

ISSUES AND TRENDS ASSOCIATED WITH ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Adolescent passes through various channels of conflicts, stress and frustrations in our schools and larger society. Adolescence stage is quite turbulent as (he individual is taking a departure from dependence to independence. Difficult environments of the home, school and larger society and adolescent factor may be detrimental and threat to the peaceful co-existence in the society. This paper examined (he developmental tasks of adolescents. Issues in adolescent delinquency and counselling techniques for adolescent's maladaptive behaviours were all raised in the paper. The paper finally recommends the role of guidance and counselling team involving the parents, adults, religious leaders, social workers and counsellors who should work hand-in-hand _in shaping adolescent's behaviour for better.

Introduction

Adolescence is a period that is characterized by major transformations in the life of young person. This occurs in his body, mind, abilities and interpersonal relationships. Some adolescents go through this period of transition without much stress. However, some do experience stress and may involve themselves in various deviant behaviours. These behaviors of adolescents become very serious issues of concern in the society. There is need to protect their lives from danger, risk or frustration.

Psychologists have identified certain stages of human growth and development such as infancy, childhood; adolescence and adulthood. Each of the stages has its peculiar problems, needs, interest and tasks. Out of the above singes, adolescence appears to be the most difficult stage that draws peoples attention. Usman (2006), lamented that the greater percentage of the population in Nigeria ranges between the ages of 13 to 21 years. The country's success in various fields of life depends on the proper guidance of adolescents. Some of the parents, teachers and the larger community do have a lot of conflicts with the adolescents. They find it difficult to manage them because they fail to realize the fact that adolescents and youths perceive themselves as adults and therefore, want some degree of independence or freedom. Many research findings like that of Akinhoye, in Baba (1997), found that adolescents and youths have become so many and their adjustment behaviour problems are so numerous. Many adolescents and youth grow and pass through many conflicts, frustrations and worries. Quite a number of parents, teachers and other adults still harbour a lot of painful experiences or conflicts they had with young stars at one time or the other.

In the course of developmental change of adolescents, they encounter interpersonal conflicts. Coupled with this are the influence of foreign culture through cinema, video film, phonographic magazines pictures and television

The Concept of Adolescent

Adolescence may be defined in several ways. Some psychologists see adolescence as the transitional period of life. This is because the adolescent experiences a number of changes.

The term adolescence was derived from a Latin word 'adolescere which means to grow to maturity (Chauhan, 1988:68). This therefore, refers to physiological changes that occur in individuals that lead to sexual maturity and facilitates procreation.

Adolescence is referred to as teenage. It is a period that begins with puberty and encompasses the teenage years. In a clear term, adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and manhood. The adolescent is neither a child nor full matured adult. This is why his behaviour is between the two developmental stages. This explains why he always has conflict in his interaction with parents, teachers and other adults.

It is a period of conflict and vacillation between dependence and independence. (Atkinson and Hilgard. 1983). Adolescence according to Atkinson and Hilgard (1983), Salawu and Isah (2005) and

John (1999), refer to the transition from childhood to adulthood. It is also used to denote the psychical, physiological and social development and maturation. This period has an age span of between 12 and 18 yrs.

Adolescence could be understood as the period in which the individual's life begins at the end of childhood and closes at the beginning of adulthood. It is a period when the young person develops to sexual maturity, establishes and faces the task of deciding to earn a living. Adolescence is regarded as the most turbulent stages of human development because it is characterized by physiological and psychological changes.

Adolescence could also be seen as the period when an individual is capable of begetting offspring because of his or her sexual maturity. This period is not static and may vary from culture to culture because of feeding or hereditary factors.

Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

Developmental tasks are defined as skills, knowledge, functions and attitudes that the individual should acquire during the specific stage of life. Sokan and Akinade, in Ah'yu (2007:17-18), described developmental task as:

The task that arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and success with later task, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society and difficulty with later tasks.

Developmental tasks are therefore, dictated by an individual's physical maturity, psychological competence as well as appropriate societal expectation. Societal expectations vary according to cultural norms and values. Havighust, in Aliyu (2007: 17-18), listed the following developmental tasks for adolescents which adolescents wish to satisfy:

- i. achieving new and more relations with age mates of both sexes,
- ii. achieving masculine or feminine roles,
- accepting one's physique and using the body effectively,
- ii. achieving assurance of economic independence
- iv. achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults.
- v. selecting or preparing for an occupation,
- . preparing for marriage and family life,
- v. developing intellectual skills and concepts for necessary civic competency,
- i. desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour,
- x. acquiring a set of values as a guide to behaviour.

Adolescents witness rapid pubertal changes in their body configuration and maturity of reproductive organs. At this stage, the adolescent experiences rapid growth and development both physically and socially.

