Implications of Family Conflicts in Nigeria

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Abstract

The basic unit of any given society from where the impartation of the societal values begins is the family. As important and functional as the family system can be and ought to be, it is disheartening to discover that most homes and family institutions are now in disarray as a result of various degrees of conflicts which are either not handled or mishandled. Conflicts within the family system can be very devastating and has caused a lot of impropriety and mal-functioning in many homes, thus, eventually giving rise to a malfunctioning society. It is therefore to this extent that this study aims at examining the impact of conflicts on the family system and the overall implications both on the family system and the nation Nigeria. This study employs both survey and analytical method of research in acquiring the facts presented in this work. The ''Social Exchange Theory'' propounded by Homans George was applied in this study. The study recommends that devoted attention should be given to the building and sustenance of a positive and workable family system by all persons, organisations and the government. The Government is expected to inculcate into the nations' education system a workable curriculum which projects the process of dealing with conflicts most especially in the homes.

Keywords: Conflict, Family, Institutions, Implications, Nigeria

Introduction

The family system is a very important and vital unit of the system. It is from the family that procreation, growth, development and positive value system can be generated. The sustenance of a nations' social and economic development is one that has its bearing to the kind of family units and system within its territory, thus the need for government to focus on creating an enabling environment for the effective operations of the family system. In the recent times, the nation has been plagued with all kinds of devastating crises bordering on religion and ethnicity all because of the failures of the family system upon which the indigenous Nigeria is built. Presently in Nigeria, the family system and its attendant positive values are gradually becoming a thing of the past as our lives are now marked with all kinds of vices as against virtues of morality, contentment and national unity. Nepotism and the likes have now become the order of the day instead of the projection of skills, excellence and integrity which are the core and basic foundation upon which family units ought to be built. The family system is so important that it is being regarded as one of the basic social institutions. According to Patterson (2002), families serve several functions for society. Some of which revolved around the family formation with membership, economic support, socialization, protection of vulnerable members among others. Shaffer (2000) stated that, the three basic goals which families have for their children are: survival, economic self-sufficiency, and self-actualization. These three goals are symbolic to various cultures in human society. Although, there are differences in the types of families in the world but they have certain things in common. As such, it is the work of educators, scholars, philosophers, sociologist in particular and social scientist in general to distinguish the characteristics of families in order to foster the uniqueness of family development in human society (Christian, 2015).

In the contemporary society, the family has been observed to be faced with numerous social problems such as, family disorganization, spouse battering, family violence, divorce, and separation. The family system is presently under siege as it is being faced with a barrage of institutional problems which are majorly caused by incidence of conflict and lack of appropriates management systems. The ugly situation has invariably led to severe implications on the members of the family vis-à-vis the children, the spouse, the extended family system and the society at large. Consequent upon the above, scholars from varying human disciplines such as Burgess & Locke (1976) have beamed their academic searchlight on the dynamics of family conflict and there have been

arguments, counter arguments on the real condition of the situation. It is therefore for the above stated facts and many more unmentioned that this study seeks to consider the implications of conflicts on the family system in Nigeria and also provides probable solutions in that regard.

Statement of the Problem

This study is set out to look at the crisis affecting home institutions in Nigeria vis-à-vis its overbearing negative influence on family life which it's expected harmonious existence and structures are being gradually eroded as a result of mishandled conflicts. The consequences of conflict in any given society are highly severe, most particularly on the family social set-up where its overwhelming negative influence is wreaking serious havoc. The overbearing negative influence of home based conflicts in this contemporary world is very alarming and the impact are quite enormous and devastating and among such are the problems associated with ''divorce'' as caused by different factors like, infertility, adultery, economic problems, social problems, breakdown of morals and value system and etc. It is in the affirmation of this that Oke (2003) projected that infertility and battery are occurring at alarming rate in the society and it is a veritable base for the incidence of family problems. Wells (1975) also in the support of this assertion stated though adultery does not really lead to family institutional problem because it is rarely used as a legal ground for divorce, yet it has contributed to a greater extent to the barrage of incidence of broken homes in Nigeria. Furthermore, Wells (1975) is of the opinion that family conflicts are indication of an invalid societal social morals and value system. Where the family or home institutions are in the right order, the society at large will be devoid of all forms of crimes and vices as is being experienced presently in our nations. It is on this that Shek (2009) stated that marital satisfaction has great implication on the state of health and life of individuals within a society.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research was to investigate the conflicts experienced in family institutions in relation to their implications on family lives and value system. The study also postulates ways and mechanism by which these crises can be eradicated or reduced to the barest minimum.

