

**Counseling to safeguard the future of Nigerian child**

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**Abstract**

*The paper examined counseling to safeguard the future of Nigerian child. Based on research and experience, the authors x-rayed the common challenges faced by the Nigerian child to include among others: insecurity, lack of basic needs for life, family crisis, forced labour, forced marriage, child trafficking and lack of quality education, prostitution, hunger and poverty. Also the paper explained the meaning of counseling and counseling services to safeguard the future of the Nigerian child to include, educational, social, economic and technological changes. Counseling to safeguard the right of the Nigerian child against maltreatment like child marriage, force prostitution, child trafficking, force labour, child labour, child abduction and discrimination was discussed. The benefits of counseling to safeguard the future of the Nigerian child that will help to modify problems like restlessness, aggressive behavior, quarreling, truancy, bullying and anxiety were discussed. Conclusion and recommendation was also made*

**Keywords: Counseling, Safeguard, Nigerian Child.**

## **Introduction**

Presently, the Nigerian children and youths are facing critical and challenging situations in Nigeria. The problems and challenges faced by these youngsters range from hunger and poverty, as a result of economic hardship, family crisis, insecurity, corruption child labour, lack of empowerment and unemployment. Most of the Nigerian youths are being used for political huffer because of lack of employment. They suffer from lack of basic needs of life for self and family, they lack access to loans to save and own assets. Our children suffer rapping, abduction trafficking, ritual killings etc. These and somany other similar challenges faced by our youths and children impacts seriously on their future lives. These challenges deprive them opportunity and courage to achieve the developmental tasks in life. Psychologically, if the children and youths cannot accomplish their developmental tasks properly during the early years and youthful stages of life, psychological problems must occur during the adult stage of life. Such people will not be well adjusted in their family lives and society in general. Instead maladaptive behaviours such as aggression, emotional depression etc. and other behavioural problems will manifest in their future lives. There is need for proper counseling of our children to safeguard their future both emotionally, socially, economically, educationally etc. Kehily (2009) suggested that children deserve to have a future for them to represent the future. She defined childhood as a subordinate group in need of protection in order to be prepared for adulthood; they should be protected from the harsh realities of life. They are adults-in-the-making and therefore required quality care and attention. She said that children come into the world as blank slates, but guidance and training develop them into rational human beings. It is the duty of adults to provide appropriate education and control to enable children develop into matured and responsible citizens

## **Need for Counseling the Present Nigeria Child**

The situation of things and what children are passing through in our present society calls for serious attention to safeguard the future life of our children. Lack of proper guide, advice, directives and counseling influence the character and future life of Nigerian children negatively in many ways. Ime (2014) said that today's world faces many difficult problems -escalating crime, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, gang activities, vandalism, school dropouts, deteriorating work ethics, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency racial tensions, broken families. He said that the root of all these problems spring out of the lack or misapplication of good character quality. And if we are to find lasting solutions to the problems of our day, we must deal with these roots. We must work to improve our own

character, teach good character to our children, and help those around us to improve their characters. For character development is essential to ongoing success plans of the society. Counseling works to restructure, remold and improve character for achieving better goal in one's life especially for the children and youths who still have many tasks to achieve in life. The federal government of Nigeria noted the importance of Counseling as one of the educational services that will promote quality of life and effectiveness of the educational system. For that reason, the National Policy on Education (2013) said that in view of the apparent governance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers, and counselors shall be appointed in primary institutions, government shall continue to make provisions for training of interested teachers in guidance and counseling, and guidance and counseling shall also feature in teacher education programs. Simon in John, Keziah and Timothy (2019) stated that National Policy on Education encourages all processes geared towards producing educators and scholars that will encourage the spirit of inquiry, and one of the objectives of education in Nigeria is to inculcate in the children permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.

### **Meaning of Counseling**

Counseling is an activity freely entered into by the person seeking for help and a learning process designed to increase adaptive behavior and to decrease maladaptive behaviors. It is an interaction of client with a Counselor who provides information that will stimulate the client to develop behaviors that will enable him to deal more effectively with himself and his environment. (Egbechukwu, 2008)

### **Counseling Services to Safeguard the Future of Nigerian Child**

The most three important counseling services in the field of Counseling are: educational, vocational and Social-personal guidance and counseling services. (Okafor and Ike. 2022). Earlier and proper counseling of Nigerian children in these areas will immensely help to safeguard their future life and opportunities.

