the physical reassurance of normal family attention,” have abnormally high level of stress hormones. One psychosocial factor unique to children is that they are developing. Children do not develop in isolation; the family is essential in providing the sense of self-esteem, security and identity that is necessary for the child to successfully learn from and fit into the rest of society. The emotional well-being of children is influenced by the protection and care they received from their families and communities. Despite government efforts, labour, political, and other problems plague Nigerian’s educational system. Many children go without any formal education. Parents are often forced to remove children from school for economic reasons. There are credible reports that poor families often sell their daughters into marriage as a means of supplementing their incomes. The First Lady of Nigeria, Hajija Tuari Yar’dua challenged parents to shape the lives of children as future leaders especially those who have been inflicted with one form of social vice or another at tender age.

Maternal deprivation has been operationally defined as the absence of a positive and continuous relationship between infant and mother. Maternal deprivation is a state of affairs in which the
child lacks warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute, which gives rise to later acute conflicts in love relations.

Providing stable and nurturing families can bolster the resilience of children in care and ameliorate negative impacts on their developmental outcomes. Protecting and nurturing the young is a universal goal across human cultures. Research confirms the importance of the family unit as the provider of safe, stable and nurturing environments for children. Unquestionably, children who are reared in safe and stable environments have better short and long-term adjustment than children who are exposed to harmful experiences. Children exposed to highly unstable environments are likely to experience developmental difficulties.

Neglect/Abuse of Children

Child abuse is any act of misuse of a child in any form, when a child is not being provided the much needed necessities of life. It is a situation where a child is maltreated physically, sexually, emotionally or psychologically and this is detrimental to the future growth and development of such a child. There is no generally accepted definition for the term” child abuse”. But it simply refers to the ill-treatment of a child by his parents or any adult. Child abuse is a wilful maltreatment of a child which can include acts of commission (abuse) and omission (neglect).

Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect describes the phenomenon as any act or failure to act on the part of parents or caregivers which result in death, serious physical or emotional harm of any child. A narrow definition of child abuse is limited to life-threatening physical violence, including severe beatings, burns and strangulation which are inflicted on children by adult members of the community. A broader definition however, lays emphasis on any treatment other than the most favourable care, and includes neglect, sexual or emotional abuse and exploitation. Whichever way, child abuse is the flagrant abuse of children’s God-given and constitution-guaranteed freedom, comfort and peace, by adults in the society.

Child abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional mistreatment or neglect of a child or children. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department for Children And Families (DCF) define child maltreatment as any act or series of acts of
commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. Child abuse can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with.

The African Network for Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) defines child abuse as, "the intentional, unintentional or well intentional acts which endanger the physical health, emotional, moral and educational welfare of children. Child abuse can be seen as any act of omission or commission, physical or psychological mistreatment or neglect of a child by its parents, guardians, caregiver or other adults that may endanger the child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. In this definition, wrongfully maltreating a child or selfishly making an unfair use of a child’s services by adults responsible for the child constitutes child abuse. Thus the adult may not be directly related to the child but a person in whose care the child is left can be an abuser. This may include the educators, healthcare workers, day care workers, or other responsible adults.

**Child abuse in Nigeria**

The Nigerian child has become most endangered in the midst of many abnormal events which have daily continued to shake the foundation and growth pattern of his life. Many Nigerian children are still subjected to physical and mental violence, sexual abuse, neglect and maltreatment. Apart from child exploitation which is also called child labour, many Nigerian children are victims of human trafficking, kidnapping and ritual killing. Thus a recent study by the International Labour Organization showed that Nigeria lost 4,000 children to traffickers. It was also claimed by UNICEF a year ago that about 10 million Nigerian children are out of school. This is in spite of federal and some state governments’ free education programme under the framework of Universal Basic Education programme, and the almajiri education that just been launched by the Federal Government.

