



Living As a Runaway Youth: Implication for Counselling

Prof. Innime Righteous¹, Dr. Gift Ugwe Roman²

¹Chancellor: Poise University, Rwanda. Orchid ID: 000-0002-0909-6024

²Department of Business Management, Poise University, Rwanda

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*Corresponding Author:

Prof. Innime Righteous

Abstract

Living as a runaway youth can be exceptionally harmful to family and the society at large. Living in a shelter or on the street can be unhygienic, dangerous, and disordered. The runaway is at great risk of sustaining physical damage, including injuries and infections. Youths who live as runaway also suffer all-embracing emotional harm. Living as a runaway also corrodes youth's sense of privacy, security, and trust. The education of runaway youths in peril, as homelessness makes attending school and meeting learning goals exceptionally difficult. Among others it is recommended that counselors should work more intensively with parents and the family in understanding the home situation (which causes their children to run away) before considering restoration of the child to the same environment and that counselors should work with the community within which the child is restored to ensure that the family of a runaway child and the child itself gets the community support when restored.

Original Research Article

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INTRODUCTION

The family is the first social space where a child learns about society, rules and values, and thus serves as the primary environment for learning or understanding life. The child learns fundamental ways of acting and thinking within systems of values through its relationships with parents and other major family members, which have an important impact on the further awareness. Mordecai (2019, p. 18) states the family is key for building the psychological, moral and spiritual framework to help facilitate holistic growth. Structurally, a family can be classified as intact or disrupted. A disrupted, or "broken," home describes a family background with structural instability, caused by divorce, separation of parents, mortality of one parent, or abandonment. Because of such circumstances, instability can be prevalent in the environment that negatively impact a child's developmental trajectory; this is even more pronounced for individuals who are at the youth stage.

The issue of runaway especially among the youths has become a major problem in our society even before today. Leaving behind families and friends for reasons best known to them, in most cases these youths are unprotected from the many problems in the society such as sexual abuse, exploitation, sexually transmitted diseases, hunger, and criminal activity.

Runaway youth in modern society is an ever-growing social issue that have well looked beyond the ones involved. This is a massive issue that affects not just the youths impacted by this but also families and communities and larger societal systems as well. Increased number of at-risk youths leads to various issues in society, highlighting the prevalence of this problem. Yes, youth runaway behaviour is common enough that almost everyone knows of one or associates with a person who knows of one.

Runaway behavior in young people is associated with a number of psychiatric disorders. According to the London Institute of Psychiatry (2018), runaways are more likely than their peers to develop serious mental health disorders, such as psychosis is (highly characterized by schizophrenia). It is a severe disturbance of the integration between thinking, emotion and behaviour coupled with a loss of reality contact and interpersonal defunctioning. Further exacerbating the already unstable conditions of runaway youths, this psychological vulnerability stunts their ability for stability and social integration.

All over the world, societies face specific social, economic, political and cultural challenges unique to them – Rivers State is not an exception. You are in the developing region where multiple issues exist and negatively effect the lives of its

people. One of many aspects among these concerns is the increasing number of youth runaways that has become a major social problem with almost serious social consequences. The challenges of this phenomenon are not only limited to individual families but also have repercussions on the broader community and society, straining social systems and impeding sustainable development. Juveniles on the run are missing basic needs like good education, good parents, and opportunities to grow. As a result, most are prone to both deviance and delinquency over the long term, thus fostering social disorder that makes for an imperfect state of social cohesion and progress.

Attention: We are trained until October of 2023. Experiences like these greatly boost their risk for dangerous, self-destructive behavior. Many of these youths experience interruptions in their education, whether due to school dropout, suspension or expulsion. In addition, running away is a risk factor for delinquency and increases their probability of becoming victimized. Disruption to diverse areas of society, from the COVID-19 pandemic to societal instability, also presents another layer of risk and vulnerability when it comes to criminals citing people with specific characteristics as targets: those characterized by traits like race, religion or gender being brutalized in different forms across the globe.

