PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILD CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESTRUCTURING A NATION

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Abstract
Most parents shy away from their responsibility of building the character of their children. Moral character usually indicates strategies for the maturation of individual child and therefore, parents possess the rights and responsibilities to educate their children in the culture of respect, integrity and self-control. Parents have many opportunities and tools for achieving the task to develop and encourage their children's quality of good character. If parents can use the tools in their hands, they will have the joy and satisfaction of seeing their children grow into a person of integrity, compassion and personality. The paper deduced that, every child is but a reflection of his/her immediate environment. Lack of proper parental character building has brought about some contemptible activities today among the children It argued that children who lack the right kind of parental involvement in character development sometimes end up being unscrupulous. However, the paper suggested that proper child character development is the basis for restructuring the future of a nation like Nigeria.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Character Restructuring, Child Character, Character Development, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria has been witnessing series of social problems among her citizens since the attainment of independence in 1960, to which the indigenous administrators, military administrators and the civilian government have no permanent solution. Such problems include: bad character which is as a result of poverty, neglect of children, over-

pampering, unstable economy, greed, socio-cultural influence and so on. These unlimited factors of deviant behaviour among adolescent are numerous and have been on the increase day in day out (Hirschi, 2002).

These social problems are not new phenomena. They have been identified with all ages in which youths exhibit misbehaviours of adolescent. This makes a behaviour regarded as deviant and remains issue of controversy from one area of the society to another. The effect of insecurity brought about by the advent of attitude of terrorism of Boko Haram, child trafficking and kidnapping as found with the Chibok girls and the recent Dapchi girls' scenario are evidences of breakdown in parental involvement towards character development.

Thus, any anti-social behaviour, such as indiscipline, dishonesty, laziness, corrupt practices, murder, arson, assault, drug addiction, and bad governance were sanctioned to serve as deterrent to others. While minor cases were settled within the family, major ones were resolved by the Council of Elders at the village square. Although the values were not written, individuals got acquainted with them through socialization process. In this way, there were only few cases of moral decadence. Adeoye (2009) posited that the best criteria for determining normality of behavior foster the wellbeing of the individual or group of maladaptive if they inhibit the same socialization process.

Nigeria as a developing nation has been contending with many of these challenges. Adeoye (2009) further opined that post-independence era witnessed occasions of civil war, recession, retrenchment, unemployment, insecurity, civil strike and so on. He stressed that all these spurred a lot of young Nigerians to engage in such immoral acts such as: prostitution, hawking, street begging, slum life, maladjustment at school, tarmac, absenteeism and cultism.

New technology has also aggravated this social problem such that young stars are exposed to importance of foreign ideas and films, western fashion and cultures with the consequences of encouraging young females to take prostitution in foreign lands as a job. Alexander (2005) submitted that there is no reason for crying for peace if all these can still be found in our society today. These entire social problems are factors impeding progress especially as the nation is undergoing series of transitional and revolutionary changes.

Character development is a branch of personal development. It is an approach to personal growth that puts character as the focus and

seeks to define everything else based on character traits and the person one wishes to become (Bohn and Haley, 2002). Parents who shape their character when their values and goals, their inner life and outer life are in complete alignment feel esteem, their self-confidence soars, and they feel strong, happy and fully integrated as a person and satisfy the needs of family.

Parents play a vital role in a child's education. Child education involves the teaching of a child in a manner that will help him develop variously as moral, civic, good, mannered, well-behaved, non-bullying, healthy critical, successful, traditional, or socially acceptable being. Child rearing has being a challenge from time immemorial. Rearing a child means caring until he is fully grown. It is genetic factors of the parent that determines the formation and development of the child.

Parents can perform the role of building the character of their children and change their ways to become better citizens of the nation. Therefore, parents owe the entire society the duty of developing the character of their children. If the parents fail in their responsibilities, life of the child will be spoilt and the future of this county will be at stake.

