MODULE 2   CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN CHILD REARING PRACTICES IN NIGERIA

Unit 1   Concepts of Child Rearing and Parenting
Unit 2   Common Cultural Differences in Child Rearing Practices in Nigeria
Unit 3   Child Fosterage as a Form of Child Rearing Practice
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UNIT 1   CONCEPTS OF CHILD REARING AND PARENTING

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Children are more than the object of their parents` attention and love; they are also a biological and social necessity. The human species perpetuates itself through children; cultural, religious and national groups transmit their values and traditions through children; families maintain their lineage through children; and individuals pass on their genetic and social heritage through children (Arnold et. al 1975). None of these is however possible without appropriate child rearing and parenting.

This unit therefore explains the two concepts; child rearing and parenting in terms of processes and models, with the intention of examining in the other units of this module, the variations in the patterns and practices across different cultural groups in Nigeria.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

*   explain the concept of child rearing;
*   explain the concept of parenting;
*   differentiate the concept of child rearing from that of parenting;
*   explain some of the processes of child rearing; and
*   Describe some models of parenting.

3.0   HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

*   Read through this unit care.
*   Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

NOTE: ALL ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENT ARE AT THE OF END THIS BOOK. THIS APPLIES TO EVERY OTHER UNIT IN THIS BOOK.

4.0   WORD STUDY

Child Rearing: This is a process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual's development of a child from infant to adulthood.

Parenting: The term promoting is a derivative of the word "Parent". This is a process of raising and educating a child from birth until adulthood. It is the activity of raising a child rather than the biological relationship.

5.0   MAIN CONTENT

5.1   Meaning of Child Rearing

Simply put child rearing refers to the behaviours of parents towards their minority-age children. Child rearing is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood.

The concept of child rearing and its associated patterns and practices are embedded in the socialisation processes of any social group. It is the training or bringing-up of children by parents or parent-substitutes. It is used also for child rearing practices in different societies, at different economic levels, in different ethnic groups, etc. It differs from

parenting in that in child rearing the emphasis is on the act of training or bringing up the child and the interaction between the parent and child, while parenting emphasises the responsibility and qualities of exemplary behaviour of the parent. Effective socialisation of the child therefore depends greatly on the quality and richness of child rearing practices and parenting.

Evans &Mayers (1994) observed that child rearing practices are embedded in the culture and determine, to a large extent, the behaviours and expectations surrounding a child's birth and infancy. They also influence childhood, adolescence and the way these children parent when they become adults. Child rearing therefore is usually grounded in cultural patterns and beliefs.

In the case of humans, child rearing is usually done by the biological parents of the child in question, although governments and society take a role as well. In many cases, orphaned or abandoned children receive parental care from non-parent blood relations. Others may be adopted, raised by foster care, or be placed in an orphanage.

Mothers and fathers are essential for optimal child rearing. This is because gender complementarity has been found to be capable of affording children the opportunity to thrive in the best possible environment (Byrd, 2006). Usually, parental figures provide for a child's physical needs, protect them from harm, and impart in them skills and cultural values until they reach legal adulthood, usually after adolescence. All these are part of child rearing. It equally involves descriptions of how children are raised within cultures, including beliefs and practices surrounding pregnancy, childbirth and treatment of young children.

The task of raising a child has never been an easy one. Quoting St. Dimitri of Rostov (l709), Alexander (2001) says "A young child is like a board prepared for icon painting. Whatever the iconographer paints on it, honourable or dishonourable, holy or sinful, an angel or a demon, it remains forever. The same applies to a young child: that upbringing which he/she is given, those manners he/she is taught--whether God-pleasing or God-despised, angelic or demonic--shall be part of him/her for the rest of his/her life."

Seventeenth-century philosopher and physician JOHN LOCKE offered another analogy for child rearing when he conceived of the child's mind as a *tabula rasa,* or blank slate, for parent's to write upon. His influential *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) articulated his vision of parenting as a systematic and consequential enterprise.

The fact that children are so impressionable, parents must be especially vigilant regarding the influences surrounding their children, ensuring as much as possible that these make a positive contribution to their development, towards making them worthy citizens and good parents in future.

Child rearing can also be scientifically explained. *The Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society* (2008), remarked that the idea of child rearing as a scientific enterprise made increasing headway in the nineteenth century. The focus on specialised techniques of child rearing was at least partially a consequence of economic and demographic changes, which contributed to smaller family sizes and intensified nurturing. In 1800, the average family raised seven children to adulthood; by 1900, that number had shrunk to three or four. With fewer children and productive responsibilities in the home, child rearing became a focal point of women's work in the home. In a society where one's fortunes could rise and fall in a lifetime, parents sought to inculcate children with the habits and virtues that would allow them to maintain or improve their economic position and social status. While philosophy and religion initially provided the theoretical rationales for informing parents about the best means of rearing children, science and medicine began to make inroads on this discourse by the close of the century.

The advent of the field of Pediatrics in the 19th Century therefore became central to the evolution of scientific child rearing. This afforded physicians an opportunity to acquire greater influence over family life throughout the century. Pediatricians orchestrated campaigns to alleviate *infant mortality*, initiated regularly scheduled well baby examinations, and pronounced themselves as authorities on infant feeding. During the World War I era, child health activists sponsored infant welfare clinics, better baby contests, and milk stations. In both rural and urban areas mothers congregated at settlement houses, county fairs, and government offices to have their babies weighed, measured, and receive milk. In these venues, mothers learned that there were scientific rationales for psychological as well as for physical care. Physicians and nurses offered advice about feeding, clothing, and how to respond to a crying infant. However, there was variability in the extent to which mothers accepted scientific authority over their mothering practices. Poor mothers, especially, were often receptive to suggestions concerning sanitation and nutrition, while remaining skeptical about the idea that science should determine their techniques of nurture and discipline.

