Managing Abused Neglected School Child: The Role Of Special Educators And Counsellors

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ABSTRACT

Abuse and neglect leads to wide range of unfavourable consequences for children and young people. The purpose of this paper is to indicate the possible effects of child abuse and neglect and presented the roles of the special educator and the school counsellors in handling and managing such abused and neglected school children. It discussed types of major abuses and explored whether different types of maltreatment are associated with specific adverse consequences in childhood and adolescence. The paper discussed the different effects of child abuse and neglects and concludes by suggesting that the counsellors and special educators should assume the roles of managing and handling the abused children in schools so as to assist them achieve their potentials. They are also expected to educate the school teachers the difference between physical assaults and disciplining them during teaching/learning periods in the school.

Keywords: Child Abuse, Neglect, Counselling, Guidance, Special Educators

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria when school children are thoughtlessly sent out of their classes to the street after flogging/battering them, the resultant effect is usually traumatic. Unknown to the school teachers, the school child sent out of the class to the street often fall prey to sexual advances and gangsters who uses them to achieve their selfish desires. Some of these students (the girl children) are sometimes involved in sexual intercourse, sexual molestation and lesbianism. The boys who fall victims of abuse (flog and battering) in the school learn to fight, to steal, to have sex and to enjoy drug as a way of having monetary distraction from the actual existential fear and feeling of rejection. These have catalyst effects in our educational system in particular and our larger environment in general.

As a form of child abuse, flogging/battering school children by school teachers and the students’ senior school mates, which has a very low attention in the country, constitutes over 30% of young people
involvement in social vices. Again, emotional abuse involves actions by many teachers, society, government that interfere with the healthy personal and social development of a school child. Meanwhile, Madubuko, (1990) observed, in her study that abused children come from large families. Therefore, she argued that family size is a determining factor in the incidence of child abuse and neglect. According to Ebigho (1979), certain forms of child abuse such as arranged marriage of under-aged girls leads to physical trauma and to fixation or their husband which can have negative or positive consequences (Okunola and Ojo, 2012). In addition, sexual abuse leads to depression, lack of a self-esteem, communication difficulties, self destructive behaviours, feeling of shame or guilt and danger or hostility.

Moreover, a psychologically impaired child will continue to suffer from one side intensity and false consciousness, this reduces the academic performance of such child and makes his/her appearance anaesthetic and susceptible to violence and racialism. With escalating cases of child abuse, it becomes pertinent to state that the number of psychologically impaired pupils in many Nigerian schools is correspondently increasing, hence outrageous fall in the standard of education in Nigeria.

Abused children are found of crying in a very helpless manner, lack expectation or assurance or comfort from parents and caretakers always on guard, sizing up every situation and afraid of what comes next. They are always suspicious of their immediate, surrounding and are emotionally not well balanced. Children who are loved and cared for tend to turn to their parents for safety but abused children endure life as though they are alone with no real hope for safety in this world which they believe to be a very harmful place which cannot accommodate them. The abused school child will tend not to trust anybody especially his teacher for safety. The teacher picks on such children to school and this makes them unpopular among other children. The child soon finds solace among his type-birds of the same feather. However, an abused child is associated with feeling of shame, depression, and loss of prestige and so on. The educator who handles the child should realize that since the mind is the seat of intelligence and since emotions are products of mental arousal that excessive and intense positive emotion produces stress in the organisms.

The special educator and school counsellor should realize that learners’ behavioural readiness is a pre-exquisite to activities associate with learning. In this way, stress affects learning. Furthermore, the government in its policies should come out with stringent measures to find a lasting solution to this incidence of child abuse which has eaten deep into our social system in the society and in schools (Perry, 2001). There is a necessity to evolve a policy aimed at recognizing the right of children to equality, consultation and representation and guaranteeing their protection in these aspects. The right of school children to have adequate family life in their natural families and right to be represented in court by lawyers right to be consulted in planning his services and education, have hitherto either been denied or ignored, in other words, there should be alternatives policy orientation created by the government.
FORMS OF CHILD ABUSE:

Forms of child abuse include – physical assault; flogging/battering neglect and sexual abuse. Physical assault against children is a type of violence which occurs within the family. The factors which explain child abuse are probably similar to those which explain violence between other family members. Thus, violence at home occurs when social needs and expectations of individual are unsupported by either the family of by other social institutions. Also, Kempe and Kempe (1978) defined physical violence as physically harmful action directed against the child; that it is usually seen as any inflicted injury such as bruises, burns, head injuries, fractures, abdominal injuries or poisoning. According to Gelles (1980), he defines physical assault as the incidence of physical force by parents against children. He maintained that violence is extensive and patterned, that mothers are likely than fathers to use violence and males and younger children are then most likely victims. Kempe (1980) sees physical assault or what he termed “Battered child syndrome” to refer to a clinical condition in children who have been deliberately injured by physical assault. Furthermore, the assaulter could be the parents, the caretaker or a sibling. Ekpe (1982) defines physical abuse as physical injuries generally considered to be deliberately inflicted by a caretaker. It is undoubtedly the easiest form of abuse to identify because of the visible injuries.