Youth runaway is increasingly considered a global social problem over last three decades. The scale of the problem is underscored by empirical evidence; in 1994, reported estimates published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that between 0.3 and 1.6 million youths are homeless each year in the United States (36) In fact data indicates that nearly one in eight children will run away from home at least once before their 18 birthday, with about 40% never resuming their previous living situations (Whitbeck & Simons, 2012). Preliminary statistics demonstrate the scale and depth of this issue, emphasizing their continued scholarly and policy relevance.

According to Wilson (2018, 56) 'there is a vast body of scientific evidence' showing that the disintegration of family relationships linked to runaway behaviour tends to lead affected children into long-term damage intellectual, physical and emotional ramifications. These long-lasting consequences highlight the substantial developmental effect of other experiences like these. This echoes the wider recognition that children often suffer the consequences of family instability. Advocating for this perspective, Wobo (2018) notes that attachment disorders are more prevalent in runaway subpopulations and indicates that the lack of consistent emotional ties leads to patterns of maladaptive and deviant behavior.

Challenging behaviours may arise from runaway youths coming from environments that include neglect and abuse, where they may endure chronic emotional distress. Families that do not receive proper care and attention can create an environment where it is okay to be aggressive, leading children to participate in behaviors such as theft, drug use, or

other delinquent activity even if they have their material needs met. In the view of Wobo (2018), runaway behavior in youths has been, on the increase which constitutes a grave danger to the society owing to its contribution towards increasing deviant behavior among this age group. As a result, this expanding group is often linked to criminal acts and other social vices that disrupt social equilibrium, impede the sustainable behaviour and evolution of society.

Runaway youths also live as aggressive people, theft, burglary, destruction of school property, truancy, rudeness, breaking the curfew, vandalism, drug abuse, weapon carrying, alcohol abuse, rapist, examination malpractices, school violence, bullying, cultism, school drop-outs, fighting, indecent dressing and sexual harassment. These negative behaviours or lifestyle among the youths are observed amongst runaway youths of different age categories and locations.

Sampson (2019) notes that runaway behavior among adolescents is caused by various factors, such as child abuse, high levels of stress, depression, parent-child conflict, substance use and fear of failure. Adding more dimensions to this understanding Wilson (2018) explains that several young people leave home both due to experienced trauma, ongoing familial conflict and dysfunctional households. In the Nigerian context, for instance, some adolescents run away from home to escape physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence or parental substance dependence. On the other hand, different individuals are detached from their home context due to challenges of resistance to parental status or lack of satisfaction with imposed directives. Furthermore, adolescents living in foster care may runaway because of feelings of alienation, loss of emotional attachment, low self-esteem and identity issues that subject them to the general risks faced by individuals within runaway populations.

For some youths, running away serves as a psychological escape vehicle from dysfunctional familial situations, attitudes or behaviors of one or more parents, economic pressure to support their families at an early age with little chance of completing high school for socio-economic reasons. Yet, this coping mechanism often results in adverse effects as it forces youths into riskier situations within the street milieu. According to Wilson (2018), runaway youths face a variety of problems such as substance abuse, delinquency, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, school dropout status, prostitution, exploitation and violence. All of these factors exhibited as multifaceted risks that capture the complexity and severity of the issue and can effectively illustrate the need for this study to discover where runaway youths are coming from through their perspectives which inform counseling interventions.

CONCEPT OF RUNAWAY

An enduring challenge in the world of scholarship has been to come up with a clear consensus definition for what "runaway" means. While there are multiple key definitions

available, most of them display conceptual disposedness and a lack of specificity, interdicting their validity in strong empirical studies. To address these limitations, efforts have been made to develop typologies or systems that categorize runaway behavior into certain types. These classifications attempt to give a more structured and analytically rigorous foundation for investigating these multifaceted phenomena, helping better delineate conceptualization and enabling more cohesive interpretation across studies.

According to NCHS (as cited in Sampson, 2019) runaway behavior is defined as the intentional departure or retention away from home with awareness that one's absence will be perceived coupled with the intention of remaining out for a period of time. This definition provides a general description of the behavioral criteria for running away but lacks to conclude on possible other conditions which may be interplaying in making runaways and drive such behaviors. More precisely, it fails to account for the full heterogeneity in psychological conditions, environmental factors and personal circumstances that lead individuals to choose this path when searching for potential explanations.

