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The Impact of Western Culture on Nigeria Family structure; a study of Ugwuaji community

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Abstract

The culture and family structure of a society is a means of their identification as it affords them due recognition. Over centuries it has been vivid that the old Nigeria traditions are gradually fading away as we absorb western traditions and slowly conform to western influence. This research therefore is aimed at examining the impact of western culture on Nigeria family structure. This study was carried out in Ugwuaji community, with a sample size of 400. The theoretical framework of this study is the Functionalist Theory of Social Change. The theory suggested that both family structures (western and indigenous) should be practiced to avoid conflict in the society, but the demerits of both needs to be cut off; Adekorede and Abiondun (2016). Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for the purpose of this study. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select the villages in Ugwuaji community to be studied. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Simple statistics like frequency distribution and simple percentage method were used for the presentation and analysis of the research questions. Chi-square statistics was used in testing the hypotheses. One of the key findings of this research is that the indigenous family structure is going on extinction due to the penetration and acceptance of the western family structure. This research thereby recommends that parents should properly socialize and integrate their young ones into the indigenous cultural practices, and strengthen the extended family bond. And the government should add an extra credit curriculum in school activities to teach pupils/students about their origins and family structures. Teachers should also give pupils/students assignments to take home to their parents/guidance, elders and traditional ruler(s) to inquire about their original family structure. This should really be put into consideration as it could help to preserve cultures and traditions which are on the verge of going on extinction.

Keywords: Western culture, Nigeria Family Structure, Decolonization, Religion, Ugwuaji community.

Introduction

The Western culture has massively impacted on the Nigerian societies in a very positive and negative dimension, since the coming of the British colonial masters. The colonial masters in Nigeria introduced an alien culture which was generally accepted with open arms because of the administration of the country was in the hands of the colonial masters. Therefore, Western culture brought Western civilization, religion and education. It also gave way for urbanization in Nigeria (Oginwo, 2016).

Culture is the way group of people live their lives. Culture is the complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs and technology, which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation; Otite and Oginwo (2016). Tylor in his book "primitive culture" (1871) defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".

Therefore, Western culture constitutes the social norms, beliefs, customs, ethical values associated with countries and nations of Europe (Vogel and Jackson, 2016). The social norms, beliefs customs and ethical values, even the Western technologies have been inculcated into Nigeria societies. The development of the Western culture has influenced religion, education, occupation and political system of the Nigerian societies. This influence also penetrated into the Nigerian family structure which has provoked development and crisis as well. The family has often been regarded as the cornerstone of society. In pre-modern and modern societies alike, it has been seen as the most basic unit of social organization and one that carries out vital tasks, such as socializing children (Haralambos and Helborn, 2013). If the family structure of any society changes, it affects every other social structure as the family is seen as the basic unit of every society.

The family is an organized group of blood relationship (Aroh, 2017). "Family structure" is a term that describes the members of a household who are linked by marriage or bloodline (Pasley and Peten, 2015). The Ugwuaji community constitutes the family structure of African societies. The compromise of the Western culture with the Nigerian tradition came with it, various changes which have brought significant changes to the traditional family structures. Murdock (1949) conducted a research on the institution of the family using 250 societies; he concluded that the family is universal. This means that family exists in all societies of the world, with dynamic family structures.

The family as a social institution is important for the integration of social norms. Children, unlike the young of other animal species, depend on the adult members of the family to take care of them, and this make it imperative for the Nigerian families to decolonize themselves from the Western cultures which has dented the relationships which used to be in existence between members of the family (Mawusi, 2013). When looking at the family structure of Nigerian pre-colonial era, several facts is being found. For example, in Nigerian families, taking care of a child was not only a personal business neither does it include baby sitters, rather it was a business for the whole members of the extended family who then shared the same household. The children knew every member of the family.

Moreover, the children lived together with their birth parents and were educated by them, a system of education known as informal education. The parents taught their children how to farm, weave basket, fish, tap wine, cut grasses, mold pots, houses, and so on.

The family held on to extended family ties in which uncles, aunts, and grandparents lived together with the nuclear family. The family was not only a bond between those related by blood, it had a communal connection. Every member of the community was involved in each

other's activities; Eghafona (2017). The general proverb "the child belongs to the entire community" is a clear indication of the communal life that existed in the Nigerian families.

However, before the introduction of the western culture in Nigeria, the Nigerian families were extended families; the extended family members were involved in decision making in the family, only the younger children were left out. In the pre-colonial era, the family was structured in a way that the whole household decides whole is married into the family. They also decide the names of the children that are born to the family.

