

Family socialization role and healing of Nigeria's ills

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Abstract

There seems to be so much apprehension among researchers, psychologists, political analyst, counsellors and other concerned citizens of Nigeria about the deteriorating ill condition of the country. There are uncountable crises bickering in every nook and cranny of the Nigerian economy which perceivably are responsible for the ills experienced in Nigeria's social, economic and political environment. These ills include insecurity, poverty, corruption and development challenges facing the educational sector. Over the years, several interventions by government towards healing the nation of these ills have proved ineffective. Unfortunately too, each intervention seems to open up avenues for corrupt individuals to impoverish the economy the more hence the ills persist. Through careful analysis of incidences and reports of some researchers, this article identified family socialization role as a gap in intervention and thus the needed remedy to engender the process of healing of Nigeria's ills. This article suggested that family socialization roles like parental love and concern, parenting rearing style, parental disciplinary practice and parental marital stability, are the needed remedies to heal Nigeria of these ills.

Keywords: family, socialization, role, healing, Nigeria, ills

Introduction

Healing could connote the process of becoming sound or healthy again from an unpleasant, discomforting, sick or unhealthy condition. Udoh (2006) described a holistic perception of health as the degree to which an individual enjoys or boasts of physical, emotional, mental, social and environmental harmony. Nigeria being regarded as the individual lacks this healthy condition, therefore her condition requires healing. The ill condition of Nigeria has led to many psychosocial issues in the economy and confusion in governance which is exemplified by the crises of leadership tussle rocking the judiciary, the legislature and the executive arms in recent times. These ills are multi faceted and too numerous to mention here but, this article has identified some of them which include insecurity, poverty, corruption and development challenges especially, in the educational sector. These ills are anti-developmental and much of it can make a society unhealthy.

Reported and unreported insecurity situation abound in Nigeria. For instance, Nigerian citizens have witnessed violence of various magnitudes not reported. Jarikre (2016) exclaimed that there is great bickering, violence and insecurity from the different sections, segments and layers of the citizenry whose freedom and rights have been perceived to be variously curtailed by the deliberate action and inaction of those in authority. The Niger-Delta militancy, the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency and various notorious cult activities have threatened the peace and tranquillity of the country. Observably, the media is replete with frightening news of negative impact of religious and communal clashes, Fulani herdsmen encroachment, boundary conflicts and different forms of violence, extra judicial killings, homicide and arson to mention a few. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2016), serious crimes reported to the police between 2007 to 2011 shows that 11,571 cases of murder, 33,897 cases of burglary, house and store break, 70,696 cases of assault, 10,340 cases of armed robbery and 125 cases of manslaughter were reported amongst others to the police within this period. The happenings in the country are a reflection of a nation in crises, a nation that is ill and begs for attention. The importance of regaining a healthy condition cannot be overemphasized for Nigeria because citizens will enjoy peace, happiness, growth and development in every part of the economy.

In terms of poverty situation in the country, Eneh (2006:26) stated "Nigeria, a country blessed with the natural potentials to be among the richest nations of the world but is rated between the 13th and 21st poorest country and 1st or 2nd most corrupt nation of the world." Poverty condition has persisted in Nigeria through the years since Eneh made this observation. This finds support in the statement of Suberu (2007), that "Nigeria earned around US\$500 billion in oil revenue since the 1970 yet remains mired in poverty, unemployment, burgeoning domestic debt, and infrastructural squalor, abysmal health and educational services and attendant social frustration and unrest" (Suberu 2007:21). The negative impact of poverty on Nigerian citizens is also described by Maduagwu (2007) to include frustration, loss of hope or prospect and value for life, loss of meaning for life and purpose of living. Meanwhile some researchers described poverty situation as the inability of individuals to attain a minimal standard of living measured in terms of basic consumption needs such as food, shelter or income required to satisfy them (Shola, 2015; Gamawa, 2015). Okafor (2014) noted that the success or failure of any government depends on the degree of attainment of human development or the level of poverty prevalent among the people.

Based on the above description, poverty in Nigeria presents a critical ill condition that requires urgent reduction, alleviation or eradication to ease the citizens of Nigeria of frustration and trauma. The poverty eradication intervention programmes introduced by the government over the years have failed to heal the country of poverty. However, a critical analysis of the intentions behind the interventions will reveal that its target is

to empower families to enable them perform their expected socialization roles in nation building. In the same vein, political and economic analysts have applauded the intention of government in initiating the poverty alleviation programmes but observed that it was beneficial to some Nigerians and not all.