It is evident that child abuse is a serious global problem that is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social practices and occurs in a variety of ways and places.
In Nigeria, children face the menace of abuse ranging from physical injuries, abandonment, sexual abuse to child labour. In fact, child abuse is becoming alarming in the country. Government’s efforts to combat the problem have yielded little or no result. Our Nigerian society is still plagued with incidences of child labour, child maltreatment, child marriage, child trafficking, neglect, and child prostitution. The effect of such abuses are many and varied including teenage pregnancies/ mothers, youth restiveness and violence and violence, cultism, youth decadence, joblessness, armed bandits, molestations, school drop-out. These menaces have eaten into the life of most Nigerian children.

However, a look at the society shows that child abuse occurs not only in homes but has found its way into the school system thus constituting a barrier to the attainment of sound educational development in the country.

In Nigeria, for instance, education is viewed as a means of building a free democratic, just and egalitarian society; a united strong and self-reliant nation; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Thus, Nigeria and her people need a change and growth in education so as to be in line with the developed nations. The fact that the society has a strong belief in education system (school) in the task of helping children develop their abilities, attitudes, values and good judgment make one not to think of child abuse as occurring in the school. Yet, incidence of abuse abound in schools and sometimes in subtle ways unknown to the school authorities but as the same time posing serious dangers to children at the same time having damaging and far more consequences on the life of the child. If the school, which is supposed to be a custodian of knowledge as well as functioning as the an avenue for the optimum development of the child fosters and indulges in child abuse, then one wonders how children will benefit from the process of education.

Statistics show that about ten million children of school age are out of school in Nigeria. The right of the child is paramount in every society; they are the future of every world. And if the world would remain fruitful, then the lives of the children should be considered by every government and every individual. The kind of life the child lives today would determine the kind of youth and adult he or she would be tomorrow. Intense advocacy continues for the remaining states. This explains that the landmark in achievement of the legislative arm of government has
not yet translated into improved legal protection throughout the federation. Children are abused physically, mentally, sexually, psychologically and morally on daily basis.

Some who are of school age are on the streets hawking. Most of them live on the streets and become hoodlums tomorrow. Others are sent out for prostitution, child labour even at an early age. Some of these children are even used for rituals nowadays.

**Poverty**

Many of the victims of child trafficking are said to be moved from one place to another with the aid of commercial vehicles under the pretext that they are coming into the country to spend holidays with their relatives. It is also revealed that the child traffickers resorted to commercial motorcycles when immigration officers clamped down on commercial buses. Child trafficking is modern day slavery. Every child has a right to life, security, education, leisure and good health. Treating children like second class citizens and exploiting them to hate you and want to harm you is enslavement.

**Illiteracy in Nigeria**

A look at Nigeria in the Six-Geo-political zones have a fair share of this menace North-East, North-West and North Central are filled with almajiris and now Boko Haram, South-West Area Boys, South-East kidnapping and armed robbery and South-South militancy.

Boy-child-back to school scheme was inaugurated in Enugu to curb the boy-child drop-out from school in the South-East. There are measures introduced to speed up education is the surest form out of every form of abuse and exploitation. This is because the most potent charm against poverty is knowledge.

**Awareness of child sexual abuse and other forms of abuses**

Child abuse prevention is everybody’s responsibility because by their nature, they are defend less and most vulnerable. Child abuse prevention is crime prevention-the way we report to police about criminal activities in our society is the way child abuse should be reported to the appropriate authorities.
The work of protecting our children is the responsibility of the adults around them irrespectively of their ethnicity, creed, colour, social status. Everyone is duty-bound to protect children from child abuse if they are to wipe out the menace faced by the younger generation.