Similarly, Egbechukwu (2008) noted that Guidance and Counseling is necessary for future potentials of Nigerian child in the following areas - (a) educational change (b) social change (c) economic change (d) technological change.

**Educational Change:** In other words, it is educational guidance that will assist the Nigerian child in preventing or resolving educational problems. The educational guidance helps students in subject selection and combination that will lead to career they have interest, abilities and expose them to available opportunities for vocation and will equally enable the country to

identify the talented children and youth and nurture them to the optimal level of education and economic development.

**Social Change:** It is the social-personal guidance which will help Nigerian child to resolve social maladjustment problems like anxiety, negative self-concept, truancy, alcoholism, confusion, excitement etc. The above problems are seen in the personality of Nigerian child and these influence his daily attitudes and behaviors. The counselor needs to understand the stress and pressures of Nigerian children and use his professional counseling techniques to correct, re-instate, re-orient, re-direct and remold the child for better change to the path of sanity

**Economic change:** Vocational counseling is very important for the Nigerian child today in a wide field of career opportunities in the world of science, medicine, architecture survey and planning, engineering, agriculture, pharmacy, building construction, woodwork, computer etc. The counselor assists the child to make choice of career where he/she has good ability and more interest. Ogbidi (2014) opined that if the citizens are adequately educated, it will serve as a bridge to the future economic transformation of Nigerian society for sustainable peace and development.

**Technology Change:** The use of technology nowadays has turned the world into a global village, restructured people's perspective, wide their horizons for understanding of contemporary issues, it has also reduced unemployment to some extent through skill acquisition.

Oluwalola (2020) stated that with the knowledge of information and technology (ICT) skills, the rate of unemployment in Nigeria has reduced to a minimal level compared to previous decades of technological decadence. Since today's world of work is ruled by ICT, there is need for individual to obtain the kind of education that would equip him with knowledge, understanding and skills in order for him to be highly functional in the society. Therefore, counseling the Nigerian child in technological know-how knowledge like application and computer usage will help in the development of skills, attitudes and potentials of Nigerian youths so as to realize their fullest possible capabilities for national development.

### **Counseling to Safeguard the Right of Nigerian Child against Maltreatments**

Ignorance is a disease says an adage. Most of the parents and adults fail to realize that children have rights as well as the children themselves. Children should not be viewed as passive, weak, dependent and incomplete adults and ill-equipped to make their lives or being excluded from decisions that affect them. Glenda and Kylie (2009) opined that in social actor model, the child is seen to have valid ideas, values and understandings of him/herself and of the world, has

capacity to act as a partner with adults to develop new policies and practices. Further said that to regard children as social actors is to treat them as active participants in concert where traditionally, they have been denied those rights of participation and where their voices remained unheard. They noted that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1981 made children's rights legally binding and was signed in 2003 the following Rights of Children: right to enjoy leisure, recreation and cultural activities, right to enjoy and practice their own culture, religion and language without fear of persecution or discrimination, right to privacy, protection and autonomy, right to express their views on all matters affecting them, and their views taken seriously, right to freedom of expression, including freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, right to education that promotes children's emotional, intellectual and physical development, that fosters awareness and understanding of parent's roles and of the importance of cultural identity, language and values that prepares children for responsible life in society.

Counseling both children and parents on the rights of children will help the parents and general Society to have knowledge of the great values that accorded to children. Counseling on the rights and values of the Nigerian child is an important means of safe guarding the future of Nigerian child and equally helps to monitor and deal with some ill-treatments/maltreatment on the Nigerian child such as:

**Child marriage/Betrothal:** refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child. It is often the result of entrenched gender inequality, making girls disproportionately affected by the practice.

**Forced prostitution:** refers to conditions of control over a child who is coerced by another to engage in sexual activity.

**Child trafficking:** is where children tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. The trafficking of children in Nigeria for domestic service, sex work and forced surrogacy is rampant and lucrative.

