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THE BATTERED EVIRONMENT AND THE BATTERED CHILD:

COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS OF THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED

PERSONS(IDPs) (CHILDREN) IN EDO STATE.

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**THE BATTERED ENVIROMENT AND THE BATTERED CHILD: A CASE STUDY OF**

**THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) (CHILDREN)**

The battered environment is that environment that is hostile, traumatic, and not consistent in providing love, security, food, shelter and puts doubt in the mind of the growing child. A battered environment is less likely to provide the conditions that will enhance the emotional capability for the growing child to be acceptable of him or herself. The battered environment in this paper is the environment of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) children. The IDPs include those displaced by natural disaster such as floods. Communal clashes and insurgencies such as war. This paper however studied the IDPs displaced by insurgence. The population of this study consisted of 1.700 children between the ages of eight and fourteen years who are at the critical age of their formative developmental stage and constitutes about 68% of the total population will produce battered children without intervention. This paper strongly employed the use of interview and observation for collection of data. The descriptive design was adopted.

Key words: Battered environment. Battered Child, internally displaced persons ( IDPs ), intervention

**INTRODUCTION**

Pringle in ( Okocha 2005) in his theory of reprocity on the needs of the child explains the importance of meeting the child’s needs; the need for love and security. This he noted will be importance in order for the child to maintain social and emotional relationship known as the process of reprocity. This process he emphasized must be long and interrupted and help the child develop confidence and inner security needed during adolescence to define their world. A battered environment ‘ does not provide for this consistency or continuity nor is uninterrupted. Battered environment therefore hinders the ability of the growing child to from healthy relationships as the emotions are thwarted and stifled such that it destroys the appropriate development process.

Also, Dreshier ( 1984 ) in OKocha ( 2005 ) in his theory of stages of development opined that there are three stages of development: Regulation, imitation and inspiration. He remarked that the age of regulation requires strict parental directions and instructions to enable the child develop controls. A Learning and character information neither is there a position model character to imitate. In the case of inspiration, there is nothing in the camp to inspire healthy living. IDMC ( 2016) estimates that there are almost 2,152, 000 internally displaced people ( IDPs ) in Nigeria as of 31 December 2015.;

The problem with the battered environment is that the society remains unaware of the depth of damages caused by it in the earlier years of these growing children. This is why the society is unaware of the effect of the battered environment on the growing child. Many of such children as adults may be troubled by emotional problems and may turn around to give back to the society what it offered them. The issue is that the battered environment is likely to trigger unpleasant and unwanted effects on the development of the IDP children. According to Zamudio (2016 ) the Director of internal Displacement Monitoring Centre ( IDMC);

‘’Violence, abuses, forced evictions all add to the conflict –mix in many of these situations. While in places such as Nigeria we see how challenging life becomes for those already displaced by conflict…’’

The IDP children in a transit environment like the IDP camp may have their emotional developmental process thwarted and stifled. For this reason, these children will need remediation counselling. They must be thought to forget the traumas, pains and scars of their exposure to violence.

**Identity Crises**

A growing child in a battered environment obviously may have suffered many injuries. These injuries. These injuries are significant and distinctive because they are inflicted on the child at a very crucial time in the development stage of the child’s life. This is the time when the child is beginning to gain consciousness of the society around him with expectations of love, security, discipline and care ( Mckay 1995). These are meant to create responsive relationships between the child and the society which ought to be reciprocated to enhance the ability of the child when he becomes an adolescent to maintain social and emotional relationships with others ( Farmer 1990). The battered environment in the life of the child may create an upheaval and disrupt growth and may bring about tension, conflict and role confusion, creating crises of identity in the life of these children ( Passer, 2005). If these children fail to gain a sense of psychological well- being they will be unable to integrate previous identities and may lose the sense of stability and may not be able to achieve identity (Passer, 2001). This may create a generation of problems children /people of the society.

