Examining Parent's Marital Adjustment and Children's Social Behaviour in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract: *The study examines parent's marital adjustment and children's social behavior in Nigerian secondary schools. The role of the historian in educational psychology were also examined. If the family or home is stable, it will positively impact on the children. Children's social behavior should not only be left on the teacher, but a combination of both the parents and the teacher. The study revealed that large number of social vices and ills in our societies such as examination malpractices, cultism and so forth, were the result of poor parent's marital attitudes. The quality of relationship within the family naturally affects the behaviour of the child from the family. The child's home environmental conditions play an important role in the formation of cognitive abilities like measured intelligence, creativity, the manner he conducts interpersonal relationships and level of thinking.*

Key words: *Children's social behavior, parent's marital adjustment, Nigerian secondary schools, social Behavior*

1. Introduction

It is acceptable that the family (Home) is the institution most entrusted with the adequate preparations of children for what the society expects of them. Experience shows that couples (husband and wife) today are regrettably hampered in carrying out their duties because of separation (divorce) quarrels, misunderstanding of husband and wife. In other words, marital problems or maladjustment tend to be increased in most families. Such homes then become ineffective in selective exposure of children to values of acculturation. This misunderstanding between husband and wife contribute greatly in making our children operate without any effective guidance structure from the adult world thereby giving way to social problems or behaviour. Social behaviour in our schools has for some years now remained a disturbing phenomenon. Manifestations like rampant examination malpractice of all shades, increase cases of truancy, students dropouts, destruction of school property, manhandling of school staff, nonchalant attitudes to classwork, inability to cope with school rules and regulations, poor student-student relationship. All these social misbehaviours are partly a reflection of their homes and products of their earlier parent-marital experiences. It is indisputable that maladjusted child cannot perform well in school nor in the world of work. The National policy on Education urges that the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values among others; faith in man's ability to make rational decisions; moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations, shared responsibility for the common good of the society,

and promotion of emotional, physical and psychological health of all children (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981 p. 7). One would then want to consider these causes of trends in children's characteristics and examine the different factors that may be responsible for the situation. A lot of researches have been carried out in this area. But it is important to note that such researches are not done in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Since the environment greatly affects one's behaviour, coupled with individual uniqueness, this study is aimed at investigating parents' marital adjustment and children's social behaviour. The concept, social behaviour is seen in this study in relation to children's attitude in class work and student-teacher relationship. The problem facing educational psychologists, planners, educationists and the researchers is to determined why, despite the increase in Educational subventions, given the same environmental circumstances, and under comparable conditions some young people become socially maladjusted while others are not. Researches on these issues by Seer (1970), and Nwachukwu (1994) have led to the conclusion that, at least part of the key to this problem lies with different marital adjustment among different family backgrounds. The main problem of this study therefore is to determine the relationship of marital adjustment and children's social behaviour and these behaviours incorporate children's attitude to class work, student-teacher relationship, coupled with school rules and regulations and students-students' relationship.

2. The Role of Historian in Educational Psychology

It is the great Philosopher George Santayana who went down in records for the famous phrase "those who cannot remember history are condemned to repeat it". History is just as important as the present and the future. Even though a generation has left History in the past, it is very important to understand it. Historical experiences occupy very important positions as sources to which people can make reference and enhance learning. Though not obvious, history applies in the people's daily life situations. According to Crabtree, history plays a central role in how the present is viewed. Experiences of the past largely influence today's decisions. Crabtree holds high the understanding that History is not just about dates and past events. It is a phenomenon that is current, valid and influential to the shaping and subsequent creation of our futures (Mulhern, 1959).

