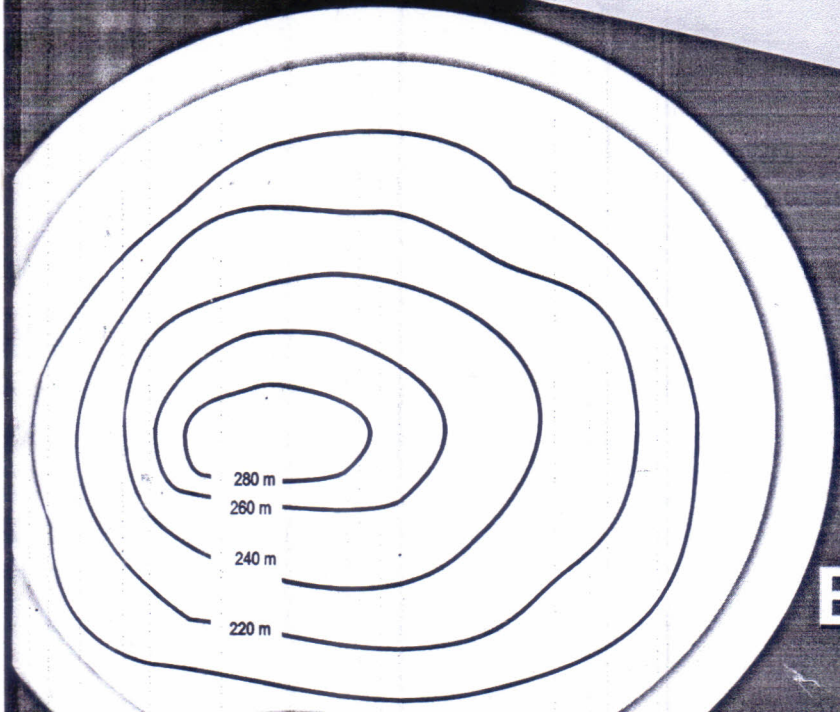
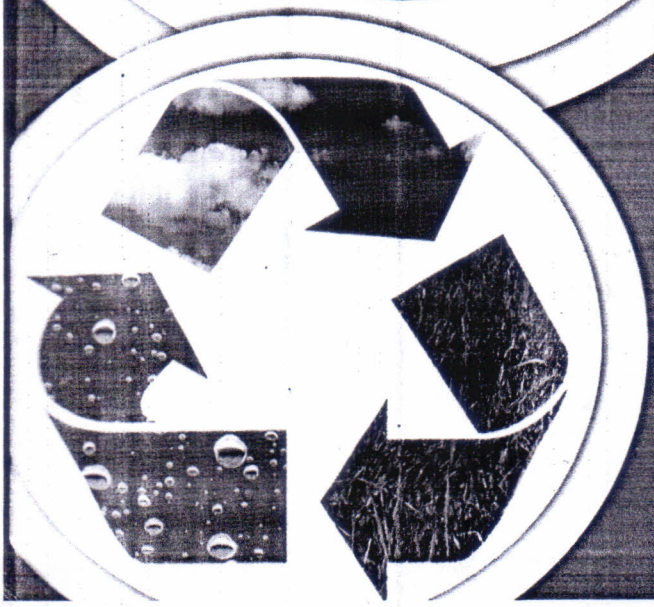
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CHILDREN IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS IN NIGERIA: CHILD ABUSE AS A FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Childhood is the most basic and fundamental stage in the developmental process of humans. It is the stage where humans are first introduced to social values, and learning to cope with the society, takes place. Care, love and security ought to be provided to children, as this would modify them and help them cope with social realities in the future. The Nigerian Child Act of 2003 prohibits acts capable of violating the child's rights. The prohibition is against child marriage, tattoos, skin marks, betrothal etc. However, the country still records a high rate of neglect and abuse of children which implies an overwhelming level of child stress in the country; this is the rationale behind this article. This paper discusses the incidence and the causes of child stress in Nigeria, paying particular attention to child abuse. Attachment theory was employed to explain the effects of child stress. The paper suggests that re-orientation programmes, more research and policy formations, contributions from concerned non-governmental institutions, and more focus on education would help to control the situation.