**Anxiety, Fear and Phobia**

There is no doubt that the IDP children would be experiencing a lot of anxiety, fear and phobia: anxiety over changed pattern of life, over feeding habit, loss of dear ones, anxiety over disruption of their education and anxiety over what the future hold for them. This is because stressful life events may have interacted with their personality vulnerability factors and make them become vulnerable. They may require only a little in the way of life stress to reach their breaking point, so anything that will give the relief may be accepted. With any tension in their environment the child would be averse to trust which may produce anxiety fear or phobia (Makay, 1976).

**Society Vices**

A battered environment is likely to provide an unconditional environment and many behavioural problems may become prevalent. This is in response to adaptation to the hostile environment. This is why repeated exposure to violence breeds violence itself. This problem may not be a problem from the individual person but it may arise because of the clustering of various problem behaviours inherent in unconventional environment ( Passer, 2001). Since this type of environment diminishes the effectiveness in monitoring against aggression and crime. It may lead to the development of unconventional attitude. As they get involved in several problem behaviors, the chain of problem activities may be set in motion. It is therefore not unlikely that many social vices may develop if not attended to. When these children as adolescence get to their level of tolerance, as many psychologists agree they may not have the capacity to accumulate and build upon experiences of previous happenings because of injury ( McKay, 1996). They may never fully become human. McKay (1996) explains that this may develop into reacting to emotional disturbance with an inner physical reaction tending towards psychological disturbance, given a state of psychological arousal for which the individual has no explanation. Arson, aggravated assault, murder victimization, gang violence, robbery, cultism, vandalism, vandalism, prostitution etc. These are often the temporary ways of reducing tension when frustrated under this type of situation ( McKay, 1996).

**Emotional numbness**

The Nigerian society needs to be aware of the depth of emotional damage that the disruptions of life process have caused the IDP children. Farmer (1990) asserts that they are likely to have no definitive standard to follow and this may produce a damaging effect. Children that experience serious traumatic conditions’ do not easily forget the pains. They bear the scars of this exposure. These scars of emotional damage leave more permanent but less obvious psychological problems (Stokes and Lucas 1995). This leaves a constant state of internal deprivation with feelings of emptiness, failure and rejection. In the bid to fill the emptiness something from the outside may be introduced and the child may run into social problems like stealing, vandalism etc and become vulnerable, overwhelmed and may block creativity ( Haruna, 2004). These vices which seem to provide temporary relief from pain of deprivation create a desperatr need for them to repeatedly turn to these vices for relief. What was started to distract from emotional disturbance may now become an obsession and they become incapable of living a positive life. These may cause deep wounds to the identity and self-worth of these children and feel alienated from the society. Such children as adults may experience emotional numbness as well as painful yearning for closeness and intimacy (Farmer, 1990). Where they cannot afford it, they may become depressed and have thoughts about suicide. They may find it difficult to develop internalized conscience which is not a good signal. This is because their life has been totally dominated by fear and their personality squelched beyond expectation (Farmer, 1990). Counselling, Farmer asserts that taken to its extreme, the battered child can develop psychosis from overbearing expression.

**Statement of the Problem**

Repeated exposure to violence breeds violence itself. The effect of pains suffered by these children, when hatched, can frustrate positive life achievements. The problem is that this become distinct when they try to merge their lives into one picture of themselves. Without interventions, the effect of pains suffered by the IDP children will substantially continue into adolescent and adulthood. For the children to deal with these pressures satisfactorily, different unpleasant behavioural traits may begin to emerge. The society at this time may not be able to handle these crises. This study therefore is concerned with the possible emergence of deviant behaviors. The question is, if counselling interventions are put inproper perspectives. Will these ameliorate the development and control of unpleasant behavioral traits that might emerge among the IDP children?

**This paper has the following assumptions:**

1. That the camp environment of the IDP children is battered (unhealthy) and can produced (unhealthy) battered children

1. That counselling intervention will be needed as remedial measures to ameliorate the effect of the camp environment on the growing IDP child

Research Method

This paper employed the use of interview and observation for collection of data. The interview was used because a good number of the sample could not read or write and in some cases involved interpretation. The interview methods used though structured was flexible enough that it enables the researcher to collect more useful data than she had expected. Patience was required to be able to sieve what was needed from the length of answers given to some of the questions.