Corruption is noticeable in every human society today in Nigeria (Samson, 2012). Corruption has eaten deeply into every aspect of Nigeria's public and private life, be it social, economic or political. According to Torulagba (2018), the behaviour of public officers (civil servants, military and police personnel, elected officers amongst others) and former public officials, towards the civilization and distribution of resources has proved Nigeria's society to be corrupt. Nigeria's ill condition remains a stressor for any government in power. The consequences of corruption are anti-developmental. No wonder the world depicts Nigeria as a troubled nation (Dambazau, 2014). Nigeria struggles between being developed and underdeveloped. Alumona (2009) noted that the African continent has remained largely underdeveloped despite the huge mineral and human resources, several decades after the end of colonialism. This is because adequate provision of basic infrastructural facilities, security of lives and property, are still lacking. The perception of the article is that corruption has continued to threaten the wellbeing of Nigerians despite several anticorruption fights. Thus, Ajanaku (2017) averred that without reorientation of parents for adequate parenting, anticorruption efforts may not be impactful enough.

The educational sector is so ill that no level of the system is spared of ill condition. From primary to tertiary level of education, Nwagwu (2003) counted up to twenty (20) crises suffered by the Nigerian Education system. These include: crisis of purposes and priorities, crisis of demand and expectations, crisis of population explosion, crisis of unplanned expansion, crisis of access and equal opportunity, crisis of inadequacy of infrastructural facilities, crisis of educational funding, crisis in curricular policies and activities, crisis of professionalism and crisis in the classroom. Others are crisis of indiscipline among staff and students, crisis of time utilization and management, crisis of scholastic achievement, crisis of examination malpractices, crisis of secret cult, crisis of policy formulation and implementation, crisis of records and information management, crisis of supervision and inspection, crisis of leadership and public confidence, and crisis of values, mindlessness and anti-intellectualism.

This article notes that the crises as identified by these researchers still exist in the system as if nothing has been done about it. For instance, presently, the crisis of educational funding still seems unresolved as demands of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) as contained in 2017 MOA cited in Strike Bulletin No.1 is still not met. Unfortunately, blames are passed from one socialization institution to another. Who is willing to take up responsibility to engender this healing process? Therefore,

the purpose of this article is to create awareness on the roles families could play in healing Nigeria of her ills. Through the socialization of children, youths and adults, it is hoped that families bring up patriotic individuals that could gradually promote healing in all aspects of the economy.

Theoretical framework/rationale for choice of variables

This article is anchored on Jerome Bruner's Theory of Constructivism (1918). This theory holds that children learn through doing (the enactive mode of learning), imaging things that they had experienced (iconic mode of learning), making what they know into symbolic codes like talking, writing or drawing (symbolic mode of learning). The implication of this theory to this article is that relevant instructional techniques should be employed during socialization, teaching of the desired cultural norms, attitude and moral behaviour employing storytelling, songs, idioms that will help engender better understanding and effective retention of the learned skills.

The Control Theory of Crime and Delinquency by Hirschi (1969) assumes that delinquency activities result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken. The theory also noted that the natural motivation to human beings is to deviate. According to Hirschi (1969), individuals are bonded to society through four elements which are attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Relating this theory to this article, individuals who are not attached to the society may deviate. Commitment is the rational component in the bond which helps an individual to bond to society and minimize the chance of being deviant and citizens who show commitment may not deviate. By involvement, the theory assumes that a person who is involved in legitimate daily economic or civic activities may be less vulnerable to corruption. Belief in the theory relates to accepting the legitimacy of the rules, norms and values of society; and that individuals vary in the extent to which they believe they should obey the rules of society. This is the reason, those who do not believe may be those involve in promoting the ills in Nigeria.

The article presumes that the families where children, youths and adults reside every other time ought to provide quality socialization necessary to inculcate in individuals the various elements identified by the theorist that strengthens bonding to society. This article posits that the family unit is the first agent of education and the behaviour of individuals are highly influenced by the quality of training dominant there. Therefore, the family could make dominant those desirable social skills like empathy and national values such as patriotism, responsibility for others and community spirit for individuals to internalize. This article believes that an individual's interest to contribute towards Nigeria's healing is largely influenced by the quality of the socialization received in the family. The National Policy on Education places much emphasis on inculcation of national consciousness and unity in diversity on the

acquisition of appropriate knowledge, ability, skills, competence and self-reliance (FRN, 2014). In view of the policy statement above, the article thus avers that fundamentally, education first start from the family. Therefore families should take their place in education for national healing. This article believes that Nigeria's healing can be motivated by families through renewed socialization effort by focusing on teaching those values that unite, and foster peace and harmony. For example, President Mohammadu Buhari once lamented that if Nigeria fails to kill corruption, that corruption will kill it (Mathew, 2016). This essentially is a call for Nigerian families to engender the desired healing through desirable socialization.