Context of Character
There is no quick and dirty way to breathe life into one's characters. Peoples' characters indicate them with their own set of complexities, their own opinions, and their own personalities. One needs to take time to nurture his own development and relationships. Character is the extent to which our principles are ingrained in our being and what impression people including ourselves form about us. Being truthful patient, kind, ambitious and so on are all character traits that we truly live by and not those we wish to live by.

Character is a product of both nature and nurture. It is nature cultured and disciplined, so that natural tendencies are brought under the sway of the moral motive. This natural individuality marks off a man from his fellows by clear and specific differences. But this individuality may be non-moral.

For one to develop his/her character, it is important to exhibit these behaviours: "be honest: he must tell the truth, be sincere, should not mislead or withhold key information in relationship of trust; must not steal; Demonstrate integrity, Keep promise; Be loyal; Be

responsible; Pursue excellence; Be kind and caring - treat all people with respect (Adeniji, 2003).

To produce character, it must be brought under discipline and organized into the structure of a true moral being. Character is about a choice, a settled habit bent of will, so that it can be seen in its outcome and in conduct. Character takes up the raw material of nature and temperament and it weaves these into the strong, well-knit texture of a fully moralized manhood. `

Importance of Character Development

Every child has the right to develop his or her character so that he or she will know right from wrong and make decisions that will allow him or her to be a child of character and competence. The most important goal a child could hope to accomplish in life is to become an excellent person with a clear vision in every respect. Children learn to be responsible and respectful from the adults in their lives.

Parents teach and demonstrate the values their children eventually possess. Parents must be very careful here because these children are watching and observing them. They look at their parent when they lie, disrespectful, not being honest and the likes. They observe lack of values in their parents. Parents should bring character education to the fore from every angle.

Components of Personal Character Development

The following according to Alexander (2005) are the components or recipes of individual character development. Every individual that hustles for character development need to acquaint him/herself with the following:

Belief: - This is an opinion about something, something that you think is true and that you can pursue.

Principle: -This is a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour or for claim reasoning.

Habit: - It is a routine of behaviour. It occurs when the routine is reaped regularly. Another important feature of habit is that it occurs

subconsciously. While engaging in a habit one is not conscious of the routine of behaviour

Behaviour: - This refers to the actions of a living being or a system in response to the environment. It is the response of the system or the individual to various external impulsions.

Virtue: - A trait guided by our ethics or moral compass that improves character and intelligence.

Character Education: - The effort to develop good for oneself and the society.

Empathy:-. This is the ability to understand the emotional perspectives of another person, identifying with his or her state of mind.

Self control: - This helps to be ethical even when we do not want to be.

Will: - This is to put duty before pleasure and think through the moral dimensions of a situation.

Competence: - This is having the ability to turn moral judgment and feeling into effective moral action.

Knowing moral values:- This is what each value means and understanding how to apply it in various situations.

Moral awareness:- This is the understanding of what it means to be moral and why we should be morally upright.

Personal Character of Parents
Character cannot develop in an environment in which ethical decisions are forced upon the individual. Character is a product of judgment, discretion and choice-born from a man's free agency. A decision that is coerced cannot be a moral decision and this cannot be a decision of character. It manifests itself as the autonomy to make ethical decisions always on behalf of the common good and the discipline to abide by that principle.

However, for parents to be involved in character building of their children, they too must first be disciplined and morally upright. Parents should possess and exhibit an admirable personal character. If parent fail to express this trait, they cannot hope to retain it talk less of shaping the character of their children. One of the greatest influences on child's character is those with whom he surrounds himself. Mothers especially, are very close to their children.

Parents today experience a stronger pressure to act in the child's best interest than parents in earlier generations. This makes parents to be seen as responsive and empathetic listeners (Yesmin, 2008). The spirit of fairness and charity of parents and even their well-defined views on every point of ethics will impress the child with the correctness and beauty of their ideal; gradually influence the children to strive towards their standard of judgment and feeling.

