

ESTABLISHING A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE GIRL CHILD FOR CHILD GROOMING IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Living together has been a lifelong experience for the sustenance of humanity. Nature however has assigned responsibilities to individuals and gender for which the functions and perseverance of humans are being well nurtured. The girlchild in the society has been identified as a source of pacifying human aggression, grooming character and nurturing existence. Recently however series of challenges have obstructed the functions of the girlchild which to some extent have severed behaviour, withdrawal attitude and exposed individuals in her care to extreme danger. In spite of the abuse, the girlchild is still acknowledged as a soothing tool for child care in Rivers state. The paper therefore emphasizes the outstanding roles of the girlchild in the society, challenges and implications. The paper recommends a return to pure African grooming to reinstate the worth of the girlchild for the grooming of children generally in Rivers state.

Keywords: Responsibility, Accountability, Child Grooming

Introduction

Humanity as an order of function have assigned responsibilities to individuals, clans and gender of living beings. The girlchild in Rivers state cannot be exempted. Child grooming in Nigeria particularly of the girlchild, was known to begin from birth. This order of care was expressed through bathing, dressing, routine orientation, cultural indoctrination, enforced observation and informal instructional delivery methods. The process was regularly well coordinated and mothers were blamed when the expected behaviours were not visible and were subjected to account for consequences. Any misconduct identified in the character of the girlchild, was not only offensive but indicted an adult for negligence and irresponsibility.

Wikipedia (2019) recorded that in many cultures and societies, the girl child is denied her human rights and sometimes her basic needs. Frohmader (2015) emphasized that the girlchild is at increased risk of sexual abuse and exploitation and other harmful practices that negatively affect her survival, development and ability to achieve to her fullest potential instead of her right to education, safety and security. This is because girls are particularly vulnerable; they therefore require additional protections at

home, school and society and also an in-depth understanding of their responsibilities to themselves and their communities. The challenges of the childchild are even worst if she is disabled.

Globally, the conduct of the girlchild is always expected to be worthwhile, exemplary, noticeable and representative of the family and community. This is so because, as Ekhomu (2017) emphasizes, that, "one responsible girlchild can do more than 20 boys...". This pattern of nurturing prepared and registered the girlchild for the duties of womanhood. In many families in Nigeria, the boys are solely dependent on their female siblings for domestic services and even social and job professional advice. Girl children who are believed to be very close to their mothers are entrusted to handle responsibilities which they spontaneously assume as a lifestyle without instructions.

The process hence revolves from one generation to another. In recent times, societal norms are decaying as a result of the conduct of the girlchild. There has been a regular outbreak of deception in observing natural rules, poorly regulated code of conduct and total lack of

responsibility in individual character utilization by the girlchild. What happened? What went wrong? Who changed the status-quo? Whose fault is it? Who is to blame? What set the standards for ununiformed cultural grooming of the girlchild? Does all that matter? Who? What? When? Whoever starts a fire will never be an issue when the heat emitted is destructive to people around. Everyone affected must look for a means to put out the fire. Thus, Haarr (2019) observed that the girl child was one of the major topics emphasized in the 1995 Beijing conference for Action. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child stressed girls' rights as inclusive of non-discrimination, protection from harm and abuse, and full participation in family, social, and cultural life. All conventions deciding on issues concerning the girlchild frowned at female genital mutilation (FGM), sex-selective abortions, and child marriage, each of which is common in most areas in Africa. Some nongovernmental organizations like Kembatti Mentti Gezzimma-Tope (KMG), Yemeni Women's Union (YWU) and Strategy for Acceleration of Girls Education in Nigeria (SAGEN) aim at supporting education and economic opportunity for young women through fund raising, protest, and community-based research, reproductive health and family planning by running education workshops on the harms of child marriage and pregnancy and engages with families on the risks and long-term implications of these practices. They also include media campaigns, advocacy, lobbying, and sharing knowledge through network building, to enhance the effectiveness of strategies to improve the situation of girls worldwide. (Santhya & Jejeebhoy 2015).

This is why, old girls of most learning institutions around Nigeria like Government girls secondary school, Finima, Bonny, Rivers State, Nigeria and others, for the love and concern of the girlchild are proposing that the practical sense of responsibility and accountability this gender is admired for should be revisited, emphasized and cultivated.

Definition

Responsibility and accountability are used as synonyms but by implication, they are at variance in function. They are different to some extent. Responsibility identifies an individual while accountability qualifies that individual. Responsibility is a charge to reply, to respond measurably to the expectations of a task. It is a duty or a cluster of duties to be observed and conducted for self or others.

The process whereby responsibility is well conducted accessed understandably, concluded satisfactorily, certified as successful and reported as accomplishing the specified terms of reference or expectations, irrespective of the behavioural state of balance, is referred to as accountability. In essence, responsibility and accountability are ambiguous. They are like punctuality and regularity.

