

RELEVANCE OF EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND ITS COUNSELING IMPLICATION

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Abstract

This paper examined the relevance of emotional and social adjustment of children with visual impairment in an inclusive education and its counseling implication which include the concept of emotional behavior, categories of children with visual impairment with emotional and social problems, common characteristics of a visually impaired child with emotional & social problem in an inclusive setting. Furthermore, intervention strategies in an inclusive classroom were extensively discussed as well as some counseling implications.

Introduction

Adjustment to children with visual impairment means acceptance of the condition of impairment means acceptance of the condition of impairment (loss) by the child with visual impairment without feeling shameful about it. Adjustment also signifies the successful resolution of a crisis' situation (loss) or the result of a successful adaptation to the crisis situation

Acceptance or adjustment implies a realistic appraisal of the loss situation in terms of abilities and limitations and accepting the two sides as a matter of fact. In addition to that it also means an emotional and intellectual acceptance of loss, coping, acceptance, person environment fit, psychological rehabilitation, and successful resolution of loss.

Concept of Emotional Behaviour Problem

Adima (1989), defined emotional behavior as a deviation from behavior appropriate to the child's age. This behavior significantly may interfere with the child's own growth and development. It may also interfere with growth and development of other people.

Thus, according to Adima the emotionally disturbed child is a child who is angry with himself, with his family, the school system, and the society at large. This agrees with Abang (1995) who relates emotional behavior children who deviate in an extreme manner from the norms of society within which they operate. The behavior they exhibit is unacceptable with high frequency. These behavior are not in accordance with the social and cultural expectation. Their self esteem is affected adversely, they have low school achievement, and poor interpersonal relationship.

It should be noted that a visually impaired children with emotional problems does what other children do but his own is either too frequent or is of high degree and intensity. They seem, in their behavior to be particularly unaware of the appropriate time and places for certain actions except with the strict supervision of adult attendants (Nwoye 1988).

According to Gulliford (1971), emotional upsets and difficulties can hardly be avoided in the process of human development. Thus, Kolo (1994), relates that. It is not uncommon to experience emotional difficulties in the forms of stress, temper, and even regressive behavior in children and grown ups. However, when such emotional upsets not only persist, but reach a level at which it becomes a permanent features of a person's social adjustment, it must often turn out to be an emotional disorder requiring special educational adaptations.

Categories of Children with Visual Impairment with Emotional and Social Problems

In the school context, behavior that fall into the behavior problems category include truancy school phobia, oppositional –defiant behavior (in subordination or disregard for constituted authority), hostile, aggressive behaviors, hyperactivity (leading to excessive movement and disruption) hypo-activity - i.e. being withdrawn (Department of Education 1994). Lastlett (1982) puts school visually impaired children with behavior problems into two broad groups.

- a. Children with conduct or behavior difficulties, who he/she describes as showing hostile, aggressive and difficult to manage behaviors other behaviors in this group include attention seeking, easily distractible, limited (short) attention span, anxiety, serious deficiency in basic learning seemingly impervious to physically overactive.
- b. Children who show emotional or neurotic behavior characteristics include being isolated, timid, obsession, withdrawn, anxious, and showing average ability in class.

Common Characteristics of a Visually Impaired Child with Emotional and Social in an Inclusive Setting

Lastlett further identifies some common characteristics in the two sub-groups: the development of a faulty self-image, as shown by uncaring and hostile behaviors, and limited social relationships and interactions. Telford and Sawrey (1981) have a similar classification of behavior problems in school children. They see children with visual impairment with behavior problems as:

- a. Socially maladjusted:- children with visual impairment are chronic violators of broad cultural moreso and social values; who have learnt and accepted behaviors that are accepted values and more so. Gangs of delinquent individuals come to mind here, as

their accepted code of conduct includes truancy, fighting and defiance of constituted authority.

- b. Emotionally disturbed:- children with visual impairment who have emotional problems which are severe enough to prevent them from making the necessary adjustments for effective functioning in their cultures. The behaviors of emotionally disturbed children range from aggressive destruction to complete withdrawal from society and from social activities.

There is hardly a school or classroom where there are no children who either fail to adapt to school conditions or are disruptive. A child may display either of these behaviors, but if it occurs once in a long while, or there is (or are) definite observable, immediate cause(s) that triggers it, it may not be regarded as a behavior disorder requiring special attention. Therefore, how intense? And how resistant to control by the teacher or school authorities? It is important to note that what constitutes behavior disorder in children is different from normal behavior only in terms of quantity (i.e. rate, intensity and frequency) and not necessarily in quality, and perhaps, in the setting and situation in which they occur.

Intervention Strategies in an Inclusive Classroom

The behavior management activities outlined below have been drawn from three theoretical approaches namely.

1. Behavioral approach:- This pays little attention to finding the (internal) causes of the disorder, but focuses on the manifested behavior and uses a regimen of rewards, reinforcement, encouragements and punishers to modify or put an end to inappropriate and undesired behaviors. The behavioral approach does not locate the causes of the problem in the child, but in the environment (the home, the school and classroom, etc) and therefore, use environmental factors to change the undesired behavior. In addition to that, very well structured teaching approaches are employed. Such teaching approaches include task analysis, mastery learning and clinical teaching.
- (ii) Psychodynamic approach:- this approach adopts the view that an undesired behavior has its origin or causes in the unconscious or sub-economics thought of the child. The child is, therefore, to blame. Consequently, by this approach, the teachers believe that they can do nothing about the problem since they do not have the training and skills to discern the secret thoughts and emotions of the child. The services of trained school psychologists and counselors have been found to be helpful here.
- iii. Eco-systematic approach:- This recognizes that the child is subject to several influence or sub-systems. These sub-systems include factors within the child (the micro-system) the interaction between the teachers, the child, and his peers (the meso-system), the school system, the family and other members of the social, the family, and other members of the social and cultural environment

(the macro-system, the behavior of any child, or any body for that matter, is a product or function of the interaction between these sub-systems. Therefore, in seeking to adjudge any behavior as disorder, or in seeking to modify a disordered behavior, all these systems have to be carefully considered.

Counseling Implications

In summarizing this paper, the counseling suggestions will centre on specialist that deal directly or indirectly with the children with visual impairment, both in private and in public schools in an inclusive setting.

Full inclusive education should be encouraged in our educational system. Inclusion enables both the special needs and normal peers, as well as their teachers, to learn in school, and through practical, firsthand experience to make adjustment and to accommodate one another. Inclusive also facilitates the acquisition of self skills. All architectural barriers in and around the classrooms, houses etc. should be modified or eliminated. Necessary adjustment and modification should be made in our surrounding to ensure that those visually impaired that use cane are able to move about freely.

The following counseling procedure can be applied as intervention strategies namely behavior modification, reality therapy adjustment therapy, positive counseling, academic counseling, counseling parents and teachers, encounter group and Referral visit and recommendation.

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