

Family Binding Factors: The Role of Home Economics in Building Harmonious Communities across Borders

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ABSTRACT

The family is seen as the major institution for human and societal reproduction. It is the only known cultural agent for socialization and interaction in the traditional society. This study explored the possible factors responsible for binding the family as a unique entity, as the key institution responsible for regenerative function of human circulation, the basic foundation for creating life and the only source of promoting longevity and good quality of life thereby building harmonious communities both within and across borders. Secondary data from WHO on challenges of the contemporary families were adapted and a cross sectional survey design was employed to collect data from Umuahia North local government marriage registry of Abia State on number of registered marriages and how to locate some of them resident within. A structured interview questions comprising only 4 major sections addressing 22 major items on building harmony in the family, were administered to 400 married individuals compromising 250 male and 150 female and were all public/civil servants selected from both federal and state government owned ministries and departments. Simple frequency distribution and mean was used to analyse the responses from the respondents. All factors listed were classified as contributing majorly as key index in stimulating the family to harmony as all score above 3 points over and above 2.5 cut-off. It was observed not in any order that issues of concern include initial readiness to start up a family; separation, parenting issues; trust/honesty; unemployment, financial problems, ill-health, addiction, domestic violence, death, discrimination, greed/gluttony, stealing, lack of companionship, lack of communication among others constitute major index militating against the family in a contemporary society. The study recommended that Home Economics professionals, teachers and practitioners need to braze up to this responsibilities before 2030 if a strong and harmonious family is to be perceived. The study also recommended that most social vices in the contemporary families could be ameliorated if the intact families are peaceful.

Keyword: Family Binding Harmonious Communities
Home Economics.

INTRODUCTION

The family can be viewed as the first institution that originated from creation for the sole responsibility of regeneration and sustenance of human existence. The family could be seen as the basic unit of the society and the social structure of global community because of its conjugal and procreative nature (Mbah et al., 2019). The precise definition of the family can differ largely from time to time and from culture to culture (Kapur, 2018). In simple terms, the family is known to comprise social groups consisting of the father, mother, children, brothers, and sisters who are related by marriage, blood and or by adoption. Family includes people we love and those who love us as well as those we are connected to through a shared history and experience (Innis, 2016). Family is often taken for granted. It seems like a simple, natural part of everyday life, yet, within the family system, individuals develop enduring and vital relationships which give rise to creation of life, birth, childhood, education, marriage, parenting, retirement and death (Anyakoha, 2013). For most people, the family provides a special cushion and spring-board for numerous life decisions, challenges, demands and goals. The Family is fundamental for personality formation. As the first community to which a person is attached and the first authority under which a person learns to live, the family establishes society's most basic values. A family shares goals and values which reinforces relationship and cohesion in the family (Adebawale, 2014).

According to World Health Organization (2018) Life within a family is an inter-active, dynamic process, the individual and the group are constantly reacting in covert and overt ways. The significance of family cohesion to live in peace with good health and services has two levels; the first is the simple aggregation of the physical and mental well-being of the family members. This is the most obvious way to consider the concept but it represents only one part. One conceptual step further lies the recognition not only that the physical and mental health states of individual members of a

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family interact and are very important such that if neglected in any form could interfere with the peace and solemnity of the family as an entity. Though, interference in the family and among members may occur from time to time, but the quality of the relationship that exist determines the health status of each family unit. Thus, in a real sense, the family as a unit has a life of its own, with the individuals within it, acting as its agents. This complex web of interconnections influences the harmonious and stability of the family just as much as more abstract notions such as happiness and misery will rule some persons within the family and or among spouses.. The physical and mental health of members of a family may be related to that of other members either directly or indirectly. Directly, it may be a characteristic mode of behaviour such as, for example, certain child rearing practises which protect against or facilitate disease; or it may be genetic, the family providing the necessary link in the causal chain. An example of the indirect relationship would be illness that reduces the efficiency of an individual leading to loss of employment or the closure of a business. This may start a chain reaction within the family which can

affect the health of other individuals. Another common example of the indirect relationship is severe emotional strain within the family reverberating.

