

PREPARING OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NIGERIA FOR SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT THROUGH COUNSELLING

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Abstract

The success of reducing or resolving every problem depends on the quality of the strategy used in solving that problem. Due to this, governments, Non – Governmental organizations have persistently created ways to resolve the problem of out of school children in Nigeria through public enlightenment campaigns, building more schools, feeding school children, enforcing parents to send their children to schools etc. however, with all these, the problem still persist, reflecting on the inefficiency of all these strategies, there is therefore the need to use counseling been it a helping profession design to help people with problem in reducing/resolving problem. This paper therefore, suggests on preparing out of school children in Nigeria for social and psychological adjustment through counseling, the paper provided highlight on the key concepts of the topic, some negative effects of been excluded from school were provided as well as some problems of out of school children and their psycho-social implication, finally the paper provided counseling strategies for socio-psychological adjustment.

Keywords: Out of School Children, Social Adjustment, Psychological Adjustment, Counselling.

Introduction

The much desired achievement of education for all calls for an urgent attention to the social and psychological adjustment of out of school children in Nigeria, in order to enable them adjust and be back to school. The onset of out of schooling is very traumatic on individuals. It is accompanied by social and psychological problems. If these problems are solved, the individuals will live fulfilling lives, otherwise, more seated psychological problems such as anxiety, withdrawal, inferiority, depression and low self – esteem will occur which leads to maladjustment. It is obvious that the out of school individuals require counseling to prepare them for social and psychological adjustment they need in order to live fulfilling lives. No matter the time they took while not in school, counseling reduces its negative effects on the individuals which can be treated, such rehabilitation through counseling greatly will reduce its impact and allowing the children to live fulfilling lives.

“Out of school children experience trauma, disorganization, fear, low self-concept and uncertainty that could be solved through positive attitudes towards helping them” (Abosi, 1998).

Helping out of school children through counseling to overcome the enormous negative, social and psychological effect of the condition is a noble task and should be of great concern to all. Well-adjusted individuals utilize their potentials, live fulfilling lives and contribute their quota to the economic growth, national security and general development of the country.

Concept of out of School Children

Out of school means not attending school, therefore, out of school children are children that are not attending school. According to the United Nations, out - of - school children are defined as those kids who are yet to be enrolled in any formal education excluding pre-primary education. Unesco define out of school children as children in the official primary school range who are not enrolled in either primary or secondary school. Presently, there are millions of children that lack access to basic education. These children are referred to as out of school children.

Nigeria account for 20% of all out of school children in sub-saharan Africa, with nearly 20 million out of school children, girls account for 38% of Nigeria’s out of school children. The percentages of out of school children across some states in Nigeria have emerged with northern states topping the list. Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe States have 67.6%, 66.4%, and 62.9% of children aged 6 – 15 are out of school. Major barriers such as child marriage, conflict, socio-cultural norms, lack of inclusive policies/practices in schools, poverty and gender discrimination prevent children both boys and girls from learning. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has expressed concern that Nigeria has the largest number of out of school children globally, with only 63% of primary school children regularly attending school. Unicef recently declared Nigeria the country with the world’s highest number of out of school children.

Some Negative effect of been excluded from School

Being excluded from school can have long - term or even life – long impact. Research suggests that children who have been excluded are more likely to be unemployed, social stigma, fewer job opportunities, lower salaries, higher probability of involvement in criminal activities and likely go to prison as well as to have mental health difficulties.

Current statistics of out of School Children in Nigeria

The United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF] has expressed concern that Nigeria has the largest number of out of school children globally, with only approximately 63% of primary school children regularly attending school. For whatever reasons, the real fact remains that Nigeria has the highest number of out of school children in the world. Likewise, according to a 2022 UNESCO report noted that approximately 20 million Nigerian individuals are numbers of out of school children, this amounts to 20 percent of Nigeria’s entire population and is more than the overall population of various countries in Africa.

Social and Psychological adjustment

Adjustment is the individual's ability to deal successfully or unsuccessfully with life problems or the way environment fashions out events for individuals to adopt and cope with. A person who is capable of dealing successfully with life problems is well adjusted, if he lacks the potentialities for problem solving and submits to them he is maladjusted. According to Ibudeh (2023), "the concept of adjustment refers to active, creative effort to live effectively". Egwim (1995) says, "social and psychological adjustment refers to adjusting to social and psychological activities, interactions, conforming to norms and social expectations, experiencing emotional stability, subjective happiness and contentment, relative freedom from out of schooling anxiety, frustration, tolerance and flexibility"

Concept of Counselling

Counselling is the ability of a trained and experienced counselor to provide information for the counselee which he uses to overcome his challenges. The challenges may be in the area vocational, educational, personal – social or psychological adjustment. Gesinde (2002) says, "counseling is an interacting relationship between two or more individuals where one is the counselor attempting to help the counselee to better understand himself in relation to his present and future problems". A well adjusted individual is not the one who never faces or succumbs to challenges but one who deals effectively and efficiently with challenges. Counseling is positive, encouraging, energizing and organizing relationship. The counselor has a better understanding on how a person can plan and be successful in life irrespective of the initial challenges. Akinade (2010) stressed that "counseling has been used to denote a wide range of procedures including advice giving, support in times of trouble or need, encouragement, information giving and test interpretation". Condition of problem makes counseling imperative for out of school children. They need counseling intervention which will make social and psychological adjustment effective and useful to them.

