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Qualitative Study on Integration of Counseling Interventions: A Panacea for Effective Parenting among Couples in Nigeria

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Abstract

Parenting nowadays has become a difficult task because many untrained or poorly trained children have become parents with a lot of conduct disorder and anti-social behaviour. This has defeated the purpose of parenting which is the process of promoting and supporting good and healthy physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child from birth to adulthood. However, lack of emotional intelligence, substance abuse, family conflict and divorce, inadequate parental skills, lack of parental involvement in children's activities and mental health issues of parents are contributing issues to poor parenting. emotional intelligent training, cognitive restructuring therapy, parent-child interaction therapy, proper education of parents on developmental stages of children, regular family therapy and establishment of university of Counselling were recommended as a counselling tip to help parenting effectiveness in our society.

Key Words: Parenting, parenting Styles and Counseling for Effective Parenting

Introduction

All over the world, parenting is a term that cuts across geopolitical zones and intergenerational and cultural societies. Parenting is most debatable topic among public health, counseling psychologist, social workers, clergy, adolescents facilitators among others. Parenting is also known as child rearing, child upbringing and child nurturing. As we all know that the home is the primary agent of socialization of children in which values, moral, interests are transferred from one generation to another. Children learn from their parents and this form their personality and dispositions in the society. The parents serve as role model for their children training and consciously or unconsciously, the children emulate their parents' characters, attitudes, dressing, manner of behaviour among others through perception, internalization and exhibition of ideas learned from their parents. It is quite unfortunately today that many untrained children have become parents, that is why parenting has become a difficult task. Many parents have no time to train their children as expected because of pursuit of money and material things while some are not even ready to train any child because of inability to accept the responsibility of parenting a child, leaving the child for a care giver or guidance. Poor parenting is a common social issue which has generated a lot of debate among scholars and professionals interested in parenting children especially adolescents. Despites all available parenting styles, some parents are still failing in their responsibilities. This is more reasons why this paper is motivated.

Concept of Parenting

Parenting has been defined or conceived by many scholars or authors and organisations based on their researches and conceptions. Parenting is a process of raising children and providing care in order to ensure their healthy growth and development into adulthood. It is defined as a direct practice, observable specific behaviour that parents employ to socialize



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their children into cultural values and societal accepted behaviours (Kuppens and Ceutemans, 2018). More so, parenting has been conceived by many experts as the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child from birth to adulthood (Academic Pediatric Research,2020). In the definitions above parenting is seen as a process, behaviour associated with parents to develop a child in a gradual process to ensure his or her entire growth and healthy living in form of provision of necessary supports. In another perspective, McGraw (2003) sees parenting as the art of guiding a child to grow and develop and help them to become the best version of themselves. It implies that parenting involves guidance and helping of children towards discovering and reaching their potential through a safe and nurturing environment as seen by Brazelton, 1992), in order to become what they are destined to become. In a view, It is a journey which involves learning, growing and evolving alongside with our children (Markham, 2012) and a journey of self- discovery, growth and transformation for both parents and the children on the other hand (Tsabary, 2010) . It is a challenging and rewarding job which requires parents to be patience, show love and dedication (Spock, 1946), it is a partnership work between parents and children (Faber & Mazlish, 1980), teaching skill needed for live success and vbeing a positive role model (Borba, 2016).conclusively, on what parenting is all about, it is noted that parenting is about providing stable and loving foundation that allow a child to explore, learn and grow (Siegel &Hartzell, 2003) and it is about love , devotion, sacrifice and putting a child’s needs before parent’ needs (Perry,2011).

Parenting Styles

Parenting styles are approaches or methods or techniques that parents use to raise children. The methods can influence how parents interact, make decisions and discipline their children. All parenting styles have their advantages and disadvantages. It has been observed that many parents are not comfortable with a single parenting style but combine two or more parenting styles in order to achieve maximum child upbringing. Some of the parenting styles are discussed below. Authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting, authoritative parenting (Baumrind (1967), attachment parenting (Sears,2001), free range parenting (Skenazy, 2009) and mindful parenting (Kabat-Zinn,2003). Authoritarian parents are very strict, make rules perfectly clear to their children and require them to be completely obedient with little warmth. The parents are highly demanding and controlling not allowing any discussion when orders are given. The children are likely not to love and can show violence and risky behavior.