Religion has also been in existence throughout the history of human societies, as it is a part of human social life. Religion is a system of believe in the existence of supernatural beings; Aroh (2017). Tylor (1958) defined religion as "a belief in spiritual being". Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things; Durkheim (1915). In the pre-colonial era, the families in Nigeria were united by a common traditional religion they practiced or believed in. This traditional religion shaped their thoughts and behaviors in a moral way.

Before the intrusion of western culture all members of the family believed in a monotheistic God (Chukwuabiama or Chukwu Okike) who also had a lot of spirits (Arusi). They believed that Chineke has mysteriously created everything on earth and Chineke has kept the family together and had made their harvest to be bountiful. They also believed that Chukwu is the giver of children and he calls them back anytime He wants. They accepted all things whether good or bad believing it was the will of the gods. Death was believed to be a transit of humans to the spirit word. They also believed that each member of the extended family had a guardian spirit which was referred to as "chi" and was assigned by chineke. They often use this word "may your chi protect you". A person's chi was believed to escort them into the spirit world at death. They took their ancestral worship very seriously. They believed they could communicate with their ancestors who live in the spirit world through the mouth piece of Amadioha or Anyanwu. They made offerings to their dead in ancestral shrines dedicated to ancestral worship; Awolesi (2018).

The western culture has indeed left an indelible mark amongst the Ugwuaji people of Enugu South Local government area. The western culture brought Christianity which influenced the belief system of the families. Few members of the families continued in their traditional worships while the majority accepted the western Christian worship. This of cause has destabilize the family structure of the society as those who believed in Christianity now see the other family members who still practice the traditional religion as diabolic or devilish as the case may be. They also avoid contact or gift from the traditional worshipers and call them evil doers who would perish in hell.

From the interview held with Mr. Emeka Ugwu, an old indigene of Ugwuaji community, it was discovered that in the pre-colonial days of the Ugwuaji community, the family was well structured and the extended families lived near each other and some in the same house with so many rooms. The extended family was strictly headed by the older male. The men were the rulers of the family. Only the voices of the male folks were heard. The opinions of the women were not taken seriously. The women in Ugwuaji community were not given the right or privilege to own landed properties. Only the men had the right to own land(s). Women were

only allowed to farm on their husband's lands. There were also given a land to farm on for a certain period of time.

In Ugwuaji community, male children were valued more than the female children, because of their strength and ability to work for a long duration at the farm. When a woman gives birth to so many girls, it is believed that her womb contains only female children. The women married one husband, while the men could marry more than one wife. Yet the wives lived in peace and were able to accommodate each other's differences. The children from different wives were also united; they play together, go to the stream together and fetch fire wood together. Also, the whole family would gather at night in moon light to listen to stories and histories of their community (Ugwuaji) from the oldest of the family.

The contact of the western culture with the Nigerian family structure has also changed the family structure of the Ugwuaji community. The Ugwuaji community has neglected the original family structure which was valued in the pre-colonial era and has embraced the western culture which has impacted greatly on their family structure, positively and negatively. It is believed that the western culture has created better life chances but it is also believed that the many social vices in the society is as a result of the influence of western culture. Children are also neglected due to work by working class parents. The increasing consequences of western culture over the indigenous family structure constitute a debate over the validity of Nigerian family structure; Ajiboye (2012).

This research seeks to evaluate the impact of western culture on the family structure of Ugwuaji community in Enugu South local government area of Enugu state, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The indigenous family structure is going on extinction due to the coming of the westerners and the introduction of their culture. This has brought about the increase rate of separated parents (divorce) or families; Ubani (2007), social vices resulting from child neglect, employing baby sitters, and women autonomy in Nigerian societies which requires a re-evaluation. Ajiboye (2012) observed that the neglect of child care by many educated parents contradict the traditional methods of child care which constitute a fundamental factor to social and cultural development in the society. Western culture has also disrupted the initial family hierarchy and the connection between the extended family members. Child care has ceased to be the business of the extended families. It is also an immense chaos that the children hardly identify their extended families, this has sometimes led to cases of incest taboo. Due to cultural change, it has been a norm for women to go along the road, school, church, and so on half-naked, putting clothe that reveals special part of their body all in the name of fashion which negatively leads to sexual harassment; (Skykinner, 2015). The children no longer continue in the business of their family as a result of the broken family structures.

