

## **CHILD ABUSE AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: THE NEEDS FOR PARENTAL AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE**

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### **Abstract**

This paper attempts to take a concise the various components of child abuse and the various treatments, that is, parental and vocational guidance modalities that could be used to ameliorate this problem. The paper tried to be constructively critical, giving, utmost consideration to the pragmatic constraints which exist in intervention with abusive families. Attempt is also made to determine the implications of the present knowledge of child abuse, needs for parental and vocational guidance for more effective vocational guidance that could be provided.

Contemporary issues could be regarded as the burning current issues of concern. They include matters arising that called for concern, the current happening of our time, problematic phenomena that requires people's attention or situational issues requiring people attention or solutions or objective views. Thus, some of these contemporary issues could be underemployment, unemployment man-power shortage, high rate of dropouts from school, high rate of juvenile delinquencies, child abuse, family problems, prostitutions and child, women trafficking, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse/addiction to mention but a few.

The contemporary issues are so diverse, numerous and non-exhaustive in a simple paper like this. Therefore, in this paper an attempt is made to take keen interest in one of the most crucial ones: the child abuse.

History demonstrates that child abuse is as old as civilization itself. Yet modern society has refused to recognize its pervasiveness. Until recently, even its existence had not been on concern. Subdural hematoma often occurred together in infants and suggested that these may be the result of accidental or purposeful trauma, perhaps inflicted by the parents, (Ajibade, 2004). He also reports the high incidence of physical injury in infants. He provides some clue to his colleagues on their reluctance to recognize the possibility that some of these injuries may have resulted from parental abuse, not until 1961 did Kempe and his colleagues had any success in mobilizing concern over the extent of child abuse. Alarmed by the increasing number of children admitted to pediatric clinics with non-accidental injuries. They conducted a symposium on the problems of child abuse at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics. To draw attention to the seriousness of the situation, they coined the term "battered child syndrome".

The past 30 years has witnessed a burgeoning interest in the study of child abuse. Professionals from a wide array of disciplines have written voluminously in the area. Increasingly, research reports have appeared in journals on pediatrics, child welfare, social service, legal, NGO, psychiatric and psychological. The news media have published the extensiveness and gravity of child abuse, primarily through sensational reports of the macabre incidents. Their efforts have resulted in increased public awareness of the problem and support for its alleviation.

### **Historical Perspective of Child Abuse**

Societal attitude concerning child abuse has changed over time. Originally, a laissez faire philosophy prevailed, and children were left to the mercy of capricious child rearing practices. For example, abandoning or killing unwanted children, as well as mutilations of children for display purposes, were once widespread practices in many cultures (Ajibade, Ibid) However, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an interest in child advocacy developed and a criminal justice approach predominated. It argued that parents who abused their children should be prosecuted and the child removed from the home to ensure his safety. More recently, the efficacy of legal prosecution has been decried and it has been emphasized that an abusing parent is in some way mentally ill and in need of

therapeutic intervention. This position is best exemplified by the psychiatric model of child abuse. Early research ascribed the occurrence of abusive episodes – solely to deviant parental personality characteristics (Mamuda, 2005).

External factors are the major cause of deviant, behaviour which have emphasized the casual or contributory role of social, cultural, economic and environmental factors. The need for parents and guardians to serve as watch dog in the monitoring of their wards movement and deeds would help in reducing the incidence of child abuse. As early as 1860, Tardieu implicated environmental conditions, such as unemployment and social isolation, as major factors in the occurrence of child abuse. the advocates of this sociological model place particular emphasis on the environmental stresses such as poverty, hunger and war which impinge upon parents and increase the likelihood that an abusive incident will occur. A recent school of thought has stressed the importance of reciprocity and interaction on social relationship, including those which lead to abuse. (Mamuda, 2005 ) Although there is a sizable body of knowledge concerning abuse little exists in the way of a comprehensive explanatory theory. Each model is limited in its description of the ethnology and suggestions for the treatment of abuse.

This paper attempts to enlightening us with the various components in the etymology of child abuse and the various treatment modalities that could be used to ameliorate this problem.

