The Hurried Child Syndrome

A Perception Survey

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Introduction

• The main objective of this quantitative survey is to examine the perception and awareness of the public on the attitudes, practices and patterns of lifestyle that contributes to hurried child syndrome within Nigeria.
Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model Template

Emotional Needs of Children

Stages of Psychosocial Development
Methodology

• Using a quantitative research design, a cross sectional survey was conducted online to examine the attitudes and practices of 436 Nigerians parents towards hurrying their children in the home, school and the society.

• A Hurried Child Syndrome Survey was completed by 436 Nigerians. The survey consisted of 25 items and the value for Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = 0.820$ which shows that the scale is highly reliable.
Socio-demographic Information

- The survey was filled across 21 (with representations across the 6 geopolitical zones) out of the 36 states in Nigeria including the diaspora. About 62.8% of the respondents were from Lagos state, followed by Abuja (9.6%), Oyo (6.2%) and the rest shared amongst the remaining 18 states.
Gender of respondents

- The gender distribution of the respondents showed that 74.1% (323) of the respondents are females while 24.8% (108) were men and just 0.5% (2) preferred not to say.
• The demographic analysis showed that over 50% of the respondents were between the ages of 35-50 years, while the remaining proportion was shared among those within the age range “19-34 years” and “51 years and above” accordingly.
Marital Status of Respondent

- The frequency distribution according to marital status revealed that over two-thirds of the population, 78.4% (342) were married, 14.7% (64) were single, 3.9% (17) are separated, 1.6% (7) are divorced, and 0.7% (3) widowed.
In terms of parenting status, majority of the respondents were co-parents 81% (353), followed by single parents 7.3% (32) and the remaining 3.2% (14) in the separate parenting category.
Employment Status of Respondents

- The distribution based on employment status showed that half of the population 50.2% (219) are under paid employment, 44.7% (195) are self-employed while the remaining 4.8% (21) are unemployed.
Results from Descriptive Analysis

- Home-related variables
- School-related variables
- Societal variable
Home Related Variables

- The item “Quarreling among parents stress the children by overloading them with fears and anxieties because they have no outlet” had a mean of 4.56 and a standard deviation of 0.660 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.

- The item “Divorce creates hurriedness, pain and confusion in children thereby forcing them to deal with separations that should have normally occurred in adolescence” had a mean of 4.17 and a standard deviation of 0.941 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.

- The item “Too much separation from parents of any kind leads to emotional overload that is stressful and harmful for children” had a mean of 4.43 and a standard deviation of 0.700 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.

- In comparing the responses to the item “Children are stressed because of the parental responsibilities (taking care of their little sister or brother, or mother or the entire household) they bear in single parent households Vs both parent households”, the result showed a mean of 3.72 and 3.01 and a SD of 1.037 and 1.011 for single and both parents’ household respectively. This further implied that respondents inclined to agree that children single parents’ household bear more parental responsibilities than those in double parent households.
School Related Variables

- The item “A stressed child poses more difficulty to the teacher’s effectiveness” had a mean of 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.641 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.
- The item “The pressure for academic achievement is a major factor influencing the hurriedness of children in the present day” had a mean of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 0.967 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.
- In comparing the responses to the item “There are no spaces for physical play and extracurricular activities in private Vs Public schools in Nigeria”, the result showed a mean of 3.17 and 2.57 and a SD of 1.217 and 1.139 for private and public school respectively. This further implied that respondents agreed to a large extent that public schools have spaces for extra curricular activities while the disagreed to a little extent for private schools.
Societal Variable

• The item “Young people who have been pressurized to grow up too fast tend to be more critical about their parents” had a mean of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.853 implying that most respondents only agreed to the statement.”

• The item “Hurried children feel their parents were more committed to their own lives, careers and friendships than they are to them” had a mean of 3.92 and a standard deviation of 0.911 implying that most respondents only agreed to the statement.”

• The item “Friendships during childhood and adolescence are essential for building competencies needed in adulthood (e.g., parenting, intimacy in marriage)” had a mean of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.623 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.”

• The item “Hurrying a child to grow up fast leaves him/her unprepared for challenges of adolescence” had a mean of 4.45 and a standard deviation of 0.743 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.”

• The item “The most expensive gift can never replace the presence of parents at their child’s birthday party” had a mean of 4.51 and a standard deviation of 0.804 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.

• The item “Hurrying a child can lead to school burnout” had a mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.764 implying that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the statement.

• The item “The media creates stress for the children by providing them with information too fast or information beyond their intellectual or emotional states” had a mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 1.068 implying that most respondents agreed to the statement.
Conclusions

• Based on the findings from this survey, we can safely conclude that Nigerian are aware of the negative effects of hurrying a child and also aware of the significance of “involved and intentional parenting” and *in loco parentis*, to ensure a child enjoys a quality experience in the childhood (formative) years.
Implication of Findings

Implications for Research
• There is a dearth of literature on the construct “the hurried child syndrome” in the African context which makes it difficult to critically analyse the phenomenon from an multicultural perspective. This begs the need for further research in this area of child development.

Implications for practice
• Academic scholars must be engaged to developing interventions that can curb or control the spread of the syndrome in Nigeria, and Africa at large with special attention giving to our indigenous cultural practices that may serve as protective factors in buffering the syndrome
• Child psychologist, counsellor, health care providers, social workers must be enlightened about this issue to help in their private and public practices

Implications for policy development
• Parenting practices must be revised and taught at tertiary levels to bridge knowledge and skills gap of the next set of parents for the future
• Work policies must be further revised (key attention to the private sector) to reduce parenting stress and encourage inclusive and balanced parenting among present day.
• School systems must review their policies to accommodate the concept of play, reduce unhealthy competition, and promote social and positive psychological capitals from the early childhood to tertiary level of education.
Limitations of the study

• The limitations of this survey are as follows:
• The statements in the questionnaire were positively worded for easy understanding but might lead to some bias in response patterns. This concern was controlled by ensuring a reasonable sample size to reduce the error margin.
• The data was collected using an online channel which might limit the scope of respondents to those that are educated and literate in the use of IT, many of whom belong to the middle- and high-income class in the society.
• The nature of analysis was purely descriptive which was sufficient to capture the phenomenon at present, however, having a cause-effect or inferential level of analysis would have brought more robustness to the findings of the research.
Recommendations

We, at AMLi recommends that:

• Psychological assessment of stress in children should be a critical indicator in admission process and must be implemented in both private and public educational institutions in Nigeria.

• Classroom management and school activities must be designed to reduce stressors in the learning process.

• Government should establish post marital counselling clinics in each Local Governments Areas

• The school system must make play-based learning at the early childhood levels and extracurricular activities at secondary levels
References

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