

An X-Ray OF A Human Society Without Good Parenting

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Abstract

Parenting is considered one of the foremost socialization mechanisms that engender equilibrium in all facet of human development. It therefore, directly or indirectly determines the direction any society will follow in terms of social and psychological development. The present paper evaluates the human society without good parenting. It adopts exploratory qualitative method. First, it describe what society is all about, second, it highlight the fact that parenting is the origin of functional behavior. It further stated different setting where parenting is needed, forms and important of parenting. It then utilizes two theories (attachment and ecological theories) to show the important of parenting for a developing child and the consequences of bad parenting. Finally, it suggested that since parenting is a duty of all toward others irrespective of the nature of the relationship with the others; human society may be an illusion if efforts were not made by parents in the society to ensure that there is appropriate attachment to the ecological systems.

Key Words: Human; Society; Parenting

Introduction

One of the aims of scientific disciplines generally and social sciences in particular is to provide solutions to problems facing the world for the benefit of human society. Social sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, political science, economics, etc.) proposed ways of making human society a better place to live; they also try to identify through their various researches factors that could influence the quality of life of the individuals in any given society. Thus some of these factors are classified either as economic factors, sociological factors, geographical factor or psychological factors.

The word "society" comes from the Latin word "societas" meaning "a friendly association with others". Society may be operationally defined from different

perspectives. Political analyst may conceive society as a large social grouping that share the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. A more psychological perspective may see society as a group of individuals who are related to each other through persistent relations such as social status, roles and social network. Sociological perspective may summarize society to be a structured community of people bound together by similar traditions, institutions or nationality. One crucial point common to these various perspectives is the fact that a society is made up of varied collection of individuals who may be from the same or different ethnic groups sharing things together with love. These groups of individuals that made up a society definitely come from different families. A family is undeniably the microcosm of every society. Family is described as a group of people who are closely related by birth, marriage or adoption and is normally headed by the parents. Furthermore, there is a symbiosis relation between the society and the family in that the quality of either has a reciprocal effect on the other. Parents are main caregivers of the family and the quality/style of parenting practiced by families will influence the quality of behaviour in the society at large (Darling and Steinberg, 1993).

The present paper captures society without good parenting. It begins by describing parenting and its' role in teaching its' members how to love, the contemporary family contexts where parenting is needed so that the children can learn how to love. It further indicates the importance of parenting, components of parenting and factors that may be responsible for bad parenting. Also different types of parenting styles were highlighted. While theories that showed the important of family and parenting to the individual members of society were reviewed (Attachment and

Ecological theory). Finally the implications of society without good parenting and role of government as the parent of the society were highlighted.

Parenting as the origin of love in children

According to Learner, Castellino, Terry, Villarruel and McKinney (1995) parenting is both a biological and social process involved in nurturing a child. It is a biological process because it involves task known to be provided primarily by some ones biological parents, and a social process because it refers to a relationship, a process and a group of activities involved in nurturing a child (Hoghughi & Speight 1998). Although the noun parent usually implies a natural or biological parent, parenting can be delivered by non-biological parent figures (Hoghughi & Speight, 1998). Thus, anyone concerned with the care of a child can be seen as part of the parenting process (such as care, control and development in any setting) therefore, grandparents and other members of the extended family, family friends and neighbors, school teachers, family aides, community workers and even doctors and nurses can all be seen as part of the parenting process (Hoghughi & Speight, 1998, Lerner et al, 1995). Ford and Learner (1992) noted that parenting is a complex process, involving much more than mother or father providing food, safety and succor to the members of their family. Parenting rather involves bidirectional relationships between members of two (or more) generations, and can extend through all or major parts of the respective life spans (infancy childhood, adolescence and adulthood) of the groups. It may engage all institutions within a culture (educational, economic, political and homes) and is embedded in the history of a people (Lerner, Brennan, Noh and Wilson, 1998).