The Girl Child

The girl child is almost always referred to as the less than 18years old of the feminine gender. This definition sounds so ordinary. That is why of course society pays less attention to most sensitive issues with regards to the girlchild. Look at the State school environment where girls are being educated, the security outfit, the quality of safety measures, girlchild marriages, rape and more. Even what it looked like forty years ago, was substandard but a hundred percent better than what it is today. So who is the girlchild? The girl child is that individual, of the feminine gender, expected to be highly protected and provided for by law for the wholesome preservation of culture and humanity. If therefore women are not well educated, groomed in recognizing their responsibilities, if women cannot account for development in the society, humanity literarily is getting extinct and in so many offensive ways inexistent, a cauldron of ignorance, violence and unrest. The girl child is the seed, sucker, tuber, stem, the server, the modem and the channel for the preservation of tradition, the reason for past history, the now and the hopeful future.

Responsibilities of the Girl Child

The word or concept termed responsibility is based on individual accountability. It is to some

extent a self-imposed assignment. A gender acclaimed position. A human system approved task. An obligation. When you are obligated to carry out a task your commitment is solicited. It is expected of you by compulsion to respond based on the terms of reference to that duty to which you are obliged. Responsibilities could be assigned, assumed, inherited, generated and by nomination or appointment or employment. Responsibilities of the girlchild are hinged more on self-assigned functions.

1. The girlchild in honesty must be aware of who she is and represents as a girlchild.
2. You do not require someone to tell you to sweep a room to keep it clean.
3. You should not wait to be told to pick up trash where it is dropped to put in the trashcan.
4. You do not need motivation to learn how to cook.
5. You must be an advocate of peace irrespective of who takes the credit.
6. Be a consultant of good behaviour.
7. Be an advert of decency in every respect
8. Turn off a tap from where water is wasted, don not bother to find out who carelessly turned it on.
9. Be an initiator of economic lifestyle
10. Plan the leading and following process to ensure joyful coexistence.
11. Emphasize morals in character and learning. Be educated.
12. Acquire skills to effect changes and boost lifestyle.
13. Conduct yourself in preparation for womanhood.
14. The girl child is not a custodian of filthy expressions so avoid violence, fights, quarrels and gossip.

How Does the Girl Child take Responsibility?

1. Obey your parents
2. Adhere to instructions based on good advice.
3. Be obedient to wise counsel
4. Be positively intuitive
5. Follow your feminine instincts
6. Awake your conscience

7. Be objective in your source of defence
8. Balance your sense of judgment
9. Be polite and humble
10. Be disciplined
11. Express eagerness to learn not be envious
12. Draw a scale of preference for your expectations.

What you expect of your children and other girls when you grow up should be what you are today. If you are negligent, insensitive to change, distracted and poorly persuasive or you have a misdirected priority, indecisive and abusive, indecently dressed, you certainly can predict the future.

Dividend of Responsibilities and Accountability of the Girlchild?

1. Convenience for everyone in the society to function as expected and in a socially acceptable manner.
2. Organization. The touch of organization becomes very visible in a society where the girlchild has been guided to express her responsibilities and she is positively accountable to her decisions.
3. Security is ensured because one girlchild did what she is expected to do for more than twenty people within her network of interaction.
4. Safety of children, family, cultural norms and tradition are certain.
5. Decency is visible.
6. For continuity of a system to function within the context of peaceful coexistence.
7. Healthy living becomes a priority because every girlchild is accorded respect and not molested.
8. Wealthy lifestyle is experienced by everyone.

UNICEF (2010) Includes that there are many benefits of investing in girls' education. Healthier families, lower fertility rates, improved economic performance and poverty reduction are among them. Educating girls in a supportive, gender-

sensitive environment is critical to achieving gender equality.

Implications of Cultural Barriers/ Challenges

Establishing a sense of responsibility and accountability in the girlchild to some reasonable extent incurs cultural barriers and challenges. These barriers are expressed in all sectors where the girlchild could perform effectively to her maximum capabilities.

Education: UNICEF (2010) recorded that Africa, the Middle East and South Asia have the largest gender gaps in education. The reasons observed where those girls from poor and rural households are especially likely to be denied education. Knowledge and skills needed for employment, empowerment and advancement in status often are withheld because of customary attitudes about educating boys over girls. Girls are more likely to be used as child labour inside and outside of the home.

Circumcision: The United Nations Population Fund estimates that 100 million to 140 million girls and women have undergone genital mutilation and at least 3 million girls are at risk of the practice every year. (Wade 2015.) Most cases occur in regions of Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In Egypt, it is estimated that 75 percent of girls between 15 and 17 years of age have undergone genital mutilation, a practice which has immediate and long-term negative consequences on girls and women's health and well-being and with very fatal complications. Some countries in Africa, Europe and North America have banned genital mutilation; nevertheless, the practice continues.