CHILD NEGLECT:

Neglect implies a disorder in parent child relationship characterized by a failure of parents to endow the child with personal value Goldstein (1979). The child suffers from lack of attention by parents manifested by malnutrition and lack of stimulation. Pinheiro (2006) sees neglect in form of emotional deprivation, a “failure to provide the psychological nurturance necessary for a child’s psychological growth and development”. Emotional neglect represents a lack of emotional involvement between parents and child. Neglect can be a very insidious form of maltreatment and if there is no contact with a doctor or nurse, it can persist, unnoticed, for a long time. Neglect implies the failure of the parents to act properly in safeguarding the health, safety and well being of the child. Neglect according to Ekpe (1986), is a form of physical neglect which occurs when a child’s health or safety is endangered because of lack of adequate food, clothing, shelter or supervision. One manifestation is a “failure to thrive syndrome in which the child exhibits retarded physical growth and development without organic cause. Robert (1974), holds the view that the neglected child is usually multiply deprived adequate food, shelter, love and communication with others, while he is simultaneously assaulted. He also observed that several forms of childhood deprivation particularly physical, emotional familiarity and social deprivation are prevalent. That the children raised in poverty stricken areas lack home stability, medical treatment and educational facilities necessary to improve their situation.
School teachers may neglect school children by shifting them from one class to another effectively leaving them without the lessons they need. They also neglect children with reasons of their own, sometimes they concentrate on making sure that only few students understand them and leave others without any care. Fontana (1980) sees neglect as a broader range of “maltreatment syndrome” which concerns the well being of children than do other terms “maltreatment” is useful because it calls attention to a range of omissions or patterns of neglect such as food or water deprivation, or inadequate hygiene which may be injurious to the child. According to (Schutt, 2004) neglect is indeed a part of a pattern of abuse. In his view, he illustrates that neglect may not be indicative of in difference, ignorance of resources but a fundamental, severe disturbance in the expected nurturing role of parents. He recommends that caretakers be included in all stages of restoration treatment and provided with extensive after care services.

**SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual abuse means the exploitation of immature children through such actions as in cast, molestation and rape. It’s particular circumstance in both detection and treatment; warrant a discussion of sexual exploitation as a special case Kempe and Kempe (1978). According to David (1978), most sexual victimization took place within the child’s family not with strangers as “child molesting” have traditionally been stereotyped. While the problem cuts across social and economic lines, it seems to be more prevalent in families of lower social class and rural background, indicating that social isolation may play a key role in victimization and family violence. Mothers are crucial in protecting their daughters from sexual abuse; girls whose mothers were absent, ill, poorly educated or alcoholics were much more likely to be victimized. Children were most vulnerable prior to puberty, and most of them did not reveal their experiences to anyone at the time it occurred. Experiences involving force were much traumatic than those not involving force. According to Musoen (1984), the prevalence of sexual abuse (genital fondling, sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual interactions with children) is even more difficult to estimate than the frequency of violence to children.

He continued that adolescent females are the most frequent victims of sexual abuse by other family members. Almost all the cases of incest are father daughter incest. Children who are sexually abused are often physically abused as well. Kempe and kempe (1978), is of the view that clinicians who treat sexually abused children; they are often forced into social isolation from their pears. Other members of the family, including the other parents are often aware of the sexual activity involving the child and sometimes implicitly encourage it. Children are fearful of losing the love and acceptance of both parents if they object or refuse to participate.

For Ekpe (1981), sexual abuse can be considered as any act of a sexual nature upon or with a child, presumably performed by a parent or caretaker without the child’s consent and understanding example
incest. Okunola and Ojo (2012) holds that the abuse of children through sexual exploitation if what he called a “hidden paediatric problem”. He believes, however, that it is as common a problem as physical abuse and the “failure to thrive syndrome. As he posits, sexual abuse weather in the form of pornographic exploitation, incest, violent molestation rape, or paedophilic contact. Can have severe developmental consequences and therefore warrants inclusion in studies of maltreatment. Okunola and Ojo (2012) focus on one aspect of sexual abuse by reviewing cases of incest diagnosed in an adolescent clinic. They discussed the types and characteristics of families where incest has occurred, the consequences of such abuse for the victims and for the sometime resulting offspring. Sexual abuse in its entirety, ranging from issues or histories given is a serious crime. It causes not only physical suffering for the usually female victim but great psychological trauma as well. Addition man degrees of sexual abuse e.g. rapes are accompanied by violence sufficient to kill or mutilate the victim (Cichetti, and Toth, 2008). The comprehensive analysis of sexual abuse has helped to illustrate the nature of sexual assault on school children; the physical and emotional violence involved and the consequences for the child’s educational development.