Parenting is therefore a complex activity that include many specific behaviours that work individually and collectively to influence individual (children) in a family.

Through these complex activities a lot of manners including love are inculcated into the members of the family (children). It is very important that among all things

parents should through good parenting teach the children how to love. By “how to love” in the present paper the writer means teaching the children how to abide by the rules and regulations of the society, how to value and preserve human life, how to work for the collect interest of the society. Thus if parents perform their parental obligation to their children, these children will in turn through the process of socialization and modeling learn how to take care and others. Parenting becomes an illusion when parents fail in their duties to their children.

Contemporary family contexts where parenting is needed to teach how to love to its members

The function of society in general and family in particular is to raise its members especially children and adolescences in a healthy manner (Bornstein, 1995). Lerner et al (1995) argued that the role of the parents is to provide the family members with a safe, nurturant, loving and supportive environment; which will in turn allow the members of such family to have happy and healthy life, develop knowledge, values, attitude and behaviours necessary to become good citizen of the society who can make a productive contribution to self, family and society at large. However, children and adolescence live in different family structures. These different structures or contexts as noted by (Lerner et al., 1995, Zimmerman, Salem and Maton,1995) needs parenting since parenting summarizes behaviours used by a person (usually, but not exclusively the mother or father) to raise an individual. The contexts according to Lerner, et al. 1995, include;

- Intact nuclear family (with biological parents).
- Single parent family (with a biological parent)
- Intact nuclear (with adoptive parents)
- Single parent (adoptive)
- Intergenerational
- Extended, without parent (e.g. Child-Aunt).

- In Loco parentis families institutions
 - e.g (a) Foster care homes
 - (b) Group homes
 - (c) Psychiatric hospitals
 - (d) Residential treatment facilities
 - (e) Juvenile detention facilities
- Runaways
- Street children e.g Adolescent prostitutes
- Homeless children

At the various contexts, different quality of good parenting are required to teach love to the children from either the biological parents, adoptive parent(s), members of the society, social workers, health caregivers, the government or appropriate authorities. These agencies are expected to provide the necessary support or parenting to their citizens in the various contexts.

The Components and Important Parenting

Good parenting is a process that adequately meets the members of the family's needs according to prevailing cultural standards which can change from generation to generation. Basically all members of a family need physical care, nutrition and protection. Additionally parenting requires some emotional care for the members of the family. These emotional cares can be categorized into the following components according to (Hoghughi and Speight, 1998);

1. **Love, care and commitment:** This component is based on the fact that members of a family need to feel that they are loved and cared for

consistently and unconditionally, because of the basic positive attachment behaviour that is generated from such love and care. If a child in the family is

severely emotionally deprived throughout early childhood in terms of love, care and commitment from the parents, there is a risk of developing Bowlby's "affectionless psychopathy (Hoghughi & Speight, 1998). Again, if the deprivation is partial, the child will be at risk of developing insecure attachments with subsequent disturbance of social and emotional relationships. Therefore a family which gives the children adequate love has indirectly equipped the children on how to love others. The same is obtainable in the families where there is no love and care; the children will end up not being able to show love and care to others.

2. **Control /Consistent Limit Setting:** This entails setting and enforcing boundaries or Limits to help the child in the family learn how to deal with the outside world. The essence of setting these boundaries is to show the members what behaviour is unacceptable. Normally these boundaries or limits are set with due consideration of the individual's developmental stage. Control also requires the setting of reasonable limits which are enforce in consistent yet loving way. Usually individual members in a family through this component of parenting learn to live within generally acceptable boundaries. Finally if the boundaries are inherently unreasonable or control is applied inconsistently or too punitively it may cause damage to the members of the family development and could in turn influence how they love others.
3. **Facilitation of Development:** In parenting, development involves optimizing children's potential and maximizing the opportunities for using it (Hoghughi 1998). In order words, development implies helping the child in the family achieve his/her full potential in every area of functioning including; physical and intellectual to the moral, esthetic and spiritual domains. The facilitation development component of parenting is also seen the various effort by the parents to stimulate members of their family