Western culture has also caused communication barrier in families. Vast members of the families today speak English instead of their ancestral language; Sibani (2019). The western mode of communication has disrupted the free flow of communication amongst the family members. This has also affected the structure of the family. The traditional way of worship has drastically changed and has also been westernized.

Research Questions

The following research questions summarize the purpose for this study.

1. What are the impacts of western culture on the family structure of the Ugwuaji community?
2. What extent has western culture affected the Ugwuaji community?
3. What are the possible ways to revive the family structure of the Ugwuaji community?
4. What are the possible solutions to the problems of westernization in Ugwuaji community?

Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To determine the impact of western culture the family structure of the Ugwuaji community.
2. To appraise the extent western culture has affected the Ugwuaji community.
3. To determine the possible ways, the family structure of the Ugwuaji community can be revived.
4. To find out possible solutions to the problems of westernization on Ugwuaji community.

Literature Review

Concept of Western Culture

Culture is the complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs and technology, which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation; Otite and Oginwo (2016). Culture is defined as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society; Tylor (1871).

Western culture is a broad term used to describe the social norms, belief systems, traditions, customs, and values that are based on European culture. America, for example, is western in culture. The east coast of the United States was originally a British colony, and as America developed into its own independent nation, it carried with it many elements of European culture. Europe and much of western hemisphere is western in culture. This is in contrast to Asia, which is Eastern in culture, and Africa, which has its own unique culture; Sullivan and Levitas (2016). Sullivan and Levitas (2016) outlined some of the central characteristics of western culture, which include: Democracy, Rational thinking, Individualism, Christianity, Capitalism, Modern technology, Human rights and Scientific thinking.

Most historians agree that the concept of western culture emerged with the ancient Greeks. The Greeks and Romans were the first to build up what has come to be called Western civilization/western culture, and transmitted it to Europe, and from there it was transmitted to the Western Hemisphere (Modern Western Culture & Social Life, 2016).

Westernization reached much of the world as part of the process of colonialism and continues to be a significant cultural phenomenon as a result of globalization. Westernization began with traders, colonizers, and missionaries from Western Europe who believed that their way of life

was superior to those of the people in the countries to which they traveled. The occupied people were required or encouraged to adopt Western European business practices, languages, alphabets, and attire. They were also encouraged to assume western European education system, and to convert to Christianity (Britannica Encyclopedia, 2020).

Obiora, a Nigeria researcher said that the transformation of culture is gradual and not sudden; culture is a continuous process of change. It changes exactly the same way as the human being changes. It is dynamic, learned, acquired, transmitted or diffused through contact or means of communication flow from generation to generation.

Cultural imperialism is a term used to describe the imposition of western culture on the culture of people in developing countries (Oden, 2021).

Concept of Nigerian Family Structure

Family, as a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, constituting a single household and interacting with each other in their respective social positions, usually those of spouses, parents, children, and siblings, should be distinguished from a household, which may include boarders and roomers sharing a common residence; Barnard (2021).

Family structure is simply a term for the configuration of people who live together and make up a family; Nowaczyk (2021). Some family structures are more common than others in different part of the world. Family structure often carries cultural and religious ties. While much has been speculated on which kind of family structure is the best or the most beneficial for children, there are obviously benefits and difficulties that come with all different family structures; Blakeley (2021). Moreover, the more complex and diverse the society, the more variation there will be in the family practices.

In examining family structure, it is important to distinguish "family" from "household", though the two are frequently elided, a tendency which itself is indicative of contemporary understandings of family structure (Allan and Crow, 2012). Household structure refers to the demography of households, domestic living arrangements, and domestic economies. Family structure, on the other hand, is concern with the organization of kin relationships, though part of this also concerns how domestic life is framed and the different role and responsibilities that different family members have within this. Historically, many of the key debates in the early years of family sociology were integrally concerned with the type of household structure that predominated in different societies. Arguments about the transformations that industrial capitalism generated in family structures often reflected the change household composition found in developing industrial urban/ sub-urban areas, legitimately so as these demographic changes reflected different family obligations and solidarities. However, it is important to recognize that family structure reflect more than just household structure (Adams, 2021).

In pre-industrial societies, the primary form of social organization is through kinship ties. Kinship refers to a network of people based on common ancestral, marriage, or adoption (Kendall, 2013). Through kinship network, people cooperate so that they can acquire the basic necessities of life, including food and shelter. Kinship system can also serve as a means by which property is transferred, goods produced and distributed and power is allocated (Kendall, 2013).

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with geography as diverse as its people and culture (Afsusa, 2021). A family which is usually made up of people who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption, is very important to most Nigerians.