CAUSES OF RUNAWAY AMONG YOUTHS

Below are some of the reasons for runaway among youths.

- ❖ **Child Abuse:** Home is supposed to be a safe place. Sad to say, Many children do actually escape their homes in an effort to preserve their security. We already know that they don't feel safe at home because of the physical or sexual abuse, or even emotional abuse, that they may experience. They are so scared to speak out about it that they have no choice other than leaving home. Homes are not the only places where child abuse occurs. It has seeped into schools, too. Besides, with the rise in cyberbullying, the internet became an everyday life place for harassing, humiliating and teasing youths.
- ❖ **Depression:** Depression is one of the most pervasive factors that humans face across cultures, socio-economic structures, religions and personality traits. Depression has been stated by Schermerhon, Hunt & Oshborn (2005) as a state of tension which is caused by extraordinary demands, constraints, or can be an opportunity where the individuals are not able to cope with it. According to Gibson, John & James (2002) depression is defined in terms of being a person's adaptive response to a stimulus that places excessive psychological and physical demands on the person. According to Haddad & Gunn (2011), depression is a debilitating mental illness that consists of physical and psychological effects, such as lethargy, loss of interest and pleasure, sleep and appetite disturbances. It is not uncommon for youths to be depressed, but it can sometimes lead to critical decision making when they are in such a state. Depression also clouds youths' ability to solve everyday problems and make

rational decisions, making them think that their troubles will go away as soon as they leave home.

- ❖ **Conflict with Parents:** Youths are hungry for love, support and attention from their family, particularly parents. When they fail to get it, then it becomes difficult for them to stay at home. This also became apparent in a study conducted at the University of Chicago. National Runaway Safe line considers conflicts with parents the major reason behind youth runaways, with 50 percent of the youth running away having made the decision due to this factor. Sometimes parents become so angry that they ask their child to get out of the house, thinking the latter will eventually come back. That, unfortunately, is not always the case.
- ❖ **Drug Abuse:** Drug abuse is the intake of drugs without prescription from qualified health worker (doctor) including excessive or persistence use over time. The chronic use of drugs can cause serious and sometimes irreversible damage to people's physical and psychological development. Drug abuse is a major health problem all over the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2005). Drug abuse is also a common reason behind youths running away. Leaving home makes it easier for them to continue taking drugs without worrying about getting caught and having to give explanations to their parents. Abuse of drugs clouds their mind and gets the better of their judgment, due to which they make irrational and unwise decisions without realizing the consequences of these decisions.
- ❖ **Fear of Failure:** Believe it or not, but one of the worst fears is the fear of failure. There are some parents who want their youngsters to be the number one in everything, whether it is studies or sports, debate, etc. This and many other expectations are so heavy they burst their youth and carry it throughout life with the stress. For a bulk of youths, the dreaded feeling that they are not good enough to succeed or that their parents would be disappointed if they fail is overwhelming and hence quitting seems like a better option than battle. Just running away knowing that they will never be able to face their parents after quitting.
- ❖ **Alienation:** This is intense feelings of disconnection or exclusion that explodes internalized. This almost always is a family issue that simmers for years. It just shows that kids who run away from home are doing what their parents have done for years, except that mom and dad may have "run[runneth]" into work or drinking etc.
- ❖ **Rebellion:** This where there is rule with no relationship. Running behaviour is frequently a manifestation of defiance. A good parent/child relationship may not guarantee that someone will not run away but it does go some way towards mollifying

the natural adolescent resistance and rebellion to rules which underlies behaviour which leads them to running or which might assist in preventing/reducing this behaviour.

- ❖ **A perceived lack of control:** ADOLESCENT, similar to adults also needs the power over their lives. They can respond favorably to reasonable parental guidelines and limits, but a teen who begins to feel as if his parents or someone is controlling every word he says and action he does may react by discarding their control over him and running away.

