



Review

Domestic stress management by parents and children upbringing in Calabar South Local Government area, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Children upbringing involves building and developing of positive behaviours and self-concept for functioning as healthy adults who can contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. This requires conscious involvement of parents in children's life. Unfortunately, parents have experienced stress as a result of their inability to meet with the demands of their roles. Stress as characterized by fear of failure, frustration, unhappiness, and etcetera has led to the exhibition of psychological disorders and maladjustment. This paper therefore presents management skills for resolving domestic stress by parents and enhancing adaptive behaviour that children can imbibe.

Keywords: Domestic Stress, Domestic Management, Children Upbringing

INTRODUCTION

The art of bringing up children is one of the most challenging roles that parents have to face. This is so as the society looks up to the family to provide responsible citizens who will ensure peace, unity, community life and prosperity. However, the challenging tasks and roles expected of parents in the course of daily living and interaction can cause the experiencing of stress. This is especially so with crave for technological advancement and modern civilization which tend to leave parents with little or no time to effectively participate in the upbringing of their children. Omoegun (1996) reveals that stress results from individual's unmet needs, fear of failure, frustration, unhappiness which may ultimately lead to exhibition of serious physical and psychological disorder and other maladaptive behaviours arising from deep feelings of insecurity and anxiety. This therefore calls for the understanding of the needs and responsibilities of each parent to enhance stability in the home for positive children upbringing.

This paper therefore examines sources of stress in children's upbringing and attempts proffering skills for

management of domestic stress for effective upbringing of children.

Concept of Domestic Stress

The word 'domestic' according to Dictionary.com (2013) pertains to the home and home life. This invariably is the family. It is a bio-social group or a network of person intimately held together by a bond of social and kinship or blood relationship contends Nwobi (1997). It may be nuclear where parents and children exist or extended where couple, their children, immediate kith and kin and other dependents are found. However, this paper focuses on the nuclear family

D'Arcy (2007) sees stress as an attack and counter attack reaction. He describes it as the body's way of rising to anything that possess a threat or challenge to its well-being and its preparation to meet tough situation with focus, strength, stamina and heighten alertness. Yahala, Opekun and Idowu (1996) affirm that it is lack of fit

between the needs and abilities of the individual on one hand and it supplies or demands of the environment on the other hand. It is therefore a state of discomfort tension or emotional pain faced by an individual which demands an adaptive response to an external perceived situation that results in deviation for people.

Domestic stress can be deduced to be the way in which the home environment event or force threatens the well-being of individuals, thereby making them unable to meet that which is optimally expected of them. This may be in the relationship between husband and wife or parents and their children. It is therefore anything that may threaten the cooperation of the family, interfering with order, regulations, ideas, warm affection and harmony of the family. Akinnusi (1995) in his study emphasizes that incidence of stress at home is alarming due to the harsh economic realities, poor social relations, institutional delays, breakdowns, general and pervasive feelings or precariousness in life. He stresses that serious attention be given to domestic stress. Similarly, Onwuasoanya (2006) contends that in recent times, the family is characterized by many problems which include quarrels between husband and wife and sometimes such quarrels extend to the children. She emphasizes the need for intervention as any family that is devoid of mutual understanding and love undergoes stress.

Uting (2007) posits that stress tends to build up over time and conflicting demands of work and home can cause excessive stress. He also advocates for practical coping skills to enhance solving of stressful conflicts that may arise in the home for parents to be able to function effectively at work and meet their roles of affecting happy family life. Thus, Szymanska (2013) affirms that domestic stress appears as a consequence parents' inability to execute their goals.

Children Upbringing

Children upbringing is an active process that demands the use of skills and knowledge plan to give birth, raise and provide for them contend D'Souza and D'Souza (2005). This process therefore enhances the replication of the family to ensure that the desired values are imbibed by subsequent generations. O'Connor and Scott (2007) posit that it is the way parents shape their children's development based on parent-child relationship. Thus, it involves parents learning skills essential for successful raising of their children.