Keywords: Children, Stress, Child Abuse, Development

INTRODUCTION

The human society comprises of institutions created by man to fulfill his needs and desires. One of such institutions and in fact the most basic of all is the family. Through the family, society carries out the foundational socialization process for its 'new members' i.e. the children. As with other institutions, the family is an embodiment of social roles which if performed adequately, there would be no crisis. Thus, children, parents, relatives etc., have their roles to perform so that the family continues to be a source of love, care and togetherness. However, the role of parents which is chiefly to provide love, attention, basic needs, education and socialization for the children, has been grossly neglected in some homes and this has given rise to toxic stress for children.

All over the world, keen attention is paid to growing up of children who in their feeble status are being subjected to lots of abuses. Even though this may not be the case for all children, it is still disturbing that many are experiencing enormous difficulties especially with fewer children having support and love from adults (Kostelnik, Stein, Whiren & Soderman 1998). Survey by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) on child maltreatment shows that out of the number of children who suffer from child abuse, 73% were abused out of neglect, 9.1% were sexually abused, 7.3% were emotionally abused while 4.2% suffered from maltreatment such as abandonment, threat of harm or drug explosion.

Several welfare organizations such as United Nations, European Union, African Union, UNICEF, have expressed concern about the growing numbers of chronically unhappy, hyperactive and unmotivated children along major streets being seen by clinicians. The unwarranted stress that these children go through predisposes them to school failure, involvement in delinquency, drugs

related behavior and psychosomatic problems (Elkind 1981). The issue of children in stressful conditions is relevant because family life which often serves as cover for children is now a source of stress. The number of children who are left to fend for themselves at their young age increases daily, there is little or no care, provision and attention from parents, combined with the complexity of social interactions outside the family, the survival and happiness of children becomes worrisome. For instance, it is no news that in Nigeria, some children are moved from rural areas to urban areas to take on domestic jobs for some wealthy families. These children are mostly deprived of education or are sent to schools where their educational needs are not met. It is also disheartening to note that some children are seen as 'unwanted' and are treated as such, because they are the results of 'unplanned pregnancies'. Some of such children are dumped on the streets while they are infants, while some others are taken to the orphanage homes, grandparent homes or other relatives' homes.

While some of the children struggle and manage to attain valuable social positions, others experienced horrible stress and still remain at the bottom line of the social ladder. This creates a major concern for families, governments and stakeholders in child care issues, because children (the future of tomorrow) are at the risk of increased psycho-social problems, family conflict, social and economic deprivations amongst other challenges (Onojete 2007). Therefore, this paper focuses on stress in children, paying particular attention to issues pertaining to child abuse.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

WHO IS A CHILD?

A child is often referred to as a person within the age of infancy and adolescence. For the purpose of this work, the definition of a child as a person who has not attained the age of 18 (The Child's Right Act 2003), will be employed. In traditional times, children were assigned adult roles as they were introduced to work as a criterion for feeding. For instance, men desired many children (especially male) so as to have more working hands in the farm. This implies that children even at their tender age were performing economic functions to sustain their families. In recent times, especially with the advent of industrialization, children's roles have been modified to performing house chores which should not distract their going to school, while their parents are involved in the economic sustenance of the family (Heslin 2010).

Therefore, children are dependent and they require guidance, protection, comfort and care in order to develop emotionally, intellectually, morally and physically.

WHAT IS STRESS?

This is one of the most commonly used words during human interaction which various scholars have conceptualized differently, to give the same meaning. For Strokes and Kite (2001) stress is "an agent, circumstance, situation or variable that disturbs the normal functioning of the individual. It also involves the effect of the aforementioned". Mcgrath (1976) defined stress as "the interaction of three elements: perceived demand, perceived ability to cope and the perception of the importance of the ability to cope with the demand". In the words of Yeager and Roberts (2003) stress refers to "any stimulus, internal state, situation or an individual reaction, usually in form of positively or negatively adapting to a new or different situation in one's environment".