positively especial during the early childhood and adolescence stages. If the children receive this positive facilitation from their parent who does it out of love, the children are likely to achieve their life aspiration and contribute positively to the society. But where this positive facilitation is not available, the children may not achieve anything and may become the instrument of all sorts of anti social behaviours.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the importance of parenting arises from its role as a buffer against adversity (such as, providing security, providing basic need, food, shelter, clothing, housing, health etc). The knowledge of the three basic components of parenting also provides insight on the importance of parenting. Through parenting the emotional needs of members of a family at any level is ensured. These emotional needs include; (a) adequate love, care and commitment for the child's wellbeing and learning or socialization. (b) Control/consistent limit setting for the members of the family during socialization processes (c) Facilitating of development of all spheres of life of the individual members of the family through adequate stimulation and other parenting skills or measures.

However, researchers have noted that it is not all parents that are able to give their children good parenting (Hoghughi & Speight 1998, Hoghughi, 1998, Spencer, 1996).

Hoghughi (1998) noted that factors such as severe poverty and maternal depression seriously distort and damage the parenting process. Other factors include experience of the parents, parental style, the level of parental involvement in the child's life and culture (Knutson, DeGarmo and Reid, 2004, Nwafor 2007). Parenting

style in particular seems to be a very strong indicator of good enough or bad parenting (Baumrind, 1995, Lerner, Brennan, Noh and Wilson,1998, Maccoby and Martin, 1983).

Different types of parenting styles

The construct of parenting style is used to capture normal variations in parents' attempts to control and socialize their children (Baumrind, 1991).

Baumrind (1991) identified four patterns of parenting styles based upon two aspects of parenting behavior, control and warmth. Parental control refers to the degree to which parents manage their children's behaviour. This parental control ranges from being very controlling to setting few rules and demand. Parental warmth refers to the degrees to which parent are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The combination of these two aspects of parenting behaviour gave rise to four primary parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991).

Briefly, these four types of parenting style are

- (1) **Authoritative parents:** They are characterized as warm but firm. Authoritative parent teach rules of conduct, outline boundaries, and foster responsibility through teaching of correct principles such as how to love. It is the best style of parenting which can be adopted to teach the child how to love because it set reasonable demand and have high expectation for the children while being warm and responsive.
- (2) **Authoritarian parents:** They are characterized as little warmth, but highly controlling? This parenting style allows for strong parental command over their child, leaving minimal input of the child in decisions or rationales (Baumrind, 1991). Measures of coercive and punitive control, such as

physical or emotional punishment, are often used by authoritarian parents as a means of disciplining the child. This might not be the best way to teach how to love to a child.

- (3) **Permissive parents:** They are characterized as very warm but undemanding. Permissive parents' discipline, if any, is inconsistent and confusing and these parents often surrender to the demands of their child. This type of parenting does not meet the requirement for components of good parenting and is likely to produce individual who do not understand how to love.
- (4) **Uninvolved parents:** They are characterized as not warm and do not place any demands on their children. Most of the children born in divorced family sometimes have uninvolved parents.

However the aim of the present write-up is not to explain in details these four types of parenting styles, for detail research on them (see Baumrind 1991). The points is that parents who possess these different styles of parenting characteristics will handle the various components of parenting differently, these will in turn affect the quality of parenting they give to their children and children through this way learn a lot of things including how to care and love.

Theories of the importance of good parenting

Attachment theory

Attachment is the joint work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). The two authors work at different level of the formation of the theory. Attachment basically is an emotional bond to another person. It is a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings (Bowlby 1969). Attachment theory stated that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have a

tremendous impact that continues throughout lifespan. Bowlby (1969) asserts that attachment also serves to keep the infant close to the parents thus improving the child's chances of survival. The main theme of attachment theory is that parents who are available and responsive to their infant's needs establish a sense of security. The infant in turn knows that the caregiver is dependable, and thus creates a secure base for exploring the larger society. The theory which draws its concept from ethnology, cybernetics, information processing, developmental psychology and psychoanalysis have the following tenets about attachment theory:

Safe haven: This postulate that when a child feel threatened or afraid, he or she, can return to the caregiver for comfort and soothing which serves the love, care and commitment component of parenting the child gradually learn how to show others the same affection and love.

