

African Research Review

An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal , Ethiopia

Vol. 4 (2) April, 2010

ISSN 1994-9057 (Print)

ISSN 2070-0083 (Online)

Single Parenthood Impact on Street Children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria (Pp 185-196)

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Abstract

Throughout the world, there are children who are drifted away from homes or families of orientations. They are commonly referred to as “runaway” children. This study examined single parenthood impact on street children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria .The study made use of random sampling techniques and the data collected was 200 non institutionalized street children in Ibadan metropolis. The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyzed the results. The results indicated that, hypothesis 2 and 3 was significant (attachment of street children- $F(1.198=55.318, P< 0.05)$ and hypothesis 3 (aggression of the street children- $F(1.198=56.122, P<0.05)$ while hypothesis 1 was not significant (anti-social behaviour of street children- $F(1.198=.227, P>0.05)$). Based on the findings, the study recommended that there is need for parents to stay together with their children to ensure that their welfare is properly catered for. Single parenthood could be totally reduced if not totally eliminated from the society. Government should provide

free and compulsory education to children without family support and help the less privileged parents with financial support by empowering them.

Key words: Single Parenthood, Street Children, Anti-Social Behaviour, Aggression, Nigeria.

Introduction

The socialization of children is very important for the continuity of any culture; basically, parenting is one of the challenging social roles in Nigeria today. The family is said to be the most important agent of socialization, especially for children. Children in most communities are raised in a highly structured and disciplined manner, parents helped to instill and inculcate strong basic moral, spiritual, social, physical and cognitive principles in their children (Santrock.2002).

African system of raising children in the extended family pattern has change a great deal, with the advent of industrialization and globalization in the world. Family lives have been disrupted with the rapid social change that came with the globalization. In Nigeria, high rates of divorce, separation, birth to unmarried couples, death of spouses, war, abandonment, poverty, economic instability, and social movement are contributing factors to single parenthood.

Amato (1996) observed that women are more involved in single parenting, since custody of the child is usually granted to the mothers. One parent family affects the parent/children because the responsibilities that are supposed to be shared by both parents is solely upon a single individual making life more demanding and challenging and, if not well managed, it might lead to maladjustment in life.

In Nigeria and other parts of the developing countries, there are children who have drifted away from their homes and families. They are commonly referred to as “runaway” children, since their usual place of domain is the street. In Nigeria, they are referred to as street children and in Ibadan they are sited in Beere - Ibadan North local government area and Molete in Ibadan South West local government area. They are children working as vendors, hawkers, beggars, cobblers, car washers, head loaders, bus conductors and scavengers. Majority of street children are males while few are female children (Human development initiative, 2004).

Human development initiative (2003) observed that street children stayed on the streets for most part of the day. They are not in school even though they are of school age. They are usually tardy in appearance and are often a common nuisance to the average citizen in busy areas or shopping malls. Their presence therefore causes some concern to both members of public and authorities.

Street children are subjected to physical abuse by members of the public or police or have been murdered theft outright, as government treats them as blight to be eradicated rather than as children to be nurtured and protected. They are frequently detained arbitrarily by authorities simply because they are homeless, or criminally charged with vague offenses as loitering, vagancy, or petty theft. Smaller children are tortured or beaten by touts or by the police and often held for long periods in poor conditions. Based on the foregoing, this study therefore sought to look at the impact of single parenthood on street children.

Various parenting styles affects the children differently, the child's temperament often changes the impact of the parents' behaviour. It is well established that children whose parents are hostile or aloof are more likely to exhibit anti-social behaviour (Santrock.2002). Parental responsiveness and demanding ness are not intertwined; they are very independent from one another. It is possible for a parent to be very demanding without been responsive and vice versa.

A parent who is responsive but not all demanding is labeled indulgent whereas one who is equally responsive but also very demanding is labeled authoritarian. Authoritarian parents place a high value on obedience and conformity. They tend to favour more punitive absolute and forceful disciplinary measures. This style of parenting does not allow give and take in their household, because the underlying belief of authoritarian parents is that the child should obey whatever instruction given without standard established by the parents. They tend not encourage independent behaviour and instead, place a deal of importance on restricting the child's autonomy.

