

**IMPLICATION OF CHILD ABUSE ON EARLY CHILD CARE
DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION (ECCDE) AS SOLID FOUNDATION
FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION**

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Abstract

Sustainable development in the society is largely predicated to the care and education given to young children. It should be noted that the early years of life are more critical to the development of the mindset, intelligence, personality, and social behaviours traits of the child in order to make him become effective and contributory member of the society. Negligence, poverty, abandonment, and disrespect for the international rights of the child, are some of the major factors responsible for child abuse. The paper attempted to review some crucial factors causing the prevalence of child abuse on early childhood. One of the major recommendations of the paper is poverty eradication and reduction of illiteracy level in the society to curb the menace. To also find a lasting solution to child abuse; the paper suggested the establishment of Government well-funded boarding play-group and care-givers education programmed to discourage the epidemic.

Academic Scholarship

The way a society treats its children is not only a measure of the consciences and morality of that society, but it reflects its quality of compassionate, sense of justice and commitment to the future of human kind. It is a mark of dedication to the improvement of the human condition and therefore a realistic yardstick for measuring level of progress and human development (Chinsman, 1997). It is in recognition of the socio-cultural and educational dimension of the child, that united Nation, European Union, African Union, UNICEF and ANPPCAN have all joined efforts in advocating for protection of the right and well-being of children. Among other provisions, UNICEF and the National Policy on Children grant children the following rights.

1. Protection against indecent and in-human treatment like abuse and neglect.
2. Provision of a conducive environment to promote early stimulation to learning for the child.
3. Entitlement of every child (male/female) to receive compulsory basic education and equal opportunity for higher education.
4. Promotion and encouragement of child-friendly principles in all relevant institutions (Wikipedia, 2011).

The above provisions recognize the importance of education for the optimum development of the child, thus advocating for compulsory basic education and the provision of conducive learning environment. Education is therefore recognized as one avenue through which the child can develop properly.

In the Nigerian society a child is regarded as priceless, irreplaceable and special gift of God. It becomes absurd and contradicting that same society that cherishes children as invaluable gift from God equally abuses them. Perhaps, a good number of the populace seem ignorant of how these children are abused and tend to disbelieve its existence (Akinosho, 1999).

Consequently, in recent time parents tend to give over there responsibility of guiding, directing, counseling and role modeling of their children to the school. Thus, putting more demands on the school to do what the parents should do in addition to their normal school functions. Many young children who would have been at home at about two years have been pushed over to the school and this is what the National policy on education refers to as pre-primary education.

Although, this conception of pre-primary education has been expanded to incorporate early child hood care and development education (ECCDE) for children aged 0-3 years, however, the tasks has become enormous for the teachers in our public schools and thus, leading to many children being neglected, despised and abused on a daily basis (Msheliza, 2008).

This paper therefore, focuses on the implication of child abuse on education development of early child-hood care development education (ECCDE) as the issue presents a serious draw back on the children educational development and thus hinders societal growth and development.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse may not be clearly understood, unless we understood who is a child. Obinagu (2000), defined child as “a human being below the age of 18 as presented by the laws and practice of Nigeria”. On the other hand, Hornby (2002) described abuse as “making rude and offensive remark about a person”. Child abuse therefore, has been defined in different ways by different people depending on their respective conceptions. According to Okoronkwo (2004), Child abuse is “any mistreatment or neglect of a child that results in non-accidental harm or injury which can not be reasonably explained. Lewit (1994) opined that, “child abuse is a conscious mistreatment or exposure of a child to in-human condition due to fault or no fault of a child. Ezeoke et al (2009) viewed child abuse to mean “any maltreatment of a child less than 18 years of age, by a person responsible for the child’s health or welfare with evidence of harm or threat to the child’s health or welfare”

Similarly, child abuse can also be viewed as any act of omission or commission, physical or psychological mistreatment or neglect of a child by its parents, guardians, caregivers or other adults that may endanger the child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. In this definition one may therefore understand that any wrongfully maltreating a child or selfishly making an unfair use of a child’s services by the adults responsible for the child constitutes child abuse. Thus, the adults may not be directly related to the child, but a person in whose care the child is left can be an abuser. This may include the educators, health care workers, day care workers, or any other responsible adults (child welfare information Gateway, 2008).