5.2   Meaning of Parenting

Parenting has been described by Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2008) as the process of raising and educating a child from birth until adulthood. Parenting refers to the activity of raising a child rather than the biological relationship.The term, "parenting", is a derivative of the word, "parent", taken as a verb. When people say "to parent" a child it means "to be a parent," or "to fulfill parental duties." Since everyone who has a child has to parent he or she has his/her own view on what parental duties should entail. Generally, the majority of parents admit that those duties are to provide for the needs of a child - the child's need for security and development. This implies security and development of a child's body, mind and psyche. In other words, it is physical, intellectual, and emotional security and development.

Parenting is usually done in a child's family by the mother and/or father (i.e., the biological parents). Most parenting practices are deeply rooted in the belief systems of the people who follow them. When parents are unable or unwilling to provide this care, it is usually undertaken by close relatives, such as older siblings, aunts and uncles, or grandparents. In other cases, children may be cared for by adoptive parents, foster parents, or in institutions (such as group homes or orphanages which are not so common in a country like Nigeria).

Parenting therefore demands that parents must do all or a combination of the following:

- Providing physical security in terms of physical safety, shelter, clothes, nourishment, protection from dangers, caring for the child's health and general safety of a child's life.
- Developing a child physically, that is, providing conditions for a healthygrowth of the child, by training the body and developing good health habits in him/her.
- Providing the child intellectual security in terms of conditions in which a child's mind can develop so that his/her dignity is safe enough to enable him/her learn effectively. The child must be provided an atmosphere of peace and justice in the family, where a "no-fear," "no-threat, "no-verbal abuse" environment exists.
- Providing intellectual development in terms of opportunities for a child to learn about laws of nature and moral laws, acquire social skills, ethics and value systems, reading, writing and calculating skills.
- Providing emotional security to child by protecting and shielding his/her fragile psyche through the provision of a safe and loving environment that can give the child a sense of being loved, being needed, and welcomed.
- Providing emotional development by giving a child an opportunity to love other people, to care and to learn to help others through showing of empathy and compassion to younger and older, weaker and sicker as well as grandparents.

The implication of these parenting roles is that most parents across the world rely on their own socialisation into parenting, their intuitive sense of right and wrong, and their cultural beliefs to create a prerogative which confers on them the responsibility to guide their children to become competent, responsible, and fully functioning members of the society.

Hence, parenting that is responsive and demanding is likely to produce healthier child development. Parents are therefore not expected to be detached from their children. They are not expected to care less or be unaware of their children's needs for affection and discipline. Thus, parenting demands that parents must necessarily support, understand, trust, and protect their children as well as be accountable in terms of social and familial responsibility.

5.3   Processes of Child Rearing

One of the most important roles of parents in child rearing is presumed to be socialisation. Socialisation is the process by which an infant becomes an acceptable member of his/her society- one who behaves appropriately, knows the language, the requisite skills, and holds the prevailing beliefs and attitudes. It also consists of those patterns of actions, or aspects of actions which inculcate in individuals the skills, motives and attitudes necessary for the performance of present and anticipated roles in the society. This is however carried out through different processes listed and discussed in the next few pages of this unit.

5.3.1 Direct Teaching

This process involvesguiding the child through verbal instructions and actions to acquire some behavioural traits and skills. Here, the child is told what to do or not to do and he/she is either rewarded for the right thing or punished for doing the wrong one. He/she is also shown practically how to do some things at home or within the neighbourhood and he/she is expected to practice doing such thing under the guidance of the parents or other adults in the family or extended family.

5.3.2 Incidental Learning

Majority of what the child learns in the process of growing up is unconsciously taught. Here, parents and other adults engage the child in activities and experiences which might be fun in nature and he/she can be learning a great deal through such without having to notice that learning is taking place. It happens in many ways: through observation, repetition, social interaction, and problem solving; from mistakes, assumptions, or from being forced to accept or adapt to situations.

5.3.3 Imitation/Assimilation/Learning from Models

Children while growing up are fond of imitating both adults and their peers. They learn to imitate their parents when they within the home. When they are outside the home, they strive to imitate their same-sex peers in terms of dressing, speaking and behaviours. From their daily interactions and observations, children end up engaging in actions which tend to resemble those of their parents, older brothers or sisters or even individuals they see on the television. This is imitation. The most important factor to note here is the ability of adult figures and parents to serve as good role models who can correctly copied by the children.

5.3.4 Role Learning

In every society, people occupy different positions and each of these positions has certain expectations associated with it. So occupiers of positions are expected to behave in ways that are peculiar to these positions. Children occupy the position of off springs in a home and as such there are roles, skills, values and attitudes they are expected to learn, acquire and exhibit. These are usually prescribed or determined by the culture of the society or group to which they belong. Hence, it is a process that that affords the child to learn the requirement of that culture.

5.4   Parenting Models

The fact that children`s social responsibility starts from home implies that parents must have full input in training them to become well-adjusted members of their society. The nature of parents across the world has influenced the different methods and models adopted for dealing with the problems associated with child rearing. Some of these as presented by Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia (2008) include:

- **Rules of traffic model** - Parents explain to their children how to behave, assuming that they taught the rules of behaviour as they did the rules of traffic. What they try to teach the child doesn't necessarily mean it will get through to them. The problem of parenting, in this case, is not that they tried to teach him/her the right thing, but that they considered parenting as a single, narrow minded method of parenting, without fulfilling the range of parental duties.

- **Fine gardening model** - Parents believe that children have positive and negative qualities, the latter of which parents should "weed out" or "prune" into an appropriate shape. The problem in this parenting method is that parents fight with the faults of their child rather than appreciate their current achievements and/or capabilities. This may destroy relationships if not properly handled.

- **Reward and punishment model** – "RaP" is a most popular model of parenting based on logic: for a good action - a reward/praise and for a bad action - a punishment/scolding/reprimand. To teach a child by this logic is relatively easy and can even be effective, especially if it is done consistently. It is because it forms a sense of justice in a child's mind that it works. But, simultaneously, it imparts the child's universal image of the reward and punishment and when real life doesn't prove to be just it undermines the child's faith in justice.