The rationale for choosing the family to effect this healing process is further predicated on some of the evidences below. Olarenwaju (2007) opined that Nigeria has an underdeveloped political culture, which seems not to have any political solution for the various crises facing her. Yusufu (2007) observed that Nigerians by and large have not had a proper diagnosis of their national crises, conflicts and violence. This could be the reason why Ngala (2005) having examined the crises in Zimbabwe and having identified that there are so many religious groups and denominations in Zimbabwe including the traditional religion called the church up for national healing. The author stated:

“To speak for peace, to pray for peace, to teach peace, to work for peace, to do whatever one can whether great or small, to make peace is the church's calling” (Ngala, 2005:100)

This article borrows a leaf from Ngala, hence calls on the family to play this role of healing Nigeria. In support of this call, Perrino, Gonzalez, Pantin and Szapocznik (2000) noted that stable functional families have been shown to contribute to youth social empowerment by providing many of the factors that protect young people from engaging in risky sexual behaviour, drug use and abuse, delinquency and other anti-social behaviours. On the other hand, in a general sense, negative family experiences, such as poor child-parent attachment, a chaotic, dysfunctional, abusive, neglected, or impoverished family environment, may directly or indirectly hamper youth's social and economic empowerment. Ducharme and Schecter (2011) further explained that some children with skills deficit do not have the ability to verbally convey needs when subjected to stress or discomfort (e.g pain, frustration, hunger or fatigue) instead they may engage in disruptive behaviour that provides them with access to the outcome being sought, such as attention, quenching thirst or hunger. The family's role in paying attention to members' needs and their responsiveness to these needs are critical in inculcating desirable attitudes and moral behaviours among children, youths and adults alike.

The extended family system in African cultures has been identified as a source of healing for its members. For instance, African Union (2009:3) states that “the extended family is a long established institution which provides its members with sophisticated social security system, an economic support to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and clothing, and a wide network of relatives on whom to fall back in times of crisis, unemployment, sickness, poverty, old age and bereavement.” Therefore, Nigeria’s healing can be encouraged by families if they refocus socialization of the individual on these national philosophies which equip one with relevant social skills that manifest in pro-social behaviours. In support, Nwadinobi, Uzoezie, Umezulike and Afunugo (2018) averred that to curb corruption in Nigeria, it has to begin from the root, meaning that proper parental care is needed to instil good morals in the younger generation. In addition, Nwadinobi et al (2018) noted that as it concerns the issue of corrupt practices and moral behaviour in Nigeria, that parents have inescapable responsibilities as they bring up their children.

The roles played by these family socialization variables such as parental love and concern in parent child relationship, parenting rearing style, parental disciplinary practices and parent marital stability can be considered crucial in salvaging the crises in Nigeria thus boosting Nigeria’s healing process.

Parental love and concern in parental-child relationship

Rogers (1959) in his theory of interpersonal influence believed that feeling of self-worth developed in early childhood were formed from the interaction of the child with the parents and significant others in the child’s environment. Rogers explained that as the child grows older, these interactions with parents and significant others will affect his or her feeling of self, that the development of this feeling will depend on the extent the child is provided with genuineness, acceptance and empathy, for without these, healthy relationships and personalities will not develop. Similarly, Rogers (1951) argued that children have two basic needs, the need for positive regard by others and the need for positive self-regard (self-worth). Rogers explained that in an ideal condition, positive regard is unconditional; it is given freely to children for who they are regardless of what they do. In conditional positive regard, children are shown acceptance and love when they behave in ways approved by the parents. The consequences are that children may lose their self-worth because they tend to interject values of others rather than of the self and this could lead to a discrepancy between the self-concept (the organized constant set of perception and beliefs about oneself) and the experiences of the child.

There is need for families to help children, youth and adults develop healthy personality that enhances their adjustment in the society by inculcating genuineness, acceptance and empathy because over time these skills are apt to be modelled. If these

skills, particularly empathy, are manifested in their dealings in social, economic and politics, then Nigeria could be gradually healed from her ill condition. Yoo, Ferg and Day (2013) showed that higher levels of empathy and pro-social behaviour at pre-test predicted higher level of empathy and pro-social behaviour four years later in the male and female adolescents. It is a general belief that early childhood experiences influence later years in adolescents, in adulthood and in old age. Empathy is a quality that helps people see others as themselves. For example, President Obama is said to be one with empathy and patriotism for America. The two qualities enabled him make the great impact on the global economy by stabilizing it, hence preventing the impending economic depression during his tenure (Kalokoh, 2017). Nigeria needs individuals who are socialized with empathy and patriotism to also achieve the same feat if not more for her economy.