Since it presents accounts of occurrences perceived and witnessed by others, Crabtree reasons that finding absolute truth on its platform is nearly impossible. Reporters are largely be influenced by personal histories and may look at events differently. He however gives credit to historians saying they rarely meddle with the facts. Even though minor discrepancies may feature in their recollection, it is unlikely that major alterations will occur. Since strong content knowledge is one of the foundations of successful teaching, it is incumbent on both historians and teacher educators to work together to articulate the content knowledge and skills required of future teachers. Given the historical tensions between colleges of education and colleges of arts and sciences, this kind of collaboration can be difficult; yet it is critical if teacher education programs are to prepare their students to teach content. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has standards regarding content knowledge, and while the value of NCATE standards is debatable, we might recognize that NCATE encourages teacher educators to work with historians to outline the knowledge and skills taught in content area courses. Such conversations might be a catalyst for more substantive discussion with our colleagues in education about the kind of content and skills preparation we should be offering our students. At UM-St. Louis, collaboration between the history department and the College of

Education has resulted in significant content course requirements for our students. Most of our undergraduate students seeking certification are required to major in history. This includes upper-division coursework and the senior seminar, in which they must demonstrate writing skills, familiarity with historiography, the ability to read and analyze primary sources. Development of such skills is vital if history teachers are to foster them in their own students. The historians' role in teacher education extends beyond coursework and professional development, however, into current political debates about assessment and standards. Teacher education programs and history departments must work together to assert a stronger response to the way that history education has been politicized at this particular moment. Indeed, debates about history curriculum and standards at the state level (like the controversy over the national standards in early 1990s) have drawn historians into public conversations about the purposes and content of K–12 history education, and since its establishment in 1974, the AHA Teaching Division has had educational issues on the organizations agenda. Furthermore, in today's climate of high-stakes testing, history instruction that values critical examination of such issues and that stresses historians emphasis on reading sources and written argumentation that draws on plausible evidence places teachers in a bind. This was, in fact, one of the most disheartening parts of our conversation at the 2005 OAH, and in other history professional educational circles of late. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, which seeks to improve reading and math competencies and requires state testing in both subjects has cut into time spent teaching history, especially in elementary schools. The reallocation of precious school minutes has created a dilemma. I find that history teachers have rarely welcomed standardized tests that measure only one facet of historical knowledge, namely factual information, while ignoring critical reading, writing, and thinking skills. Yet, they now find themselves lobbying for the return of mandatory social studies assessments as a way to put more history back into the curriculum. Regrettably, the more important conversation about appropriate ways to assess the full range of historical literacy skills has taken a backseat to the priority of mandating any type of test as a strategy for increasing time devoted to history instruction (Wineburg, 2004).

When we see that children everywhere are required by law to go to school, that almost all schools are structured in the same way, and that our society goes to a great deal of trouble and expense to provide such schools, we tend naturally to assume that there must be some good, logical reason for all this. Perhaps if we didn't force children to go to school, or if schools operated much differently, children would not grow up to be competent adults. Perhaps some really smart people have figured all this out and have proven it in some way, or perhaps alternative ways of thinking about child development and education have been tested and have failed. By the mid 1950s cognitive views of learning gained ascendency over the stimulus response approach. Now questions pertaining to the role of mental phenomenon in learning and development were resurrected. Thus, with the renewed research interest into how individuals acquire, retain, recall and transform information, investigations of higher mental processes achieved unprecedented levels of sophistication and "the mind is once again at the forefront of theory and research in contemporary psychology" (Grinder, 1989:12).

3. The Impact of Parent's Marital Attitudes to Children's Social Behaviour

Parent's marital attitudes assist in the care and socialization of the children. Marriage requires many adjustments by both spouses. For children to emulate good behaviour from parents, such parents or couples must work out a mutually satisfactory division of

responsibilities. Modern marriage laws generally give husband and wife equal status. Some of the common problems in marital adjustment concern finances, sexual relations and child rearing. Marital adjustment difficulties are also caused by lack of communication between husband and wife or they are unwilling or unable to discuss their problems openly and objectively.