Generally, humans experience stress in different forms and environments: at home, at the work place, in school etc. Stress can sometimes be positive: it gives humans the right motivation and drive to achieve their goals. It may also be negative: when it becomes toxic, leading to mental, social and health problems. The Australian Psychological Society categorizes stress into three (3) forms: Acute, episodic acute and chronic stress. When stress is brief, making demand on a particular situation such as a deadline, it is referred to as acute stress. Episodic acute stress involves the recurring of acute stress over time. The most extreme kind of stress is chronic stress: at this level stress is ongoing and constantly worrisome, giving rise to health challenges and impaired happiness.

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Some of the health challenges involved in chronic stress are diabetes, cancer, ulcer and lower back pain.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

The term child abuse relies on moral and cultural evaluation, thus its definition depends on the moral and cultural judgments of people using the term. Although, there may not be a generally accepted definition, there is some sort of agreement amongst different cultures that child abuse is a wrong act (Bross et al 2000). In 1999, the WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention drafted the following definition:

> *Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.*

This definition not only gives a broad insight into the menace of child abuse but also elicits the different forms of child abuse as: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

- Physical abuse: This kind of abuse involves inflicting injuries on a child. Such injuries are often times inappropriate or too harsh for the age of the child.
- Sexual abuse: This is the act of forcing a child into sexual activities, whether consented or not. It involves the use of enticement, persuasion, coercion or inducement, to involve a child in any kind of sexual activity.
- Emotional abuse: The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (2006) defines emotional abuse as "*acts or omissions by the parents or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders*".
- Neglect: This refers to the failure of the parent or guardian to meet the basic needs of a child: health, shelter, basic education, food, parental care and guidance.

STRESS IN CHILDREN

Childhood which is a social construct describing the foundational stage in human developmental process, comes with certain degree of stress. This stress, sometimes necessary for the child's development capacity, can be toxic when it is unhealthy, prolonged and overwhelming. Toxic stress in children is often characterized by: placing extra energy demand on children than they possess, creating a feeling of insecurity or lack of necessary protection, and denying children of adequate rest and adequate diet. One of the effects of toxic stress in children is the harm done to their brain development. This largely suggests the need for parents and caregivers to be sensitive and caring, helping their children cope with any sort of stress they encounter. Another disturbing effect of stress in children is that it gives rise to chronic disease such as asthma (Gordon Bloomberg and Edith Chen 2005). Other health-related problems caused by stress are poor dieting, depression, poor mental health and upper respiratory infection. It also has social effects on children as it deters their happiness, care, love and makes them lack a sense/feeling of belonging.

SOURCES OF STRESS IN CHILDREN

Child's personality stress: Some children have certain personality make up which make them uncomfortable with anything that is done to improve their lives. Children in this category have problem in coping with their parents, peer, siblings and other people all together. As they grow older, they continue to struggle with difficult personal interaction, poor skill and low self-esteem (Kostelnik, et.al 1998).

Child's family factors: The family circle which is the vanguard of child's care and development can also be filled up with factors responsible for child's stress. These factors include separation and

divorce, single-parent families, blended families, death, working parents and children in foster care. Divorce in the family could result in stress in the life of the child.

Accompanying these challenges are all the obstacles associated with the breakdown, break up and restructuring of relationship in the family. Loneliness, poor coping skills on the part of the adults, battered ties with sibling, peers, neighbours, schools, churches, and extended family members could cause stress for the child in the family (Soderman 1985).

The stress a child goes through while living in a single-parent family equally have far reaching effects on the child's psychological well-being. The strains commonly felt by many single parents: economic problem, role strain, loneliness, depression and the desire to rebuild self-esteem, results in strain and stress for children in these families. The nurturance provided for children in single–parent families may not be adequate due to some financial constraints. In some cases, some parents are forced into accepting undesirable child care arrangement for their children. As a result, some families are homeless and lack basic ties with reality, thus their children are more prone to have development and behavioural problems. Furthermore, malnutrition, substance abuse, abnormal social fears and speech difficulties become sources of stress for these children. (De Angelis 1994; Reganick 1997).

The demise of a family member is regarded as a major stress indicator for both adult and children in a family. Children may not express grief like adults but may show such grief in their behavior subsequently. In some cases the grief may be more if there is nobody to provide support for the children. As they grow, the stress will continue to manifest in them in greater risk like depression and other psychological impairment (Noble 1997).

