

**PROMOTING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL THROUGH SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND COUNSELING PROGRAMME**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*This paper examined peaceful coexistence in Nigeria public primary school setting which is gradually declining virtually on a daily basis due to many variables such as non-implementation of guidance and counselling programmes which is potent in curbing maladjusted behaviour due to dwindling resources, irregular inter-house sport competition, gradual declining of end of the year activities and the likes. It is not an exaggeration to say this is the root cause of antisocial behaviour among primary school pupils, and by extension, it changes to the exhibition of various deviant behaviour likes bullying, stealing, fighting, examination malpractices of various forms. Aside implementation of guidance counselling programme at primary school level, social activities at that sector should also take a new shape as it used to be in the past and equally foster unity. All these, if seriously considered in Nigeria primary school system, would obviously promote peaceful coexistence and reduce deviant behaviour among school pupils to barest minimum and eventually leads to usher in new Nigeria of our dream.*

**Keywords:** *Peaceful coexistence, Public primary school, Social activities and Counselling programme*

**Introduction**

Peaceful co-existence in Nigeria primary school is declining on daily basis. All forms of unwanted behaviour are on the increase astronomically virtually every day. Among deviant behaviour exhibiting by school pupils include bullying, fighting, stealing, disobedience to teachers and other constituted authority, examination malpractice of various forms, raping and so on.

Human values are the virtues that guide us to take into account the human element for peace, harmony and development when one interacts with other human beings in any democracy. They are the main positive dispositions that create bonds of humanity between people and thus have values for building peace among all of us as human beings. It is both what we expect others to do to us and what one aim to give to other human beings (“Do unto other what you wish for yourself”) Hammed (2019), it is a truism that school pupils should imbibe the culture of peaceful coexistence and the achievement of this would invariably promote the quality of education and at the end, the realization of its objective.

In line with Adedimeji (2019), of all virtues on the world, none is as endearing and rewarding as peace simply because without peace everything is in pieces. Peace is the state of harmony among different groups which manifests in the absence of violence and freedom from fear or threat. Peace is a counterfoil to conflict, violence and war and sustaining peace is being in amity, concord, dialogue and conciliation with others within a social or political system, from the local to the global levels.

It is a known fact that primary school is the first formal education a child exposes to and also the bed rock of other educational institutions and that level has to take care of the developmental task of child since pupils are in their formative year due to this, professional guidance counsellors need to be appointed because they’ are the best to handle the child using psychological approach and at the end curbing all forms of deviant behaviour threatening the peaceful co-existence in Nigeria primary schools and by extension, lead to a better society where peace shall reign (Adedimeji, 2019). Other things that can promote peaceful coexistence in Nigerian public primary school that is haphazardly done is social activities like inter-house sport competition, football match and end of the year party. In this context, social activities refer to co-curricular activities within the school setting which enhanced social interaction of pupils to pupil and both teaching staff and non-teaching staff at the public primary school setting. The practice of these social activities is declining on daily basis and this might not be connected to dwindled resources available at that level.

Some of the social activities which can promote peaceful co-existence are as follows: school inter-house competition, footballing, end of the year activities where pupils would exhibit various gifts on drama, poem recitations, cultural display, and so on. During drama, each pupil would be given a specified function to act and in the process, they relate with one another at times, they have some misunderstanding and within few minutes, they adjust with each other and eventually, this promotes peaceful coexistence among one another.

Moreso, poem recitation, in the process of reciting poem, it also facilitates peaceful co-existence, they tend to imitate each other and by and large, facilitates peace and harmony in the school setting (Adedimeji, 2019). Furthermore, during footballing competition, pupils work in team and remain an indivisible entity because they play together, passing ball to each other to achieve a common goal hence, in the process, they imbibe the spirit of unity and this unity would eventually promote peaceful coexistence. All these activities are going down at public primary school system and it may be as a result of economy which hindered pupils to contribute as it used to be in the past.

### **Maslow Hierarchy Theory of Needs**

This study is anchored on Maslow Theory of Need because of its relevance. Theory of motivation as proposed by Abraham Maslow. According to him, some needs are extremely pressing because they are basic to survival and they energize a person and direct his behaviour until they are met. Once these are satisfied, less pressing needs begin to motivate behaviour, and so on up the hierarchy. The needs are arranged in ascending order thus: physiological need (food, Shelter and Clothing), Safety need (this has to do with security).

