

Family Instability Issues in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate causes of family instability, challenges to family stability and strategies that could improve family stability in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Three research questions were answered. Questionnaire was used for data collection. A random sample of 100 families was selected for the study. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The results of the study show 14 causes of family instability including: polygamy, parent's literacy level, drug abuse and unemployment. There are 10 challenges and 12 strategies for improving family stability include: dealing with the root causes of the challenges, encourage good parent/child relationship, acquire useful skills to enhance economic wellbeing and consult religious leaders for counselling. The study recommended that family counsellors, government and other concerned agencies should regularly develop programmes aimed at sensitizing parents, children and family members and the society on how to reduce family instability issues.

Keywords: Family, Parents, Children, challenges, Instability, Stability.

Introduction

Traditionally, the family can be described as a group consisting of two parents and their children living together as a basic unit, rearing their children and interacting with one another. The family is the single most important influence in any child's life. From their first moments of life, children depend solely on parents and family to care, protect and provide for their needs. The family provides the individual with an identity, with a social status and with economic well-being. The other institutions have only slowly developed from the family and have for a

long time been dependent on the family (United Nations, 2004; Anyakoha, 2015).

The society generally strives better when the family is steady. Family instability always occurs when there is mostly lack of understanding of values and when spouses do not perform their duties to the family adequately. Igbaji, (2018) and Ugau (2018) defined family instability as a situation where the family knows no peace, poor structure and organization, emotional separation of members and poor relationship with relations and in-laws. This is becoming

more common in our contemporary family institutions.

The problem of family instability in Nigeria can be traced to challenges of rapid growth rate of urbanization and industrialization, social changes in growing economies and the involvement of women in the labor force. Family as an institution has many issues affecting it, including marriage age, spouses' educational level, religion and social status. Inadequate supervision arising from family instability seems to be associated with juvenile delinquency (Dada & Idowu, 2006). Child care which should be the responsibility of the parent is now shifted to schools, house helps, grandparents other relations and friends (Fafanchamps & Quisumbing, 2008; Jutting & Morrisson, 2005). Couples hardly find time to stay together for interaction purposes. This continually pull-away the family members apart and gradually affect the stability of the family which may likely result into alcoholism, drug abuse, extra-marital affairs and lack of trust in many families among the couples (Benschop, 2006; Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Educational Trust 2000; Ugau, 2018). Amadi and Amadi (2014) further enumerated some causes of family instability to include social incompatibility, sexual incompatibility and lack of mutual respect, extended family issues and poor communication. Many factors are responsible for this mind bugging issues in both developed and developing countries.

Factors that are affecting the quality of marriage in our modern society has been a recent discussion among many professionals like: religious authorities,

behavioral scientists, sociologists, clinical and social psychologists, home economists and anthropologists (Aiyetan & Kalopo, 2011; Animasahun, 2011). Other factors such as education, illegitimate children, religion and infertility of the wife also initiate instability in the family. Children of separated parents frequently bear the consequences of family instability. The tension and hostility of unsolved conflict between parents often gets back to the child. There are so many boys and girls and even adults roaming about the streets, many are delinquents, vandals and touts while some are mentally disturbed because of family instability (Fafchamps & Quisumbing, 2008; Igbaji, 2018). Furthermore, those children in single-parent families tend to receive lower levels of supervision.

Statistical data by the United States Census Bureau (2008 to 2018) showed that from 1960 to 2018, the proportion of children living with two married parents fell from 87.7 percent to 65 percent. This means that more parents are choosing to live alone (separated or divorced) rather than remain in an unstable marriage relationship. The analysis of data of a National Longitudinal Survey was carried out by Bloome (2017), for Youth with a national sample of 14- to 22-year-olds followed through adulthood. She grouped the participants by childhood family structure and examined their household income level in childhood and at ages 30 to 50. Her analysis of the data showed that people raised outside two-parent families were more likely to end up in the lowest-fifth of income earners. Specifically, her analysis showed that about 28 percent of children raised outside of two-parent families ended up in the lowest fifth of the

income distribution as adults, compared with almost 17 percent of those from stable two-parent families. According to her report, people who grew up in unstable families are less likely to have stable adult marriages, which may contribute to their downward economic mobility. All these pose treats, which are also challenges to family stability.

The challenges of family stability are on the increase in Nigeria, and specifically, Pankshin Local Government Area (LGA) in recent times. Some studies in different parts of the country (Dada & Idowu, 2006; Keswet & Dapas, 2010; Igbaji, 2018; Mathias, 2018), are evidences showing some of the challenges which include: Single parenting, Maternal and family insecurity and Children Inheritance Right. All of these and more are posing challenges to parents, schools, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Government and the country as a whole. This phenomenon has resulted into various social problems as a result of unchecked effects by the government and individuals themselves. The discovery of the root causes and challenges of these instabilities can go a long way to the establishment of more stable homes in both developed and developing nations of the world. Hence, this study investigated family instability issues in Pankshin LGA of Plateau State in order to expose its causes and challenges to the family.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate family instability issues in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined:

1. causes of family instability in Pankshin Local Government Area.
2. challenges to family stability in the area.
3. strategies for improving family stability in the area.