Though Nigeria family structure is changing from extended nature to nuclear structure; Olukorede and Abiodun (2016), some families in Nigeria still practice the extended family structure- one of parents and their children, grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles. This however, is very rare.

In Nigeria, having many children is fashionable and is a status symbol. Although a large family brings a greater economic burden, many families in the eastern part of Nigeria have ten or more children. Thus, the national fertility rate was estimated at 6.31 children per woman in 1995 (Jrank, 2020).

In Nigeria, the husband is the accepted head of the family who provides for the basic needs of the household including his servants and slaves; Kokunre (2017). The traditional families lived in a walled compound, consisting of at least two houses: one for the husband and the other for the wives.

One of the greatest strengths of the Nigerian societies is the extended family system, which can be a great support than the welfare state of other communities (Mullan, 2006). The extended family provides social and psychological security for vulnerable members and groups. Kinship ties ensure that children, the aged and others without means of livelihood are adequately cared for by active members; Ogunsheye (2012).

In the same way, Baker (1973) submits that extended family has proved marvelous security for those for whom otherwise there was no security at all. In his words:

> It (extended family) is a net wide enough to gather the child, who fall
>
> From the feeble control of neglectful parents, receives the widows and
>
> Gives status to grannies (p.492).

> The first stage of socialization is afforded to individuals within the family. Through this process, the extended family impacts to its young members its values and norms thereby preserving its cultural identity, in addition to these, the traditional family also performs the spiritual function. In many communities, the family units also a religious group in which each member plays specific roles in the execution of rites, worship and religious obligations.

Worthy to be mention is the legal function of the family institution. The child becomes a bonafide member of the society through its link with the family. The family is therefore, in many respects a vital unit of social organization, social control and an indispensable social institution. More important, in tribal societies where kinship is the basis of recruitment to all or most important social roles the family relate directly with and becomes a mechanism for continuous generation of new kinship ties; Ibrahim (2008).

The Impact of Western Culture on Nigeria Family Structure
Western culture which constitutes the social norms, belief, customs, and ethical values,

associated with countries and nations of Europe, has made some of the Nigeria native cultures to give way to the European culture. Either by design or accident, Nigerians have imbibed the Western culture and have appropriated it so much that it now becomes almost part and parcel of their lives; Sibani (2017).

Western culture has impacted on Nigeria traditional societies in a positive and negative dimension; Sibani (2017). Among the positive impact are:

I.   The abolishment of some harmful traditional practices

II.   The attenuation of women abuses and girl child disregard

III.   Formal education and enhancement of living standard.

Abolishment of some Harmful Traditional Practices: Every society grouping in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are not (Roux & Bartelink, 2017). Harmful traditional practices are local traditions and processes practiced in local communities, which are known to effectively affect peoples' wellbeing. These weird practices in Nigerian local communities are adversely detrimental to the wellbeing of people who go through these practices. Some of these harmful traditional practices includes: female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, forced marriage, and tribal marks cutting; Mfonobong (2020). These practices have reduced because of the intervention of western culture.

Attenuation of Women Abuses and Girl Child Disregard: In many parts of the world, including Nigeria, gender violence and sexual abuses have both theological and cultural roots that dated back to the origin of mankind. Women were regarded as second class or subordinate group who in most cases are dehumanize and sexually abused by men (Ushe, 2015). Those who follow the gender inequality school of thought argued that even in family setting, socialization contributes significantly to inferiority of female to male counterparts (Bella, 2012). The girl child was also disregarded as they do not possess physical power like the boy child; neither do they inherit landed properties. Religion which was introduced by the white-men has helped for the attenuation of girl child abuses. The improvement of women status equally has a number of implications; first it has meant that women now have the same political, educational, occupational, and property rights as men. They are also free to decide for themselves whether to marry or not, and enter into it on the same terms with their husband.

Formal Education and Enhancement of Living Standards: The western educational system was fully implemented in the 20th century because of the influence exerted by colonists. In 1843, the first school in Nigeria was built in Badagry, over time, other educational institutions appeared and western education became firmly established in the lives of Nigerians; Ikande (2017). The living conditions of modern Nigerians are indeed much better than those of our ancestors from the pre-colonial era (Ikande, 2017).

Family institution play a vital role in maintaining the existence of the society and its cultural practices, however, the institution is undergoing continuous changes. The western culture has

also impacted on the Nigeria family structure negatively these negative impact includes: the growing number of divorce/separation, child neglect, birth out of wedlock, the absence of fathers, broken families, incest taboo, social vices, communication barrier, and so on.