The society sees the family as a primary group, and the tasks it expects from the families to perform, are by no means continuous. Overtime the family has been undergoing significant changes in its structure and organization in most countries of the world including Nigeria. Prominent among the diverse changes is increase in the number of persons who opt for divorce and mutual or legal separation as alternatives to happy marriages (Scott, 2020). An example of this could be extracted from the population and housing census in Ghana in 2010, where divorce and separation rates among ever married persons were 58.6 and 32.2 per 1000, respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Although, divorce and separation in its actual prevalence is not well documented in Nigeria, previous studies indicate that high rates of divorce have been part of nuptial culture of many parts of Nigeria (Ntoimo, 2014).



A Happy Family

Source:Steemit.com

Peace and Harmony is the basic need of any nation even across borders, it is only when a nation enjoys peace and harmony that it would be able to prosper (Dodiya, 2017). The Constitution of many countries include laws to ensure political and social equality among the citizens in order to avoid clashes and maintain harmony among its citizens. People of a country may pretend to live peacefully with each other, often the peace is disturbed owing to some political, social, economic and religious factors. Price rise as a result of inflation and unemployment also creates unrest among the people. Most often, through observation and perceived overt judgement, it is highlighted that some of the factors contributing to marriage and relationship breakdown includes, unemployment and work related problems, communication, parenting, commitment etc(Scott, 2020). Much emphasis was laid on the importance attached to unemployment and other work related issues as factors contributing to marriage and relationship breakdown as pressures placed on family life from unemployment are great and have a strong impact on the well-being of relationships. Unemployment not only has the effect of causing financial hardship but also lowers self-esteem, creates isolation, trust issues and limits the ability of families to lead fulfilling lives in their respective communities (House of Representative committee, 1998). Similarly, at the other end of the spectrum, other families, due to financial pressures and fear of losing employment, are working longer hours with a consequent reduction in time for family. This in turn places additional stress and pressure on family life (House of Representative committee, 1998). Worse scenarios are the current uprising among teenagers, adolescents and youths in the global communities emanating from fundamental failure of the family function in proper raising of children and keeping harmonious families where peace and love rules.

Home Economics as a vocational education is the education designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation, encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment (Iyam and Bessong, 2019). It is to this end that the role of Home Economics in building harmonious communities across borders becomes pertinent for this study.

METHODOLOGY

Study design

A cross-sectional survey design was used.

Study area

The survey was carried out in Abia State.

Population of the study

The population of study included only couples that were registered with the marriage registry in Abia State.

Sample and sampling techniques

Sample size

Sample size for the study was determined using the formula by Yamane, Taro (1967)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where N = population under study

n= sample size

e= margin error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{1586}{1 + 1586 (0.05)^2}$$

= 400 respondents.

Sampling procedure

A purposive sampling technique was used to select couples that are registered with the marriage registry in Abia State. The total sample size was 400 made up of 250 male and 150 female.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was done using a structured interview questions constructed by the researcher. The questions were classified into four (4) sections. Section A assessed the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, section B examined the family issues of concern, section C assessed the information on family binding factors while section D examined the role of Home Economics in building harmonious communities across borders.

DATA ANALYSIS

A 5 point scale Likert scale was used to assess the family binding factors, with 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= not sure, 4= disagree and 5= strongly disagree. The decision rule was derived as $1+2+3+4+5 = 15 / 5 = 3$. Thus means equal to/greater than 3 was accepted while means less than 3 were rejected.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Statistical package for service solution (IBM SPSS v21) software was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation) was obtained for the data, while significance was judged at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHIC / SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

The demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents is presented in table 1 above. More than half 224 (56%) of the respondents were between the ages of 39-45 years while few 3 (0.8%) of them

were between 18-24 years of age. Many 250 (62.5%) of the respondents were males while some 150 (37.5%) of them were females. Some of the respondents were quite educated as some of them had tertiary education 164(41%), secondary education 127(31%) and primary education 85 (21.3%) respectively. 176 (44%) of the respondents were civil servants while 42 (10.5%) of them were unemployed. Less than half 164 (41%) of the respondents earned between ₦60,000- ₦89,999 monthly while 70 (17.5%) still eared less than ₦30, 000 monthly. Majority 327 (81.8%) of the respondents lived in rented

flat apartments while few 1 (0.3%) of them lived in rented one room apartments.