In recent times these models have been found to be fraught with lot problems which are capable of affecting the adult life of the growing children. Parenting typically utilises tools of reward and punishment method, but most child development experts now agree that corporal punishment is not an effective behaviour modification tool. In some jurisdictions corporal punishment (e.g., spanking or whipping) has been prohibited by law. In Nigeria the Child Rights Act 2003 does not support this. Many parents

haveconsequently adopted non-physical approaches to child rearing and discipline and examples of these are listed below:

- **Nurturant parent model**- A family model where children are expected to explore their surroundings with protection from their parents.

- **Attachment parenting** - Seeks to create strong emotional bonds, avoiding physical punishment and accomplishing discipline through interactions, recognising a child's emotional needs, all while focusing on holisticunderstanding of the child.

- **Taking Children Seriously**- Sees both praise and punishment as manipulative and harmful to children and advocates other methods to reach agreement with them.

- **Parenting For Everyone** - The philosophy of this model considers parenting from the ethical point of view. It analyses parenting goals, conditions and means of childrearing. It offers to look at a child's internal world (emotions, intelligence and spirit) and derive the sources of parenting success from there. The concept of heart implies the child's sense of being loved and their ability to love others. The concept of intelligence implies the child's morals. And the concept of spirit implies the child's desire to do good actions and avoid bad behavior, avoid encroaching upon anybody's dignity. The core concept of the philosophy of Parenting for Everyone is the concept of dignity, the child's sense of worthiness and justice.

It is however pertinent to note that no matter the choice of model(s) or process(s) of child rearing adopted by a family, parenting is a phenomenon that doesn't stop when children grow up and age. Parents always remain to be parents for old children. Their relationship continues developing if both parties want to keep it or improve.

6.0   ACTIVITY

1.   What is child rearing?
2.   What is parenting?
3.   Highlight the different models of parenting that have been discussed in the unit.

7.0   ASSIGNMENT

1.   Distinguish between child rearing and parenting.
2.   Identify and briefly explain any two process of child rearing and three models of parenting that are common to your location.
3.   Why is parenting a duty and not a hobby?

8.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that child rearing and parenting are essential for child development. Attempt has also been made to highlight the differences and similarities between the two concepts. The discussion on the various processes of child rearing has equally familiarised you with the various ways by which children are provided opportunity to learn in the course of child rearing. Likewise, the models of parenting discussed have further clarified your thoughts on the need for parents to be more cautious when considering the model(s) of parenting to adopt for child rearing. This is because there are some of these models which are capable of negatively affecting the parent-child relationship instead of enhancing it. Hence, for a child to reared in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding parents, other adults and children`s peers must necessarily play positive roles using appropriate processes and models that are family-friendly.

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UNIT 2   COMMON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN CHILD REARING PRACTICES IN NIGERIA

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In humans, customs of child rearing and patterns of parent-infant interaction vary widely from culture to culture. Despite these variations it is expected that parents, other adults, children`s peers, as well as brothers and sisters are expected to provide a warm and nurturing environment for children.They all have an obligation to teach social and familial responsibility. While doing all these with the children, they cannot but have their own shortcomings and cultural differences which go a long in determining how a child is raised within a social group.

Hence, this unit is presenting child rearing practices across the different major ethnic groups of Nigeria as a way of demonstrating the belief that the culture of each group plays key role in the patterns and practices of child rearing. The culture guides parents' beliefs, practices and beliefs about discipline, behaviour management and control.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the relationship between child rearing practices, patterns, and cultural beliefs of people; and
- identify some examples of cultural differences in child rearing practices and patterns among some ethnic and social groups in Nigeria.

3.0   HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- Read through this unit care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

NOTE: ALL ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENT ARE AT THE OF END THIS BOOK. THIS APPLIES TO EVERY OTHER UNIT IN THIS BOOK

4.0   WORD STUDY

Cultural Relatives: This refers to cultural peculiarities that are only unique or relative to that ethnic group or area. It is a common practice among a particular group of people.

Toilet Etiquette: This refers to toilet training given to someone. The child is taught the do's and don'ts of the toilet – practices. The child grows up and responds to body sign or language when he or she wants to use the toilet.

5.0   MAIN CONTENT

5.1   Child Rearing Practices/Patterns and Cultural Beliefs

Child rearing practices, patterns and beliefs are usually based on a culturally –bound understanding of what children need and what they are expected to become later in life. These practices and patterns are grounded in the cultural patterns and beliefs of the child`s immediate environment, that is, the non-shared environment and to some extent the wider local environment of the child (the shared environment). This is premised on the principles of cultural relativism, that is, there is no right or wrong way to bring up a child. Child rearing practices should therefore be judged in relation to assisting children to adjust to their culture.

Evans & Myers (1994) observe that such practices from which the child benefits in the course of rearing in most societies usually include activities which:

- Guarantee the child's physical well-being, that is, keeping the child safe and free from harm, providing shelter and clothing, preventing and attending to illness
- Promote the child's psycho-social well-being- providing emotional security, socialisation, nurturing and giving love and affection
- Support the child's physical development- feeding, bathing, providing safe places to play and explore
- Promote the child`s mental development- interaction, stimulation and play
- Facilitate the child's interaction with others outside the home- within the community, at school, etc.

Specifically, however, what is done to help a child survive, grow and develop merges with how it is done to define and distinguish practices that are greatly influenced by cultural differences. The "how" in this case is the pattern of child rearing or simply put, the child rearing norms. The patterns define child rearing in a way that assures the survival, maintenance and development of the group or culture as well as of the child.

The fact that the family is the primary unit given the responsibility for raising the child makes it a major factor in the cultural development of any social group. Hence, the considerable variation which characterises practices from family to family influences how each family rears its own child. The psychological make-up of the parents, including their own personality, their experiences while growing as children and the conditions under which they are living all contribute to their styles of parenting and child rearing.

5.2   Cultural Differences in Child Rearing Practices and Patterns among Some Ethnic and Social Groups in Nigeria

There exist many cultural values and arts in Nigeria as there are many different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. This diversity has been playing key role in the different child rearing practices and patterns among families found in different cultural settings or milieu in the country.