A single parent is a parent who cares for children without the assistance of other parents in the home. According to local laws of different nations or regions, single parenting is a two way streets, the custodial parent could be either that mother or the father, because of the role nature have bestowed upon women, most times, mothers are given custody of the children.

In Nigeria, the situation is not different, women single parents are shouldering conditions of grinding poverty at a very early age with a few support systems especially the Africa culture considers care- giving and child-rearing the sole responsibility of the mother solely (Strong et al, (1986).

Single parents are taking responsibility for the care of family members (Kurtz et al 1991). Many children have grown up without their fathers (Kendall 2003). In some parts, many women who are single parents run households because their husbands have gone away to work in towns of countries across the border. Many husbands have died of ethnic clashes and other health-related diseases. Some women become single parents after losing husbands through war.

The dominant group of lone parents consisted of those who had loss a spouse through death, usually through premature death. In all, but the rarest of cases, one partner will die before the other meaning that widowhood is a common experience which many people term sickness to sudden and unexpected death. Lauer (2002) argues that the effect of death and process of bereavement and adjustment are not only extremely distressing but also a period of enormous uncertainty about how to behave.

Desertion is one of the ways to single parenthood in our society, it is a common trend that has recently crawled into Nigerian society, and men tend to abandon their families. Desertion is also known as the poor man divorce, Kendall (2003) without going through legal process of divorce. Either the father or the mother walks away from the marriage. Children of deserted parents find it more difficult to understand the reasons why they have to do without the other parent. Santrock (2002), assert that these children see themselves as unloved and unwanted by the deserted parents or some put the blame of the available parents as it is their fault for the abscond parent desertion.

The crucial event of a marital breakdown is the act of separation. This usually occurred when the relationship between both parents had gone cold. Divorce is a legal consequence that follows the emotional fact of separation, not all separation leads to divorce. Although separation generally precedes divorce, some couples are able to sort out their misunderstanding and misgivings and are able to put the separation period behind them and move on with their lives. Strong et al, (1986) opined that as many as one couple out of every six marriages are likely to have separated for at least two days. The

changes that take place during separation are crucial because at this point, a person's emotions are rawest and most profound. Men and women react differently during this period.

The most damaging consequences of separation are that it systematically impoverishes single mothers with their children. Divorce women are primary responsible for both child rearing and economic support, Strong et al (2002). As a result, women are at greater risk for poverty than when they were in marriage. A single mother's income shows about a decline, whereas the income of a divorced man results in a 10 percent decline of his pre divorce income.

When separation takes place in the family, the other parent does not know what to do or expect; there are no divorce ceremonies or rituals to mark this major turning point. The custodial parent takes the street upon the children. Scholars have considered knowledge about the negative consequences accompanying marital separation. The psychological and emotional consequences as a result of separation and divorce have been more distorted than any other consequences as a result of deviance perspective.

Children, the Symbol of Hope and Regeneration

In Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa, one is accorded respect and honour to the number of children in his household. One's personality is not fully developed until; he becomes a parent, a status which seems to bring along with it some satisfaction and severity. Children stand the best chance of receiving good nurturing when both parents are available to discharge their parental responsibilities Kurtz et al (1991), Passer et al (2001), Strong et al (2002) postulated that children who are more stable socially and nonetheless available and responsive.

Boss et al (1993) argue that child care should be seen as a significant component of modern day life, designed to serve the interest of parents, children, community, state and society. With the rise of single parent families and maternal employment, children are increasingly socialized by influences outside the immediate family. Some children may grow up in a wide variety of different and potentially damaging situations.

Children who do not live with their fathers run a greater risk of getting into troubles and this risk is not alleviated by mother's remarriage. A nationwide study of 6710 adolescents aged 12 to 17 found that across socio-economic levels, teenagers living with only their mothers were more likely than those

living with both parents to be truant, to run away from home, to smoke, to have discipline problems in school, or to get trouble with police, Amato et al (1994). But the presence of another adult in the home, not a step parent but a grandparent, or a friend of the mother lower the risk almost to the level found in a two parent families, especially for boys.