FAMILY ISSUES OF CONCERN

Table 2 shows the identified family issues of concern. The result revealed that all the identified family issues had acceptable means, among the identified family issues financial problem (4.70), divorce/separation (4.50), and domestic violence (3.50) all had higher means while death (3.40) and unemployment (3.20) had lower means.

Table 1. Demographic / socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Age range (yrs)		
18-24	3	0.8
25-31	31	7.8
32-38	62	15.5
39-45	224	56.0
46-52	80	20.0
Total	400	100
Gender		
Male	250	62.5
Female	150	37.5
Total	400	100
Education level		
No formal education	24	6.0
Primary	85	21.3
Secondary	127	31.8
Tertiary	164	41.0
Total	400	100
Occupation		
Unemployed	42	10.5
Civil servant	176	44.0
Trader/business woman	126	31.5
Artisan	56	14.0
Total	400	100
Monthly income		
Less than ₦30, 000	70	17.5
₦30, 000-₦59, 999	106	26.5
₦60, 000- ₦89, 999	164	41.0
₦90, 000 - ₦119,999	60	15.0
Total	400	100
Type of housing		
Rented flat apartments	327	81.8
Rented one room apartment	1	0.3
Own flat apartment	55	13.8
Own one room apartment	17	4.3
Total	400	100

Table 2. Identified family issues of concern

Items	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)	Mean ± Std. Dev.
Divorce/separation	113		4.50±0.21
Unemployment	125		3.20±0.01
Financial problem	85		4.70±0.08
Death	118		3.40±0.04
Domestic violence	88		3.50±0.01
Initial readiness to startup a family	93		3.72±0.04
Parenting issues	113		4.50±0.02
Communication	108		4.30±0.01

FAMILY BINDING FACTORS

Table 3 shows family binding factors. The result revealed that all the items had acceptable means, top among the factors that bind the family are humility (4.80), curdling and recreation (3.80) while other factors included trust and honesty (3.12) and economic security (3.00). This was supported by the higher percent (84.5%, 96%, 80.3%, and 70.8%) of the respondents reporting factors such as curdling and recreation, humility, trust and honesty and economic security respectively.

THE ROLE OF HOME ECONOMICS IN BUILDING HARMONIOUS COMMUNITIES ACROSS BORDER

The role of Home Economics in building harmonious communities across borders is presented in table 4 above. The result revealed that some of the roles played by Home Economics in building harmonious communities across border includes the role of education and training (4.17) reported by (92.5%) of the respondents, creativity, problem solving and entrepreneurial opportunities (3.98) reported by (87.5%) of the respondents, equipment for diversified employment opportunities (3.63) reported by (85%) of

the respondents and Home Economics extension services (3.44) reported by 68% of the respondents.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results revealed that demographic and socioeconomic characteristics are key factors in determining family studies as the data obtained were strong indicators in influencing family relationships. The results on family issues of concern indicates that the family shares some major issues of concern which probably could be part of shared disintegration of current family vices that are perceived to be generating and culminating into the uprising among communities and across borders. Proper examination of contemporary societies both within and across borders reveals that some functions of the family need to be revisited and addressed as quickly as possible.

Similarly, the results from the data analyzed also revealed that all issues raised for family binding factors were upheld indicating a very strong need that the family desire cohesion and close relationship among her members to be able to enjoy a harmonious relationship. In addition, some of the roles played by Home Economics in building harmonious communities across border includes the role of education and training (4.17).

