

## Repositioning the Family for Economic Survival in a Challenging Society: Research Imperatives

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### Abstract

This paper reviewed the concept of family; changes in the family as well as the role of research in assisting families cope with economic changes. Family is a source of emotional and psychological strength for its members. It meets the economic requirements of its members' families by acting as a production and consumption unit. Over the years a lot of changes have taken place in the family. Urbanization, mobility of population, education, new sexual morality, new direction of recreation are some of the factors. Research can help the family to survive economic challenges. The following are ways research can contribute to economic development of the society which includes the family. Research result can help in cutting cost of production, make large contribution to the economic growth and overall national welfare. This will benefit the family because the family is the basic unit of society. The growth of the foremost countries of the world is as a result of research. Maintaining financial stability is a means of being able to meet monthly expense and still have a little savings. To maintain sound financial stability one must have savings hence having a set amount automatically saved each month. Families should cut out or reduce expenses, invest in their future and never do impulse buying. Conclusively, families are no longer what they used to be. Poverty, scarcity and all forms of economic hardship threaten the existence of the family. Research has to be carried out to identify how families can cope even in the very harsh economic times.

**Keywords:** Family, Role, Research, Economic Development, Survival Strategies

### Introduction

The Family is an institution for carrying out essential production, consumption, reproduction and accumulation functions that are associated with social and economic impairment of individuals and societies. The Family has been defined in various ways by different authors. According to Mondal (2020) is an intimate group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating or legal ties. It can be described as the smallest and most basic social unit which is also the most

important group in any society. The family can also be seen as a social group made up of a father, mother and children. It is the most immediate group a child is exposed to and has tremendous influence in the life of a person from birth until death. It plays a great role in the life of every individual as it cares and empowers. The family is responsible for all round survival of an individual in every situation.

### **Meaning of family**

The family has been defined by different authors Bierstedt (2002) stated that family is a more or less a durable association of husband and wife, with or without child or of a man or woman alone with children. Family is the biological social unit composed of husbands, wife and children. Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and inter-communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter brother and sister, creating common culture (Eliot and Meoull 2002). The family has the following characteristics

- It is universal
- Family is based on marriage which result in a mating relationship between two adults of opposite sex
- Provides an individual with a name thereby acting as a source of nomenclature
- Helps in tracing ancestry
- Is the most important group in any individual's life
- It is the basic group in the socialization process
- It is the most important group in society and it is the nucleus of all institutions, organisations and groups
- Family is based on emotions and sentiments, it provides basis of family ties
- Family is made up of different economic and social roles

### **Traditional role of the family**

Traditionally the family has the following roles:

1. Through the family, procreation takes place. Sexual relations are sanctioned outside marriage
2. The process of reproduction is only institutionalized, regulated and controlled in a family
3. Family helps in propagation of the human species and perpetuation of the human race
4. Provides individual with identity and name from one generation to another
5. Family is a source of strength, emotional and psychological for its members. Every member depends on the family
6. Family fulfills the economic needs of its members families are the production and consumption units. They produce what they need
7. Family is traditionally responsible for the education of the children

### **Changes that have taken place in families and reasons for the change**

Over the years a lot of changes have taken place in the family. Dominant family dynamics are changing. These changes include the following

1. Decline in the average family size: All over the world fertility rate is going down. As a result the average household in the 2000s saw a declining trend in the number of children born to families. Average size is now 2-5 in 2018 (White 2019).
2. Single family homes are on a rise. The average single – family home size was approximately 1590 square feet but this has changed to 1000 feet
3. More mothers are entering the workforce. Earlier mothers were confined to staying at home to look after their kids but many women are now having access to education and entering the workforce. According to

US Department of labor, more than 50% of mothers have joined the workforce representing 47% of working women (Whete 2019).

4. Single Parent Home: Single parent homes are on the increase with an increasing divorce rate instability of marriages and personal choices of lifestyle has led to this phenomenon.
5. Adolescent motherhood: This is of a special concern as they tend to have low educational attainment, when married they suffer high rates of mutual stress and their employment tends to be restricted to marginal economic sectors. The children of these adolescent mothers are likely to live in poverty.
6. Increasing families from non-mainstream cultures internal and international migration is fast becoming a norm. Many families within Nigeria are suffering from internal migration caused by instability occasioned by sacking of people from their homes by bandits forcing people to live in internally Displaced Camps (IDP). This has brought about changes on lifestyle poverty and lack of resources.

#### **Factors that Brought Changes in the Family**

Whenever any change takes place it leaves an impact on other aspects society as well. All these become reasons for bringing about change in the family also. These reasons can be social, political, philosophical and economic (Applebury, 2022) social reasons. These include, urbanization, mobility of population, education, new sexual morality, new direction of recreation.

*Political reason:* These include change in authority and women's right.

*Philosophical:* In the olden times, marriages in the society were thought to be fixed in heaven Marriages was thought to be a religious binding, releasing the partners from bondage only after death. This is not the attitude today where marriage is considered as a contract that may be broken. In older times, individuals had very close ties with blood relations. This kinship and attachments of oneness is becoming rare.

*Economic Reasons:* Industrialization, material standard of living and economic independence of women have brought about changes. Other forms of economic challenges include high rate of unemployment and under employment. Increasing inequality with many not being included in the growth process. High rate of poverty and low growth, volatile growth rate depending on only one source of national income for example oil in Nigeria. Scarcity even in the presence of unlimited wants. Inconsistent redistribution of income and how to deal with external costs occasioned by debt servicing (Pettinger 2020).