CATEGORIES OF RUNAWAYS

Cherry (2013) categorizes runaway youths into four distinct typologies: “running to,” “running from,” “thrown out,” and “forsaken,” each reflecting different motivations and contextual realities. The “running to” group comprises individuals who voluntarily leave home in pursuit of independence, novelty, and the perceived excitement of life beyond parental control. These youths are typically driven by curiosity and the desire for autonomy rather than by adverse family conditions. They often idealize external environments, perceiving life outside the home as more appealing and liberating compared to the structured setting imposed by family rules and expectations. Importantly, their decision to leave is not primarily rooted in experiences of abuse, neglect, or dysfunctional family relationships.

In contrast, the “running from” category includes youths who flee from negative or harmful domestic environments. These individuals are motivated by the need to escape adverse conditions such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, parental neglect, substance dependency within the household, or severe economic hardship. Unlike their “running to” counterparts, their departure is not associated with the pursuit of adventure but rather with the search for safety and a more bearable living situation. Although parents may wish for their return, these youths often lack access to a supportive and secure home environment, placing them in more precarious circumstances (Cherry, 2013).

The third category, referred to as “thrown out,” consists of youths who are effectively forced to leave their homes due to severe familial conflict or rejection. In these cases, the departure is involuntary, with parents or guardians demonstrating little or no intention of facilitating the child’s return. Such situations are frequently preceded by prolonged difficulties within the family, educational institutions, and the wider community. As noted in related literature, these youths often exhibit higher levels of self-reliance but may also engage more frequently in antisocial or delinquent behaviors, reflecting the cumulative impact of prolonged instability and exclusion (Wobo, 2018).

The final category, “forsaken” youths, encompasses those who leave home due to extreme economic deprivation and the inability of their families to provide adequate support. These individuals typically originate from large households

characterized by weak emotional bonds and limited social connectedness. Their lack of meaningful relationships—both within the family and among peers—contributes to a profound absence of social, emotional, and financial support systems. Consequently, such youths are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and are more likely to experience heightened feelings of victimization, insecurity, and diminished self-worth (Wobo, 2018).

(false positive) classification, where these regions are often misclassified as relevant.) For example, unlike the statistically driven approach behind the previous typology, these efforts have built types grounded in intuition developed through practice with a given population. The broadness of these classificatory devices, at best, is highly suspect. They nonetheless have merit in that they allow for a more precise description of the nature of the runaway population. Dunford& Brennan, refer to six classifications or subtypes of runaway youths on the basis of Wobo (2018); (1) confident and unstopped runaway girls(2) well-adapted runaway youth(3) rerun failures and high delinquency involvement(4) fleeing youth5 (+) through ill haven young an from being,. Though this typology has more categories, the bulk of what was included in the earlier typology exists within this one too.

EFFECTS OR IMPACTS OF RUNNING BEHAVIOUR

The condition of living as a runaway youth presents significant risks not only to the individual but also to the family unit and society at large. Such circumstances often involve residence in unstable environments, including shelters or street settings, which are frequently characterized by poor hygiene, insecurity, and social disorder. These conditions expose youths to a heightened likelihood of physical harm, including injuries and communicable diseases, while simultaneously subjecting them to profound emotional and psychological distress. The absence of stable living arrangements undermines their sense of safety, privacy, and trust, thereby impeding healthy development. Additionally, homelessness severely disrupts educational engagement, making consistent school attendance and the attainment of academic objectives increasingly difficult. Importantly, running away rarely resolves the underlying issues that precipitated the behavior; rather, it often initiates a cascade of further challenges, compounding the difficulties faced by affected youths.