CHILD ABANDONMENT:

Atkinson (1970), observed that although a material instinct has been posited as universal among human females the evidence does not support this belief. Some women have been known to abandon their born infants or even kill them. Some recent studies have shown that eleven million teenagers, about thirteen million of the sixty million women who became mothers in 1975 become parents before they were adults. Hence this led to an increase in child abandonment. From all these, it is vividly clear that mothers more than any other group of people were responsible for child abandonment. These studies also reveal that an abandoned child could be useful to the society from where he comes. This makes the child a child of the community who should be cared for by all members of the society (Okunola and Ojo, 2012). This however, suggests that the community should team up and fight against child abandonment.

CHILD BATTERING:

The “battered child syndrome” as a term used to characterize a clinical condition in young children who have received serious physical abuse, generally from a parent or foster parent Cook and Bowles (1980). Service workers have described this significant cause of childhood disability and death as an “unrecongnisant trauma”. Josephson and porter (1979) in their own report said that the battered child syndrome and it’s inevitable con-committant the abusive parent, guardian, school or society arise typically from no single psychopathological entity but are the result of complex intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal and or environmental influences and entities. The problem of child battering remains controversial, some see them as a response to stressful circumstances and society’s permissive attitude to violence while other view
it as primarily a manifestation of parental maladjustment, (cook and Bowles, 1980). A battered child therefore is a child who has received serious physical abuse which might lead to a permanent injury or death. This should be seen in any child exhibiting possible signs of trauma or neglect in form of fracture of any bone, tissue injuries, poor skin hygiene or malnutrition.

CAUSES OF CHILD ABUSE:

Monstreal (1975), while trying to identify the sources of child abuse, said that fathers and mothers batter children, baby sitters batter, old children batter smaller children, brothers and sisters batter their smaller siblings. She also discovered that when women stay at home, more woman batter, when fathers stay at home and women work, more men batter, she disagrees with the popular view that the poor uneducated, under privilege, drug addicts, alcoholics; teenage or single parents are more likely to batter their children. Incidences of child abuse can result from quite a number of different social or psychological factors. Ekpe (1986), in his studies, stated that probability of child abuse occurring in a family increases with level of stress experienced in that family. He identified various factors that can lead to abuse. He stated that lower income structure in a family with fewer economic resources leads to numerous kinds of insecurity; the size of the family and the number of children who require special care, place demand on the family. As a result of this demand placed on the family, it may fail to perform some expected tasks, such as child care, or express it’s frustrations in the form of aggression. It has also been noticed that parents who were themselves abused as children turn around to abuse their own children.

Martin (1978), also states that what is thought to be an accepted level of violence depends on the parents conception of their role, their own experiences as children, their religious or moral beliefs and cultural environment of which they are a part of. Owing to this difficulty in ascertaining what in essence constitutes abuse, some parents who have been found to be excessively harsh and intolerant towards their children, would have been astonished and indignant had they heard themselves described as child abusers. The fact still remains that the unrealistic estimated that in the United Stated of America, more than seven hundred (700) children are killed every year by their parents, siblings or relatives. It has also been discovered that parents involved in these cases generally had received no love as children and frequently had been beaten by their own parents. Also Okoli (1986), stated that an abandoned baby is a child whose parents have neglected or refused to care for. An abandoned child is also seen as a forsaken child and the Oxford Dictionary says that anything abandoned is deserted and deprived. So, when we say a child is abandoned, that child is deserted and deprived by his parents. An abandoned child is said to be an abused child because it is deprived of warmth, care and cuddling by his/her natural mother and consequently, it is deprived of moral development.
EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE

The earliest studies on child abuse focused almost exclusively on the immediate, short term physical effects. More recent empirical research has expanded the focus to include the psychological, social and intellectual development of the abused child. Several of these studies report that abused children exhibit more aggressive behavior, have a poor self concept, and have difficulty in developing meaningful interpersonal relationships. Earlier research on the physical problems of abused children suggests that the neurological, psychological and social development of these children may be delayed and/or distorted. Early theoretical statement suggests that abused children are more likely to be aggressive and engage in behavior that is anti-social both resulting in conflict with authority and the law. On balance, however, this paper seems to provide tentative support for the argument that the effects of abuse are likely to go beyond childhood and adolescents. “The consistent fact, however, is that parents who were abused as children turn round to abuse their own children. This is in effect suggests that childhood abuse has long-term effects for its victims. Kalu (1986), in her contribution stresses that emotionally abused children grow up as callous insensitive adults with varied repercussions for families and the society. Emotionally abused children also help to create various cadres of street children. The common picture of street children depicts children who have wares for their adult caretakers. Schools sponsors, foster parents or seek jobs as touts. They have their own experiences of emotional abuse, mixed with physical abuse and neglect. Such children can embark on endless all-day walk with visits to shops, restaurants, drinking bars or a friend’s home. They can commit crimes like braking into premises, stealing expensive objects from their own homes and selling such. Many contemporary Nigerian families are familiar with this.

Perry (2001) affirms that a child who grows up in a battering or abusive household has a high risk of growing up to batter and abuse in turn. Professionals of opinion of this decade on the psychological characteristics of the child abusing parent reveal that, the abusing parent was himself raised with some degree of deprivation. From the ongoing, numerous studies, confirmed the failure of punishment as a child rearing practice. “Considerably, body research has found that children who have experienced large amounts of physical punishment tend to be highly aggressive”. The Irony of these findings is that studies also find that the most frequent occasion for physical punishment is to control aggression on the part of the child. Similarly, although the evidence is not as clear, there are indications that parental attempts to control excessive dependency by punishment tend to increase rather than decrease. Finally, there is evidence that the use of punishment tends to produce a child who is relatively low in internalizing moral standards and self-directness. All sources indicate that effects of child abuse are of national importance. It is frequently considered to be of epidemic proportion the government should help in no small way to formulate policies that could help solve this endemic problem since it affects the growth, development and up-bringing of our children.
THE ROLES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATORS AND COUNSELLORS

Abusive parents can learn through the counsellors to deal with their children in new ways and the special educator can also teach the abused and neglected school child how to move on in live with clean clear vision. Several treatment programmes can be carried out by the counsellors and special educators during Parents-teachers Association (PTA) meetings to teach parents more effective and less violent methods of discipline through role playing, modelling and home visits. Harsh and non-tolerant teachers can also be counselled and advised by the counsellors and special educators to learn how to handle the abused and neglected school child so as to enable him/her cope with the existing stress through abuses. Children abused can be treated at the community level by providing resources and support systems for families under stress. The rates of child abuse decline when there are support such as employment and educational opportunities for mothers and children. Social work skills must be directed to assisting families in establishing meaningful relationships and communication patterns with each other, as well as in learning appropriate child rearing and discipline skills so that further incidents of child abuse will not occur.

Having discovered the effects of abuse on the school child, the special educator is expected to work closely with professionally trained school counsellor to ensure that such child improves academically; hence the psychological effects can affect the performance of such child. Sex education on the other hand should be made compulsory in schools and must be handled by a professionally trained school counsellor or special educator since parents do not play this role at homes. The special educators should also educate other teachers of the same school the difference between disciplining a school child and physically abusing such child in schools. Family planning programmes should be handled by the special educators and counsellors for parents and they must be encouraged to avoid excessive children that cannot be catered for. Pre-marriage counselling will also help. Recreational facilities for school children suffering from all forms of abuse must be provided in schools by the governments and the school managements to ease the burden and trauma. Library facilities outside the school premises must be available to all children for continuing informal education in a related atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

Child abuse is a serious social problem which affects performance of school children. To combat it effectively, we need clear and effective policies which will deal not only with the treatment but with prevention of the anomaly. Such as a policy orientation, which would take into consideration the welfare of the whole children while coming to the aid of the victims?

From the foregoing, it could be seen that child abuse refers essentially to any act of omission or commission by individual’s institutions or society as a whole, and any conditions resulting from such acts or inactions, which deprive children of equal right and liberties, and/or interfere with their optimal development.
The paper has also stated clearly that child abuse takes various forms which include: Physical assault, neglect and sexual abuse, child abandonment, child battering etc. Meanwhile, cases of child abuse abound. Nevertheless, child abuse has cataclysmic effects on the child and the entire society. In fact, abused, child manifesto more aggressive behaviour, have a poor self-concept and have difficulty in developing meaningful interpersonal relationship; they perform very poor academically. It is on this note that we suggest that the counsellors and special educators should assume the roles of managing and handling the abused children in schools so as to assist them achieve their potentials. They are also expected to educate the school teachers the difference between physical assaults and disciplining them during teaching/learning periods in the school.

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