Apart from these economic challenges already mentioned there are for basic economic problems facing the family arising from scarcity of resources. These are:

- What to produce
- How to produce
- For whom to produce
- What provision if any are to be made for (Pettinger 2020) this involves families deciding of production based on availability of different factors of production and their prices, distribution of goods and services and sustainability of resources

### **The role of Research in the Economic life of the Family**

Having analyzed the problems faced by families especially economic challenges in this segment of our discussion lets us see how research can help the family to survive these economic challenges.

Many authors including Ewell (2010) have suggested the following as ways research can contribute to economic development of the society which includes the family. Research produces new products. New products are usually as a result of research. Research results from R & D designs or even any form of research design bring out new product which can help the family to grow. Research also creates new jobs and new industries for example research results in R & D if followed, lends itself to new development jobs and new industries which provide employment for family members.

Research result can help in cutting cost of production. For example in the production of cotton fabric, the hand 100m, paver or automatic 100ms are available, however research will reveal which one will require more labour, more time and resources.

Research can make large contribution to the economic growth and overall national welfare. This will benefit the family because the family is the basic unit of society. It is no gainsaying that research can spearhead national growth. The growth of the foremost countries of the world is as a result of research. Research can lead to the formation of family policies (UN 1997). Such family policies can lead to the following:

- Poverty eradication
- Increase in child care
- Increase in health status
- Better educational standards

- Counselling services available to the family which can help in conflict resolution among couples, avoiding breakdown of marriages, solving property and housing problems, stress management, domestic and family violence, youth intervention programs and children at risk for example IDP Problem.

Research can be of help in helping fathers in child rearing. Seminars and workshops can be organized where research result are disseminated for fathers. This will help them acquire parenting skills, thereby promoting gender equality. If the Nigerian male dominated house of senate and house of representative members have been availed with research results on the family I don't think they will reject the gender based bills that they have rejected.

### **Approaches to Economic Survival by Families/Coping Strategies for Repositioning Families**

In the face of all the challenges facing families the following are suggested approaches to survival of families.

- a. **Job loss** which is one of the economic challenges families, individuals should take up lower-pay jobs to reduce short term pressure in meeting basic needs and obligations while looking for high-paying jobs (Ologbon-Ori, 2016).

He also suggests that individuals should register with professional job-finder organizations for effective job search family members can consider career change or acquiring new sellable skills.

- Relocation can also be done in order to position oneself competitively

- Borrowing from friends and families can also be a source of cushioning job loss

b. **Family relationship** friction which is prevalent in this period of economic hardship can be taken care of. Families should synchronize bonds and work together, plan together and execute together. Families can plan to have a meal together at a decent and low profited restaurant. They can cancel holidays abroad and sell some of their properties that they “tucked” away.

**c. Loss of opportunities**

Family should key into advantages provided by government or organizations e.g the legendary SURE-P programme.

Families should research and find out investors and partners they could key into:

**Financing Education**

- Families should switch their children to cheaper good quality schools with good standards. Children could be sent to good public universities. Children especially the undergraduates can combine work with schooling for self financing.
- Be part of family businesses
- Children could be made to be part of family business where they can replace some of the employees working for the families in order to save resources.

**Acquisition of Skill**

Families should encourage family members to acquire vocational skills other than what they studied in school. These skills they can fall back on in these trying times of need. During holidays

children can learn skills e.g computer skills, catering skills among others.

**Entrepreneurship**

Families should go entrepreneurial, they should establish small scale businesses. Like computer businesses, agricultural business like fish ponds, poultry, horticulture. In order to succeed in these businesses family members must acquire entrepreneurial skill. They must do SWOT analysis of the environment they live in. They should start small and gradually nurture the business. They must acquire competencies in Managerial skills, accounting and financial skills, marketing and sales skills and other general business skills like basic steps in starting a business.

**Sound Finance Management**

Families should make sure they are debt free thus maintaining financial stability financial stability is a means of being able to meet monthly expense and still have a little savings. It involves proper planning and living within their means. To maintain sound financial stability one must

- Have savings hence having a set amount automatically saved each month
- Never do impulse buying, plan for what to buy, budget for what to buy
- Be wise and manage your impulse saving
- Evaluate your expenses and live frugally
- Track your expenses. Families should cut out or reduce expenses
- Decide if each expense is really necessary
- Invest in their future. Start planning for retirement when the strength is still there

- Keep your family secure, save for emergency and not be dependent on anybody
- Use the envelope system for savings
- Pay bills promptly and do not allow them to accumulate
- Grow your net worth, look for new ways to make money using what you have
- Seek for alternative jobs
- Do not fall victim to many related stress and worry
- Be organized and focused
- Consider priorities: families should prioritize their needs. They should come to terms with the realities of the economic times.

### Conclusion

In this hard economic times, families must adopt copying strategies listed in order to survive. Family and family values have changed. Families are no longer what they used to be. There has been changes in life style, incidence of divorce, separation cohabitation, formal marriages of same sex partners, voluntary childlessness, one parent household among others have been on the increase. Poverty, scarcity and all forms of economic hardship threaten the existence of the family. To avoid the extinction of this basic institution called the family researches have to be carried out to identify how families can cope even in the very harsh economic times.

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