Each ethnic or sometimes dialect group is known to exhibit different values of behaviour on the same subject matter which may not be far away from norms. Such differences equally amount to variation in the way each group engages itself in child rearing practices. Some of these practices are categorized and discussed in the next few paragraphs of this Unit.

5.2.1 Language Development and Acquisition

Language is one tool of child rearing that children learn unconsciously and without any formal training. The fact a child must communicate with the parents and vice versa, implies that a link must be established. Hence, nobody directly teaches any growing child the language he or she will use for interaction. Rather, by mimicking and imitating their parents, they learn to acquire the language of their non-shared environment which is mother tongue, and that of the shared environment (language of the child's immediate outside environment).

In addition to this, some cultures have peculiar language training programmes for the growing child. For instance, in the south western Nigeria, the use of the non-verbal communication tools in terms of signs, different eye contacts and symbols is part of language training for the growing child. He/she is trained to respond or react to a variety of eye contacts at the exhibition of different positive or negative behaviour(s) to notice parental approval or rejection.

Again, the fact that language is varied as exhibited in multiplicity of dialects among ethnic groups in Nigeria makes for variation in child rearing practices when it comes to language training. For example, a Yoruba boy from a traditional family of herbalists is consciously trained to acquire language proficiency and skills in the power of incantations as a tool for warding off evil. In the northern Nigeria, such training is none-existing, but parents or *mallams*can teach the growing child some verses of the Glorious Quran that can be spoken or recited to ward off similar evils.

5.2.2 Discipline, Punishment and Character Training

Developing of the proper character is the supreme part of rearing a child. Character training, discipline and punishment as part of child rearing in Nigeria is a component that has been influenced over time by factors such as the structure of an average Nigerian family (usually large with extended family members), the presence of large number of adults and the religious beliefs of parents.

The father figure is very vital in the process of disciplining a child in most traditional families in Nigeria. Nevertheless, in most cultures Nigeria most parents are known to love their children and attempt to raise them according to the customs and traditions of their society. However, parents hold the belief that if one is too lenient in training a child, he or she will likely bring misfortune to him/herself and the entire family.

Hence, different cultures adopted a variety of means to ensure that their children are not left undisciplined when they offend. In some parts of the northern and south western Nigeria, the philosophy of "spare the rod and spoil the child" has been a dominant one in child rearing when it comes to discipline and moral training.

This does not however mean that parents in the eastern Nigeria are not conscious of moral and character training in child rearing. Here, there is a culture which allows everybody to play a role. This is because of the Ibo belief that a growing child is for the community and not only for the parents.

5.2.3 Toilet Etiquette

A child is trained by every family in Nigeria to acquire some toilet etiquette as he/she is growing but the way this is done vary from culture to culture. For instance, a child in the South Western Nigeria is trained to respond to the mother`s call to urinate right from the infant stage. This the mother does by using a particular command e.g. "*Sssssssssssssss*", to get the infant to urinate especially after feeding. It is a practice that is also shared by mothers from northern part of Nigeria.

Mothers in both the Eastern and Northern Nigeria share similar practice, but the child in the eastern Nigeria who gets to the stage of walking is trained to visit a small hole usually dug just outside the house by the parents for toilet activities. The growing child before age one in the northern Nigeria is trained to use his/her body language to indicate readiness for a toilet activity and the mother as part of training responds to such communication.

5.2.4 Health Habits

Sanitation is one vital component of the health habits which most parents and the society focus on as part of child rearing practices. Parents hold strong belief that "cleanliness is next to Godliness". Hence, they train their children to keep their home clean. Some gender assigned roles are however peculiar in some parts of the country. For example, it is girls that are practically trained by mothers to learn how to sweep the rooms and clean the kitchen in the eastern Nigeria, with the boys trained by their older siblings to sweep and clean the family compound.

Traditionally in the Northern Nigeria, it is not the responsibility of the mother to give such training to the male child but she expects other adults in the family preferably the males to perform such task. This is quite unlike the south western Nigeria where the responsibility of providing such training is on every other of the family, extended inclusive.

Caring for the sick child is however the business of the parents and other adults in most Nigeria families. The older siblings in most cultural settings are trained to care for their sick junior ones and this implies that not much of cultural difference exist among Nigerian families on this aspect.

5.2.5 Food Habits

Food habits in terms of what is eaten, how it is prepared and who prepares it among Nigerian families vary from culture to culture. Consequently, the nature of opportunity made available to a child in this area differs from culture to culture. It is however important to reiterate the fact that there is no Nigerian culture which does not support breastfeeding as a major child rearing practice. Every infant born to a mother in Nigeria is breastfed and the skill of sucking acquired by the child is developed in the baby by the mother, whether she is from the north, east or south western Nigeria.

Children are taught to eat the staple foods that are commonly found in the family. For instance in the north it is guinea corn, rice, beans and yam. In the east it is yam and cassava, while in the west it is cassava, yam beans and rice. The child is trained to eat each of these in the most common form of preparation peculiar to his or her socio-cultural group. For example, the Yoruba child is trained to eat *amala*made out yam flour, and while the Ibo child will be trained to eat porridge, the Hausa child will eat boiled yam derived from the same yam.

Genders roles also differ from culture to culture when it comes to who is trained to prepared foods in Nigerian homes. Traditionally, the female child is trained to cook in most eastern Nigeria families with the male child`s entry into the kitchen seen as quite an uncultured act. While the northern Nigeria families are not so fussy about this, their counterparts in the south western Nigeria see the training of both boys and girls in the art of cooking as very essential.

5.2.6 Recreation and Leisure

Like children in most parts of the world, boys and girls from Nigerian families love to play by themselves at times and with other children at other times. Play activities are of great value to Nigerian children. Hake (200??) remarks that physically, play affords opportunities for large muscle exercise; stimulates growth and increases the demand for oxygen; improves digestion and stimulates adequate excretion. Psychologically, play is also of the greatest importance. Through play, many lessons in socialisation are learnt in a natural way. The child learns how to co-operate with playmates, to lead or to be led, to make compromises, to defend his rights and to learn to withstand antagonism.