Stressors outside the familial circle: Children that are involved between family and extra familial settings are usually associated with differences in societal values, peer culture and the security less than they have with their families. It is very clear that many of the stress that children go through today do not only come from the immediate family but from the general society at large.

The movement of children from their immediate families to settings like the neighbuorhood, schools, market situation and other child care centers are usually associated with stress. This new environment imposes on the children with some sets of rules and regulations. These rules and regulations are actually strange indicating new modalities for the children and generating some extra stress on them.

School setting: Some school settings impose certain degree of stress on children. Although a few children perform poorly in school because of the stress they bring with them from home or because they have low intelligence. In some cases, children who are not well-developed mentally for school setting, experience stress in the process. Physical and intellectual growth is more uneven in the early years of children development than as they grow up. As children enter school setting with formal learning, this situation may bring a lot of challenges and stress for the children (Soderman 1984).

Assaults from within and outside the family: Assault from different sources can affect the child negatively. The environment in which many children grow up can be associated with health hazard. The disturbing level of poor air quality, toxic chemicals and other contaminants are indicators of risk development for the child. These indicators are severe on the children because these children do not have enough developed organs to withstand the stress. Other issues confounding the child's development are the interactional effects of the social environment where the child is born and reared. Drug abuse by parents, both pre-natal and post-natal could have devastating consequences on child's stress coping strategies.

Natural and artificial disasters: Natural disasters have had devastating effects on children. Disasters like fires, tornadoes, flood, earthquakes, hurricanes etc., have caused loss of lives and properties. Most times, when these happen, children are great victims. They are exposed to a lot of adversities as a result of natural disaster. High level of anxiety and stress is caused by these natural disasters.

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Furthermore, artificial disasters and human created social traumas like war and terrorism create stress for children. These conditions expose children to rape, assaults, poor feeding, and separation from parents, siblings and friends. In such conditions, children live in fear, insecurity, distrust and confusion.

The media: Aggressive television programming and other violent media programmes have the tendency to increase children's knowledge of violent possibilities (Canadian Paediatrics Society 2003). The effects of this can be seen in the high intensity violence that young children, especially male exhibit. It is appalling to observe that there are many assaults on children today; this is because we are moving to a period in which children are less valued than they were in the past especially as the distinctions between adulthood and childhood are becoming opaque. Children are encouraged to copy adults in dressing and behaviour, which has stolen their innocence from them. With the over-all effects of stress and confusion. Even the music industry has failed to put a distinction between adults and young children. Under-aged children take on dressings and voice out lyrics, which ordinarily ought to be used by adults.

THEORETICAL DISCUSS (ATTACHMENT THEORY)

Attachment theory takes its root in evolutionary biology, object relations theory, control system theory and cognitive psychology. It was formulated by Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst John Bowlby and was later extended by Mary Ainsworth. The basic premise of this theory is that infants and children express a desire for closeness to their care givers in order to meet their biological, social and emotional needs. Thus, they require the attention and availability of parents and care givers present at the child's development. The responses provided by the care givers, determine the kind of feelings, thoughts, behaviours and expectations of children in future relationships (Bretherton and Munholland 1999). This implies that, humans derive their social and psychological make-up during childhood. More so, neglect or maltreatment of children by their attachment figures denies them protection and survival in the society (Crittenden 1985).

This theory explains the effects of Child stress. Its tenets suggest that when children are not provided with love, care and attention by their care-givers, they develop both social and cognitive problems. They also tend to exhibit similar attributes in their future relationships. This is so because the "internal working model of social relationships" which include thoughts, feelings, expectations, emotions and behaviors (Mercer 2006), are learnt during the socialization process in childhood, and are transferred to future relationships.

CHILD ABUSE: IMPLICATIONS, INDICATORS AND CAUSES

Child abuse is not a novelty: the issue is as old as human history itself. Child abuse is a product of people's culture, custom, religion, age, sex, educational level, experiences and challenges of bearing and upbringing of children. The act, whether accepted or not accepted to the community, endangers the well-being of the child (Fawole 2003; Ogbe 2007). Child abuse is one of the major contributors to child stress and consequently constitutes a problem in the course of development of a child (Busari, Danesy & Gesinde 2007).