Therefore a mixed method research was adopted such that while telling their stories the high point of emotional blocks were noted and questions were rephrased to enable the researcher note the areas of emphasis. However, the researcher was to probe deeply and collected in-depth information from the respondents. The researcher used participant observation to collect need full data. Observing the IDPs provided naturalistic data directly from the respondents. The information obtained from this natural setting had no disruption of normal activities by the group. The researcher ate, danced and sang with the group in order to gain their acceptance . A scoring form was designed to enter specific behavior as they occurred indicating the frequency of its occurrence in themes. The descriptive design was used which accommodated the historical and evaluative trends of events.

**Discussion of interviews and observation**

With interruptions of attacks, watching and experience of rapes, watching the killing of people in cold blood, seeing dead bodies lying around, horrible living conditions, bullet sounds the children appeared to be seriously horrified by those experience. With the separation from parents, siblings and loved ones, dislocation of settlements, starvation, loss of loved ones, homelessness, hopelessness, rejection and insecurity as indicated by their responses during the interviews the IDP children seemed to have lost confidence in themselves and the society around them. They also seem to have lost the inner security needed to define their world. The researcher observed reoccurring feelings of sadness, .dejection,worthlessness,emptiness, loss of interest in life restlessness pessimism and hopelessness as they answered the interview questions and narrated their experiences (see Table1). Some respondents said that they even had suicidal ideation. The interview gave me the privilege of getting firsthand information from the respondents. They depicted how terrified they were when they were close tto being caught and as they heard the cry of torments of those captured and slaughtered. One of the respondents said ‘’I died several times. They had horrifying experiences which seem to have torn their emotions into shreds. The more they ideal the past, the more they appeared to have taken to one-sided level of ‘’non-functioning’’ and learned attitude of helplessness. The assumptions were correct in this study.

Table 1: Level of Environmental impact

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age | Helplessness | Phobia | Fear | Anxiety | Hopelessness | Emotional Numbness | Feeling of insecurity |
| 8-10 | 78% | 98% | 97% | 87% | 47% | 78% | 66% |
| 10-12 | 76%% | 92% | 90% | 75% | 67% | 77% | 89% |
| 12-14 | 89% | 87% | 98% | 92% | 87% | 88% | 89% |

From the results in Table, there were high percentage scores in helplessness, phobia, fear anxiety,

Emotional numbness except in hopelessness for ages 8-10 and an average score of 66% on feeling of in security. This could probably be because they are much younger than the older age groups and the sense of insecurity and what the future holds for them is still not appreciable.

Counselling Intervention

A number of counseling interventions and therapeutic measures can be applied to remedy the impact of the battered environment on the IDP children. Immediate therapeutic procedures are needed in order to prevent these children from developing unpleasant attitudes towards life which in long run may produce devastating effects on the society at large. Counselling intervention are needed to help foster emotional capacity. This should emphasize first and foremost knowledge about the self and willingness to undertake new activities and experience, Furthermore, counseling interventions will help reestablish a sense of psychological well-being; growth, enhance skills, both on individual and group sessions, support groups sharing their feelings and experiences with others thereby enhancing human relationship.

**Systematic Desensitization**

This is a behavioral techniques used to reduce the symptoms of anxiety, fear of phobia. Its use to graduate in espousing the therapy, this is most widely used for the treatment of anxiety problems (Passer,2001). The counter displaced to the anxiety arousing condition. This applied in stages gradually reduces the anxiety arousing condition until the client can discuss the issues that led them to being displace displaced without the symptoms of anxiety.

Trauma Dissociation

This refers to helping the traumatized individual develop a new personality. It is used in most severe stress., physical and sexual abuse suffered by the victim during the period of attack and dislocation. Trauma dissociation is meant to create a new alternate identity to detach from the traumatized from the trauma by attempting to transfer what is happening to them to someone else who can handle it. It helps the traumatized individual to develop a new personality. This is used in severe stress. For children, it could be in response to physical and sexual abuses suffered during the period of attacks and dissociation. It is important to remember that most of the children in the IDP camp under discussion yet to establish identities, so that could make it easy for them to dissociate. In response to their trauma and their helplessness they may be engaged in something like self-hypnosis and this may dissociate them from reality. Trauma dissociation will create a new alternate identity to detach the traumatized from the trauma by attempting to transfer what is happening to them to someone else who can handle it. This will help blur out the pain. This alternate personality remains separated instead of getting integrated into the host personality and cause social problems.