Just as children from the eastern Nigeria are trained by the elders to get involved in special games of storytelling and short plays through tales by moonlight, their peers in both the south west and northern Nigeria are equally not left out. These games bother on philosophy and culture as tools of socialisation. In addition, parents in the north encourage older siblings to train their children in simple physical combat aimed at building their physique and promoting endurance as well as perseverance as they grow

up. This is probably why Northern Nigerian boys seem to be given more opportunities for play than girls.

5.2.7 Sex Knowledge and Training

Puberty rites for both male and female adolescents have lost much of their former importance in most Nigeria families of today. In fact, it is difficult to find villages where puberty rites are still celebrated. If one finds this still being celebrated it will be probably in very remote areas and villages.

Likewise sex training is almost non-existent in many traditional even to some extent modern Nigerian families. It is considered to be sinful or 'corrupting' to speak about such matters candidly between parents and children. Adolescent boys especially are given little or no information about the sexual changes taking place in their bodies.

This does not mean that children are not provided with specific opportunities to acquire some sex knowledge and training in different ethnic groups and within different families in the nation. The males learn about sexual matters, primarily from older brothers rather than by their mothers or fathers. In the case of the females, their mothers are the main informants in sexual matters, with their older sister, aunts, and sometimes "house-mothers" in boarding schools and grandmothers also helping out in this matter. Each one of these groups of people however does the training with a lot of caution.

5.3   Behaviour and Social Relations

Naturally, every ethnic group in the country has its ideal cultural patterns which refer its e of expects children from such group to learn how to conform to these standard norms in the course of relating with others (old and young).

For instance in the area of greetings, a growing Yoruba boy of the south western Nigeria is trained by his parents to prostrate for elders while the girls kneel down for the same group of people. This is not so with their Hausa or Fulani peers in the northern Nigeria. Here, both boys and girls do not need to prostrate or kneel down for their own elders while greeting. Rather, they are trained to show some reverence to elders while greeting, by just bending down a bit. If the elder is a highly placed individual rather than bending, the boys are trained to squat with clenched fist as a sign of respect.

In Eastern Nigeria, prostrating is not part of training in greetings for boys neither is kneeling down for girls. Children are trained to use the time of the day or events to greet both elders and their peers. Physical posturing therefore is not significant while greeting, although, children are still trained to hold their own wrist with the left hand or use the two hands when shaking hands with the elderly ones.

In the area of peer relationship and interaction, there is little or no restriction for a growing child in most eastern and northern Nigeria traditional societies. Children are trained to mix freely with their peers, particularly those of the same sex, although some monitoring is still ensured by adults and older members of their society. The situation is not quite the same in the traditional south western Nigerian societies. The growing child who lives within an extended family system is trained to relate first with peers within such set up before approval is given for going beyond such bounds. However, there seems to less restriction on the male child than the female one when it comes to relating with the peer group particularly the opposite sex. This is quite similar in most parts of the country.

Religious teachings of Nigerian families are also used as a means of shaping the social behaviour of children. Parents use the law aspects of their religious belief to teach their children morality through regular attendance of church or mosque and Sunday School or Quranic School, respect for elders, saying prayers regularly, memorising religious poems and verses from the Bible or Quran, and by personal example. They also regularly refer to examples of people in the Bible or Quran who were wicked and were punished or were good and subsequently rewarded by God for their good deeds.

5.3.1 Education

Education, particularly at the non-formal level is another component of child rearing in the traditional Nigerian society. Parents and other adults in the family provide children with opportunities to acquire what Adamu (2009) calls indigenous knowledge, that is, knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. This serves as the child`s basis for local level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, natural resource management, vocational skills acquisition and a host of other activities in rural communities.

The mode of delivery and content of this kind of education is however influenced by the child1s cultural background. Hence, we experience variations in the kind of skills developed in the child, depending on his/her environment and location. For example, while in the traditional Hausa culture, a growing boy is given Quranic education; his peer in Yoruba culture is given the opportunity to access western education. Nevertheless, both of them are still exposed to some trades, vocations and skills practiced by any of their parents, depending on the sex of the child. This is equally so with the male child in eastern Nigeria, but the female child is considered for more access into western education until recent time when the boy-child education programme was launched.

Child care generally in most Nigerian cultures is characterised by positive and nurturing parent-child interaction. Nigerian mothers and fathers buy and make toys and gifts for their children, particularly on special occasions such as religious celebrations. They also befriend and comfort their children when they are threatened with physical harm by

either other adults or children in the neighbourhood. Parents also show their love and affection for their children by giving them special care in washing, dressing and feeding them properly. And some parents demonstrate their devotion to their children by being a constant companion to them

Grandparents, uncle, aunts, other wives, neighbours and hired housemaids are also part of the people rearing and caring for children in most Nigerian homes. They all help the growing child to understand what is expected of him/her socially. For example, in many Northern Nigerian families, older brothers and sisters as well as other relatives, are sometimes expected to train younger children in toilet etiquette, table manners, cleanliness habits, etc. Also, they are often given authority by the parents to teach the younger siblings social controls. If the younger child misbehaves, the older sibling may use some kind of punishment, and occasionally this may involve corporal punitive measures.

6.0   ACTIVITY

1.   Identify some of the components of child rearing practices and patterns that can be used to describe the upbringing of children in Nigeria.
2.   Describe how parents teach their children toilet etiquette in some parts of Nigeria
3.   What are the cultural differences that characterize food habits and behaviours in Nigeria?

7.0   ASSIGNMENT

1.   Outline and discuss the various child rearing practices in Nigeria, using concrete examples in the following areas:
      i)   Discipline, punishment and character training
      ii)   Health Habits
      iii)   Recreation and leisure
      iv)   Sex knowledge and Training

8.0   SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt that a relationship exists between child rearing practices and the cultural background of the child. The diversity of culture among different families accounts for the differences in the patterns and practices of child rearing among the various ethnic and social groups in Nigeria. Differences exist in how children are raised in terms of food habits, discipline, behaviour and social relations, toilet etiquette, recreation and leisure, language development and acquisition as well as health habits.