Often times, children are abused in the name of providing discipline. In the course of guiding a child to live up to his or her expected responsibilities, certain measures are employed by those who are in direct care of the child. Spare the rod and spoil the child, so says the popular adage, but how far is permitted in the usage of the 'rod'? This gives rise to an explanation of the meaning of discipline and what differentiates it from child abuse. The debate about whether the spanking of a child is legal or illegal is one that has been lingering for a while now. In parts of Western Europe and America, laws have been placed and implemented to prosecute offenders for spanking a child for whatever reason. Nigeria as a nation is yet to take it seriously to stiffen laws prohibiting the spanking of child as many see it as a useful and effective way of ensuring discipline in a child.

Discipline is an intentional consequence, given by the parent or caretaker, for inappropriate action and designed to be a teaching moment for the child. The purpose and mode of administering

such measures of discipline differentiates it from being an abuse. Discipline is a form of guidance. It is aimed at correcting the child thereby making them better. Discipline should instill respect in the child not fear. Discipline should be carried out as an act of love not a transfer of aggression. Discipline is to be administered as an act of improving the child's behavior not an act to cause depression in the child.

When disciplinary measures are not carried out in the proper way, it loses its original intent and at this time it is called an abuse. It suffices here to say that though the intentions are right and genuine but the method, which determines the outcomes, is of paramount importance. Hence, if the method is wrong, it defiles the original intention even though it may be right.

Child abuse as a phenomenon takes many different forms. These include acts like physical violence against the child; it could also be psychological abuse in form of verbal abuses or curses and sexual abuse in form of rape and pornography. In Nigeria, street trading by child hawkers is one of the most common forms of child abuse. Another kind of child abuse which is grossly under-reported is child sexual abuse (Abdulkadir et al 2011). This kind of abuse involves introducing children to sexual activities which they consented to do or do not give informed consent to.

CAUSES OF CHILD ABUSE

According to an article released by UNICEF (2006) on Child Labour in Nigeria , the number of working Nigerians under the age of 14 are about 15 million. The report further revealed that these children who work suffer from fatigue, irregular class attendance at school, lack of comprehension and motivation, improper socialization, exposure to risk of sexual abuse, and high likelihood of being involved in crime.

The income gotten from child labour constitutes a large quota of the family income for poor homes or families. Hence, children from such homes are required to start work at a very early age. Sometimes, they are required to carry-out very tedious jobs above their capabilities and at places where they get further abused physically or sexually.

INDICATORS

There are certain pointers to identify cases of child abuse. The African Network for the Prevention and protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN 1995) outlines the pointers as follows:

i. Exposing a child to moral dangers. This is explained as acts or deeds learnt physically through movies or videos that have the ability of corrupting the child.
ii. Failure to provide a child with appropriate clothing, adequate food and shelters, as well as lack of provision of basic necessities which could enable children to grow up normally.
iii. Having more children than one can cope with i.e., where men accumulate wives and breed as many children as possible. This practice is very common in African in view of some religious practices and custom.
iv. Cultural, medicinal and cosmetic scarification of children. These refer to certain practices that expose children to psychological trauma. Some cultural practice exposes the child to a lot of pain and discomfort for example, tribal marks.
v. Denying a child the right to education, recreation or normal growth. This practice inhibits the child from enjoying the basic necessities of life.
vi. Formulating policies particularly on education, socio-economic and health that are inimical to the welfare of the normal growth and development of the child.
vii. Abandonment of children due to poverty, disability and superstition.
viii. Killing of children for rituals
ix. Kidnapping children for some diabolical purposes.
x. Using children as hawkers in the streets and major towns.
xi. Using children to beg for alms or as guide to other people who beg for alms.

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xii. Beating children unnecessarily without due regard to their health or physical development.
xiii. Early child marriage. This is the act of giving out children for marriage who are not matured physically. This is peculiar in the northern part of Nigeria.
xiv. Encouraging children to hawk when they are not matured or capable to work. This is also referred to as child labour.
xv. Exploiting children sexually.
xvi. Female circumcision which is also called female genital mutilation is an aspect of child abuse. (Busari et.al 2007)

IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The implications of child abuse on children, their families and communities are diverse and varying. Generally the implications include health hazard, fatigue, poor school performance, academic waste, accident, conflicts, stunted growth and stress.