Table 3. Family binding factors

Items	Mean ± Std. Dev.	Frequency	Percent
Curdling and recreation	3.80±0.03	338	84.5
Humility	4.80±0.04	384	96.0
Trust and honesty	3.12±0.02	321	80.3
Economic security	3.00±0.03	283	70.8

Table 4. Role of Home Economics in building harmonious communities across borders

Items	Mean ± Std. Dev.	Frequency	Percent
Education and training	4.17±0.24	370	92.5
Creativity, problem solving and entrepreneurial opportunities	3.98±0.02	350	87.5
Equipment for diversified employment opportunities	3.63±0.01	340	85.0
Home Economics extension services	3.44±0.04	272	68.0

At each level, the curriculum is made robust and appropriately designed to prepare individuals (youths and adults) to manage themselves, as well as their personal and family resources, to identify needs, set goals, apply resources, solve problems, attain goals and evaluate results (Anyakaoha, 2013). Creativity, problem solving and entrepreneurial opportunities (3.98) are synonymous with Home Economics because the factors are embedded in the philosophy of Home Economics as a major task. Every area of Home Economics (and they are many) is skill-oriented and capable of generating enormous self-employment/career opportunities for individuals (Anyakaoha, 2013). Home Economics therefore stimulates entrepreneurial spirit in the students and equips them with appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills to create jobs for themselves and others. Home Economics promotes self-employment and alleviates poverty. Home Economists are thus empowered to empower their families and households so that they can in turn challenge their challenges (Anyakaoha, 2013). Equipment for diversified employment opportunities (3.63)/ Home Economists are also prepared to work in numerous sectors of the economy. For instance, many industries focus on products and services consumed by families/households and appreciate the services of Home Economists in research, marketing, promotion, demonstrations to and training of households (consumers), among other numerous opportunities (Anyakaoha, 2013).

Generally, family relationships offer wonderful benefits for well-being, life satisfaction, and stress management, but none are without their challenges. These issues can put a strain on a couple, but working through them can either strengthen their bond or push them apart, depending on how they handle the challenges they face. Working through marriage and family problems in a healthy way can be very difficult, especially because stressors can come from many different sources.

The most common sources of marital stress and marriage problems.

Money Problems

The stress of fighting over money constitutes one of the most often cited marriage problems that couples face. Generally speaking, when couples engage in conflicts about money, their dispute is really symbolic of something different—power struggles, different values and needs, or other issues that surround money. However, in tough economic times, financial stress can actually cause more general stress, more conflict over things unrelated to money, and well as money-centered arguments as well. For example, when one partner is extremely stressed about money, they may be less

patient and more stressed in general; they may then pick fights with the other partner about unrelated things without even realizing it.

Issues with Children

Children can bring another potential source of stress and marriage problems. Children are wonderful and can bring wonderful and meaningful gifts into our lives, but having children can bring additional stress into marriage because care taking requires more responsibility as well as a change in roles, providing more fodder for disagreement and strain. Introducing children into your marriage also reduces the amount of time available to bond as a couple. This combination can test even the strongest of bonds.

Daily Stress

Daily stressors don't need to equal marriage problems, but they can exacerbate problems that already exist. When one partner has had a stressful day, they may be more likely to be impatient when they get home, may handle conflict less expertly, and may have less emotional energy to devote to nurturing their relationship. When both partners have had a difficult day, this of course is only exacerbated. As with financial stress, general daily stress can test patience and optimism, leaving couples with less to give to one another emotionally.

Busy Schedules

Marriage problems can result from overly busy schedules for a few reasons:

- Couples who are busy are often stressed, especially if they're not taking care of themselves with quality sleep and good nutrition.
- Busy couples may feel less connected because they have less time to spend together and more separateness in their lives.
- Couples may not work together as a team and might find themselves fighting over who's taking care of which household and social responsibilities. While busy schedules don't automatically lead to marriage problems, they do present a challenge that needs to be worked through.

Poor Communication

Perhaps the biggest predictor of marriage problems is poor communication or negative communication that belies damaging attitudes and dynamics within the relationship. Negative communication is so damaging, and have been predicted with a very high degree of certainty which newlywed couples would later divorce, based on watching their communication dynamics for a few minutes (Gottman, 2022). Healthy communication

is key; unhealthy communication can lead to major marriage problems.