### **An Overview of Child Abuse and its Manifestation**

One of the major problems in the field of child abuse is the lack of any consistent definition of what should be included in the term. Thus, each researcher provides his/her own criteria definition for child abuse (often limited to severe physical abuse), making it impossible to compare results between studies and rendering any findings generalizable only to the group defined by the research. The same difficulty exists in comparison of the effectiveness of various treatment modalities or treatment facilities. Success rates are likely to vary greatly depending on what definition of abuse is used. Also, the reported incidence rate of child abuse is in part determined by the definition employed. There is need to have an acceptable definition of child abuse, which encompasses all related concepts and topics. (Ebigbo, 2003). He maintained that there is no objective behaviour that can be automatically recognized as child abuser. He further stated that an abuser is merely a person who has somehow received the public label of “Abuser” and that we must investigate the criteria by which this title is affixed to be able to identify members of this group accurately. To say that child abuse is “Labeling” phenomenon is to imply that such an entity does not exist. This contention would generate considerable argument from the general public as well as professionals in the fields. One difficulty in attempting the use of a single broad, “comprehensive” definition of child abuse is that the terms used in such a broad cognition are often interpreted quite differently by different people. For example, the definition from the child abuse prevention and treatment Act of 1973 says. Child abuse and neglect means the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child. Under the age of eighteen by a person who is responsible for the child’s welfare under circumstances which indicate that the child’s health or welfare is harmed or threatened thereby ---

Such terms as “mental injury” and “Negligent treatment” are vague. Therefore, the concept of what may harm or threaten a child’s welfare could cause considerable controversy, in any conservation much less in a court of law. On the other hand, a narrow” definition of child abuse becomes extremely limiting as it makes no provision for the protection of children from types of maltreatment other than physical damage (Ashituabe, 2005). To its credit, the use of a “comprehensive” definition would sanction and even require the reporting of minor or suspected cases.

For the purpose of this work, the definition child abused below is used as a working conceptualization. “Any child who receives non-accident physical injury (or injuries), assaults, denial of basic rights, premature labour, maltreatment and/or injustice as a result of acts (or omissions) on the part of his parents or guardians”.

### **Sequel of Abuse**

The harmful effects of child abuse range from superficial wounds to permanent physical, mental and emotional impairment and even to death. Although the seriousness of the immediate problems that result is clear, only a very few studies have attempted to look at the magnitude and extent of the long range consequences of child abuse.

Kempe (1974) studied ten battered children over a six year period and found them to manifest ego defects such as withdrawal, indifference to the mother, and psychomotor retardations as infants. In later childhood, ego defects were characterized by shallow relationships with parents and indiscriminate, superficially friendly attitudes towards other adults. Although investigators have focused primarily on identifying the abused child and on pursuing legal and social intervention (Kempe, Ibid), it appears that more effort should be directed toward establishing individual treatment regiments to alleviate the physical and emotional impairments suffered by the child.

It is likely that an abusive incident has a noxious effect upon family dynamics. A change in attitude of family members toward the abuser, self-perception of the parent that he is a child abuser, the social stigma attached to the label, the resulting guilt, and the fear of future incidents are all likely to exacerbate the trauma and tension of the abusive incident and disrupt the family. By attenuating the traumatic impact of the abusive episode on the family, intervention may be a prerequisite for future family harmony.

Child abuse is circular in nature. Social anthropologists have long recognized that patterns of child rearing, both good and bad, are passed from one generation to the next in a virtually unchanged manner. The fact that abusing parents often were themselves physically or emotionally abused or neglected as children is a conclusion which draws unanimous support in the literature. That is abusive parents raise children in the style in which they themselves were raised. Some mothers who beat their children have themselves been beaten not only during childhood, but also as adults, in the weeks immediately prior to their own battering behaviours. Some children, likewise, physically abuse other children after their own battering. Since children who are abused often grow up to abuse their own children therapeutic intervention aimed at this aspect seems to be indicated in a abuse cases and is undoubting crucial to the elimination of child abuse in future generations.

### **Child Abuse and Vocational Guidance**

Oladimeji, (1999) defined vocational guidance as a process of assisting people to choose a vocation, prepare for it, and attain efficiency and success in it. In 1924 the America National Vocational; Guidance is the giving of information, experience and advice in regard to choosing an occupation, prepare for it, entering into it and progress in it. That is to say that vocational guidance, is to locate for client the type of person he is, with a view of informing the client a required level of self knowledge and understanding that he needs to be able to come to a decision about what to do in life.

According to Musa, (1999) vocational guidance is a process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated picture of himself and his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality and to convert it into reality with satisfaction to himself and benefit to the society. From the foregoing definition of vocational guidance, it is clear that vocational guidance will play vital role in the therapy and correction of child abuse.

Mogbo (2000) revealed that young Nigerian school leavers lack relevant information about occupations and the prospects of growth and benefits in such occupations. Discriminating employment policies and practices also institute a problem in this regard. These problems may lead to frustrations and consequently resulted into aggression in parents to be release on the children. Other reasons that call for a need for vocational guidance are high dropout rate and child delinquency. (Somethimes which call for punitive measure often referred to as child abuse).