Times are not what they used to be, social structure everywhere undergoes continuous change, Mbite (1969). The structure and function of Nigeria families have experienced fundamental changes over time. The coming of the Europeans with western civilization brought huge changes into the traditional family structure. The ancestral family structure of the Igbos in Enugu state Nigeria, especially the Ugwuaji community was seen with several facts. Examples, the family was structured in way that the father was the accepted head of the family who provides for the basic needs of the household including his servants and slaves; kokunre (2017). The traditional families lived in a walled compound, consisting of at least two houses: one for the husband and the other for his wives. The adult sons mostly shared the father's house. While the daughters and juvenile sons lived with their mother. The sons learned how to farm and do other masculine jobs from their father. The daughters learnt how to farm, cook, take care of the households and do other feminine chores from their mother. The traditional residential structure has changed. Distribution is no longer made between the father's and mother's houses because a modern house with a living room and a number of other rooms can serve the entire family. The extended families lived near each other and were able to identify with one another. Taking care of children was not a mere personal matter concerning only husbands and wife/wives. Rather, it was the business of the extended families (Eghafona, 2017).

Historically, the family structure of the Nigerian societies especially in the Igbo communities has experience a lot of notable changes. One of these changes is one that highlighted the movement from an "extended family" system – one of parents and their children, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, and other kin, to the "nuclear family" system – one of parents and their dependent children (Harris,1983). The cotemporary patterns indicate the structural priority given to nuclear families (Parsons, 1943). The extended family structure was marked with division of labor between spouses and their children, and every other members of the family. Employment for husband, child care and domestic services for wives. While this gendered division of labor is still evident in our contemporary societies, it is not now as powerful as it previously was. Wives usually continue to carry primary responsibility for domestic organization and care within the family, but changes in employment pattern as well as the cultural impact of second wave feminism have reduced the level of their financial and social dependence on husbands. In this regard, while the distribution of responsibilities and obligation with families remains gendered, there is somewhat less rigidity about this than there was during most of the twentieth century (Parsons, 1943). There is now greater flexibility in the diversities in other family practices. Patterns that used to be problematic, if not pathological, are now accepted as legitimate alternative family forms. The most obvious example here is the single parent family structure, which dramatically has increased since the early 1970s; other examples include step families, and cohabitation (Cherlin, 2014). With the western form of families, there is now increasing levels of separation and divorce.

The influence of Christianity tends to encourage monogamous marriage and by implication the nuclear form of family unit. Many couples now prefer smaller family. These changes are most

pronounced in the upper and middle classes. The extension of modern education, increase affluence and spread of material attitudes, emancipation of women and wide spread of contraceptive techniques, are factors that were responsible for the change in family size (Barnes, 2012).

Urbanization, due to the penetration of western culture, also contributed to the changing structure of modern family. The character of the city with its anonymity, individualism, and anomie provides very little chance for the growth of extended family structure. In addition, the separation of thousands of urban dwellers from their kin in the village serves to sever their links with the extended family. In essence, most people in the cities have lost touch with the extended family network (Parsons and Bale, 1955).

The disruption of the extended family structure created a number of problems to individuals, groups, and the entire society. For instance, the escalating incidence of juvenile delinquency, crime, prostitution and similar anti-social and immoral acts are results of break-down of the traditional hold of the family on the individual.

Like other units of the social structure, the family is also undergoing fundamental changes in its role and functions. First, the role of the family as the unit of economics production has drastically changed. In traditional societies, the home is also the base of economic activities. Also, in most cases the family decides for members the choice of occupational career. The stronghold which the traditional family wielded on members meant that compliance to family rules and norms was guaranteed. All these have changed because of the impact of western culture. The family no longer plays the role of economic determiner for its members. Also, it is no longer the self-contained unit of economic organization. Rather, virtually every member of modern family is engaged in work outside the home. The co-operative activity involved in the home production has shifted to the workplace. This has move loyalty from the head of the family to managers and other bureaucratic leaders. Again, people now spend the greater part of their lives at work, thereby reducing the time spent at home with other members of the family leading to neglect of children and other dependent members. The change in function of the family has also affected the moral and religious training. These training are no longer the sole responsibility of the family. Rather, religious organization, schools and other concerned groups now provide moral and religious instructions. More fundamentally is that morality has been by a laissez-faire attitude on the part of the government and the public. The result is the breakdown of moral order in the society leading to immoral acts.