Nevertheless, child rearing practices and patterns among Nigerian families still appear to be a mixture of good-natured freedom together with the use of strict controls, as children are strongly believed to be a major source of joy and happiness in most Nigerian societies. Collective groups have traditionally raised children and this could go without saying that children were considered children of the entire community. A child is therefore seen to bring pride or its reverse to the collective group as a whole and not to his or birth parents alone.

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UNIT 3   CHILD FOSTERAGE AS A FORM OF CHILD REARING PRACTICE

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the preceding unit, you learnt about the ways by which children are reared and the influence of cultural differences on the different child rearing practices and patterns across the geo-political zones of Nigeria. Most of these practices and patterns of child rearing are anchored by parents, older siblings and other adults in the family.

It is however pertinent for us to note at this juncture that some children in the African society, Nigeria inclusive, still end up being brought up by adults who are not their biological mothers. Let us imagine a woman who gave birth to ten children without necessarily raising all of them herself. The implication here is that some of the children must have been raised by other people who might not actually be part of their immediate family. This is child fostering.

In this unit, it is therefore expected that you will learn about the concept and types of child fostering/fosterage as a child rearing practice, the reasons for this practice, and its pros and cons.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept and types of child fostering/fosterage; and

- identifyand explain some of the merits and demerits of child fostering/fosterage in our society.

3.0   HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- Read through this unit care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

NOTE: ALL ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENT ARE AT THE OF END THIS BOOK. THIS APPLIES TO EVERY OTHER UNIT IN THIS BOOK.

4.0   WORD STUDY

Child Fostering/Fosterage: It is simply defined as the relocation or transfer of children from biological or natal homes where they are raised and cared for by foster parent.

Ward-ship: This is an act of sending children as wards to homes of non-relatives, friends and people of certain social standing. In northern Nigeria, children are often sent to at tender age to live with religious or political leaders or landlords to receive care, training, education and instruction in the Qur'an.

5.0   MAIN CONTENT

5.1   Meaning of Child Fostering/Fosterage

Usiugo-Abanihe (1985) says that the anthropological literature of West Africa contains many instances of child relocation. That is the transfer, giving out, or exchange of children among families. This child rearing practice she refers to as child fostering or fosterage. It is simply defined as "the relocation or transfer of children from biological or natal homes where they are raised and cared for by foster parents" (Usuigo-Abanihe, 1985).

The delegation of parental roles by fostering out children entails the sharing of child rearing responsibilities, and the removal of the burdens and constraints of prolific child bearing. It is a practice that is well institutionalised in some parts of West Africa, for example, Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone.

Child fostering is a valued traditional child rearing practice among many ethnic groups in Nigeria. The practice can be described as one phenomenon that has become more prevalent and assume new dimensions as societies have become more complex and diversified.

This practice is rooted in kinship structures and traditions where children are sent out not only in the event of family crisis or when one or both natural parents cannot for some reason, manage to bring them up. Rather, child fostering is practised by both stable and unstable families, married and single mothers, healthy and handicapped parents, rural and urban homes, wealthy and poor parents. The reasons for this will be better understood when we start talking about what makes people to practise child fostering.

It is a cultural practice that involves biological parents giving out of the child at a young age (sometimes as early as four or five years) to a surrogate family for upbringing. In many societies in West Africa, child fosterage is simply an accepted means of raising children. Even West African immigrants in America and Europe were reported to have been practicing the idea of sending their children to foster homes (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985).

5.2   Types and Reasons for Child Fostering/Fosterage

The cultural undertone of child fostering as a form of child rearing makes for the variations in the way and why it is practised in different societies. Basically, it comes as kinship fostering, crisis fostering, alliance and apprentice fostering and domestic fostering.

i.   Kinship Fostering

This is the predominant type of child fostering among many ethnic groups in West Africa. It is very common in Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. It involves sending children to live with relatives of either parent or exchange of children among kinsmen who share kinship obligations and assistance.

In Nigeria, this type of child fostering is a common practice among most ethnic groups. It is based on the belief that children are generally thought of as belonging not only to their biological parents but also to the lineage or kinship group. Hence, we find a male child being sent to his mother's or father`s brother`s home and a female child being sent to her mother`s or brother`s sister`s home to go and live and be raised.

Grandparents are perhaps the most important recipients of foster children. They are always ready to receive their grandchildren for a variety of reasons that will be discussed later in this unit. Among the Yoruba and the Ibo of Nigeria, it is a thing of pride for a grandmother to have her grandchildren living with her. Specifically in Ibo land, it is regarded as a blessing when a woman starts building around her a small "army" of grandchildren and great grandchildren.

ii.   Crisis Fostering

This is a form of fostering that results from some crisis in child`s home. The child is relocated in this case due reasons or situations such as dissolution of the family of orientation by divorce, separation or death of a spouse. Sometimes children born out of wedlock fall within this category, as their mothers tend to hide such children from their spouses. They are therefore given to their own relations to take care of such children on their behalf.

Isiugo-Abanihe (1984) also categorised the art of sending out of a child because of the apprehension over his/her survival as another example of crisis fostering. That is, the fear of witchcraft by a neighbouring old woman, for example or of reprisals by the spirits of unappeased dead kinsmen or ancestors could result in a child out, while the supposed cause of the crisis is ameliorated.

iii.   Wardship and Alliance Fostering

Quoting Goody, 1978; & Sinclair, 1972, Isiugo-Abanihe (1984) observed that in many West African societies, there is a specific emphasis on the use of fostering to establish and strengthen social, economic or political alliances. This is through the sending of children out as wards to the homes of non-relatives, friends, and people of certain social standing. For example, in the northern part of Nigeria, male children are often sent at young ages to live with influential religious or political leaders or landlords to receive care, training, education and instruction in the glorious Quran.

The fact that alliance fostering or wardship often combines the responsibilities of training and sponsoring of young children, it goes hand in hand with apprentice fostering. Here, children could be sent out at very early age to homes where they are disciplined or where they learn a trade.

iv.   Domestic Fostering

The essence of this type of fostering is to promote redistribution of children`s domestic importance especially between households with many children and those with few. Here, female children particularly are sent to experienced women where they are expected to learn the domestic roles they would be performing later in their future homes. For example, little girls are often sent to the homes of a new mother, especially a young mother, to help 'carry' the baby and to act as little baby minder, in return for their training and maintenance.