The permissive parenting often thinks that no discipline is the best discipline. They are loving and kind to their children but do not set boundaries when it comes to their child becoming disruptive, disrespectful, unkind or hurtful. Permissive parents are not likely to produce children with responsibility or good work ethics, since their parents don’t require anything from them, they may be depressed and full of anxiety. Authoritative or democratic parenting are regarded as the most successful parenting style. Parents require their children to be respected and kind but don’t constantly force issues on them. They allow children to act on their own and if they misbehave, they redirect them to normal behavior. They are corrective and show independence and democratic process of parenting. They inform children about the consequences of behavior and teach them to behave in a positive direction. The children under this style, may not be wayward or behave in irrational way. Distance parenting is another style of parenting which can shape adolescent emotions in certain direction. Long distance parenting for instance is a condition or situation in which both parents are not or one of them is not readily available to interact with adolescent on daily basis as a result of place of work or working condition, separation or divorce. Sometimes, parents communicate with the adolescents through the third party or communication channels like mobile phones or social media. This condition of parenting is very common in our society in which the parent-child relationship is not cordial and less productive or effective. It is assumed that long distance parenting can produce children who are less guided, nagging, isolated, abandoned and depressed. In term of positive emotional development they are most likely to be deprived because feeling the presence of parents is likely to produce happiness, expression of views, emotional attachment and feeling of being loved and cherished, Attachment parenting or close at hand parenting is a situation characterized by building emotional bond with the sensitivity to the needs and fostering on independence of children gradually. The close hand parenting is productive, both parents are readily available and regularly interacting with adolescents and provide necessary emotional support and providing basic needs for children. Close at hand parenting produces children that are closer to parents, loving, caring empathic, motivated, embracing, discipline because they imitated these qualities from their parents. Free range parenting on the other hand, is characterized by giving children significant autonomy, encouragement



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and self-reliance from an early age while mindful parents is characterized by cultivating self-awareness, emotional regulation, modeling healthy habits for the child.

Factors Responsible for Poor Parenting

The effects of poor parenting have been associated with many abnormal behaviors among children. These bring shame and disgrace to the family and society. Poor parenting are associated with drug abuse, addiction, armed robbery, multiple sexual partner, aggression, violence, indecent dressing, unwanted pregnancy, abortion to mention but a few. There are many reasons why parenting is poorly practiced by parents. These reasons are short coming for having poorly nurtured children with immorality and criminal tendencies. Some of the factors identified are expressed below.

i. Lack of Emotional Intelligence

Lack of emotional intelligence elements on the part of parents are identified by Goleman (1995). Lack of emotional attributes such as empathy, stress tolerance, impatience, social responsibility, emotional motivation, emotional awareness, emotional regulation or management by parents are hindering good parenting

ii. Inadequate Parenting Skills

Apart from lack of emotional intelligence, inadequate parenting skills is another contributing factor promoting poor parenting (Webster-Stratton, 1992). If parental skills such as discipline, setting boundaries, communication, managing emotions, child development knowledge among others are lacking in a parent, it may lead them to parade poor parenting. For instance, when these skills are lacking, it may lead to behaviour problem, emotional difficulties, poor self-regulation, delay in child development, difficulty in social relationship, academic struggles and low self-esteem of children among others.

iii. Lack of Parental Involvement

Lack of parental involvement in the upbringing of a child can affect a child moral, emotional, social, academic and spiritual developments. As presented by Henderson & Berla (1994), lack of parental involvement is one of the major factors that have negative effects on parenting and child development, this factor can show in emotional distance created by parents in which they are disconnected from their child's emotional needs leading to difficulties in building strong emotional supportive relationship. Also, when parents are not involved in child's academic activities, it can lead to academic failure. Lack of involvement of parents can lead to poor mental and psychological well-being of a child.

iv. Parental Substance Abuse

Substance abuse by parents such as cocaine, marijuana and other dangerous stimulants can affect parenting in a negative way (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003). Parental substance abuse can affect parenting in a way that parents may prioritize substance abuse over child care leading to neglecting inadequate provision of basic needs of a child. It can also be seen in inconsistent discipline and harsh discipline causing a child to have irrational fear, it is assumed that substance abuse by parents can lead to emotional and sexual violence, increase in poor mental health, difficult in trust and attachment in parents.

v. Parental Conflict and Divorce

Parental conflict and divorce have been seen by Amato (2001) as a situation in which parents have unresolved misunderstanding which leads to legal tussle and physical separation occurs. This situation makes them to divide the children between each other. The emotional stress involves can distract them from not attending to their children. It can also reduce quality time they are expected to spend with the children. Confusion often arises on how to care or discipline the children and keeping the children under the care of relatives are not portraying the parents as responsible. The rate at which divorce negatively affects moral, social, emotional and mental upbringing of children is very high nowadays,

vi. Parental Mental Health

Parental mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder among other can inhibit good parenting (Rutter, 2005). Mental health issues can make parents to be emotionally unavailable for child rearing can make parents to have impaired judgment there by leading to poor decision making. Mental health issues can reduce parental patience, difficult in emotion.