The economic and social roles of women in the family have also changed. The traditional role of women was of wife and a mother with sacred duty to serve the men. The transition from pre-industrial to the modern (industrial) word brought by westernization, has affected women's role in family and in the entire society. The women, especially those in the cities are equally forced to engage in economic activities outside the home in order to supplement the family income. It changed the character of domestic work so that women are no longer restricted to the kitchen or "homework". Increasingly more women are entering formal labor force.

Another impact of western culture is on the loss of psychological support which the extended family provides for its members. Such as traditional family structure guarantees for members

adequate emotional and psychological protection. Grief, sorrow, joy, achievement as well as failure were shared by the family. Social changes occasioned by westernization have gradually caused relatives to become separated from each other. The primacy group is much more significant to many people especially in the urban areas. In the urban/sub-urban settings, children may come into contact with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins on rare occasions and at times, not at all. The western culture has weakened the social bond which existed in the extended family structure (Laslett, 2011).

Possible Solutions to the Problems of Westernization

The trend of cultural westernization of Nigeria, especially Ugwuaji, has become very pervasive and prevalent, such that Western civilization has taken precedence over the indigenous values, and culture and the latter is regarded as inferior to the former (Arowolo, 2010). The western culture has become part of the Ugwuaji people as some traditional practices are neglected. Westernization has led to cultural dualism in Nigerian societies (Arowolo, 2013).

All cultures changes through times. No culture is static. However, most cultures are basically conservative in that they tend to resist change. Some resist more than others by enacting laws for the preservation and protection of traditional cultural patterns, while putting up barriers to alien ideas and things (Clifford, 2016). Therefore, Nigerian government should enact laws for the preservation of the indigenous harmless traditional practices, especially one that enhances the Nigeria family structure and strengthens the extended family bond. E.g. the French government forbids the commercial use of English words for which there are French equivalencies. It is now clear that there is an accelerating culture change period all around the world regardless of whether it is resisted or not. In order to avoid cultural extinction, there is an urgent need for cultural restoration in Africa owing to western indoctrination. This is very necessary because a people without a culture are a people without an identity; Sibani (2016).

The family is regarded as a sacred institution, the wellbeing of which should be the responsibility of every member of the society. The broken Nigerian family structure should be dealt with through joint effort since the concern affects the whole society.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical review explores theories that expound on the topic under study and which, thereby help in better understanding of the study in question while at the same time putting forth a justification for the current study.

Evolutionary Theory of Social Change

Social evolution is a process of social change, and evolutionary theories attempts to describe and explain this process. Virtually everyone recognizes the Neolithic Revolution and the rise of civilization and the state as two very important evolutionary transformations. The former began around 5,000 years ago. And both occurred on an independent basis in several regions of the world. Capitalist world economy is regarded as the third social transformation which has in one way or the other changed the Nigerian family structure. Also, the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century came with it great transformations which had also brought about changes on the Nigerian family structure as many dwellers travels to the western world leaving their families behind. The rise of capitalist economy brought the British colonial masters in

Nigeria. The presence of these westerners in Nigeria had impacted greatly on the family structure of indigenous Nigerians. The evolutionary theory of social change explains these transformations of Nigerian family structure to the western family structure. It also explains how Nigerian family structure has transited from extended family to nuclear family (typical of the westerners). A lot of changes have occurred in Nigerian family life since her contact with the westerners. This theory also explains the effect of western culture as it is conspicuous in the customs, traditions, social and moral behaviors, love and respect for others in Ugwuaji community.

Functionalist Theory of Social Change

When considering the impact of western culture on the role of family in the society, functionalists uphold the notion that families are an important social institution and that they play a key role in stabilizing society. They also note that family members take on status role in a marriage or family. The family and its members perform certain functions that facilitate the prosperity and development of the society (Laff and Ruiz, 2021).

Sociologist, George Murdock conducted a survey of 250 societies and determined that there are four universal residual functions of the family: sexual, reproductive, educational, and economic. According to Murdock, the family (which for him includes the state of marriage) regulates sexual relations between individuals. He does not deny the impact of premarital or extramarital sex, but state that the family offers a socially legitimate sexual outlet for adults. This outlet gives way to reproduction, which is a necessary part of ensuring the survival of society; Wendy (2021).