Children from single parent most times have more power to negotiate rule. They tell lies in order to have their ways all the time. Sometimes, children in a lone parent home can be more stubborn, cry, more often and louder, whine, pout and throw temper tantrums. They gain it through default. The single parents find it difficult to argue with them all the time.

In Nigeria, there are two main kinds of street children; those who live and work on the street, were called children of the street and those who merely work on the streets full or part-time but who retire daily to their homes at night were called children in the street. Street children are found in large numbers in urban and rural areas nationwide. In South- West Nigeria especially in Ibadan, street children work as vendors or hawkers, beggars, cobblers, car-washers and head-loaders, scavengers, street traders and bus conductors.

Most street children are working children who could not keep or maintain their jobs for various reasons. Despite the factors that have led to the children being on the street, most street children began their street life with an assumption that they could depend upon themselves and earn a living on their own, that life will be good. However, they are faced with many complexities they could not endure or deal with such as violence, police arrest, robberies of savings, health problems, community disapproval, inability to cope, and lack of attachments. This study therefore attempts to examine the impact of single parenthood on street children in Ibadan Metropolis.

The present study was conducted with the broad objective of examining impact of single parenthood on street children. The specific objectives were to investigate the effect of single parenthood on the anti-social behaviour of street children; also to assess the effect of single parenthood on lack of attachment of street children.

Research Hypotheses

H₁ There is no significant effect of single parenthood on the anti-social behaviour of street children.

- H₂ There is no significant effect of single parenthood on lack of attachment of street children.
- H₃ There is no significant effect of single parenthood on aggressive behaviour of street children.

Materials and Methods

Descriptive research design was used for this study.

The population for this study comprised 200 respondents in the four local government areas in Ibadan Metropolis. The respondents were from Ibadan North local government, Ibadan South East local government area, Ibadan North East local government area and Ibadan North West local government area. From each of these four local government areas, fifty (50) respondents were randomly selected through even numbering selection from a list of load carriers association and the drivers in the garage (Nigeria union of road workers association) through simple sampling technique to make up 200 respondents that provided data for the study.

The main instrument used for this study was structured questionnaire tagged "single parenthood and street children" (SPSC) A modified four point likert rating format was adopted for the respondents' responses in the questionnaire. This was complemented with an oral interview in other to get more information from those who are unable to read and write. The unstructured interview took the forms of discussion and conversation, which the researcher believes would allow respondent to remain as much as possible in a relaxed, natural mood while giving information devoid of subjectiveness and distortions. 209 copies of questionnaires were distributed, while 200 copies were retrieved and properly filled.

In measuring the validity of the survey instrument, the process of content validity was employed by cross checking and verification of information. A more practical avenue of validity explored included some experts in the field of community development, social work, rural and extension services department. This provided the opportunity to check and test the items as the work progressed.

The test-rest coefficient of stability was to test whether the instruments would provide identical data when administered in the same circumstance. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out with 50 respondents who fulfill the parameters for participation in this study; who

are different from the main number of participants. The test re-test paradigm was however, effected after two weeks interval. The correlation of the overall results with the pilot survey exhibited reliability co-efficient of 0.92 and 0.93 at 0.05 level of significance respectively. This result showed that the questionnaire was reliable as it fell within the identical range

Administration of Instruments

The questionnaires were administered on non institutionalized street children. They were clustery selected from street children dominated areas. There was no time limit for the filling of the questionnaire, each respondent was given the opportunity to fill the questionnaire at own pace.

Data Analysis

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tool was used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussions

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

Table 1 revealed that the linear combination of the effect of single parenthood on anti-social behaviour was not significant $F(1,198=.227, P>0.05)$. The total variation accounted for by the independent variable was $-.004$. Therefore, there is no significant effect of single parenthood on anti-social behaviour of street children in Ibadan metropolis.