The personality of the parents (guardians) or abuser, be it good or bad affects the later personality or even the vocational choice of the child. Parents' social-economic status and intelligence have either facilitatory or inhibitory effect on the child depending on the traits inherited and the environment in which he is brought up. Self and work roles are processes which begin early in life, with its related social system are important factors that influence the process. A child may imitate his mother tongue, attitudes and emotional expressions by imitating his parents as models, (Ashituabe, and Kolo 2004).

Parents sometimes consciously set up standard worthy of emulation for their children and this motivate them to be achievement – oriented influence of the family, religion, ordinal position of the child in the family, the type of careers engaged in by the father and mother and their personalities or temperaments (Musa, Ibid).

Parent provide a wealth of experience for role playing, transmitting attitudes, behavioural patterns and value systems which are basic to specific roles. Boys, for instance, learn the role of the man in the family is significantly different from the role of the women. Work role are also learnt in the home because knowledge about an occupation is related to the contact or information a person has had.

Vocational interest is a bi-product of personality and is subjected to change whenever the self concept changes or with a change in knowledge of the occupational stereo type. Some people, especially the non-abuse children, are interested in careers that involve frequent interactions with people being humorous, friendly, helpful, understanding and sympathetic towards other persons (Oladimeji, 1999). There are many careers in which people with above personal qualities can derive job satisfaction. On the other hand, a person (abused child) who lacks such qualities is bound to have problems in his chosen career. For instance, teaching, medicine, social work etc. Parents (guardians) exert one of the most powerful influences which are not favorable. They tend to pose problems of vocational choice for the child. It has been observed that career opportunity or potentiality is often affected by the kind of parents or environment individuals are privileged to have. (Mogbo, 2000).

Parental dispositions (good or bad) are presumably internalized by the child in his vocational development. The child vocational development are the products of variables such as individual's child rearing, his education and his environment. With this idea it is assumed that differences in personality structure is responsible for individuals developing certain needs which he seeks to satisfy through certain occupations. Also parents values or personality (good or bad) influence individuals who seek individuals choice on careers.

## **Conclusion**

Vocational choice is greatly influenced by the experiences a child undergoes. The parents play an important role in directing the vocational choice of their children (directly or indirectly) The children biological endowments in terms of personality traits are transmitted to him in form of genetic inheritance. Also, to a large extents, the parents' behaviours, temperament (child abuser or child lover) etc determine the personality and vocational interest of the child. Abusive parents who were themselves abused or neglected as children lack parenting skills and adequate understanding of appropriate child-rearing practice.

International Labour Organization (2001) identified four distinct clusters of personality characteristics that were true of abusing mothers and fathers.

1. Pervasive hostility and aggressiveness, sometimes at the world in general.
2. Characterized by rigidity, compulsiveness, and lack of empathy, reasonable, and flexibility in thinking and beliefs.
3. Contained parents who showed strong feeling of passivity and dependence.
4. There are fathers who were portrayed as being fully or partially unable to support their families due to some physical disability.

A lot could be done through vocational guidance by providing occupational information and counselling to both the child abuser and the abused child as a therapeutic treatment. To enable the former explore other positive and acceptable avenues to consciously direct his energy or resources instead of abusing his children and the later also to become aware of his potentials and modifies his behaviours into acceptable ones, consequently escaping being abused. Finally, it is the hope of the presenter to emphasize the need for better research to provide a comprehensive, integrated prospective on abuse. (International Labour Organization, 2001). In my own opinion based on the findings, the development of any nation is not measured on how industrial modernized they are but the attitude of her people towards the positive changes. Education is the only thing that can cause a positive change in the life of any body denying the child the right of education medical care, freedom of expression is not only abusing the child but also denying the nation future right. Parents abuse their children as a result of non-chalant attitude, illiteracy poverty, ignorance and economic situation of the country. It is unavoidable that the government should come into the issue of maltreatment of child for any meaningful development of the nation. No nation can survive with a great number of its youth neglected, malnourished and without education.

Child abuse is as old as civilization the research reports have appeared in pediatric, child welfare, social service, legal, psychiatric and psychological journals. The new media have publicized the extensiveness and gravity of child abuse, primarily through sensational reports of the most macabre incidents. Their effort resulted in increased public awareness of this problem and support for its alleviation. Though, efforts should be intensified by all and sundry especially the social scientists such as psychologists, social welfare workers, legal professionals, psychologists, and guidance and counselors vocational guidance tries to explore some other better alternatives for both the parents (child abuser) and the abused child so as to develop positive attitude in the world of work and to life in general.

#### **Recommendation**

- Government should establish reliabilities' centers for peoples to put their words that are not fit.
- Government should provide job opportunities for graduate.
- Parents must take good care of their children and strictly monitor their movement.
- Government should make provision for free education from primary level to tertiary level.

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