Parenting rearing style

Many families differ in the ways they train their children. They adopt different styles and sometimes a combination of styles. Among the styles adopted by parents include: autocratic, authoritative, democratic, permissive and laissez faire. Each of these styles exerts different influences on the behaviour of the children. Some of the outcomes are positive while some are negative. Negative outcomes may play out in deviant tendencies or activities. As adults, they may likely be persons of dishonest conduct. Crime and violence are perpetuated by persons who are found wanting in character and since parenting is part of socialization, families have roles to play to ensure children, youths and adults develop desirable pro-social behaviour. Worthman, Loftus and Weaves (1999) confirmed that through socialization, children's behaviour and moral thoughts are developed. Effective socialization by families on desirable societal norms and values could direct or redirect lives of children, youths and adults away from anti-social behaviours thus spur them to be bonded to society in obedience and in patriotism. Having healthy personalities function at different official cadre in the social, economic and political system could stir desired healing of Nigeria's ills through their desirable activities.

Parental disciplinary practices

Parents may control their children's behaviour through necessary support, reinforcement and application of appropriate punishment. Hetherington and Stanley-Hogan (2002) observed that inconsistent punitive and non-supportive dealings with children results in a failure to control children's behaviour adequately. This may bring about children's vulnerability to antisocial tendencies. Oklemute (2011) explained that discipline is instructing an individual to obey and follow acceptable code of conduct. Holden (1997) noted that parents' consistency in their discipline and use of appropriate amount of pressure can get children to cooperate and comply with instruction. The implication is that children, youths and adult who have internalized the moral code and

are behaving in desirable ways in their homes may be able to behave the same way in the work places. In the society, it is expected that positive attitudes and moral behaviours are manifested in their social interaction with others, engendering peace and harmony. There is the tendency that the children, youths and adults who are disciplined by their families will refrain from antisocial activities and promote pro-social behaviours that can bring about Nigeria's healing.

Parent marital stability/instability

What a child becomes, the quality of mind he possesses, his behaviour and life orientations have the imprint of the family he routes his life through (Isangedighi 2007:231). Isangedighi (2007) asserts that the home provides the child's first social setting in which mutual liking, love and affection is nurtured between children and other relations. Healthy parent-child relationship that positively influences personality development of children is a reflection of parental behaviours that indicate acceptance, approval and love (Ajake, 2004). Culturally, families have to be responsible for seeing their children, youths and adults through the various stages of development and behaviour moulding. According to Hockenbury and Hockenbury (2006), good and adequate parenting provided by families results in the production of children who are psychologically well-adjusted, competent, and well-behaved. However, these parental obligations towards children are not met by some families due to some negative factors which caused the marriage union to experience instability.

In a study by Sheik cited in Orji (2011) on home background factors and juvenile delinquency aimed at identifying the delinquent behaviour characteristics in the study area and the role of the home in delinquency, it was reported that the major factors accountable for these behaviours include broken homes, lack of cordial relationship, lack of material satisfaction and finally discipline. Based on the foregoing, proper upbringing of children, youths and adults can only be guaranteed through a harmoniously stable marital relationship. Orji (2011) found in a study on home factors and problem tendencies that parental marital stability has a significant influence on overall problem tendencies (intellectual, social, physical and effective trait related) among the basic education children sampled in schools in southern Cross River State. Onwuamanam and Osakinle (2005) averred that disharmony leads to mental instability. Therefore parents need to ensure stability in their marital relationship to ensure the socialization of intellectually, physically, affective and psychologically stable personality. These desirable personalities could drive the healing process of Nigeria to make it well again and devoid of corruption, etc.

Conclusion

To conclude this work, family socialization roles such as parental love and concern, parental rearing style, parental stability are perceived to be the remedy for Nigeria's ills. This researcher avers that families can, through these socialization roles, produce the desired type of personalities (in their children, youths and adults) and that through their nation building activities promote positive developments in the social, economic and political sphere. By this, the ills plaguing Nigeria which is characterized by insecurity, poverty, corruption and development challenges especially the one facing the educational sector would be gradually healed.

Suggestions for counselling

Based on the evidences presented in this article, the researcher suggests that:

1. Families need to improve in their roles of socializing their young to honour the core values of their country. It is the belief of this researcher that through developing the desired relevant social skills and attitude, the panacea for the ills plaguing Nigeria could be found.

2. Parents and guardians need to ensure that the desired societal values such as genuineness, acceptance, empathy and patriotism are inculcated and reinforced in their children, youth and adults, as this would enable them desist from antisocial activities which fuel the ills plaguing Nigeria.

3. Families should adopt disciplinary practices and rearing styles that embrace love and unconditional positive regard as this would help their children develop the desired self-concept for proper adjustment and adaptation.

4. Spouses should ensure that they maintain stable and peaceful marital relationship, be it in the nuclear, polygamous or extended family living. The roles as modelled in their peaceful relationship are apt to be internalized and reproduced by their children, youths and adults.

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