Certain distinctive shapes begin to appear. Girls develop breast, pubic hair and menstruation. The changes occur in girls between ages 9-14. Boys become taller and begin to produce sperm, develop deep "voices, pubic beard and facial hairs.

However, variation in the ages of puberty exists. Baba (1997), observed that on the average, boys experience their growth spur in adolescence stage especially at the secondary school level. They experience problems related to academic work, home, family, money, physical development and personal relations and health etc. Too much anxieties among adolescents are quite discernable on many issues like sex, courtship, marriage and child bearing. So the major behavioural problems of adolescents as observed by Akinboye, in Baba (1997), includes development, peer group moral behaviour, sex-related juvenile delinquency, job-related, personal concerns and other psychological problems.

The various changes and challenges faced by the adolescents have to be successfully resolved for him to become a responsible adult. The issues affecting his life which serve as great challenge are summarized by Steiner in Mahmood (2007). These are as follows:

- a. separation from family: the goal is to attain independence from parents and other adults and to develop a greater capacity for intimacy,
- b. forging a health sexual identity in terms of accepting one's physique and achieving a masculine/feminine social role.
- c. preparing for the future which involves skill development, selection of a career, and preparing for relational aspirations e.g. family life.
- d. development of a moral value system which would guide behaviour leading to socially

responsible behaviour.

Field Theory on Adolescent

For more understanding of adolescent's needs and problem, this theory known as Field Theory which was propounded by Kurt (1890-1947), is quite imperative to be cited as explained by Aliyu (2007:15), Kurt Lewin, was a cognitive theorist that describes and explains the behaviour of adolescent in particular situations.

Field theory attempts to show that behaviour is the function of the person and of his environment. Therefore, in order to understand adolescent's behaviour, one should consider the individual's personality and the environment as interdependent factors. The interaction of personal factors and environmental variables is called life space. The life space includes the individuals motives, goals, needs drives and all of the socio-cultural influences on behaviour.

The theory entails that at the period of childhood, the life space is simple and restricted. The life space expands as the child matures i.e. he acquires more experiences. Thus, the life space is undergoing constant change. These changes are more pronounced at the period of adolescent, which results in psychological and social stress among the adolescents.

Lewin in his theory referred to the adolescent as the "marginal man. It implies that the individual is between two worlds i.e. the stages of childhood and adulthood. The behaviour of the individual is characterized by both childish and adult like tendencies. The reaction of parents towards their behaviour is erratic. For example, when the adolescent manifest infant behaviour they referred to him as a grown up person i.e. he is no longer a child, On the other hand, when he wants to assert his independence e.g. desire to pick a wife, then they tell him that he is not ready for it as he is still-a boy.

This theory shows that the adolescent is confronted with the problem of identity. The task of shedding the goals and values of the childhood and transiting into adulthood tends to generate conflicts and stress in adolescence. Similarly, the conflicting parental demands as stated above, are capable of confusing the adolescent resulting in anxiety and stress.

Issues in Delinquent Behaviours of Adolescence in Nigerian Secondary School and Larger Society

Deviant behaviours of adolescent are obviously manifested through various means in secondary schools and in our society at large. Such behaviours include delinquency, crime, drug abuse, violence or unrest and cultism in schools, stealing, rape, truancy, excessive aggression, smoking, reckless driving etc. These types of deviant behaviours lead to serious stress, storm and confusion. The implication of all these do not affect the adolescent alone but rather affects the progress and peace in the schools and the society at large.

In the light of this, (the paper seeks to address the issue of drug abuse by the adolescents in secondary schools and larger society and its effects on the learning and the life of adolescents. Some adolescents take drugs to enable them carryout or execute some activities. For example, some students take colanut, tea and coffee in order to stay awake and read especially during examination. Others take drugs in order to sleep. The behaviours of drug abuse moves from simple drugs like the one's mentioned to the complex or hard drugs like Heroin or Amphetamines (Aliyu, 1991). According to Kaur, in Jahun, (1999). Marijuana, glue, cocaine, alcohol, L.S.D. amphetamines and barbiturates are among other drugs abused by the students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Similarly, Adesina, in Jahun (1999), showed that the following drugs were abused by students of secondary and tertiary institution in Lagos: Librium proplus, valium. Indian hemp and other sleeping pills, antibiotics, penicillin, tetracycline and chloramphenicol. In addition, Aliyu (1991) types of drug abused by adolescents in Kaduna State. This includes:

Alcohol particularly beer, stout, Burkutti, pito, illicit gin or ogogoro, palm wine, and various other alcoholic beverages, amphetamine (Kwaya) caffeine particularly in Kolanut, Coffee, tea, cocoa chocolate and soft drink nicotine in tobacco.