This conforms with Amato et al, (1994) where it was observed that various parenting style affects the children differently, the child's temperament often changes the impact of the parents' behaviour. It is well established that children whose parents are hostile or aloof are more likely to exhibit anti-social behaviour.

Hypothesis2:

Table 2 showed that the linear combination of effect of single parenthood on lack of attachment was significant $(1.198=55.318, P<0.05)$. The total variation accounted for by the independent variables $.214$ therefore; rejected the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect of single parenthood on lack of attachment on the street children.

This was in agreement with Kendall (2003) who observed that without going through legal process of divorce either by the father or the mother that walks away from the marriage. Children of deserted parents find it more difficult to understand the reasons why they have to do without the other parent. Strong et al (2002),also assert that these children see themselves as unloved and unwanted by the deserted parents or some put the blame of the available parents as it is their fault for the abscond parent desertion.

Hypothesis3

Table 3 revealed that there was significant effect of single parenthood on aggression of street children. It was found that the linear combination of effect of single parenthood on aggression was significant $F(1,198)=56.122$. $P<0.05$). The total variation accounted for by the independent variables was .217. The null hypothesis is hereby rejected.

This result corroborates with the study of Lauer et al (2002) who confirmed that children from single parent most times have more power to negotiate rules. They tell lies in order to have their ways all the time. Sometimes, children in a lone parent home can be more stubborn, cry, more often and louder, whine, pout and throw temper tantrums. They gain it through default. The single parents find it difficult to argue with them all the time.

Implications of Findings

The findings have significant implications for social workers and other helping professionals. It creates awareness and measures to be adopted in rendering help to those in neglected group in the society. The study also points to several issues that the street children experienced in the street especially on various social stigmatizations associated with run away children.

It enable people be aware of the important of the family as a functional well being of the children and the effect of parental conflict, which mostly lead to separation or divorced of parents on the children.

The study also educate people whose marriages are in difficulty should be made aware of community resources for conflict resolution which include resources for substance abuse, aggression, anxiety or anger management counseling, or psychiatric resources for the assessment of parental depression.

Conclusion

Children from lone parents home experience high degree of poverty, aggression, anxiety and abuse in the home, this lead the children to the street and involved in some anti-social behaviour like drug abuse and automatically exposed to various types of risks and hazards, depending on the socio-economic characteristics of neighbourhood in which the streets are located.

Street children lack basic resources with which to sustain healthy living as a result of physical, social and psychological problems of street children. Parental divorce and separation has a great impact on such children which lead them to the street.

This study therefore arrives at the tentative conclusion that non governmental agencies particularly those with a legal bend who desire to develop policy oriented intervention programmes in order to either alleviate the problems of street children or prevent an increase in their incidence. Change agents can also advocate by providing information to individuals who work with such children recognize and sensitive to their individual need and provide supportive and nurturing experiences for the children in schools. Social workers also have opportunity and responsibility to counsel separating and divorced parents on the significant impact.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, it is therefore recommended that parents stay together with their children to ensure that their welfare is properly catered for Government should provide free and compulsory education to children without social family support and help the less privileged parents with financial support by empowering them. Public enlightenment on issues of parental skills, family planning, family values and child discipline could be done regularly, as this would make for an intact family.

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Table 1: Effect of single parenthood on anti social behaviour of street children's

Source of Variation	df	SS	Mean Square	F-Ratio	Sig of P
Regression	.314	1	.314	.227	.634
Residual	274.686	198	1.382		
Total	274.000	199			

Table 2: Effect of single parenthood on lack of attachment of street children

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	Sig.of P
Regression	59.835	1	59.835	55.318	.000
Residual	214.165	198	1.082		
Total	274.000	199			

Table 3: Effect t of single parenthood on aggression of street children

Source of Variation	df	SS	Mean Square	F-Ratio	Sig. of P
Regression	60.512	1	60.512	56.122	0.00
Residual	213.488	198	1.078		
Total	274.000	199			