Marriage: Nirantar (2019) state that child marriage is another human rights violation that occurs in Africa, South and Central Asia and the Middle East. The highest rates are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where girls are married as early as 7 years of age, but often before 15 or 18 years of age. According to UNICEF statistics, in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Niger more than 60 percent of women married before 18

years of age. In India, 47 percent of women married before 18 years of age. In Yemen, more than 25 percent of girls marry before 15 years of age. Child marriage is a form of sexual abuse that separates girls from family and friends, isolates them socially, restricts education and leaves them vulnerable to violence from husbands and in-laws. UNICEF (2014) is of the view that child brides face health risks and even death related to premature forced sex. This happens often with a significantly older husbands and early pregnancies. They are also at increased risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Leadership: The girlchild is denied leadership rights and forced to be silent and inactive even in situations where she could make meaningful contributions and changes. Most cultures do not acknowledge female decisions as suitable in any way to public projects.

Community representatives: students and teachers, boys, girls, literate and illiterate, women and men, midwives, religious leaders, and elders cannot all meet regularly to discuss concerns, build relationships, share learning and reach consensus. These responsibilities are only handled by men.

Domestics: The responsibilities of the girlchild are mostly reduced to begin in service to domestic chores and ends in sexual satisfaction to the man in the bedroom.

Perceptions that lead to a preference for sons include: Daughters are an economic burden on the family, Daughters do not contribute to family income, the girlchild is less likely to receive proteins and nutrients necessary for growth and development, she is a social turmoil, environmental degradation and a loss of traditional income. These factors reinforce attitudes which perpetuate violence against the girlchild and a neglect of her responsibilities.

These and many more cultural barriers and challenges curtails the extent to which the girlchild can take responsibility in handling affairs that concerns her and others in her family or community and even with respect to caring

for children in Rivers state. Rosenbaum (2019) stipulates that the world should realize that women's suppression is not good for business, for the economy, nor for human development. If this gender apartheid does not end, the global community will experience extreme frustration in total development.

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, we should ask, whose obligation is it to establish responsibility and accountability in the girlchild? **Me? Yes. You? Yes. Them? Yes.** The girlchild? Yes! We are all obligated. You are responsible for how your tomorrow turns out. There is no one to blame. It is your responsibility. Parents or teachers must not be blamed if they have met the demands of their responsibilities.

Andrew (2019) Analyses that the girlchild issues are asterisked topics for deliberation in every child rights summit yet conclusions and recommendations suggested are rarely achievable. It is pathetic for the world to complain about such issues as sensitive as the girlchild and watch even cultures violating children rights for protection and social wellbeing.

The girlchild therefore owes herself the responsibility to be accountable. Nobody owes anyone anything more than the responsibility they are accountable for. Every girlchild is accountable to return after series of experiences gained at different levels of education, trainings beginning from the home, society, school and beyond, to report in appreciation to parents, relatives, teachers, advocates for quality character grooming, after adhering strictly to the rules of viable self-conduct, saying, thank you, well done. I did not let you down.

The girlchild should not wait to be assigned or appointed to discharge responsibilities. She has much to contribute voluntarily as a girlchild. So she should not ignore responsibility because it is not directly assigned to her. She must not disregard functions because she was not obliged, motivated, incited or forced to take care. The girlchild requires a voice to speak out. Take decisions not in insubordination to human rights but in agreement to the functions that only self-

freedom can afford. As long as the function is in her environment, within her boundaries and jurisdiction and she is a girlchild, it is her responsibility to say NO or YES because she will be held accountable and will live up to the consequences of neglected or well cultivated responsibilities. However every girlchild in Rivers state is a tool for the implementation of change in character, leadership, child grooming in particular and education.

Recommendations

How these concepts are to be established

1. Every instruction for the girlchild to be responsible and accountable is a wakeup call.
2. Every girlchild caregiver, educator and child right protector must live and exemplary lifestyle.
3. Be ready to caution the child promptly.
4. Discipline should be on check not beating or caning as it is called.
5. The girl child needs mentors by her parents, teachers and concerned public individuals.
6. Monitor also activities for readdress.
7. Assess, reinforce and motivate when necessary.
8. Follow to establish good behaviour
9. Nongovernmental organizations in support of the protection of the girl child should have global support.
10. Media campaigns, advocacy, lobbying, and sharing knowledge through network building by NGO's, to enhance the effectiveness of strategies to improve the situation of girls worldwide should be encouraged. (All Africa 2019 This Day).
11. Projects and collaborations between the Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF ensuring that as many girls are in school should earn global emulation.
12. Awareness of girls' needs and potentials should be improved in society and among the girls themselves so they may participate fully in social, economic and political life.
13. Rosenbaum (2019) is of the view that the success of establishing freedom and responsibility in the girlchild is based on

creating a model in cultural regions and countries in policymaking and implementations as it concerns the total girlchild. Not in praying for miracles but rather a need for commitment to action, creativity and hard work and, of course, need to support each girlchild as individuals who share the same ideas and natural resources in a global community.

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