The functionalist explore on how the western culture and the indigenous Nigerian culture can facilitate a stabled family structure. It also looks at how the external institutions like schools, Christianity, mass media and so on, which is a product of western culture, has contributed for the inculcating of social morals and values, and properly socializing or integrating the young ones in to the society. This theory views the western culture and the indigenous traditional culture as functional for a stabled family structure in Nigerian societies. As the primary agent of socialization and enculturation, the family teaches young children the ways of thinking and behaving that follows social and cultural norms, values, beliefs and attitudes (Laff and Ruiz, 2021). For example, in some families, parents teach their children manners and civility believing a well-mannered child reflects a well-mannered parent.

Cultural Evolution Theory

This theory was developed by Thompson and Williams. Culture theorists look at how culture are spread or diffused through interaction or contact of different cultures. For example, Western culture has rubbed off on Nigerians especially the Ugwuaji people as a result of the contact of the British colonial masters with the Nigerian people. Culture theory explains how the western culture has impacted greatly on the Nigeria family structure. Due to culture diffusion, most part of Nigeria societies especially Ugwuaji community now practice Christian religion instead of their original traditional or native religion; nuclear family structure instead of extended family structure; and so on. These theorists classify cultures according to their relative degree or social complexity and employ several economic distinctions (foraging, hunting, farming, and

industrial societies) or political distinctions (autonomous village, chiefdoms, and states); encyclopedia (2012).

Conflict Theory

The concept of power is as central to many versions of conflict theory as is the concept of conflict itself. The resources that are available within families are not only the subject of competition; they are also the means which one individual may gain power over others. This theory stressed the unequal distribution of power in the family which is mostly detrimental to the female folks. Because of the interest in gender divisions, there are some overlap between conflict theory and feminist theory. This theory views that most conflicts in the family are violence against women.

Conflict theorists also study conflicts in the family as a result of the impact of western culture in the indigenous traditional families. Conflict as simple as the enforcement of rules from parents to child, or they examine more serious issues such as domestic violence (spousal and children), sexual assault, marital rape, and incest (Ruize, 2020). The first study of marital power was performed in 1960. Researchers found that the person with the most access to value resources held the most power. Due to western civilization, women are now being employed to work outside their homes and sometimes they earn higher than the male, thereby arising conflict in the family. As money is one of the most valuable resources, men who worked in paid labor outside of the home held more power than women who worked inside the home (Blood and Wolfe, 2012). Even today, with the impact of western culture, conflict theorists find disputes over the division of household labor to be a basic source of marital crises. Household labor pays no wages, therefore, no power. Studies indicate that when men perform house chores, women feel fulfilled in their marriages, reducing conflict. In general, conflict theorists tend to study areas of the family and marriages that involve inequalities or discrepancies in power and authority, as they are reflective of the larger social structure. However, conflict theory examines a society's cultural norms which benefits some people but hurt others. Some norms, formal and informal, are practiced at the expense of others. This theory also views that women were not allowed some privileges. For example, women were not allowed to vote in the United States until 1960, same-sex marriages are not allowed in Nigeria (Wendy, 2021). People who have less power also have less ability to adapt to cultural change.

Theoretical Framework

The four major sociological theories used in this research have different focus and look at a situation from different perspective, but for the purpose of this study, the Functionalist theory of social change has been selected as the best theory to explain the impact of western culture on Nigerian family structure; a study of Ugwuaji Community. The situation in Nigeria fits into the functionalist theory because of its characteristics. Nigeria is predominantly rural traditional area; extended family structure is the major family system of the people, which "Ugwuaji" as one of the community practiced till western culture gained prominence. When westernization took place in Ugwuaji, both the traditional extended family pattern and the western nuclear family pattern or structure became the family system till date. The functionalist perspective of

social change is looking at how these two family structures can be practiced without conflict arising in the society.

In both western family structure and Nigerian family structure, parents teach their children gender roles. According to Wendy (2021), gender roles are an important part of the economic function of a family. In each family, there is a division of labor that consists of instrumental and expressive roles. Men tend to assume the instrumental roles in the family, which typically involve work outside of the family that provides financial support and establishes family statues. Women tend to assume the expressive roles which typically involve work inside of the family which provides emotional support and physical care for children.

According to functionalist, the alien culture and indigenous culture differentiation of roles on the basis of sex ensures that families are balanced and coordinated. When family members move outside of these roles, the family is thrown out of balance and most recalibrate in order to function properly. For example, if the father assumes an expressive role, such as providing day time care for the children, the mother must take on an instrumental role such as gaining paid employment outside of the home, which was made possible with western civilization, in order for the family to maintain balance and function (Ruiz and Laff, 2021). The functionalist theorists argued that all hands must be on deck to ensure the smooth running of the family. This includes employing baby sitters if need be, education, Christianity, technologies, and so on which are typical of the westerners.