Human being tends to live in a well secured setting and never want anything that can endanger his/her life. Pupils in public primary school deserve to learn in a secure and conducive environment. Environment that free from any stimulus that can affect peaceful co-existence. This safety need is highly germane to this theoretical paper. Other needs on the hierarchy include belongingness, esteem and finally self-actualization.

### **Objectives of Primary Education**

Among the objectives of primary education as contained in the National policy on education (2004). Include among others: inculcating moral values in the life of pupils, numeracy and literacy, preparation for secondary education and so on. Develop the child to adapt to his/her changing environment etc.

Guidance and counselling has been an age long affair in Nigeria dating from the time of our ancestors till the present time (Egbochuku & Alike, 2010). However, it was only in 1959 that it became professionalized. Guidance and counselling is an essential tool for effective interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship for self-understanding as well as equitable adjustment to one's environment.

Guidance and counselling is a process of assisting an individual to have clear understanding of himself/herself so as to make rational decision in order to live a peaceful life. The Nigerian Policy on Education (2004) recognizes guidance and counselling as a virile educational service that is capable of promoting the quality of education. This led to its introduction to the Nigerian educational system. Counselling programmes are capable of assisting students to understand the variety depth and breadth of personal and inter-personal experiences, the opportunities available, and actions necessary for self and societal goal attainment (Adika, 2011).

### **Promoting peaceful coexistence in schools through counselling programme**

The National Policy on Education (2004) in recognition of the importance of guidance and counselling in Nigerian schools stressed that in view of the apparent ignorance of many people about career prospects and in view of the personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in post primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category are scarce, government will continue to make provision for trained interested teachers in Guidance and Counselling. Guidance and Counselling will also feature in teacher education programme.

Upon the above, Guidance and Counselling programme is yet to introduce to primary schools and even it is yet to take normal shape at secondary school axis. If fully introduced into primary schools setting, it would surely promote peaceful coexistence through following areas. This position paper lay more emphasis on moral aspect which is grossly deficient among school pupils and equally leads to adverse effect on their academic performance and peaceful coexistence within and outside the school setting.

Bullying as one of deviant behaviour among school pupils. It is a situation where one beats or suppresses their mate perhaps due to their body physique and ego. Bullying occurs in a social context determined by the individual characteristics of the participants, as well as by different contextual features of the environment (Cook, William, Guera, Kim & Sadik, 2010). The general tone of the school coupled with absence of guidance counsellor in school could promote bullying and leads to the declining of peaceful coexistence and invariably affect the school and the general public. This act has been causing a lot of damage to the victim schools and society at large. If care is not taken, victim interest in schooling may be declining and eventually get out of the school. Counselling psychologists have come out with so many psychological interventions which have proved efficacious in reducing bullying intent among school going children against this backdrop, it becomes necessary for government at all level to ensure the provision of guidance counsellors at all primary schools in Nigeria and this would bring about peace in school setting.

Also, fighting as one of deviant behaviour that is rampant among school pupils. It equally threatens peaceful coexistence in the sector in most cases, causative factors of fighting among school pupils are purely based on illogical thought. Thoughts that are not beneficial to the victim and others and professional guidance counsellors are able to put intervention in place to replace pupils' illogical thought to logical ones (Adedimeji, 2019). Such include testing for "superiority" in most cases, pupils do claim superiority among one another and decide to experiment it through physical exchange of blows between or among one another and at the end may lead to "parental fighting" because the one that receives greater blows which goes home possibly with scars on his/her body or with mad cry and inability of most parents to control their emotion

would eventually threatening the peaceful coexistence in the school and by extension, in the society.

Stealing amidst/among children should be discouraged, it is unlearnbehaviour. Many behaviours are not learnt such as breast sucking, sexual intercourse, and so on. They are unlearnbehaviour. When pupils felt inadequate or due to covetousness, they result in to taken their mates education materials without seeking their approval (Adedimeji, 2019). Guidance counsellor would use their professional expertise to handle the reported case but a trained teacher may result in to corporalpunishment which may even harden or stiff the heart of the victim, hence, implementation of guidance counseling programme at primary school axis becomes inevitable. Counsellors are well grounded on psychological intervention development as well as their applications, their appointment at public primary school level would reduce antisocial behaviour at school level and by extension, the larger society.