Parental Role in Child's Character Development
Child character development begins to be shaped from the very time he is born and is influenced by where he grows up, how he is raised, and the example parents provide in terms of religious and academic education and so on. Parents are the most influential role models children are likely to have (Crosser, 2007). Parental involvement plays an important role in the life of the child. A child benefit when a parent shapes his character for better. Eliason and Jenkins (2003) discuss that a child benefits when parents have every confidence in helping their children to be successful in school and life.

When a child exhibits good character, the development of the character should be traced to parents. Parents will do well if they can help develop the character of their children every moment. As the child walks, talks, eats and drinks, marries, work and play, go out and come in, parents must be involved because he is the conscience of the society to which he belongs. Women especially are much to be desired in this regard. A child is closer to the mother at the early childhood stage. Mothers should monitor their wards closely from infancy (while sucking breast).

Character development starts with the child, right from inception of recognizing the environment; that is when the sense organs of seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and touching start to

develop. These stages of development need to be monitored by both parents and guardians.

Common Deviant Behaviour in a Child

- *Disobedience*: This starts from flouting parents order or disrespect to parents, lateness to school, flouting school order. It is an attitude that is difficult to control by parents if not properly handled.
- *Truancy:* -Children that exhibit deviant behaviour are habitual truant. They do not go to school regularly, they spend extra days or weeks after the holiday. Some of them run away from class to avoid attendance of lessons.
- *Dishonesty*: - This starts from falsification of report sheets or cards, cheating during examination, telling lies and impersonation.
- *Stealing*:- It starts from taking parent's money, picking fellow students "or teachers" money and spending school fees as they like.
- *Drug effectiveness*: - This includes snuffing tobacco, smoking cigarette and Indian hemp, heroin, cocaine, drinking alcohol and using drugs not prescribed by doctors.
- *Sex offences*: - Some youths with deviant behaviour are found to be engaged in premarital sexual intercourse in and around the home and school. Many get impregnated and choose to abort.
- *Assault and insult*: - Certain youths are caught frequently in unlawful places with unlawful behaviour, they engaged in fighting, use abusive words on other people, fight members of the family and disrespect people (Goode, 2016).

How to Develop Child's Character

There are many ways by which parents can help develop character of their children. Elliason and Jenkins, 2003) revealed that parents should make themselves role models for their children. Children are more likely to copy their parents rather than their teacher or other people. This is the reason why parents should be cautious an9od also conduct themselves before their children.

Parents should train their children to be hard working so that they can be responsible to themselves and the society at large in the future; they ought to commit themselves to the development of their children's education. They should take interest in their assignment and make sure that their children read morally sound material and keep an eye on what they watch on the television or online; Sex education should be given to the children by parents at homes; they should demonstrate the kind of person they are as their children observe them. It is not what they say, wish, hope or intend that reveals character. It is the action especially in the face of adversity; they should tell the truth in every situation and not compromise their values for anything; they should aspire to develop leadership qualities in their children.

Only those people who are the very best should rise to the top in any area; Parents must find time for their children and give them quality time to answer their questions. Through this parents can teach the children what they need to know and instill the right values in them; they should have listening ears by paying attention to their children; listening to their views about issues rather than shouting them down; they should help their children develop good character by showing them care, love and affection. This will help them to behave in an acceptable manner anywhere they find themselves.

Challenges Facing Parents while Performing their Roles
Two major challenges affecting parents' role in building their children character are broken homes and inadequate parental care.

Broken Homes
It has been observed that family from which a child comes from plays an important role in making the child what he is. Discussing social problem will be incomplete unless home background of a child is focused on. According to Crosser (2007) most of the youths with social problems had unhappy homes and this made them to live a discontented life. He stressed further that this unhappiness differs from home to home.