**Force labour:** when an individual is compelled against their will to provide work or service through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Forced labour takes different forms, including debt bondage, trafficking and other forms of modern slavery.

**Child labour:** is the employment of children under age of 18 in a manner education and development. Child labour is pervasive in every state of the country. In 2006, the number of child workers was estimated at about 15 million. Poverty is a major factor that drives child labour in Nigeria. In poor families, child labour is a major source of income for the family.

**Child abduction:** Forceful removal and transfer of the child from lawful custody.

**Discrimination;** Practice of treating a child less fairly than the others in the society under the circumstances of ethnic group, religion, sex, deformity, born out of wedlock, economic class and similar issues that pertains to Nigerian child.

### **Benefits of Counseling to Safeguard the Future of Nigerian Child**

There are certain behavioral problems in Nigerian child but can be modified through counseling in order to safeguard and restore the values of Nigerian child. Anagbogu and Nwokolo (2012) noted such problems to include

- Restlessness: Which is inability of a child to sit at a place or pay attention.
- Aggressive Behavior; Act of attacking or being hostile to other children.
- Quarreling: Being unfriendly, angry or fighting others.
- Truancy: Where the child stays away or being absent from school or dodges school without any good reason.
- Bullying: Where a child fights, frightens or beats other children.
- Anxiety or Fear: Where the child feels worried or nervous or afraid.

Counseling serves to restore the value of the Nigerian child by transferring the behavior of a good role model to the child, guides and directs the child's way of aspiration and behavior also will influence the social and moral development of the child (Anagbogu and Nwokolo, 2013). Counseling the Nigerian child will help the child to prepare and meet up with the admission requirements, subject selection and skills needed in pursuance of particular educational program appropriate to a child's personality to avoid academic frustration in future. It will assist the Nigerian child to make realistic and appropriate vocational decision to aspire to enter occupation that suits his interest, values, abilities, skills, talents or aptitude and personality characteristics for future job satisfaction.

Counseling the Nigerian child will help in solving the social-personal, educational and problems of the child it will also instill self-confidence in the child as well as modify the maladaptive behaviors in the child such as phobic fear, poor self-concept, lying, dishonesty, drug abuse and juvenile delinquency and maladaptive behaviors (Elizabeth and Ike, 2019).

To safeguard the future of a Nigerian child demands that the parents, the government and the child have roles play.

Parents and guardians are responsible for the proper upbringing of the child by making provision for the necessary guidance, discipline and education of the child. The government has the overall duty of ensuring that the right of every child is protected, they should also safeguard and promote the welfare of the child; provide necessary facilities for the health and educational needs of the child. The duty of the child is to respect the government, parents and

elders in the society, respect the ideal democracy, by tolerance to people and culture of the society.

### **Conclusion**

From all indications, the Nigerian child is facing and suffering from many challenges of different situations of life mainly as the result of corruption and negligence to human rights and values. And if the Nigerian child is not given rightful values early in life the resultant of it is psychological depression, confusion and inability to achieve developmental task or goals in life which may linger and manifest in adult stage of life.

The effective counseling of the Nigerian child helps to expose all sorts of problems the Nigerian child is passing through such as insecurity, lack of basic needs of life, lack of basic and quality education, early or force marriage, force labour and prostitution, child trafficking and related problems.

Counseling to safeguard the Nigerian child is a great welcome idea both for the parents and the general public to know the rights of children and equally adhere to the needs to give children their rights both in the family and elsewhere. School counselors in the primary and secondary schools or even in the higher institutions should make efforts to safeguard the future of Nigerian children through behavior modification techniques to restructure their characters and equality prevents future behavioral problems in children. This is because, these children have values, and they are adult-in-making and the future leaders of the society. So there is need to help them develop into competent and sound human beings.

### **Recommendations**

The authors recommend the following:

1. The inclusion of guidance and Counseling services at all levels of education.
2. Parents at home should recognize that children have right and capacity to make their own contributions at home.
3. Parents and general society should be made to know the great values legally accorded to children as the rights of children and equally respect those rights.
4. General public and parents in particular should stop the common ill-treatments on children, and basic education be given to every child.
5. The government should make provision for the security and well-being of the child, while the child must respect parents, government and elders and respect the culture of the society and equally tolerate other people's view.

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