Disobedience to teacher or constituted authority in the school setting also common among schoolpupils. Parental influence is also important in this regard. Some pupils have abnormal behaviour due to the parenting style receives before their enrolment at school and this is in line with Freud who postulated that experience a child have at a certain age would determine the behaviour one exhibits in subsequent stage of life. A disobedient child in the school also needs psychological intervention like cognitive restructuring, value clarification and so on. All these would in variably enhancing school pupils' exhibit behaviour capable of promoting peaceful coexistence in the school setting.

Examination malpractice of various forms: it is surprising that school pupils, despite their age and education level are also engaging in various forms of examination malpractices. Examination malpractice is a product of negative self-concept and this promote examination malpractice. Many pupils believe they cannot read and pass without involve in examination malpractice such thought is illogical and threatening the peaceful conduct of any form of examination.

Pupils self-concept, academic self-efficacy, self-esteem need to be boosted by counselling psychologist and as at now guidance and counselling services are yet to be put in place in Nigerian primary school in spite of its inclusion in national policy in education. Except counsellors are appointed in schools, such service would not be given correctly.

### **Peaceful coexistence in schools through social activities**

Social activities are those ones that are put in place in our schools that may lead to achieving peaceful coexistence in Nigeria public primary school. In this contemporary society, these activities are the declining probably as a result of paucity of fund in that level. These activities include : inter-house sport competition, where variety of sporting activities which include among others: athletics, high and long jumping relay race and so on were been displayed.

Many factors threatening peaceful coexistence in Nigerian primary schools and these may be attributed to non-implementation or non-inclusion of guidance and counselling services aside those mentioned above. They are as follows: parental factors i.e. some parents are not cooperating with personnel in the sector. Most especially in the areas of payment of levy for one thing or the other as agreed upon during their parents teacher association meeting, parental perception on school teachers, some see their children teachers as enemy instead of seeing them as partners in progress for the overall development of their wards (Adedimeji, 2019). Some parents even report their school teacher at their various local government education authorities for minor issues. Total neglect of pupils by their parents due to economy. Some parents are careless about their children and this may lead them to be influenced negatively by their peers. Social media, are expected to lead to positive transformation in the society but it is disheartening pupils are using it wrongly and persistently leads to moral decadence and eventually threatening peaceful coexistence in the school setting.

Coexistence describes the capacity of individual to live with other with mutual respect and solidarity. This means a recognition of and respect for diversity, a capacity to understand others, to value and accept each other different points of views. School head master should be democratic enough in every aspect of the school. He should carry along all school personnel and

the students as whole. Series of do and don't be communicated and this would be binding on every member of the school community on every decision that affects them would definitely promote peaceful coexistence because it is a process. Peaceful coexistence in school therefore, is the particular relationship developed in the school environment between various members of the educational community: students, teachers, head masters, parents and guidance and even donors to the school if available.

Social interaction between members of the primary schools should be created. Group project could be assigned to the pupils and each group could select a leader among themselves. This would enhancing meaningful interaction and also inculcates child centre approach during teaching learning interplay and this could enable the pupils to be more active in the class. Organizing school inter house sport competition, it is disheartening that due to paucity of fund, sport competition is gradually phasing out in Nigeria public primary schools and this is not the best. Organizing school inter-house sport competition promotes in no small measure peaceful coexistence in the school setting (Adedimeji, 2019). Through this, they communicate with one another and even others people from other schools effectively. They laugh at each other and this promotes greatly social interaction.

Other things that promotes peaceful coexistence in the school setting is end of the year activities before and during the programme, they involve in many activities such as, rhyme citations, music and dance, in the process, peaceful coexistence and moral values are been promoted.

### **Conclusion**

This paper could be concluded thus: peaceful coexistence in the public primary school system is declining gradually, this might be as a result of non-implementation of professional counselling services at that level and invariably, this also necessitate to various forms of deviant behaviours which include among others: fighting, stealing, bullying and so on. It equally discussed counselling programmes and social activities and if fully resuscitated in the school setting, it would reduce all forms of anti-social behaviour exhibits by the school pupils to bearest minimum.

## Recommendations

Following recommendations were made in order to promote peaceful coexistence in Nigeria primary schools:

- Government should appoint school guidance counsellor to public primary school in Nigeria and should not be giving additional responsibilities aside counselling roles.
- Social activities should be resuscitated in Nigerian public primary schools and this undoubtedly promotes peaceful coexistence in the school setting and by extension larger society.

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