Damaged Physical Health

Runaway youths often experience both chronic and acute health challenges as a direct consequence of their living conditions. The National Center for Family Homelessness highlights that the unsanitary and unstable environments in which these individuals reside expose them to harsh weather conditions, extreme temperature variations, and limited access to consistent medical care, thereby increasing their vulnerability to a wide range of illnesses. Although certain societies have made notable progress in developing supportive shelter systems to mitigate these risks (Wobo,

2018), such provisions remain unevenly distributed across regions. Empirical evidence indicates that runaway youths are significantly more susceptible to health complications compared to their housed counterparts, including markedly higher rates of respiratory and ear infections, as well as an increased likelihood of asthma. Furthermore, studies by Barry, Ensign, and Lippek (2012), Williams (2013), Karabanow (2014), and Ringwalt, Greene, and Robertson (2018) reveal that these youths are considerably more prone to food insecurity, often experiencing hunger at disproportionately higher rates than their non-runaway peers.

In addition to health vulnerabilities, the absence of basic domestic facilities further exacerbates the nutritional deficiencies faced by runaway youths. Wilson (2018) observes that the lack of access to cooking and refrigeration compels many to rely on nutritionally inadequate food sources or unsafe preparation practices, thereby undermining their overall well-being. As noted by Eddowes and Butcher (2010, p. 40), prolonged nutritional deprivation can lead to significant developmental consequences, including cognitive impairments and reduced academic performance. The cumulative impact of these physical and nutritional challenges diminishes their energy levels and resilience, ultimately restricting their ability to cope with everyday demands and maintain consistent participation in educational activities.

Psychological and Emotional Impairments

Beyond the physical health problems that affect runaway youths, Weinr, Wehler, Perloff, Scott, Hosmer, Sagor, & Gundersen (2012, p. 236) observed that “many also experience serious psychosocial and mental health problems.” Studies such as Lubell, Crain, & Cohen (2017) have demonstrated repeatedly that runaway youths suffer much greater rates of psychological illness than their housed peers.

Runaway youths form a clear and vulnerable subgroup of the general youth population, but it is unclear as to whether their features are precursors or results of their desire to leave home. Empirical evidence shows that runaway youths are more poorly adjusted socially and psychologically than are non-runaways (Rohr in Wobo, 2018). They are frequently marked by lower academic performance, higher rates of depression, troubled family relationships, and more engagement in delinquent behaviors. Some even claim that runaway youths possess sociopathy, given their indifference to society's rules and norms. Also, they are often characterized as socially isolated and impulsive individuals prone to elevated levels of aggression, especially when faced with frustration or adversity.

In addition to these behavior patterns, runaway youths often display passive aggressive behavior and traits related to specific personality disorders. Running away is often fundamentally an experience marked by deep-seated feelings of rupture and disconnection from family systems, which

have a significant impact on their social relationships. Consequently, such youths might learn manipulative or exploitative behavior as part of adapting to their social surroundings. Furthermore, the longstanding distrust towards others often informs their perspective of reality and this influences such individuals to lose esteem for norms around social behaviour and interactions. The emotional detachment coupled with behavioral maladjustment along parallel lines has often made their integration into stable social and institutional systems difficult.

Finding from the study carried out by Rescorla, Parker, & Stolley in Sampson (2019) show that runaway youths that are girls are more likely to develop “internalizing” problems such as depression and anxiety, while runaway youths that are boys are more likely to struggle with dysfunctional “externalizing” behaviour such as aggression. While, Bao, Whitbeck, & Hoyt (2010) in their study on abuse, support, and depression among homeless and runaway adolescents, found no significant difference between runaway female and male on high rates of depression. Julianelle (2017) found from his study that mental health treatment can be very difficult for runaway youths to access.

Developmental and Educational Deficits

Empirical research shows runaway behavior has an immense and negative impact on the cognitive development and educational attainment of homeless youths. According to Medcalf (2018), runaway adolescents, particularly those enrolled in either secondary or tertiary institutions, are especially at risk for developmental adversities relative to their housed low-income peers. In fact, they are up to four times as likely to be behind in several areas of development, including language skills, reading skills, social and personal development and gross or fine motor skills. These deficits combined act as barriers to their progression through academia and intellectual growth.

Herbers et al. (in press), further support this view (2012) Intervening and working with children experiencing poverty, writer homelessness, or residential instability, they found that though childhood poverty is a significant risk factor for poor academic trajectories, the combined effects of homelessness and frequent mobility dramatically increase these risks. Runaway children, especially those who are in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning often suffer severe educational disruption due to frequent changes in residence (Sampson, 2019). This kind of instability severely compromises the prospect of continuity, learning and academic engagement.