Children are also sent out for here, to elderly women or women without their own children for companionship. Likewise, childless couples are often given children by their relatives to rear so that they do not become discouraged.

v.   Educational Fostering

This is usually done for educational purpose. Children in this form of fostering are often boarded out with relatives who are expected to provide them with formal education. The children are sometimes sent to non-relatives where there are few relatives living near the schools to be attended by these children or where relatives are no longer willing to honour the kinship claims of distant relatives.

5.3   Merits and Demerits of Child Fostering/Fosterage

Child fostering as a form of child rearing practice has been a valued traditional practice among many ethnic groups in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. This however does not mean that the practice has not been totally beneficial to all those involved in it. Hence, we need to briefly discuss the merits and demerits of the practice.

Merits

In situations where children are sent to their grandmothers for fostering, it gives the biological mother more time to work or go to market or the farm in the traditional society. Also, it engenders an inbuilt support system because the occasional visits and gifts of money, foodstuff, and clothing by parents to the grandparents form an important part of their resource accumulation. This does not however imply that wealth does not usually flow from parents to grandparents in the absence of fosters, but the presence of fosters guarantees the regularity of visits and the size and assortment of goods brought in (Asiugo-Abanihe, 1985).

Consequently, the extended family, on which child fostering is buttressed, acts to even out the hardships of large family size. The delegation of parental roles by fostering out children promotes the sharing of child rearing responsibilities and helps to reduce the burdens and constraints of prolific child bearing.

Child fostering also helps in easing some of the usual problems associated with migration of parents. Parents who migrate (internally or internationally) can leave children behind with relatives, either temporarily or permanently, thereby reducing such parents worries about how to manage the case of leaving behind their children. This is equally beneficial to women who are trying to return to school or enter the labour force.

Where kinship fostering is practised, it strengthens kinship ties and also promotes reallocation of resources thereby contributing to higher chances of maximum survival for the unit. The recognition of the responsibility of a child`s upbringing as every body's business is also enhanced through child fostering.

Practising crisis child fostering can help improve the survival chances of children by removing them from the source of a crisis, real or imagined. For example, if a child is sent to go and live with his/her grandparents due to witchcraft scare, it is possible to bring such child under a more cautious and caring environment.

Surrogate parents are capable of inculcating stricter discipline in foster children than their parents, especially if such surrogate parents are good disciplinarians and are socially upright. Hence, child fostering in this case is a motivation for social mobility. This is because children who are raised under the supervision of surrogate parents, especially those socialised in superior or prestigious homes are more likely to be more sophisticated than those raised by their own parents who are of lesser socio-economic standing. The same principle applies when we have children who are sent to go and live with professionals such as teachers and others. They could become better groomed and prepared for future educational enterprise.

Demerits

It is not impossible that the economic costs of children to biological parents may be lowered by the practice of child fostering but the costs would surely become higher to the foster parents, who would normally be expected to do his/her best in ensuring that the child is well brought up.

Also, this implies that fertility regulation among the educated elites does not guarantee them small family size. We can therefore witness situations in which these elites end up acquiring large families from poorer relatives or even non-relatives.

In some situations child fostering can subject the fostered child to untold hardships especially if the foster parent is the non-caring and wicked type. Such foster parents may end up using such children as housemaids charged with doing all the odd jobs at home.

It is expected that a fostered child should at one time be reunited back with the biological parents, but what we witness in some cases is that the long time emotional detachment from these parents usually affects such reunification. The bond that develops between the foster parents and the foster child sometimes gets so strong that at reunification point the foster parents become emotionally destabilised. This could, in turn, have serious implications on the relationship between the foster parents and the biological parents.

6.0   ACTIVITY

1.   What do you understand by the term fostering/fosterage?
2.   Describe the ways fostering is practiced in your locality.

3.   Highlight some of merits and demerits of child fostering as a child rearing practice.

7.0   ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the prospects and problems of child fostering.
2. How can fostering of children be improved?
3. Explain the concept of child fostering as a child rearing practice and establish to fact that if not well practiced it could be detrimental to its beneficiaries.

8.0   SUMMARY

Child fosterage, as a child rearing practice, is quite prevalent in West Africa, especially Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Liberia. It can be referred to as the relocation or transfer of children from biological or natal homes to other homes where they are raised and cared for by surrogate parents or foster parents. People get involved in child fosterage for a variety of reasons and these inform the different types of child fostering that we have in our communities. The way this form of child rearing is practised is however characterised by some pros and cons which could affect both the fostered child and the biological/foster parents.

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UNIT 4   THE BENEFITS OF APPRECIATING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN CHILD REARING PRACTICES

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The practice of raising or bringing up children in most African societies, Nigeria inclusive, is highly beneficial to the child as an individual, the parents and the community at large. Breastfeeding, carrying the child on the back, sleeping with the child, educating and providing socialisation avenues for him/her create an intimate relationship between the child and his/her parents. Again, many of the traditional child rearing practices and patterns in our society are known to promote child mental health.

This unit, therefore, presents some of the benefits that can be derived from proper and appropriate child rearing by all the parties that are usually involved in the process; the child, his/her parents, older siblings, older adults and the entire community to which he/she belongs.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify some of the benefits that are derived from proper and appropriate child rearing practices and patterns; and
- discussthe benefits of understanding cultural differences in child rearing practices and patterns.

3.0   HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

* Read through this unit care.

* Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

NOTE: ALL ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENT ARE AT THE OF END THIS BOOK. THIS APPLIES TO EVERY OTHER UNIT IN THIS BOOK.

4.0   MAIN CONTENT

4.1   Benefits of Proper and Appropriate Child Rearing Practices and Patterns

The fact that a child`s social responsibility starts in the home makes it imperative for him/her to enjoy proper and appropriate child rearing practices through the parents and other older adults in his/her home. Through some of these practices and the patterns of carrying them out, parents show love and protect their children. For instance, firmness as part of child rearing keeps children on the right track and this ends up making them lovable.