On the aspect of cognitive development, Asamu (2012) outlines absence from school, class retention, high school dropout, lowering of self-esteem and the perception of relative deprivation as effects of child abuse. Furthermore, UNICEF (1991) asserts that the negative effects of child abuse can manifest in the following form: children may find it difficult to create good social relationship with other people, they may be involved in some risk behaviours like taking drugs, some may also be infected with sexually transmitted diseases and other respiratory and skin infections. Many abused children do surfer some impairment problems because children are biologically different from adults. They are physically weaker, mentally more vulnerable and they have weaker immunity to contain major obstacles in their way.

Furthermore, child abuse could pose serious threat to the economic stability of a society. This is evident in the financial costs of attending to reports of abuse and neglect, creating facilities for welfare homes, providing social services in neglected children, healthcare and also the cost of paying social service providers.

More importantly, child abuse does not just have present negative implications but could also create problems in the future. This is because, some neglected and abused children lack the ability to show love and care since they never experienced such. Sometimes children with this kind of background might take such attributes into their future homes, which makes the problem more inherent in our society. Abusive and ill-treated children may grow up to be abusive parents (Leventhal & Dobbs 2000). Also, according to a report released based on a research carried out by Starr and Wolfe (1991), 90% of maltreating adults were maltreated when they were young.

The effects of child abuse are rifle in the spread of venereal diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The World Health Organization (1990) confirms that HIV/AIDS has a direct impact on children's participation in the workforce (Patel 1990). Nwana (2005) opined that abuse, particularly child labour activities may lead to depletion of the population of this present generation. To her, many of the children might lose their lives due to accidents and diseases. Children who are sexually abused may be infected with deadly transmitted diseases which may affect their psychological well-being contributing to the over-all problems of stress in children (Asamu 2007).

CHILDREN IN STRESSFUL SITUATION IN NIGERIA: CHILD ABUSE AS A FOCUS

In Nigeria, there have been several reported and unreported cases of children in stressful situations, particularly abused and neglected children. Certain structural and cultural factors contribute to these, and invariably the solution to the problem lies within the Nigerian social structure and culture combined with relevant foreign aid. We shall consider some categories of child abuse in Nigeria.

Street children

There has been an increased rate of 'street children' in Nigeria, since the transition from agricultural based economy to capitalism. This is seen as the effect of urbanization, increased population growth and poverty in many homes. Evidence of the menace reflects in the number of children, who engage in hawking, cleaning windshield at traffic, begging with their disabled parents and roaming the streets. Faloore (2009) described two categories of street children in Nigeria: one category make their living on the streets and return home at the end of the day while the other category make their living on the streets and also live on the streets (under the bridge, in the market places, at motor parks). Such children are exposed to drug abuse, unhealthy living, bad company, illiteracy, malnutrition, lack of parental protection, love and care. This poses a major problem for the future of the country, since the future generation is neither well-equipped nor prepared for the tasks ahead. This also suggests the need for structural measures to be put in place, through the combined efforts of the family, religious institutions, non-governmental organizations, the government and other concerned institutions, to reduce the incidence in the country.

Child labour

Child labour is inherent in our society, as about 15 million children under the age of 14 are among the working class (Unicef 2006). Young children around Nigeria are forced to work for the survival of their families and they are deprived of the benefits of an important stage in their lives. The increase in the rate of child labour in Nigeria is said to have been triggered by oil boom in the 1970s and the resulting poverty and hardship that came with it.

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse refers to the forceful involvement of a child into sexual activities, for which he/she doesn't consent to, or in some cases consented to, is found in several areas in Nigeria. A study conducted in Minna revealed a high rate of child sexual abuse, with low rates of reporting due to fear of ridicule and stigmatism (Abdulkadir et al 2011). The study further revealed that the abuse is more likely to be carried out by male than female. This kind of abuse occurs mostly among victims of child labour, to buttress this, Ebigbo and Abagha (1990) recorded that both male and female child hawkers in Awka were being abused sexually. Unfortunately, since child sexual abuse is rarely reported (reference), the chances of children getting sexually transmitted diseases, psychological disorder (depression, anxiety) remains high, since they will not be able to receive medical help or counselling. This indeed puts children in stressful situations.