Through parental warmth, lack of conflict and control and monitored play, O'Connor and Scott (2007) add that children develop social skills. The interaction between parents and children where the children experience protection, nourishment and guardians have lasting effect on the children emphasize D'Souza and D'Souza (2005). Thus, parents are first and foremost the teachers of their children. The loving and supportive love based

upbringing of children builds them up into healthy and successful adults who can face challenges and enhance community life and prosperity. While the fear based upbringing without love and support lead to children with unhealthy behaviour who become maladjusted adults that cannot contribute to the development of the society.

Omoegun (1996) is of the view that it is basically the responsibility of parents to bring up their children for successful adult life though other agents of socialization like the school, church, mosque and significant adults also complement the role. Nevertheless, parents need to be available to rightly guide their children on matters relating to growth, physical and mental development as well as social, moral and spiritual life to enable them grow and develop meaningfully and realistically throughout the various stages of life.

However, in the face of vast social economic changes in the nation, the bane of ineffective upbringing of children is on the evitable increase in work force as women engage in work outside their homes to assist with the financial situation of the family (Akinlabi and Olatunji, 2013). Thus, the traditional roles of the families and family interest patterns have changed as a result of mothers spending most of their times at work and less at home. Further, the shift is seen as children as early as three months of age are now registered in crèche to allow mothers opportunities to concentrate at work. Most of these children are left to the care of care-givers who know not the family values that should be cultivated in children. On this Ahmed (2007) reveals that lack of parents' attention in the early childhood years could negatively impact the children's personality and therefore their future in the long run.

Effects of Domestic Stress on Children Upbringing

When parents are not capable or their capacities are inadequate to cope with the demands of raising children, they get stressed. This according to Odebunmi (2005) can lead to conflict between spouses or other severe problems as high blood pressure, ulcer, drug addiction, drunkenness, heart disease and death. The final result of the either the health problems or family disintegration is the children losing the affection, protection, guidance and provision by parents that could have seen them into meaningful adulthood.

Parents who are stressed posit (Katz, Corlyon, La Placa and Hunter, 2007) are less likely to be able to provide optimal home circumstances and more likely to use coercive and harsh method of discipline. Such method can harden children and subsequently cause them to run away from home thereby increasing the number of 'street children' who are now a great menace of the society. Parents on the other hand may be stressed if they do not feel a sense of connection with their children even at early stage of life. This may be

inform of resistant, distant behaviour or anxious clinging behaviour to others than the parents. In such cases, parents cannot properly rouse the children as attempts in any form are resisted by the children. Allowing the children to take to the path they want can be deviation from the family value system.

Upbringing of children does not imply forcing children into school where they cannot cope with studies. It is parents being realistic and reasonable in meeting their children right to education and providing the needful things that will ensure that children participate actively in school guiding them at homework and being interested in their general school activities views Dhammananda (2004). Parents are morally responsible for the behaviour of children. Their active involvement in children upbringing is sure to reduce the problems of juvenile delinquency in the society. Parents less involvement in children's school activities give room for the peer group to take over their roles. The peer culture most often is counter to family culture, thereby increasing the rate of juvenile delinquency.

The dwindling resources of the home can be a source of stress. Where the living standard is affected, the inability to meet the daily needs of the family and the personal needs of the spouse can lead to mental conflict. The observed over burden roles of parents may lure children towards adopting a supportive role towards either parents thereby being disobedience to the parent they have no sympathy for. Such situation Okwoche (2001) reveals results in emotional illness, suicide, lack of structure, anger, financial burden, spiritual and moral decline that invariably led to juvenile delinquency in children.

Most women work today so that the family can enjoy more material benefits states Dhammananda (2007). They need make extra sacrifices to compensate for what their children missed while they were at away. The feelings of guilt by these mothers over their lack of attention have led to most of them compensating their children by placating them with whatever gift demands they make. This has caused more havoc to children as many have taken to stealing or telling of lies to ensure they get their demands.