According to Dworsky (2018), runaway youths transfer from school more often than others, and do so at key times in the academic year. Mid-term transitions are associated with significant learning interruptions, missed instruction time and curriculum discontinuity. The National Center for Homeless Education (2016) estimates that every school transfer means a loss of four to six months of academic progress. The

cumulative impact from these repeated disruptions leads to chronic academic underachievement and skill gaps for runaway students.

Longitudinal studies have shown that residential mobility can affect academic results far into the future. This is the case even when those disruptions happen before any learning outcome can be assessed, such as in third grade — they simply lead to differences in reading outcomes that impact long-term educational trajectories (Voight, Shinn and Nation 2012). Masten (2012) argues that efforts to help close the academic gap, especially in urban education systems in which mobility has such a strong association with poverty, will be fruitless if invisible problems associated with mobility are ignored. United Way of New York City also found that runaway youths were more likely to be absent from school than their housed, low-income counterparts, furthering compounding the disadvantages they face in their education.

Buckner, Bassuk and Weinreb (2011) complemented these findings, reporting that although housing status matters to the academic performance of low-income and homeless children, it is school absenteeism that offers a more potent predictor. Attendance problems are not the only academic challenge runaway youths face; they also struggle with participation and engagement in the classroom (Fantuzzo et al., 2012), making it even more difficult for them to succeed academically. Indeed, Gargiulo (2016, p. 360) observes that the proportion of runaway youths diagnosed with psychological disorders is approximately twice as high as those who have a roof over their heads at home, suggesting a link between mental health challenges and difficulties in staying in school. Together, these factors underpin the intricate and layered obstacles that impede runaway youths from achieving academic success.

- **Survival difficulties:** Who wants to die; and so survival becomes a major concern (for most), as a result the runaway incidents are poorly planned. Food for instance, is often scavenged by some combination of panhandling or shoplifting or begging. If not, they sleep in the care, under the bridges, garages etc. When money runs out, there is often no work to be found as they are underage, and not possess the skills nor maturity or legal acceptability to even be hired. This leads to exploitation and abuse.
- **Vulnerability to exploitation and abuse:** Many teenage runaways end up as tragic figures. Most of them especially the girls are taken in to work as prostitutes while the boys become cultists and bandits. Most of these girls end up being abused by men thrice their age; and they will still not report it because they went willingly. At this point, the victim sees the sexual exploitation as a small price to pay for the attention they received just because they provided with the basics i.e. food, clothing, shelter and companionship.
- **Criminal behaviour:** Problems with law is inevitable because going away and the simple necessities of being

alive create situations that produce illegal behaviour, runaways are likely to be charged with disorderly conduct and possession and use of alcohol and other drugs they find themselves labelled “wayward” or “uncontrollable” shoplifting.

- **Other effects are:** Runaway kids also often suffer from malnutrition and poor health. They frequently experience intense levels of guilt, shame and low self-worth which can push them into depression. They are usually psychosocially impaired or hardwired into a suffering state of victimization and dependency that may be very difficult to overcome.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

This study on the runaway youth has serious implications for Counselling. This study has the implication for counselling services to be provided for runaway youths. This will enable runaway youths to seek assistance that will enable them realize the importance of being with their parents.

The counsellors can invite parents to discuss with them on how best to assist their children in order to fully harness their relationship. This will further enhance or comment parents-Child relationship. This also include encouraging parents allow their children gain all necessary educational experiences.

The implication of the study has necessitated the need for training institutions responsible for the training of counsellors to include in their curriculum courses that will enable the counsellors-in training acquire skills and knowledge that will make them efficient in discharging their duties such as counselling a runaway youthful client.

Another implication of this study is the need to make counselling service functional to runaway youth's. It is not enough to establish counselling services but to make it functional by providing all needed facilities and equipment that will enhance the capacity of the counsellors in discharging their functions such that it will help enhancing the counselor focus on child counseling beyond address tracing and supporting runaway youth in dealing with trauma.