Scope, Area and Population of Study

This research work was conducted in Ado Odo Ota Local Government Area and Ifo Local Government Area of Ogun State. The sampled communities include Ifo, Sango, Owode, Lanfewa, Ota and Arigbajo. The population sample was drawn from 450 respondents randomly selected for questioning.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher employed the ''Social Exchange Theory''. This theory was propounded by Homans George (1961). This theory implies interaction between two or more individuals or groups. A social interaction is also exchange relationships. Two persons are in exchange relations when one gives or receives gifts, services etc from the other. In this exchange theory, I understand that husband and wife are expected to receive good services from each other. When the services are not rendered appropriately, problems will arise. People also exchange greetings, good deeds etc, while living in societies. In the same manner, money and commodities change hands in the market and daughters are exchanged for bride wealth between two social groups during marriages. Why conflict theory is chosen in this study, is because family performs those primary functional fundamentals to human and social life, so without the sexual and reproductive function of the family, society cannot continue to exist and without economic functions it will not be sustained. People get married because they have needs and expectation to satisfy. When these needs are not gotten, conflict will arise, which destabilizes the family.

Literature Review

Concept of Family: According to Ooms and Preister (2005), a family comprises of two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption A commonly used definition is that of the Census Bureau, which considered family as a householder and one or more other persons living in the same household who are related to the

householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (Census Bureau, 1990). This definition includes many family types commonly regarded as families including traditional families (breadwinner husband, homemaker wife and their children), remarried families, dual-earner families, and single parent families. Murdock (1949) defines family as a "social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. In this study family refers to, a basic social unit consisting of parents and their children whether dwelling together or not. Burgess and Locke, (1976) defines family as a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting with each other in their respective social role of husband and wife, mother and father, brother and sister creating a common culture.

Home as an Institution: Certainly, there are different dimensions by which the concept of ''home'' can be explained. The definition can be viewed legally, socially, environmentally or philosophically and etc depending on the focus of the writer. The focus of this research is in alignment with the definition of Brink. According to Brink"s argument, home cannot not simply refer to a concrete structure, but to an abstraction; that the term „home" was not viewed as referring to the property itself, or at least, was: "…not limited to the exclusively physical habitation itself, but include[d] concepts of dwelling and affection." Thus, in relation to this study, institution is defined as an established system of human interactions whether legally or socially and recognized. The most important factor in the definition of institution herein is that it must provide an acceptable platform for human relationships and these includes marriage institution, home institution, educational institution and etc.

Concept of Conflict: The world conflict is taken from the Latin word "conflitus" meaning "stuck together", conflict lexically means clash, contention, confrontation, a battle or struggle, controversy or quarrel (Nwolise, 1997:28). Conflict as an element of social interaction has evoked a lot of arguments; suffice to say that there are as many definitions of conflict as there are scholars. Conflict can be referred to as anytypes or forms of contention between an identified groups of people such as home, community, organisations which most often times are occasioned as a result of expectations not met. Chung and Megginson (2012) define conflict as the struggle between incompatible or struggling needs, wishes, ideas, interests or people. Conflict arises when individuals or groups encounter goals that both parties cannot obtain satisfactorily. Coser (cited in Otite 2001) defines conflict as a struggle over values and claims of scarce status, power and resources, in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals.

Family Conflict: Family conflict refers to active opposition between family members. Because of the nature of family relationships, it can take a wide variety of forms, including verbal, physical, sexual, financial, or psychological. Conflicts may involve different combinations of family members: it can be conflict within the couple or between parents and children or, again, between siblings. All interpersonal conflicts, whether they occur between family members, romantic partners, or groups, have certain elements in common. It refers to any family arrangement characterized by frequent conflict, inadequate parental control, weak integration and a couple's propensity to dissolve an existing marriage, even though dissolution may not take place.