For families and marriages to be stable, there should be peace and mutual respect for each other. Nothing is as valuable as peace and understanding in any home. It is observable that the quality of relationship within the family naturally affects the behaviour of the child from the family. For instance, Coopersmith (1967) has asserted that level of marital harmony within the family necessarily influences the personality and behaviour of the children. To this, the rate of conflict and tension between parents is associated with maladjustment of children as well as their self-esteem. Siegleman (1966) also reviewed the impact of marital or family harmony on children and projected that incidents of parental or family conflict are more likely to show poor social behaviour and low self-esteem; even when this conflict occurred several years earlier. In the school, children from intact homes or adjusted homes who receive parental warmth are socially stable. They interact well with others, they can love others, accept responsibilities and display personal integration. Children from broken homes are aggressive, inconsiderate, withdrawn, less friendly and shy away from responsibilities. Children from marital maladjusted homes may discover that the school does not support the permissive atmosphere at home, hence become socially maladjusted.

Psychologists and sociologists also contend that an intact family in one where bother the mother, father and the children stay together. On the other hand, marital maladjusted family is one that is incomplete as a result of either divorce or and other conditions involving misunderstanding of spouses or couples. Denga (1986) noted that parent's agreement on matters important to life, affectional, intimacy, companionship and satisfaction help to harmonize the family. Socially adjusted child will be able to master challenges, learn to interact with his environment, his peers, develop good moral standards and conscience as well as learn to deal appropriately with anxiety and conflict (Craig, 1976). According to Bloom (1978), the sort of relationship existing between parents and children at this stage, affects children's physical, intellectual, emotional and social well being. He concludes that the child's home environmental conditions play an important role in the formation of cognitive abilities like measured intelligence, creativity, the manner he conducts interpersonal relationships and level of thinking. Ezewu (1984), notes that a child's mental capacities and emotional behaviour are greatly influenced by home type, and of course, the level of interpersonal relationship that exists between parents and children. By this, he links the home to the school.

Ezewu (1982), identifies parents' marital adjustment to children as an influencing factor of children's social behaviour in school situation. The maladjusted behaviours arising from poor parent child relationship listed by him include going to school late, absenteeism, truancy, failure to do class/home assignment, cheating, sleeping in class during lesson, inability to get along with teachers, classmates, verbal and physical attacks on teachers, non-participatory behaviour in class, hostility in class and school, stealing and extortion among others. Socially maladjusted learners constitute a problem not only to themselves, but also to the school community. They would not be at the right place at the right time. Neither would they flow along with others to present, the least resistance as the administrator pilots the school affairs toward her goal's attainment.

According to Labarba (1981) an individual in a stressful situation has problems of social behaviour. For stress has direct effect on the person experiencing it. It also has an indirect effect on others with whom that person comes in contact. Cognitive functioning is disrupted by the individual's inability to concentrate, frequent forgetting occurs and the individual is overtly sensitive to criticism. These traits that accompany maladjusted are reduced in the "normal" or adjustive person. Maladjustive behaviour could be viewed as normal reaction to certain life situations and problems. The maladjusted child or children may be an outgrowth of the neighbourhood play group which emphasized adventures annoying others and playing truant. The playing group becomes a gang through coming into "conflict" with some elements in the environment. This conflict arises from the opposing definition of situations as held by the group of children and others within the community. It is a general feeling that there is a great need for Nigerian children to be socially adjusted or behaved. It is the belief of the researcher that if children are well properly adjusted socially, it will bring about high academic achievement and discipline among children (Denga, 1986). We will examine the Statement of the Problem, Objective of the Study, Research Questions, Hypothesis, Scope of the Study and the Significance of the Study that are appropriate in the study of parents' marital adjustment and children's social behavior in secondary schools.

4. Conclusion

If the family or home is stable, it will positively impact on the children. Children's social behavior should not only be left on the teacher, but a combination of both the parents and the teacher. The study revealed that large number of social vices and ills in our societies such as examination malpractices, cultism and so forth, were the result of poor parent's marital attitudes. The quality of relationship within the family naturally affects the behaviour of the child from the family. The child's home environmental conditions play an important role in the formation of cognitive abilities like measured intelligence, creativity, the manner he conducts interpersonal relationships and level of thinking.

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