It has been essential that any development programme should be towards involving the people in identifying, defining, executing and maintaining westernization which has helped in solving the social problems of underdevelopment. But westernization has been abused in the sense that people are over-reacting. This theory focuses on the family being the smallest and the most important institution which indigenous cultures should be taught right from the scratch to avoid over over-reaction of western culture which separation and child neglect is one of them

Therefore, Functionalist theory of social change is relevant for this study because it states clearly that Nigerians should be taught, right from time starting from family, about family structures and family stability. In this theoretical framework, functionalists suggest that both family structures (western and indigenous) can be practiced to avoid problems in the society, but the demerits of both needs to be cut off; Adekorede and Abiodun (2016).

Findings
With three hundred (300) respondents selected from Ugwuaji community in Enugu South Local Government Area, on the impact of western culture on Nigeria family structure, with Ugwuaji as the area of study, I have come up with the following findings:

- That western culture has a great influence on Nigeria family structure. 290 out of 300 respondents representing 96.7% of the respondents believed on the impact of western culture in Ugwuaji family structure.
- According to Sibani (2017), western culture has impacted on Nigeria traditional societies in a positive and negative dimension. In this research, it was observed that western culture has both positive and negative impact on the family structure of

Ugwuaji community. Among the positive impacts are the: abolishment of some harmful traditional practices; attenuation of women abuses and girl child disregard; formal education; enhancement of living standard and so on. I also found out in the course of this research, that the family institution plays a vital role in maintaining the existence of the society and its cultural practices. The institution is undergoing continuous changes. The western culture has impacted negatively on Ugwuaji family structure. These negative impacts include: the growing number of divorce/separation; child neglect; attenuation of extended family bond/disunity; increasing social vices and inadequate socialization of children.

- The trend of cultural westernization in Ugwuaji has become very pervasive and prevalent such that western civilization has taken precedence over the indigenous values, and culture and the latter is regarded as inferior to the former. Western culture has become part of the Ugwuaji people as some traditional practices are neglected. Westernization has led to cultural dualism in Ugwuaji community.

- Another major finding in this research is the possible solutions to the problem of westernization in the family structure of Ugwuaji community. Through the responses of the respondents, it was observed that the possible solutions to the problem of westernization in the family structure of Ugwuaji community are: the integration of young ones into the indigenous culture; and extended family bond.

- Finally, out of 300 respondents, 200 respondents which are 66.6% of the respondents agreed that it is not possible for Ugwuaji community to completely emancipate from western culture. This means that the Ugwuaji people have to accommodate both cultures (western culture and the indigenous culture), to achieve a functional and a stabled society.

Conclusion

Many facts have been established on the basis of the findings of this research. This research has extensively discussed the impact of western culture on Nigeria family structure; a study of Ugwuaji community. It has been established that the Ugwuaji family structure has undergone and is still undergoing continuous changes. This research explained that before the penetration of western culture in Ugwuaji community, the Ugwuaji people held on to the extended family structure, but because of the changes caused by the advent of westernization in Ugwuaji community, nuclear family structure has become the most recognized and acceptable family structure. This has breached the extended family bond. This research also explained the presence of cultural dualism in Ugwuaji community. The western culture and indigenous cultures need to be accommodated as the indigenous people cannot totally emancipate from western culture.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be put into consideration:

1. The entire societies are not what they used to be. Change is a constant thing which has come to stay. Though the western culture came with it a lot of negative impact in Ugwuaji family structure, it has also helped to attenuate some harmful cultural practices of the Ugwuaji people. I therefore recommend that the western family structure and the Ugwuaji family structure should both be accommodated in Ugwuaji community.

2. That the rulers of Ugwuaji community should enact laws against stigmatization of traditional worshippers and those who still hold on to extended family structure.

3. To avoid conflict and to ensure peaceful coexistence between those who practice western culture and those who hold on to the indigenous culture, they should be no inferior or superior culture.

4. To prevent the indigenous culture from going on extinction, parents should properly socialize and integrate the young ones into the indigenous culture, and strengthen the extended family bond.

5. Finally, the government should add an extra credit curriculum in school activities to teach children about their origins and family patterns. Teachers should also give pupils/students assignments to take home to their parents, elder or guidance to inquire about their original family structure. This should really be put into consideration as it could help to preserve culture and traditions which are on the verge of going on extinction.

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