Forms of Child Abuse

Child abuse can be broadly categorized into five perspectives, namely: - physical abuse; emotional abuse; sexual abuse; neglect; and child exploitation (child Labour).

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may be seen as the inflicting of a non-accidental bodily injury on a child. The injury may not have been intended by the parent or caretaker and is not an accident but may be due to over-discipline or corporal punishment that may not be appropriate or is unjustifiable for the child at that age.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse or psychological maltreatment. The National clearing house 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” Emotional abuse can thus be seen as any attitude, behavior or failure to act on the part of a caregiver which interferes with a Childs mental health, social development or sense of self worth. It is probably the least understood, yet the most prevalent, cruelest and destructive type of abuse.

Child Neglect

This is a failure to provide basic needed care for the child such as shelter, food, clothing, education, supervision, medical care and other basic necessities need for the child physical intellectual and emotional development. It is a situation where the guardians or parents fail to perform tasks that are necessary for the well being of the child which invariably can lead to the child's health and safety being endangered.

Child Exploitation

Child exploitation often referred to as child labour or child trafficking. It involves the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. Child exploitation is a systematic process of using children to work with little or no compensation and consideration for their health and safety (Newton, 2001). Such children rarely benefit from education and will eventually drop out of school, and by the time they reach adulthood, they are mostly physically, emotionally, morally, and intellectually damaged.

Sexual abuse

This is simply refers to any illicit sexual affairs with a child by an adult. Eweneyi (2003) viewed sexual abuse as “any act of sexual nature with or upon a child by an adult which includes actions and inactions which tend to misuse, harass, force, trick exposure or predispose minors (child) to sexual activity e.g rape, defilement, sexual assaults, incest, early marriage, child prostitution and gender discrimination”.

Causes of Child Abuse

As there are different patterns of child abuse, so also are different causes. However, the pattern of interaction between the adults, children and the environment provides some identifiable causative factors. These include the family, the culture, poverty, ignorance, moral decadence, environmental and governmental insensitivity and so on.

Family some specific circumstances and unfavorable situation increases the probability for child abuse by the family. Marital instability, domestic violence and clashes of interest are some of the factors that lead to decrease responsiveness to positive behavior and less parent-child relationship. And this is what may later lead to child abuse with in the family.

Culture This has to do with people's belief, value system, and practices. Sometimes, some of these beliefs are superstition and harmful to the child e.g female genital mutilation, early marriage, ritual killings, child fostering and exploitation of the virgin.

Poverty Bukoye (2004) attributed most cases of child abuse in northern Nigeria to poverty. Parents discharge their children in to the streets to beg, hawk or prostitute as a means to boost their economic condition. In some instances, marriage fails as a result of economic hardship with its attendant effect of the child.

Ignorance Hogdes (2001) Lamented that some acts of child abuse like female circumcision, child labour and berating are done of ignorance on the part of the parents. For instance, in some community's child labour is not seen or known as an abuse, but child training.

Moral Decadence This may be indicated as a one of the major factors that have lead to child abuse. For example Erikson, (1996) stated that parents who are abused as children are more likely than other parents to abuse their own children. Lack of parenting skills, unrealistic expectations about a child's capabilities, ignorance of ways to manage a child's behavior and of normal child development may further contribute to child abuse.

Implications of Child Abuse on the Educational Development of the Child.

Recent researches have shown that a loving, caring and stimulating environment during the first three years of a child's life is very important for proper brain development, (Ajala, 2009). This findings implies that children who receive maltreatment in there early ages are more likely to have sub-optimal-brain development.

In most part of the northern Nigeria, the use of corporal punishment to children at early ages is being held in high esteem as a way of correcting and instilling discipline. Although, spanking is seen in some cultures as a means of correcting children. But most of the times the teachers and care givers are doing this in anger and in the process the child is left injured and physically inflicted with bruises and pain.