Bringing up a child to respect his/her parents' rules and regulations helps to promote in him/her, a good sense of responsibility. Through this the child is encouraged to inculcate a strong sense of kinship ties and respect for others within their larger community. This practice is capable of reducing dissension and creating a homogenous community where all could expect to be treated fairly and with compassion. They are also likely to grow up with a feeling that they are in this world not only for their own satisfaction, but primarily to serve others.

Proper and appropriate child rearing practices and patterns could be part of parents` demonstration of their belief in one of the provisions in Declaration of the Rights of the Child which emphasises that the child, by reason of his physical and mental maturity, needs special safeguards and care, before as well as after birth. Hence, where a child is trained to acquire some food and health habits as well as social relations skills as part of child rearing, he/she has higher chances of growing up to be a well-adjusted individual. As children are cared for by their parents both parties develop understandings of the other.

With responsive and demanding parenting, there is the possibility for healthier child development to evolve. The manner in which parents respond to a child`s behaviour as part of child rearing will have an effect on the child`s self-esteem and future interactions with others.

The development of self-control as part of child rearing promotes the child`s will to conquer attention. It leads him/her set to achievable goals in life and always aspires to seek for things that can be more appealing, and be ready to work hard, which in essence is the fruit of social control.

Child rearing practices help humanise the growing child as a biological organism and transform him/her into "a self" thereby creating in him/her a sense of identity, endowing him/her with ideas, values and aspirations necessary for the development of human society at large.

There is no growing child who does not need what Rubottom (2001) calls "frequent does of reassurance and encouragement. This is because while growing up, they are prone to worries and sometimes combine information received from adults with their own imaginations to come to some frightful and unfounded conclusions. Through appropriate child rearing practices which emphasis affection, love and care a good sense of security and confidence is developed in children.

4.2   Benefits of Understanding Cultural Differences in Child Rearing Practices and Patterns

Children grow up in a wide variety of different physical, social and cultural circumstances. The fact that within cultures, there are diversity implies that there is no right or most correct way to bring up children. By detecting and understanding the cultural differences and their effects on child rearing practices, it is possible to identify those practices which should be supported and those which ought to be discouraged.

Furthermore, it will create opportunity for people to respect cultural differences and the child's right to his/her cultural identity as stipulated by the United Nation`s Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For continuity sake, it is important to understand cultural differences in child rearing practices so that in times of rapid change, some old practices can still be applied in new settings without necessarily taking a misguided step. This is because traditional practices and beliefs still have a particularly important role to play when children`s lives have radically changed as a result of some circumstances beyond their control.

The benefits of understanding cultural differences in child rearing practices and patterns can be better appreciated using some of the central dimensions of child rearing identified by Barry *et.al*. (1959). And also, through the University of Leicester's School of Education and Social Science Resources (2009).

- **Obedience training-** This is the degree to which children are trained to respect and obey adults. This varies from culture to culture and an understanding of the

different but culture-specific ways of training a child to become obedient will promote better social relationships among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. For instance, while a Yoruba boy is trained not to call his senior siblings by names, it is not the case with the Hausa boy or his Ibo peers. Nevertheless, all of them still emphasise respect for elders. An understanding of this difference is not likely going to make a Yoruba elder to frown at a Hausa boy found calling his seniors by name.

- **Responsibility training-** This is related to the degree to which children are trained to take responsibility for subsistence or household tasks and this cannot be the same across cultures. It will therefore be another source of difference if understood and respected will facilitate better social relationships. For example, in the south eastern Nigeria, the place of a growing boy is traditionally not the kitchen, whereas both boys and girls are trained in the south west to take the responsibility of cooking and preparing food for members of the family.

- **Nurturance training-** This concerns the degree to which children are trained to care for and help younger siblings and other dependent people. Here, the level of belief in the extended family features influence greatly the kind of training received by a child. In some societies the older siblings are trained to act out the roles of their parents while their junior ones are growing up. The female ones are trained to back their younger ones, feed them and even wash their under wares. In some other societies it is not so. An understanding of the cultural differences in nurturing is therefore capable of reducing stereotypic beliefs about a particular ethnic group.

- **Self-reliance training-** This relates to the degree to which children are trained to take care of themselves and to independent of assistance from others in supplying their needs or wants. This equally varies from culture to culture. Recognition of these differences makes for a better understanding of group dynamics and the competency levels of different groups of children when it comes to execution of some tasks. For example, the degree of self-reliance training (usually tough & high) of a Fulani boy or Ibo boy cannot be compared with that of a Yoruba boy, but all of them still have to be understood for a well-adjusted socio-economic development of such children to take place.

The implication of the foregoing discussion is that a better understanding of these cultural differences in child rearing practices is capable of reducing ethnocentric feelings among adults who would find themselves relating with these children at one point or another of their growth and development.

Again, it is possible to reduce the chances of viewing the culturally diverse child rearing practices as wrong and abusive when they are not in conformity with those that are quite

common within a locality. By this, educators and others within that locality are not likely to be involved in misjudging the appropriateness of such differing child rearing practices or parenting styles.

5.0   ACTIVITY

1.   State and discuss four benefits of proper and appropriate child rearing practices and parenting.
2.   Discuss the various benefits that can be derived from a detailed understanding of the cultural differences that are found in different geo-political areas of Nigeria.

6.0   ASSIGNMENT

1.   Discuss the different cultural practice of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria in terms of child rearing practices.
2.   Stage the benefits of understanding cultural differences in child rearing practices and patterns.
3.   Identify and discuss the dangers and problems of ethnocentrism in cultural tolerance in terms of child rearing practices.

7.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that proper and appropriate child rearing practices are quite culture –specific and could be highly beneficial. The degree to which physical and emotional nurturance, shelter, safety, security and health care are provided as part of child rearing practices vary in nature and volume from one culture to another. Despite these variations, we have learnt that an understanding of the differences and the reasons for such will go a long way in improving our cultural knowledge base as well as social relations and tangible involvement in the business of child rearing in our society.

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