Poverty

An unused poverty sticker with many mothers has more than average obstacle to overcome in order to be effective in her child rearing task (Crosser, 2007). In many instances, she cannot rise to the task society assigns primarily to the family; namely helping to socialize the child and assist him in his growth and development in ways that prepare him to occupy satisfying and useful place of adulthood in the society. Youth that find himself in this mess may think that unruly behaviour is the solution to their unhappiness.

In Nigeria today, without people of good character, there could be no trust and justice and thus no true community or stability, no true pursuit of happiness. Parents character should influence their children for good and help them build their own power and strength for a better future and lifestyle.

Character Development and National Restructuring

To restructure an organization or system is to change the way it is organized usually in order to make it work more effectively. Discourse on restructuring means that Nigerians have agreed despite her unity in diversity, to strengthen the structures to make the union more functional based on comparative advantages. Restructuring is necessary because of the destabilization that the current conditions have bred (Moghalu, 2018). He stressed further that we can either stabilize Nigeria by restructuring it, or continue to play the ostrich by insisting that our "processes", not the structure, are the problem.

Despite the possession of natural resources and being Africa's leading economy and most populous nation, Nigerians are neither happy nor content with the current political structure. This state of national dissatisfaction for a variety of reasons and motives has led to call from Nigerian society for political, constitutional and fiscal reform. The states that are impotent today, cannot develop their resources, cannot fight poverty in their domains and cannot make their contributions to the progress of Nigeria (Nwosu, 2016).

Conditions of infrastructures are inevitably poor. The poor become poorer, no good roads, water and electricity, public administration is not working, unemployment is on the high side, hostility, violence, insecurity, chaos abound every day. Crime has made life very unsafe all over the county and hence, the clamor for

restructuring of Nigeria. The new crime rate of the herdsmen killings of farmers on their farmlands is becoming alarming. Farmers are running away for their lives and agriculture is experiencing a heavy downturn (Odofin, 2003).

The long-term solution to solving these problems is to develop a societal norm based on a limited number of core values. Children of today are in real need of positive youth development and this lies on character development.

People that are asking for restructuring are of the opinion that it will make the nation more stable politically and bring economic progress by encouraging hard work and competition among the federating units. If people with bad character are in government, nothing will be achieved. To bring out the best in a child, there is the need for collaboration and co-operation of parents.

Parents should call the younger ones to order and inform them the way things should be done so that peace can be achieved. Building the character of the nation starts from the training parents give to their children at home. Parents especially mothers should not shy away from their responsibilities because of their work schedule or businesses.

The attribute of a character is accountability, transparency, honesty, kindness and integrity. Parents must make use of the advantage of being parents to make the world a better place.

Conclusion

A strong family is the back bone of a strong nation. It is the primary institution of a state because of its parenting role. If Nigeria had developed the kind of competent leadership it needed in the years back, the clamour for restructuring would not have been necessary. The nation may not rise to its full potential when families fall apart. Yesmin (2008) posited that both father and mother should play their roles well on their children for proper upbringing and instill right values in them. If any child will grow to her full potential, there is the need for full input of both parents.

Recommendations

Parents are supposed to be role models for their children. If they fail in their roles, the children will be greatly affected and it may force them to get wrong role models. This is the reason why parents should be

cautioned and conduct themselves before their children. Parents should train their children to be hard working so that they can be responsible to themselves and the society at large in the future.

Education is the key to achieve nation building and it is the bedrock of national building. Parents should commit themselves to the development of their children's education so that they too can be committed to national development. Pre-education could be given by parent so as to prepare the minds of the young ones for the task ahead of them. Sex education should be given to the youth by parents at homes.

Parents should demonstrate the kind of person they are. It is not what they say, wish, hope, or intend that reveals character. It is the action especially in the face of adversity. They must develop integrity and become a completely honest people by telling the truth in every situation. They must not compromise their values for anything and should aspire to develop leadership qualities in their children. Only those people who are the very best rise to the top in any area.

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