The experience of series of attacks, rapes and seeing people murdered in cold blood may arouse a feeling of security. This is more so when dead bodies are seen lying around bullet sound. Such horrible living condition especially when some of them are separated from their parents, siblings and loved ones they were bound to feel rejected and hopeless. Thus this will make the IDP children find it difficult to develop confidence and inner security needed to define their world.

Communicating and interpretations

This refers to information, encouragement or anything else in terms of communication and interpretations needed to resolve inner conflict. What is essential here is to understand what needs to be said; these are frequently needed to resolve inner conflict. The first thing to do here is to understand what needs to be said. Do the IDP children need the information, encouragement, humor, or something else? It is necessary to focus on the most important thoughts and ideas of the IDP children. There should be productive exchange with the IDPs in this course. Always start all discussions on the positive note. While talking, try to remain positive environment. It is important to get feedbacks using minimal questions, open ends etc.it is important to ensure that unclear languages are not used since this might be destructive. In counselling, you should be attentive to hear everything that is being said, then select, flitter that which is not related to the main point. While talking, it is important to observe the non-verbal response. Humour can effectively be used to break down boring and painful effects.

Behavioural Modification

Behavioural modification is the method which enables one to manipulate the environment by the use of positive reinforcement to achieve a desired behavior and discourage or and extinct (if possible) negative behavior by the ues of negative reinforcement. The focus here is to modify externally observable behaviours and measure the targeted behaviours as they change. This is order to track the progress of the treatment program and then make notifications if the behavior change begins to lag.

Modeling and social skill Training

Counseling should start with social skill training beginning with conversation, social risk, learning how to communicate comfortably, give and receive complements and enhance their appearance. For those who are lonely and have feelings of rejection, counselling can help them think well about themselves when they interact with others. Social skills development is an important task in dealing with issues of social risks. This deal with how a behavioral trait that will bother other people around. The skill training considers acceptability of the validity of other peoples statement, respect stated prohibitions applying measures of constraint, recongnizing the inconveniencies you are causing others.

AVERSION

This refers to conditioning a person to a particular stimulus with the goal of reduce deviant approach behaviors. The goal of aversion is to eliminate bad habits. Self-destructive behaviors or other undesirable behavior (e.g homosexuality, lesbianism, pedophilias and alcoholic). This is done by pairing the behavior is a learned behavior and as such can be unlearned or changed with proper’’ conditioning’’. Aversion therapy works to create an association with something. Aversion therapy is designed to cause individuals to develop an intense dislike or feeling of disgust –an aversion –to the behavior itself as they come to associate it with the noxious stimulus

Interpersonal Therapies

This refers to the need to focus on interpersonal problem of a person in order to correct the deficits in dealing with social skills this is needed to focus on the IDP children’s as the current interpersonal problems in dealing with conflict, adjustments, to loss of relationships identity and correcting deficits in social skills that make it difficult for them to initiate change. In this procedure, there must be genuine purpose. There must be consistency between the therapist feelings and his or her behavior. This should be open enough to express feelings honestly whether positive or negative even when it seems contradictory to the attitude of unconditional positive regard. While expressing displeasure to a negative attribute you can at the same time communicate acceptance of the client as a person

CONCLUSION

The impact of a battered environment such as IDP camps likely to leave the IDP children with feelings of alienation. This may create a desperate need to feel valuable and may create a great deal of problems for the Nigerian society. Appropriate counselling therapeutic measures are needed to be on-going now amongst the IDPs. They need to learn emotional acceptability in order to be able to redefine themselves; establish controls, develop inner security, confidence and try to from healthy relationships. It is expedient that intervention programs should be put in place to help them heal fast. They need to recover their identity. Self-worth, and self-image and get over their traumatic experiences. This should be done in order to prevent them from taking to one sided level of non-functioning and learned attitude of helplessness.

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