The young generation should be protected and safeguarded from child abuse. Everyone has a responsibility to protect children since it is a national task. Development will be of no use without protecting the future generation. In this regard, parents and teacher/guardians have to play this vital role by doing the following:

- Teachers, Parents/Guardians must have copies of simplified copies of the Child Rights Act and they will study it diligently to know what behaviour constitute abuse on the life of a child.
- They have to keep a keen eye on their children and protect them at all times.
- Giving of scholarships to indigent, orphaned and children whose families are facing poverty.
- Taking the education of children very seriously and ensuring that they get qualitative education especially the girl-child who suffers more than any other.
- Moral education should be brought back to our school to instil proper values into our children.
- Teachers/ parents should boost the confidence of their children. Our children must be relaxed with us enough to tell us things.
- Parents should encourage stand by their children so that they can feel free to share their personal experiences with them.
- Parental negligence must be end , parents should try as much as possible to provide the basic needs of children to reduce child abuse and exploitation.
- Teachers/Guardians should teach children to be vigilant and conscious of their environment at all times.
- Children should be taught to avoid following strangers and know who is lurking around their environment.
- Teachers/parents should be trained on the different stages in child-rearing. There are times when all that children would require is a particular part of you. There is a progression in the relationship.
Parents should strike a balance between their career and their children’s upbringing.

Training and re-training on the techniques of raising good children should be established in our schools, communities, churches, mosques and even in market places where the illiterate ones would be targeted.

The value of hard work, disciple, honesty and good neighbourliness. Money should not be everything that matters in life.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The Bible for example said in Proverbs 6:22, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he grows, he will not depart from it”.

Proper pre-marriage classes should be brought back into our communities to teach the would-be parents what and what to expect in marriage.

The menace of absentee father should be addressed- a father in the house but his impact is not felt.

Sexuality education should start as early as the child can talk-explain the parts of the body where nobody can touch and report to Mummy if somebody touches them.

Learn to give some form of autonomy to the children –listen to them talk you may be amazed of what they will say.

Keep their secrets secret- do not expose anything told you in confidence.

Relax with the children and allow them to expose their environment while keeping eyes on them.

Establish the Child Right Clubs in the school where there will be peer-mentoring.

Create a very good conducive environment for learning by providing instructional materials.

Be dedicated as a teacher/parent knowing that the greatest investment in the life of a child is proper upbringing and good education.

Set boundaries to a child and maintain them-set good examples for the child to follow.

Be disciplined as a teacher/parent because children learn more by what they see you do more than what you say.

At appropriate times, discuss about your children’ friends and about sex, dating and marriage.
Parents should not abdicate responsibility of moral and ethical re-orientation of female students to teachers alone, there be a synergy.

Make personal development your life-time goal, improve yourself on a daily basis, read books, attend seminars, workshops. If you stop learning, you start to decay.

Teach children to learn self-control and contentment early in life.

Teach them to be assertive and courageous enough to know their rights and values and protect them at all times.

Provide good books, materials and aids that support positive values.

Never send girls to a man to ask for favours.

Teach the girl-child to avoid sitting on men’s laps irrespective of who they are.

Teach children not to accept money or gifts from men not known to you.

Pray for and bless your children all the time

Teach children how to pray early in life.

Teach children time management skills. Let them know that time lost is lost forever.

Children should not be turned into breadwinners.

Allow children to play—it a vital aspect of their developmental stages.

Teach children to dress decently and comport themselves well at all times.

Teach children not to undress in front of others.

Be available to children in their growing up days by giving emotional and psychological when needed.

Sending under-aged children to study abroad without proper supervision may earn you drug-addicts in return.

Teach hard work early in life and discourage laziness in any form.

Be teachable, most times allow yourself to be taught by the children—nobody has the monopoly of knowledge.

Be actively involved in your child’s spiritual, academic, social life.

Attend his/her PTA meetings, Open Day Visit your children’s teachers and school when in doubt of anything. Do not assume anything because, ‘a stitch in time saves nine is a common adage.

Encourage positive and healthy interaction with the opposite sex and insist that they bring their friends home when you are around not in your absence.
✓ Try as much as possible to know your children’s friends and interact with them when necessary.
✓ Trust your child to be able to trust you.
✓ Assist children to set worthwhile goals and values in life, and focus in them and avoid distractions.
✓ Teach children to report any overly made move by any adult figure to him/her.
✓ Teach children financial intelligence and how to be prudent with money.
✓ Inculcate in them savings culture by delaying instance gratification for a long time investment.

References