Social and Psychological adjustment through Counselling

Life is full of challenges, and adjustment is needed in all aspects of human endeavor, counseling is of immense benefit to all individuals. It offers the assistance individuals need to overcome difficult situations. Out of school children are said to have been in a difficult changing situation, for Attahiru (2009) "changes often place considerable stress on individual and groups whose coping and adaptation mechanisms of ten break dawn when they find it too difficult to accommodate these changes." Changes and challenges throw people off balance and break down their coping and adaptation mechanisms. Coping with normal change, demands for extra strength, time and energy, coupled with this demand, out of school children are to adjust to various challenges of their condition. At this juncture, counseling takes the lead to prepare out of school children for the much needed social and psychological adjustment. To achieve this, the individual may require vocational, educational and personal – social counseling.

A trained and experienced counselor can help out of school children to overcome their difficulties and creates an enabling environment that makes him face reality. Imagine the picture of a boy who sees himself as being different from others, a frame work on which he bases all thoughts and actions or any category of people that are out of school. The counselor prepares the individuals for necessary psychological and social adjustment. He helps them accept themselves as they develop strong will-power and inner self-drive for survival. Adjustment would no longer mean effort and sacrifice of the interdisciplinary team to help them live fulfilling life but also their commitment and determination to forge ahead successfully in life. They shifts from negative to positive thinking, accepts the fact that there is ability in somebody who has problem to adjust to his problems which will result to inner happiness, life actualization and consolidation.

Some problems of out of School Children and their Psycho – Social implication

Identity Crises:- identity crises is “a developmental challenge in life where the person seeks to establish a stable view of self and to define a place in life.” (Akinade, 2010). An out of school child battle with who he is, who he should really be and the situation he finds himself. A child in this situation is confused and is unable to maintain cordial relationship with people. Crises counseling and crises mobilization have been found very useful in solving this problem.

Emotional Instability:- in this case, the children have mixed feelings, they cannot understand why they appears different from other children. They may become unhappy, withdrawn from people and find it difficult to express themselves in the public.

Dependent:- out of school children who are dependent rely on others for survival. According to (Abosi 1998). “out of school children seek assistance of others due their condition of doing nothing” this situation leads to frustration and lack of self-confidence.

Counselling strategies for Social and Psychological adjustment

Rehabilitation counseling:- Ipaye (1990), says, “rehabilitation counseling is helping the counselee(s) to acquire decision making skills, coping skills, problem solving skills, self-study and self-Analysis, leading to adequate self-understanding”. Out of school children needs to acquire these skills, knowledge and competencies they need for social and psychological adjustment through rehabilitation counseling. It offers them the platform for self - study, self - discovery, self – acceptance and self – orientation which makes rehabilitation realistic.

Personal – social counseling:- This aspect of counseling helps individual with special needs to achieve self re-structuring, self-positive image, self-acceptance, decision-making skills and personal adjustment to issues in life which enable them to live a fulfilling lives’. (Gesinde 2002)

Modelling strategy:- Modelling is a behavior change strategy that provides vicarious experiences to the observer, who may imitate the experience. “Modelling is a way of learning desired skills in a social context and practice of what have been observed”. (Akinade, 2010) states modeling involves acquisition of skills through observation, perception, conception, hearing, participation and imitation. The counselor uses modeling

strategy, for example live modeling, audio-visual modeling and video-tape modeling achieve the desired behavior change in persons with special needs.

Counselling Parents of out of school children;- their condition affect both the children and their parents. Parents of out of school children needs counseling to help them adjust to the adverse effect of their children's condition on them and understand their children and how to help them overcome their challenges. "parents of out of school children are more likely to have emotional difficulties and conflicts as a consequence of their out of schooling condition, their own difficulties arise from their disappointment at having children that does not appear to fulfill the wish common to all parents". (Abosi, 1998). Parents should endeavor to accept their children from been neglected that will make social and psychological adjustment possible.

Recommendations

1. Counselors handling out of school children should strive to adequately and effectively prepare them for social and psychological adjustment as this will prevent the development of problems like identity crises, emotional instability and dependence etc.
2. for proper social, psychological and emotional development of out of school children, such problems experienced by the children and their parents needs to be properly handled through counseling.
3. Counselors should use the counseling strategies stated in this paper in counseling out of school children.

Conclusion

The paper examined the concept of out of school children and how counseling can be used to help them adjust to various challenging situations in life. Out of children is a group of children that experiences social and psychological problems due to their condition of not been in school which create a barrier between them and the ones that are in school. Counselling, awareness and reorientation are the major components that will break the barrier between them. Counselling of out of school children is the most preferred option in Nigeria been it a profession design to help people with a problem.

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