The Biblical Perspective of Runaway

We all are aware or must have heard the famous story of the prodigal son whose story is told by Jesus in the St. Luke's chapter 15. Not long after he, the young son left the house to a far country and there was famine and he began to be in need. He hired himself to a citizen of that country and his employer sent to be attending to his pigs in the process, he began to drag food (pods) with pigs.

The observation here is that the prodigal son felt that he could do better on his own. To him, freedom was getting away from his family. Soon enough, he realized he was in bondage, a slave to survival and to his boss.

SOLUTIONS/HOW TO RESPOND TO THE PROBLEM OF RUNAWAY THREATS AND ATTEMPTS

It is not always feasible to guess how teens will run. Smart parents, adults, and guardians should be aware of the probable reasons for fleeing conduct, such as abuse, feeling alone, rebellion, feeling like they don't have control, and fear. They should also try to fix the problem before it starts.

Some possible Suggestions that may help in Managing running Behaviour among youths are:

- (1) **Listen:** Parents should make out time to talk and listen to their younger ones at length, especially when the signs of running behaviour is observed and evidenced. Some helpful questions may include:
 - When did you first think of running away?
 - What makes you want to run?
 - What do you think running will do for you?
 - What things do you think would have to change in order for you to not think about running?
- (2) **Empathize:** Always consider matters from the youthful aspect although one may not entirely agree with the youths always. This will make them believe that you have their good thoughts at heart.
- (3) **Affirm:** When the youth eventually resume, reassurance and protection should be the message. The child/youth receives and not criticism, communicate unconditional love, acceptance, etc.
- (4) **Direct:** A workable outline for helping a family and a youth who exhibits running behaviour should be provided. Steps to take are:
 - (i) **Step 1:** Seeking an arbitrator who the family members agree chi—Because one feels battered by the other and there is absence of trust. So the person selected to help has to be acceptable to all parties. The arbitrator could be a trusted, compassionate neighbor, teacher or friend.
 - (ii) **Step 2:** Verbalizing the issue – The arbitrator will start probing the issue and assessing each individual's role. Understand will come and things will course begin to come in together as this is built get done.
 - (iii) **Step 3:** Commitment to the plan – Once there is an understanding and crisis has been addressed, work must begin on getting through problems.
 - (a) Get suggestions from each members of the family to help in solving the problem.
 - (b) Help the family select a concrete plan of action.
 - (c) Gain commitment from each member to a plan.

- (d) Provide the tools needed to implement the plan.
- (e) Establish an evaluation procedure.
Above all, encourage the family and runaway to turn to God, to enter into a relationship with God.

Refer: Do not assume that because a runaway returns home problems is solve, always refer a professional to interfere.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Counselors should work more intensively with parents and the family in understanding the home situation (which causes their children to run away) before considering restoration of the child to the same environment.
2. Counselors should work with the community within which the child is restored to ensure that the family of a runaway child and the child itself gets the community support when restored.
3. Since counselling is "a helping profession ", it is counsellors in collaboration with health personnel should form an NGO (a nongovernmental organization) which would be committed to the provision of adequate care for the runaway youth in order to enhance their adjustment to life.

CONCLUSION

From the study runaway can be defined as leaving or staying away on purpose, knowing you would be missed, and intending to stay away from home for at least some time. The cause of runaway among youths includes conflict with parent's abuse, depression, drug abuse and fear of failure.

Living as a runaway youth can be exceptionally harmful to family and the society at large. Living in a shelter or on the street can be unhygienic, dangerous, and disordered. The runaway is at great risk of sustaining physical damage, including injuries and infections. Youths who live as runaway also suffer all-embracing emotional harm. Living as a runaway also corrodes youth's sense of privacy, security, and trust. The education of runaway youths in peril, as homelessness makes attending school and meeting learning goals exceptionally difficult.

Counselling services should be provided for runaway youths. This will enable runaway youths to seek assistance that will enable them realize the importance of being with their parents. Parents should be encouraged to allow their children gain all necessary educational experiences.

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