Bad Habits

Sometimes couples experience marriage problems that could be solved if the two could notice their bad habits and change them. People don't always make a conscious decision to argue over petty things, nag and be critical, or leave messes for the other to clean, for example, they get busy or distracted, stress builds, and they go on autopilot. Then they find themselves following the same patterns they hadn't realized they were choosing in the first place. People just get into negative patterns of relating, fall into lazy personal habits, or get into a rut that they perpetuate out of habit. Fortunately, these marriage problems can be worked on. Even if only one partner is consciously trying to change, any change can bring a shift in the dynamic of the relationship, which can bring positive results to help bind the families together as a harmonious entity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the family binding factors were identified as love, honesty/trust parenting, good communication etc. The researcher therefore, recommends that Home Economics professionals, teachers and practitioners need to braise up to this responsibilities on achieving strong and harmonious families by 2030. Husbands and wives should gladly accept the deep responsibilities of safe keeping of the family in trust and bind the family as a strong force to promote harmony not only in the family but the society at large and across borders.

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الملخص العربي

عوامل الترابط الأسري: دور الاقتصاد المنزلي في بناء مجتمعات منسجمة عبر الحدود

Patricia E. Mbah, Ozioma C. Azubuike

وحكومات الولايات. تم استخدام التوزيع التكراري البسيط لتحليل الاستجابات من المستجيبين. تم تصنيف جميع العوامل المدرجة على أنها تساهم بشكل أساسى كمؤشر رئيسي في تحفيز الأسرة على الانسجام حيث أن جميعها سجلت أعلى من ٣ نقاط.

للحظ من النتائج أن القضايا ذات الاهتمام تشمل كل من الاستعداد الأولى لتكوين أسرة، والانفصال، وقضايا الأبوة والأمومة؛ والتقة والصدق والبطالة، والمشاكل المالية، وسوء الصحة، والإدمان، والعنف المنزلي، والموت، والتمييز، والجشع/ الشراهة، والسرقة، فقد الرفقه، وعدم التواصل، من بين أمور أخرى، تشكل مؤشراً رئيسياً ضد الأسرة في مجتمع معاصر. أوصت الدراسة بأن المتخصصين في الاقتصاد المنزلي والمعلمين والممارسين عليهم دور في تحمل مسؤولية حل هذه القضايا حتى نصل إلى أسرة قوية ومتناغمة قبل عام ٢٠٣٠. كما أوصت الدراسة بأن معظم الرذائل الاجتماعية في الأسر المعاصرة يمكن تحسينها إذا كانت العائلات مسالمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الترابط الأسري - المجتمعات المنسجمة المتناغمة - الاقتصاد المنزلي.

يُنظر إلى الأسرة على أنها المؤسسة الرئيسية للنكايات البشرية والمجتمعى. وهى العامل الثقافى الوحيد المعروف للتنشئة الاجتماعية والتفاعل فى المجتمع التقليدى. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى الكشف عن العوامل المحتملة المسؤولة عن ترابط الأسرة ككيان فريد، باعتبارها المؤسسة الرئيسية المسؤولة عن الوظيفة التجديدية للدورة البشرية، وأساس تكوين الحياة واستمراريتها والمصدر الوحيد لتعزيز طول العمر ونوعية الحياة الجيدة، وبالتالي بناء مجتمعات متناغمة منسجمة داخل الحدود وعبرها.

استخدمت البيانات الثانوية من منظمة الصحة العالمية حول تحديات الأسر المعاصرة، وتم استخدام تصميم مسح مقطعي لجمع البيانات من سجل الزواج الحكومي المحلي في ولاية أبيا Abia State شمال أومواهيا Umuahia حول عدد الزيجات المسجلة وكيفية تحديد موقع بعض منهم مقيمين فيها. تم الاستبيان بالمقابلة المنظمة اشتمل على أسئلة تتكون من ٤ أقسام رئيسية؛ تتناول ٢٢ عنصراً رئيسياً حول بناء الانسجام في الأسرة، عينة الدراسة تكونت من ٤٠٠ فرد متزوج (٢٥٠ ذكراً و ١٥٠ أنثى)، كلهم يعلمون موظفين عموميين/ المدنيين من الوزارات والإدارات الحكومية الفيدرالية