According to Bruce (1994) child abuse affects the developing brain of the young child, and creates a livelong response pattern of hyper-alertness and fear. The psychological development and social behavior of a child would be impaired as a result of the abuse. The child will have a low self-esteem and is likely to engage in self-destructive behavior, lies, resents, apathy, hostility, and eventually dropping out of school. He or she may probably abuse his or her own children as an adult.

The consequence of child abuse and neglect can therefore be viewed as devastating and far-reaching. Physical injuries can range from bruises, scrapes, and burns to brain damage, permanent disabilities, and death. The psychological effects of abuse and neglect can last a lifetime and may include a lowered sense of self-worth, an inability to relate to peers, reduced attention span, and learning disorders. In severe cases, abuse may result in psychiatric disorders like depression, as well as an increased risk of suicide.

Concept of Early Child Care Development Education (ECCDE)

Early child care Development Education is that education given to children who are below the formal primary school age. This cover to 2 to 5 years old. The National Policy on Education defines early childhood or pre-primary "education as the education given in an educational institutions to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the Nursery and the kindergarten." (NPE, 2004:11). This stage is very crucial in the life of the child; Hurlock (1978) opined that "50% of the child's

Academic Scholarship

development process takes place within this period”. The early years are the most important to the cognitive and attitudinal development of child. Each day experiences add to the blank page to which the child is born. The motivation to learn and understand is very strong during the early years of life.

The Role of ECCDE in Child Development

The National Policy on Education (2004) outlined some roles and or purposes of ECCDE as follows:

- a) Effect a smooth transmission from the home to school;
- b) Prepare the child for the primary level of education.
- c) Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, e.t.c.)
- d) Inculcate social norms
- e) Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys. e.t.c
- f) Develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit.
- g) Learn good habits, especially good health habits
- h) Teach the rudiments of numbers colours, form e.t.c through play.

Solution to the Problems of Child Abuse

As the saying goes “understanding the cause of a problem is half of the solution”. Below are some of the solutions to the epidemic.

- a) Understanding the concept child abuse i.e including forms, causes and effect, by all the stakeholders responsible for child upbringing.
- b) Enforcing the real punishment as it contains in the child right act to the perpetrators, which will serve as deterrence to others.
- c) State government should establish a well-funded boarding play-group in all the local government areas of the states.
- d) Employing adequate qualified professional personal on the centers and provided them with all the necessary expected structures and adequate materials at their disposal.
- e) Create adequate Monitoring and supervision by the official of social welfare units and state ministry of education to ECCDE centers and ensure that, the right thing has been done in the centers..
- f) Intensive poverty alleviation strategies should be promoted by the government and NGOs in order to minimize the plight of the majority of the parents and caregivers.

Conclusions

Child abuse is a pandemic that has in the recent time, became a public agenda. Children are misused, mistreated and neglected every now and then in Nigeria. On the other hand sustainable development of a nation can only be achieved through a qualitative ECCDE that will serve as a link in education that enables a child to participate effectively in a more structural educational environment, getting along with others, develop a sense of self, and appreciation of group-thinking. A proper ECCDE

breeds appropriate learning experiences which will be suitable and relevant to the growing needs and background of the learners. The prevalence of child abuse therefore suggests that, a more effective and urgent strategy is needed to deal with this subtle phenomena.

Recommendations

Against the backdrop of the fore going discussion this paper has realized that the issue of child abuse, is a pervasive and complex problem with many causes, yet we should not take a defeatist attitude toward its prevention. Therefore, below are some of the suggestions that if followed may definitely reduced or even eradicate the menace of the endemic issue.

1. There should be public enlightenment programmes to combat mass ignorance and public awareness on the child right to freedom from all forms of child abuse.
2. Frequent organizing of symposiums, workshops and seminars for ECCDE teachers and care givers on implication of child abuse on educational development of children.
3. Teaching profession should be professionalized to ensure that there is none that undertook teaching as a second best option; this would ensure that people in this profession really see it as their contribution to society's development.
4. Community leaders and patriotic individuals in communities should assist in sensitizing its citizenry on the relevance of early child education programmes.

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Academic Scholarship

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