Female Genital Mutilation

One particular hazardous stress faced by female children in Nigeria is female genital mutilation, commonly known as "female circumcision". The World Health Organization (1998) conceptualised FGM as the all processes involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia and/or causing injury to the female genital organs, whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reasons. This socio-cultural act, condemned by the World Health Organization, United Nations International Children Emergency Fund, Federation of International Obstetrics and Gynecology (FIGO), African Union, The Economic Commission for Africa, and other welfare organizations worldwide, is inherent in the Nigerian society, as the country accounts for about One-quarter of the estimated 115-130 million circumcised women in the world (UNICEF, 2001).

The act of female circumcision violates the human right of children in Nigeria, as it is often carried out at very tender and young age and provides no opportunity for the victims to give their consent (Okeke, Anyaehie & Ezenyeaku 2012). Putting an end to this unhealthy practice, which is more prevalent in the Southern part than in the Northern part of Nigeria (Abiodun, Oyejola & Job 2011), is an enormous and difficult task because it is backed by certain traditions and rigid cultural beliefs. Such beliefs include that circumcision ensures that young girls do not become promiscuous in the future, keep their virginity till marriage, bring respect and honour to their families and please their

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husbands sexually when they get married. Nigeria, in an effort to tackle this harmful culture, has joined efforts with the WHO and other welfare organizations to discourage it. Okeke et al. (2012) documented that increased awareness and education are relevant tools in the eradication of the menace.

Child Marriage

Child marriage refers to marriage by anyone who is below the age of eighteen (18). This kind of child abuse mostly affects the girl-child. It is high in the Northern part of Nigeria. About 73% of girls between ages 13 and 19 in the North East are married, in the North West 48% of girls are married by age 15 and 78% are married by age 18 (National Population Commission, 2000; National Demographic and Health Survey 1999). Several factors are pinpointed as reasons for this kind of abuse: avoidance of premarital sexual activities, preservation of inter-familial relationship and bond, poverty and illiteracy (Population Council 2004). Child marriage leads to chronic and acute stress for children, who are mostly married out to men who are significantly older than them. Child marriage makes the child to be susceptible to domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), infant and maternal mortality. Increased awareness, efforts of religious bodies, government policies and regulation, enlightenment programmes are necessary to tackle this menace.

Generally, the Nigerian government has not been insensitive to the problem of child abuse. The Child Right Law in Nigeria has been enacted to protect the Nigerian child from exploitation and undue abuse. The Child Right Act of 2003 specifies the following rights of the child:

- Right to dignify of the child
- Right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities
- Right to health and health services
- Right to parental care, protection and maintenance
- Right of a child to free, compulsory and universal primary education, etc
- Right of a child in need of special protection measure
- Right of the unborn child to protection against harm etc. contractual rights of a child.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Child abuse, in its various forms cause children to live unhappy, unhealthy and insecure lives, exposing them to chronic and acute stress. Certain structural and cultural factors are responsible for the incidence of child abuse and the implications impede the development of the child. Quality attention needs to be paid to developing the child, to help them cope with the complexities in the Nigerian society. Therefore, if child abuse is to be eradicated so that the stress children go through can be minimized, the following important factors must be put into consideration:

- All stakeholders on children most work as one in order to enforce the fundamental human rights of children.
- The penalties as provided in the child right acts against child abuse must be made to work.
- Serious efforts should be made through seminars and workshop to enlighten parents and other child care givers about the dangers of child abuse and the attendant stress attached to it.
- Though, child abuse cannot be totally eradicated in Nigeria due to some factors like poverty, culture and tradition. Effort should be made to reduce the incidence through the provision of free primary school education, by the government.
- Parents should recognize and respect different coping styles of children. They should be alert for the withdrawn child as also the child who more frequently displays negative feelings. Both children require tremendous patience from parents if they want to get the best out of them.
- Parents should always promote self-esteem among children. They can be helped in every opportunity to feel competent and worthwhile.
- Parents should make the child the object of daily focus. There should always be a care giver that will always take care of the child.

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