

# Parenting Boy Child and their Psychosocial Wellness in the Context of Post Covid-19 in Uganda

By

Sr. Dr. Nnantamu Jane Frances

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# Introduction

- There is a subtle, unacknowledged process of oppression that the boy child is subjected to during their formative years of childhood
- It is rooted in the cultural child rearing practices and perpetuated by agents that promote the girl child
- Some parenting practices ignore the boy child on most of the essential edifying exercises
- The boy child is exposed to a lot of inner struggles that compromise their psychosocial wellness
- The Covid-19 lockdown aggravated the psychosocial problems of the boy child

# Purpose of this study

- To raise awareness that the psychosocial wellness of the boy child is compromised
- Specifically the study aimed at:
  - Investigating the kind of parenting experienced by the boy child
  - Assessing the psychosocial health of the boy child during and after Covid-19
  - Evaluating the relationship between the kind of parenting experienced by and the psychosocial wellness of the boy child

# Problem Statement

- It is universally agreed that every child, irrespective of gender, has a right to basic needs, education, love, guidance, security, to survive and thrive in life
- However, the social cultural structures tend to ignore the boy child on most of the essential educational activities that are generously presented to the girl child
- By general observation it is clear that males outnumber females among prisoners, mental health patients, substance abusers, and street children.

WHY?

- Could something be lacking in the parenting process of the boy child? Does the boy child get enough preparation to thrive healthily through life?

- This covert neglect of the boy child during the formative years of childhood is likely to compromise their psychosocial wellness
- The Covid-19 lockdown aggravated the condition of boy child and repercussions are on-going

# Method

- It was a cross-sectional qualitative study conducted in Central and North-Eastern Uganda
- The participants were boys (young men) in schools/homes, teachers, civil leaders
- Data collection was through one-on-one and group interviews using semi-structured interview protocol
- We searched for subjective experiences captured in individual stories of participants
- The focus was participants' feelings about the parental upbringing methods before, during, and after Covid-19 and their evaluation of the effect of their experience

# Parenting the Boy Child

- The boy child is sidelined on many of the basic edifying activities
- Girls are trained in basic survival skills like preparing food, mending a torn cloth, tidying up, while the boy is left on try-and-err mechanisms
- While girls are given forum to exercise themselves in emotional intelligence, social and life skills, the boy child is given little or no attention
- Girls are given much time under the protection of the mother while boys are peeled off the mother and dragged into the cocoon of “masculinity”

- Girls are given time to bond with several mentors like aunts, grandparents, but the boy usually has to fend for himself
- Girls' tender emotions are allowed but boys are forced to harden and to deny their tender feelings
- Women movements have championed the empowerment of the girl child but left the boy child with little or no attention from either parents or society
- In schools, parents tend to provide for a girl to her satisfaction and the remaining few items are then given to the boy



# Compromised Psychosocial Wellness

- Boys are stuck in a false ego; they learn to be unreal to themselves and to others.
- Their dependence needs are muffled and so they learn to either harden and deny their vulnerability or they fear commitment and hence loiter aimlessly
- Denied vulnerability is the foundation of the “superiority complex” suffered by many males
- Their capacity for emotional expression is blocked
- Psychological connectedness with other humans is deeply inhibited

- Boy do not learn how to bond, do not learn what their responsibilities are to humanity, and tend to lack a strong sense of service
- Their capacity for emotional expression is blocked
- The boy child's transition process into manhood is unattractive, threatening, and scaring because of the feminine movements that surround the boy with dominant women who seem determined to go their own way.
- Themes like discrimination, anger, fear of failure, unworthiness, and loneliness were prevalent in the participants' stories

# The Covid-19 Effect

- Most boys were exposed to age inappropriate hard work in the name of “being men”
- More boys than girls experienced neglect; much more attention was put on protecting the girl child, guarding against unwanted pregnancies
- Pregnant teen mothers are given care whereas there is not much done for the teen fathers
- The boy child continues to suffer inwardly

# Recommendations

- Conduct parental practices training that are concerned about the developmental needs of the boy child
- Encourage mothers to be present unconditionally for the growing boy child
- Offer boys more direction on life and interactive skills
- Fathers should offer their physical and emotional presence to the growing boy
- Develop policies geared towards the emancipation of boys

- New policies should be developed that would attract more boys towards giving up on earning and get committee to attend school work till they grow into adults
- Boys too are children and are equally as needy of protection and dependence as the girl child, protection, mentorship, should be given to them in the same way as with the girl child

# Food for Thought

- Child rearing practices in Uganda harbour abusive conditions that compromise the boy child's psychosocial wellness
- Empowerment of the girl child cannot yield the desired fruits if not coupled with empowerment of the boy child.
- The mental and emotional health of the man is a prerequisite to the wellness of the woman.
- "Every time you raise a loving, wise and responsible man, you have created a better world for women," (Michael Gurian, 2005)