Counselling For Effective Parenting



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Counselling is a process of helping people with educational, socio-personal and vocational problems. Counseling plays important roles in preventing and remediating educational, personal, social, mental and other challenges among people of different categories such as parents, children, students, teachers, workers among others. It involves the utilisation of psychological or counselling theories and techniques to prevent and remediate problems. It is therapeutic in nature, involving personnel who are well-trained to effect desirable changes in the client's perception, thinking, feeling, emotions and actions so that the client will develop effective and acceptable behaviour. For parents to be effective in raising a balanced and morally presentable children that will function effectively in intergenerational or intercultural societies, the following tips are recommended for them. the counseling for effective parenting aims at supporting parents in developing adequate and effective skills and strategies to improve their parenting approaches.

1. Parent-Child Interaction Therapy

Parent-child interaction therapy is an evidence-based therapy that focuses on improving the quality of relationship or interaction between parents and their children. It teaches parents effective skills to manage their children behaviour in a productive manner. The goal of parent-child interaction treatment is to enhance positive interaction and communication, reduce child behaviour problems, teach parents discipline techniques and improve parent's confidence and competence. The therapy is divided into two phases according Sheila Eyberg in the 1970s. the first phase is relationship enhancement which focuses on establishing warmth, responsive, parent-child relationship. The child is given opportunity to play with toys and the parents use positive reinforcement strategies while playing along. the second phase is the phase of discipline and compliance. This stage equips parents with disciplinary techniques and parents take lead providing direct and simple instruction and enforcing consequences for positive and negative behaviour.

2. Cognitive restructuring for Parents

Cognitive restructuring refers to the process of replacing cognitive distortions with thoughts that are more accurate and useful. Cognitive restructuring is an evidence-based treatment used to challenge unhelpful thoughts and behavioural pattern affecting parenting. It works by identifying negative or unhelpful thoughts (which may be about oneself, the world or others) and then gathers evidence to challenge the accuracy of the thought. Cognitive restructuring which was propounded is essentially a useful technique for understanding unhappy feelings and moods, and for challenging the sometimes-wrong "automatic beliefs" that can lie behind them.

3. Proper education for parents on child development stages

It is noted that many parents are not familiar with child development stages and behaviours attached to these stages. It is necessary for parents to be guided by many professionals in the area of parenting or who are working with parents such as pastors, organizational psychologists, mental health workers, social workers, pastoral counselors among others to include knowledge on developmental stages of children as part of training that are slated for their workers and audiences during staff seminar, workshops, conferences and meetings to promote good parenting. it is recommended that parental responsibilities at each stage of development should be communicated to parents plus expected behaviour that their children are likely to show.

4. Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence has come to stay in its usefulness in promoting and bringing positive outcomes in intra and interpersonal relationships parents. Counselors are expected to expose parents to emotional intelligence skills of recognizing, understanding, motivating, regulating and managing emotions. The counselor should help parents to help their children to develop problem-solving skills by employing solutions to emotional challenges. Parents can also be trained to serve as role model in effective communication to children in active listening and clear expression of emotion. The parents should be exposed to difference between empathy and sympathy as emotional expression.

5. Family Therapy

Family therapy which is also known as family counseling is necessary to enhance family functioning and parenting. family counseling is recommended for all families not only for conflicting family because it is will address relationship dynamics, communication and behavioural issues that affect family as a whole. Family counselling can help to identify causes of conflict and resolve them and teach family resolution skills, strengthening relationship, supporting parenting skills, manage stress associated with parenting cum work and helps in improve psychological or mental well-being of the family. It is well



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known that imbalance or unhealthy family will surely produce unhealthy children. I am of the opinion that the government should make it compulsory for couples to see a family or marriage counselor at least twice in a year as a compulsory requirement as NIN, National Id Card are compulsory for all citizens to ensure unity in the homes.

6. Establishment of University of Counselling

It is not enough on the part of the government to make counseling policies and strategies for implementing them in all levels of education in Nigeria but to establish a counseling University in each geo-political zones of Nigeria with short- and long-term courses on parenting, conflict management, family counseling, family financing and economics, social justice and welfare, family communication, conflict resolution in the family, sexuality and sexual issues in marriage among others. The university will help a lot of people to acquire necessary knowledge, attitude and skills that are effective in promoting family harmony apart from the fact that it is an institutions for the training of counselor in many areas of life such as occupational, social-personal, educational, adolescent, clinical, developmental, family counselors among others.

Conclusion

It is important for counseling psychologists that many social vices and criminalities being experience in our societies nowadays in form of book haram, rituality, internet fraudulent practices, secret societies or cultism among others are products of failed marriage, broken homes, poor parenting. it is high time for counselor and other experts in parenting use the above recommendations for proper parenting.

Recommendations

1. emotional intelligent training and cognitive restructuring therapy should be encouraged at all stages of parenting
2. Parent-child interaction therapy and proper education of parents on developmental stages of children should be encouraged
3. Regular family therapy and establishment of university of Counselling should be prioritized

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