Implication of Home Conflict: Home conflict can really be harrowing and devastating and this justifies the reasons scholars have focused on the general effects of marital conflicts on overall family functioning (Cox, Paley, & Harter, 2001; Erel & Burman, 1995; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000; Dunn & Davies, 2001). Some of these effects are stated to include; serious negative impact on the children of the divorcee (Amato & Keith, 1991; Buchanan & Heiges, 2001); parental depression (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Downey & Coyne, 1990); alcoholism (El-Sheikh & Cummings, 1998); and physical and sexual abuse (Appel & Holden, 1998; Howes, Cicchetti, Toth, & Rogosch, 2000). It has also been proved that Children of the divorced parent have worse cognitive, behavioral and health outcome in general than children born into more stable family (Duke-Natrebo, 2014).

Conflict Resolution in Homes: In furtherance of the above, one of the core areas of marital conflict dynamics that has attracted the attention of scholars is the area of conflict resolution. Accordingly, researchers have

devoted efforts to analyze conflict resolution from different aspects even as related to religion as a prime factor. For example, Somotade (1998); Amao-kehinde (1999) had worked on marital conflict resolution strategies among selected couples in Ijebu Ode. Prayer as a conflict resolution ritual was considered in the work of Lehrer, & Chiswick (1993). Lambort & Dollahit, (2006) researched on how religiosity helps couples prevents, resolves, and overcomes marital conflict. Bye and large, what could be inferred from the discussion thus far is that the occurrence of conflict in the family is on the increase and there is the need to find ways and means to bring the ugly incidence into minimal control.

Importance of Home/Family: The family is one of the basic and fundamental social institutions. The family is described as such due to the important functions it performs among the people in the society. From the functionalist point of view, the family performs numerous important functions for the survival and continuity of human society. There is no society, no matter the era in which it functioned and has developed, in which family is missing. In other words, from the most remote times to present, the family is the most common form of social organization. To highlight this, the American anthropologist George Murdock (1897-1985) in his work entitled Social Structure (1949) examined a total of 259 societies and discovered that all of them has a family organization basically. Therefore, despite of the variety of forms in which family can occur, the family is a universal social institution. Some of the basic functions of the family are: sexual satisfaction, procreation, protection, socialization, social capital and so on. Members are living together, to undertake various joint activities, to contribute with resources necessary to life, and to have children. At least two of the family members have sexual relations, in accordance with the norms of the society in which they live. In other words, a married woman may have not only permitted sexual relations with her husband but also with all the men from similar age group. It is a matter of the norms available in Mosaic society, that the husband to have nothing to object when a good friend asks for permission to have sex with his wife. The one who decides ultimately is, moreover, his wife. In Banora society, from Papua New Guinea, the husband cannot have intimate relations with his wife, before she gave birth to a child whose father is a friend of him. Murdock (1949) argued that the family has four basic social functions: sexual regulations, reproduction, economic cooperation and socialization/education. The first function that performs family as a social institution is that of regulation sexual behavior. In this sense requires a finding that is that there is no society which leaves people to express their sexual behaviors as they want, but there are a whole set of written and unwritten rules/norms that prohibit certain ways of sexual behavior. For example, in many societies, the practice of sexuality is not permitted during periods of mourning, in the periods of various religious ceremonies, while the woman is pregnant or during menstruation. Murdock (1949) argues that, despite significant differences between the various societies. The second function that fulfils the family in society is reproduction. In order to develop, each society needs new generations of young people to replace the old people and this cannot be merely in three ways: by reproduction, migration or conquest of other societies. The third function is economic cooperation function. It is assertion that the family constitutes the basic economic unity. It has the role of satisfy the basic needs of its members, which consist mainly in food, housing, health and comfort in general. The situation has changed in modern societies, where some of the economic aspects traditionally belonging to the family were taken over by other social institutions. And in the final analysis,the fourth function of the family is education or rather better portrayed ''socialization''. In fact, family is the primary agent of socialization, and as such, it is not just a producer of biological kind, is not limited to reproduction, but has a fundamental role in the use by children of a certain language, learning a set of values, beliefs, skills, etc. Most of the times, socialization provided by the family as the primary group is so complex that it is not notified of every individual in the actual running time of this process.