Ekwe (2005) observes that a stressed home raises stressed children who are unlikely to keep their academic and social lives healthy, thereby ending up as academic failures and social misfit. This is more so in homes where children are left unguarded. They have access to time especially after school. Where they have no personal time table nor their homework supervised, they spend their time on telephone conversations, playing video games or watching films. Close to school examination, they become more highly stressed due to wasted time and opportunity which should have been wisely utilized.

Conger, Conger, Elder, Lorenz and Simon (1994) reveal that poverty can put severe strain on spousal relationship and induce the feeling of depression and

increase family dysfunction. Uting (2007) and Katz, Corlyon, La Placa and Hunter (2007) also argue that poverty contributes to more stress, depression and irritability on parents. These in-turns disrupt children upbringing. The domestic distress in the relationship between adults can in turn result in less effective upbringing of children. Studies by Ahmed (2007) and McClelland (2000) support that stressed parents are unable to pay attention to the importance of parental care.

Domestic Stress Management Strategies

Although stress is an unavoidable characteristic of life, its effect on domestic life especially in children upbringing can be very devastating. Thus, for a happy and successful life, it is essential to be aware and utilize management strategies. It is one of the keys to a happy and successful life in the modern society posit Borer and Segerstrom (2004).

According to Lazarus and Folkman in Omoegun (1996) the first two forms of management strategies can be effectively utilized to minimize stress in the home.

1. Problem focused coping strategy

This involves understanding and identifying a problem and working out possible solution. The identified problem may be:

- **Outer Directed:** Here coping skills are oriented toward altering the situation or behaviour.
- **Inner Directed:** Skills are channelled toward addressing attitude and needs in order to develop new responses.

2. Emotion focused coping strategy

This is directed toward managing emotional distress. Other forms of management include:

3. Taking Active Responsibility

Knowledge of roles and responsibilities by different members of the family enhance the needed effective bonding that can see the family through trying times. It fosters respect and appreciation where surrogate roles are taken by capable members of the home. Talents of children when discovered should be appreciated.

4. Open Participative Communication

The process should be problem centred, encouraging confidence and flexibility. Parents should carefully listen to each other and guide their children to learn to do same. With the ability to listen attentively comes logical reasoning of issues and children's questions should be

answered in an honest manner. Utting (2007) found out that parents who operate open participative communication assist themselves and their children in developing confidence and flexibility in managing stress.

5. Shared Activities

Parent's behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and values affect children greatly. As parents openly participate in each other's activities as well as participate in children's activities, they learn more about each other and their children. Worthwhile attitude, beliefs, values are impacted on the children. The joy in sharing and participating in activities does not give room to stress nor depression. Quality time in shared activities is called for here. Shared activities should also extend to household chores. Lewis and Lamb (2007) found that parents who shared activities with their children facilitate smooth instead of delayed development while O'Connor and Scott (2007) found shared activities as resulting in quality parent-child relationship.

6. Empathy

It fosters understanding of members of the family and enhances cordial relationships. It helps remove unnecessary arguments. The understanding of one another's feeling or an individual from his own point of view though we do not agree with them help in providing psychological comfort when needed (Bassey, Egong, and Owan, 2002).

7. Assertiveness

This means standing up for one's right, expressing one thoughts and feelings in appropriate manner. It involves the use of tact and negotiation thereby facilitating the developing of self-esteem, confidence and finding purpose in life. Omoegun (1996) posits that this skill gives the feeling of efficacy and internal control needed for interpersonal relationships especially in the home.

CONCLUSION

The duty of parents in the upbringing of their children can be stressful if they are incapacitated in any form. This paper has attempted to enhance the understanding of domestic stress as well as discussed diverse skills for managing of domestic stress. It is believed that if parents and children can utilize the skills, the home will be without rancour, disharmony and problems.

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