The abuse of hard drugs in Nigeria by adolescents has enormously increased in recent years. Nigeria was a transit camp of these illegal drugs. Historically, Nigeria in the past used to be a depot for drug traffickers. This was minimized when National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) was established. John, in Jahun (1999), narrated the story of a secondary school girl in Lagos who became a victim of cocaine. The girl was introduced into cocaine by unscrupulous and unfaithful drug abuser. One day, the girl woke up in the morning and started crying. When asked about the cause of her crying, her reply was that " I have no money to enjoy myself. The girl was known to have had a very good school attendance record but when she was introduced to cocaine, her school attendance started becoming poor, and finally she had to withdraw from the school. This is one of the effects of cocaine. So many adolescents of her types have fallen victims (drop-out).

Drug abuse among adolescents is a very serious problem which affects every body. Adolescents are important agent for any societal development. The future of any society depends mostly on them because adolescents are the backbone for the development of any country especially in the developing and third world countries.

Adolescence Problems: Implications for Counseling

Bearing in mind that adolescents pass through various channels of conflicts and frustrations in our schools and larger society; parents, teachers, religious leaders and other adults have varied roles to play in correcting delinquencies in adolescents.

In this regard there is need to understand the nature of adolescent development, developmental tasks and problems affecting him. This will affect our attitudes towards students and our mode of working with them.

Our recognition of how students mature intellectually should help us to create ways of counseling them so as to promote their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, it should also make us aware that students' cognitive development at this stage affect their emotions in so many ways. For example, they become very self conscious and worry unnecessarily. Sexual maturity also creates a new set of problems for the adolescent. He/She begins to face conflicts between his or her attraction toward the opposite sex and Christian, Muslim or Traditional norms. He/She may be caught in the net of pre-arranged marriage or simply be having problems with maintaining friendship.

The implication of physical development is very important and often the adolescent needs a great deal of personal social counselling at (his stage. For example, adolescents would need counselling on such important emerging issues as the consequences of sexual intercourse (i.e. premarital sex and how the society views it), the choice of a life partner (its determinants), the ills of engaging in drug taking, and excessive drinking of alcohol and its long term effects on an individual. It is anticipated that an individual that is well counseled on the consequences of indulging in drugs, alcohol and pre-marital sex will grow up to be a responsible member of the society (Mallum, 1999).

In addition, the writer feels that other counselling procedure should be used in combating emerging issues in adolescents. These include:

- i. trait and factor approach; this counselling process shows that individuals are born with the potentials to become good or bad.
- ii. It is for individual to seek for good and reject evils. This approach also explains the inter-personal relationship between the personality factor and the behaviour of an individual. This counselling approach will assist adolescents in having a thorough knowledge about himself so that he manages them, modifies or eliminate the defects and disabilities.
- iii. the use of Rational Emotive Therapy. The philosophy behind this therapy is that man is both rational and irrational. When he thinks rationally, he is happy, effective, competent and lives a successful life. It is when he thinks irrationally that he becomes ineffective, unhappy and creates problems for himself. The counsellor's role is to examine and persuade the client or adolescent to realize how his illogical statements cause his emotional disturbances. It can also be used by teachers and parents in training their adolescent (o develop sound altitude and perceptions about people.'
- iv. counsellors could employ the use of group and family counselling. This approach gives free access to observe how adolescents interact in his social environment among adults, parents and teachers,
- v. The behaviourists approach could be used by the counsellors. This approach includes openint conditioning, social modeling, role-playing, simulation, confrontation, desensitization and counter-conditioning procedures with the help of reward lo hasten and promote desired behaviours,
- vi. counsellors could also employ client-centred approach. This technique shows that individual adolescent is capable of acting responsibly to resolve his own problems when there is conducive atmosphere with no threats. It also shows that basically, human nature is good, constructive and no! destructive.

It is pertinent at this juncture to state 4that the counsellor is in better position to treat maladaptive behaviours of adolescents. He is also to help students, identify and understand the appropriate measures for any form of delinquent behaviour. The presence and importance of counselors in secondary schools cannot be over emphasized. The writer therefore, recommends that school counsellors should be made available in Nigerian Secondary Schools. They should be allowed to establish and run effective guidance services in their schools.

Moreso, the parents, other adults, religious leaders, counsellors and social workers should work hand in hand as a team or guidance and counselling team for proper shaping and better upbringing of adolescents.

Conclusion

Adolescents witness major changes and challenges in their life which need utmost care and concerted efforts by the parents, teachers, other adults, religious leaders, social workers and counsellors in resolving adolescent's stress, storms and confusions. Some adolescents pass through their transitional period smoothly while others experience stress, crises and confusion. In this case, counselling should be extended to outside school setting. For example, it should extend to clinical and rehabilitation counselling where adolescents' problems are well

pronounced. We must therefore create conducive environments that focus toward achieving desired development task of our adolescents that are emerging into the world as good assets to our society by providing positive continuity that every society needs in order to develop and progress. It is by so doing that progress and development of citizens' peace and stability in the society would be ensured.

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