Causes of Conflict in the Family/Home Structure: The family institution in Nigeria is being subjected to quite a lot of problems as occasioned by several enormous factors. Though some of these need not occasion a fatal outcome on the family system and structure but the reverse has been the case because of impropriety on the part of the parties involved. Some of these factors highlighted by various authors include; gender role quality (Campbell & Snow, 2002), financial status (Bria, 2019), sexual dysfunction (Oyewo, 2012), children (Akanbi,

2004) and a host of others. Oyedepo (2001) & Awok, (2003) identified age in marriage as an important factor causing marital conflict. Otuji (2000), Genda (2002), identified childlessness as one of the factors associated with marital conflict.

Analysis of Field Work

This area of the study presents and analyses the responses of respondents as to different vital questions posed on the field.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Areas/Communities

Areas	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Arigbajo	90	20
Lanfewa	80	17.7
Ifo	90	20
Ota	110	24.4
Owode	80	17.7
Total	**160**	**100**

Source: Field Work, Iroye Samuel Opeyemi, 2020

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents' Views on the Major Causes of Family Conflict

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Financial Problem	65	14.4
Different Cultural System	52	11.5
Sexual Orientation	60	13.3
Gender Role Contention	30	6.6
Trust Issues	32	7.1
Infertility	42	9.3
Communication Problem	29	6.4
All of the above	140	31.1
Total	**160**	**100**

Source: Field Work, Iroye Samuel Opeyemi, 2020

The result emanating from the question relating major causes of conflict within the family cycle revealed that majority of the respondents' beliefs that all the options given are all major factors causing problems in homes. The percentage of the options chosen shows close range differences which imply that all options are very important factors that can breed conflicts in homes.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents' views on the Implications of family conflict

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Broken Marriage	95	21.1
Single Parentage	82	18.2
Domestic Violence	144	32
Homeless Children	15	3.3
Drug Abuse	12	2.6
Socially Misfit Persons	102	22.6
Total	**160**	**100**

Source: Field Work, Iroye Samuel Opeyemi, 2020

The result emanating from the question relating to the implications of conflict on the family system revealed that majority of the respondents stated that an easy outcome of conflict in the home is ''Domestic Violence'' and this represents the 32% of the respondents. Closely related to that is the likelihood of producing socially misfit persons which represents the 22.6% of the respondents. 21.1 % of the respondents believe that broken marriage could be the aftermath of conflicts at home. Notwithstanding that the choice rate of the other factors are lower, the result of the data collection proofs that all of the highlighted elements could be adduced as the major implications of conflict within the family system in the study area.

Summary of Major Findings

In the general analysis, the findings here show that quite a lot of factors occasioned conflict in the home and the variety of these includes, Financial Problem, Different Cultural System, Sexual Orientation, Gender Role Contention, Trust Issues, Infertility and Communication Problems. If all these elements are taken cognizance of

and well attended to in the various Nigerian homes, issues of conflict may be either eliminated or reduced to the barest minimum. Furthermore, it is discovered in this study by the data presented and analyzed that where conflicts are allowed to germinate within the family system it could occasion serious devastating and damaging effects such as, broken marriages, single parentage, domestic violence, homeless children, socially misfit persons and drug abuse. All these factors are elements causing a ravaging impact on the home systems and family lives and these can eventually occasion serious destruction and disruption of the national polity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The family system is germane to the national development and it should therefore not be relegated to the background most especially as it concerns its relevance within the different policies of the government. If it is ensured that government policies take cognizance of creating an enabling atmosphere for dealing with family issues, it will go a long way in helping to prevent several needless crises within the society. It is therefore in this regard that this study recommends that a department of the government operation should be made to focus on carrying out enlightenment programmes for the total child development which incorporates the values of conflict prevention and resolution right from the cradle. This study also recommends that the Nation's educational curriculum be developed to incorporates home making and home building values most especially as it relates to healthy communications among family members and this will help the individual within the family system to grow up with skills that will enable them to handle all forms of conflicts. It is recommended that the government establish in every communities of the state, counseling outfits where family members can take advantage of in times of crises. In the final analysis, it is worthy of note that the custodian of the culture of the people which includes the family system is the traditional institution, and if family matters will be adequately attended to, it will take the involvement of the traditional institutions of the people. It is also recommended the government ensure that relevance is given to the traditional institution more than ever before in the structure of governance in the nation.

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