Secure base: The caregiver through the bonding with the child provides a secure and dependable base for the child to explore the world. This in turn facilitates the child be conduct himself or herself well outside the family to be a good ambassador of his or her family.

Proximity maintenance: When there is proper attachment the child strives to stay near the caregiver, thus keeping the child safe from outside influences or bad company who may teach the child negative behaviours such as hate and violent acts.

Separation distress: This postulates that when a child is separated from the caregiver, the child will become upset and distressed. This revolutionized our thinking about child's tie to the parents and its disruption through separation, deprivation and bereavement. Thus it is not good to push the child into force labour as seen in "house maid syndrome common in Nigeria" (situation where by children are sent by their parent to be a house servant to close relative or others). These children undergo a lot of distress and may be taught how to hate rather than love.

Good parenting accordingly will form a positive pattern of attachment between the caregivers and the child, and such attachment will assist in the healthy pattern of socialization of the child. If on the contrary there is no form of attachment between the parent and the child, which is an indication of bad parenting, this will lead to some dire consequences on the child's development.

Ecological theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) has also contributed a lot in our understanding the fact that good parenting is needed to teach how to love in the different family contexts (see Lerner et al 1995, in the previous page for the different family contexts). The theory stresses the importance of mutual relationship between the individuals and their living environments in developing the child's ability to learn how to love. Bronfenbrenner stated that the environment from which individuals receive, different experiences and parenting are divided into five levels which interact and produce balance individuals.

At the Microsystems level, the quality of facilitation for development may depend solely on the immediate nuclear family (parents). At the mesosystem level, parenting functions depend on the interrelationship among settings (eg the home, day-care centre and the schools or other institutions as the case may be) in which case other people are involved in parenting (eg teachers).

The exosystem, Macro-systems and chronosystem levels deals with aspect of the environment that may not have direct contact with the child's developmental quality but the policies indirectly influence the quality of parenting a child receive from the micro and mesosystems. The place of work of parents, and governmental policies are in these categories of environment. From the foregoing, it is obvious that the closest system and the most important where the child in the family

develop attachment, receive first hand love, care, commitment and learn how to love and are equally socialized using appropriate control measure is the micro system. Thus failure in parenting in the Microsystem to teach how to love will create problems in the other chains of systems if care is not taken.

Implications of society without good parenting

The importance of parenting in the society has long been acknowledged. There are political and public concern about a variety of issues which taken together suggest an impending crisis in our society because people do not show love to one another. These include a rising incidence of crime, violence and delinquency and an ever increasing prison population, together with concern about deteriorating discipline in many schools. There is also increasing evidence of family breakdown through parental separation and divorce which in turn affects the lives of children (Hoghughi and Speight, 1998, Utting, et al., 1993). Parenting problem is also implicated in the increased drug addiction and homelessness among teenagers (Spencer 1996). Hoghughi (1998) stated that parenting is the most important public health issue facing our society. It is the single largest variable implicated in childhood illnesses and accidents, teenage pregnancy and substance misuse, truancy, school disruption, and underachievement (Hoghughi, 1998). Additionally, child abuse, unemployables, Juvenile crime and mental illness can all be attributed to poor parenting. Poor parental style, involvement, and poor child rearing practices which are indicators of bad parenting have been found by researchers to have negative psychological consequences ranging from poor academic performance, internalizing (depression, anxiety disorder, suicide tendency etc) and externalizing problems (conduct disorder, aggression and violence, anti-social disorder etc) to juvenile delinquency (Baumrind, 1971, Knutson, DeGarmo & Reid, 2004, Lamborn et al., 1991, Maccoby and Martin, 1983, Nwafor, 2007). However, Hoghughi and Speight (1998) pointed

out that the implications of bad parenting are manifested more in components of parenting not properly reached such as children not learning how to love. They postulated that defective loving, care and commitment throughout early and middle childhood is a barrier to normal attachment, personality with low self esteem and problems with peer relationship. Also it is associated with problems in marriage and parenting children as adult and personality disorder which may be related to affectionless psychopath.

Hoghghi and Speight (1998) also state that children brought up without controls or with totally confusing controls are at risk of future conduct disorder, delinquency and criminal behaviour. Further more, children whose early development is blighted by neglect according to Hoghghi and Speight (1998) are at risk of subsequent educational failure and social handicap. Note worthy is the fact the amalgamation of many families make up a society and if proper parenting is not received from the Microsystems, the society might be affected.

In Nigerian context, parenting problems have caused the nation a lot of problems ranging from economical, educational, social and psychological damage. It is seen in the health problems when some parents fail to show love to their children by refusing to give them the basic health care (Vaccination against the six killer diseases) and leaving children to be crippled by polio or blind by chicken pox. It is seen in the abuse of children by parents who pull such children out from school only to hawk goods in the street thus exposing them to all sorts of abuses. It seen in higher institutions of learning where cult members kill and destroy lives and properties of the universities. It is seen in the "Almajiri" syndrome in the Northern Nigerian where Islamic families deny the children opportunity of growing in the Microsystems and sending them out to beg and learn Islamic education under unsupervised conditions which make them to fall victims of terrorist movements

who use them in the nefarious acts and create problems for the country. For example the increasing rate of terrorist bomb attacks by the Islamic sect Boko Harams where many people has lost the lives and hatred and xenophobia common in northern Nigeria which have led to killing and destroying of properties of visitor in their region.

It is also seen in the current quest for economic survival where both parents fail to do their work as primary caregiver of the Microsystems, because they are so busy with the work place, thereby denying the children adequate attachment needed to learn how to love and face the world positively. It is seen on the total neglect of social institutions by the government of the day and their inability to provide adequate concern and security of Nigerian children who are involved in trafficking and all sorts of domestic abuses. Most of these problems can be attributed to the collapse of family institutions where by the parents failed on their own part to nurture their children (Ogunbameru, 2004).

Way forward and conclusion

The smallest unit of every society is the family; therefore every problem in the society is traceable to the family. While Bowlby stated the importance of attachment in the child's life, Bronfrebenner asserted that the interrelationships between the child and the different systems of the environment are vital in maintaining balance in both child and society at large. Society is described as being bad when there are high levels of antisocial behaviours, political anarchy and economic crisis and these are equally traceable to the family. As the core agent of socialization, the family uses parenting skills to show love, care, commitment, control and adequate stimulation to its members. Undeniably, when parenting is well executed, the individual members of the family are better behaved. (Baumrind, 1991, Maccoby and Martin,

1983, Nwafor, 2007). As noted in the different contexts where parentings are needed, the work of parenting should not be limited to the biological parents alone but to the entire society. The governments should be regarded as the parents of the society. Therefore "a not good enough government" will show a general lack of care for the whole population. While a good enough government will truly care for all its citizens and will seek to promote their welfare and still be firm and fair in applying sanctions for unacceptable behaviours. For any society, the government that truly love, care and is committed to the citizenry suppose to have supportive measures for its families such as universally available nursery care, well resourced and expert social work help/family aides, parenting classes for teenage parents, easier access to child guidance/child psychiatry services, early referral from nursery/infant school for children with remediable problems and strategies for prevention of teenage pregnancies and HIV/AIDS (Hoghughi and Speight, 1998).

Parenting is an illusion when the basic structure, strategy, control, care, commitment and facilitation of development is lacking in any context of family in a society.

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