Methodology

Research Design: Descriptive survey design was employed to seek the opinion of the respondents on family instability issues in Pankshin LGA.

Area of Study: The area of study is Pankshin LGA of Plateau State. The LGA is bound to Mangu, Shendam and Kanke LGAs of Plateau State. The dwellers are pre-dominantly farmers, traders and civil servants. Pankshin LGA is rocky in nature and the weather condition is usually cold. Some of the major tribes present include: the Ngas, Mupun, Mhiship, and Tal.

Population for the Study: The population consisted of one hundred and ninety one thousand, six hundred and eighty five persons in Pankshin LGA of Plateau State according to the data of the National Bureau of Statistics (2008). The population were made up of all members of the family (General), which included: parents and their children, both male and female in the LGA.

Sample for the Study: A total of One hundred respondents were sampled from the population of study. These sample was made up of family members comprising fathers, mothers and children.

Sampling Techniques: A simple random sampling technique was used to select the one hundred respondents. Respondents sampled were: 30 fathers, 30 mothers and 40 children. The 40 children used for the study ranged from ages 9 to 17 years,

making a total of one hundred participants for the study.

Instrument for Data collection: A four-point scale Structured questionnaire called "Family Instability Issues Questionnaire (FIIQ), was constructed by the researchers for data collection, the instrument was made up of four sections which are sections A, personal data of the respondents, section B, on the causes of family instability and section C, on challenges of family instability and D, some strategies for improving family stability in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State. The instrument was validated by three experts. Validity and a reliability co-efficient of 0.96 was obtained based on the experts' ratings of the

questionnaire items and this was adjudged to be reliable.

Data Analysis Techniques: Face to face method was adopted in administering the questionnaire to the respondents. The questionnaires were distributed to the hundred participants by the researchers, which were later collated for data analysis. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A mean rating of 2.00 and above for any item was considered to be "agreed upon" while below 2.00 were "disagreed upon" as decision rule.

Results

The results obtained from the study were presented as follows:

Causes of Family Instability

Table 1: Mean Responses on Causes of Family Instability Issues in Pankshin LGA

S/No.	Causes of family instability	Mean \pm SD	Decision
1	Infidelity is a cause of family instability.	2.62 \pm 1.13	Agree
2	Incarceration can cause family instability.	2.56 \pm 0.76	"
3	Polygamy is a cause of family instability.	2.67 \pm 0.82	"
4	Poor family socio-economic status is a cause of family instability.	2.84 \pm 0.76	"
5	Parents' divorce/separation is a cause of family instability	2.62 \pm 0.81	"
6	Communal Crises is a cause of family instability.	2.72 \pm 0.88	"
7	Father's inability to assume his responsibility does not cause family instability.	1.45 \pm 0.85	Disagree
8	Physical abuse of wife/children is not a cause of family instability.	1.41 \pm 0.73	Disagree
9	Sexual abuse causes family instability.	2.45 \pm 0.76	Agree
10	Unemployment of a parent is a cause of family instability	3.17 \pm 1.11	"
11	Medical situation can cause family instability.	2.57 \pm 0.76	"
12	Drug abuse by parents causes family instability	2.52 0.73	"
13	Unexpected pregnancy is a cause of family instability.	3.25 \pm 0.90	"
14	Child adoption is not a cause of family instability.	2.46 \pm 0.73	"

Source: Field data 2018.

Table 1 shows the various causes of family instability in Pankshin LGA. The respondents agreed twelve out of the fourteen items listed as causes of family instability with the highest Mean and Standard Deviation scores of 3.17 ± 1.11 and the lowest scores of 2.52 ± 0.73 respectively. They however disagreed on

two of the items which are: father's inability to assume his responsibility does not cause family instability and that children adoption does not cause family instability with mean scores of 1.45 ± 0.85 and 1.41 ± 0.73 respectively.

Challenges of Family Instability

Table 2: Mean Responses on Challenges to Family Stability in Pankshin LGA

S/No.	Challenges to family instability	Mean \pm SD	Decision point
1	Illiteracy of a parent	3.25 ± 0.90	Agreed
2	Inability to pay children's medical bills	2.61 ± 0.91	Agreed
3	Children's lack of good/acceptable morals not a challenge	1.46 ± 0.67	Disagreed
4	Differences in parent's religious believes is not a challenge to family stability	1.25 ± 0.86	Agreed
5	Inability to educate children is a challenge to family stability.	2.69 ± 0.88	Agreed
6	Inferiority complex of a parent is not a challenge to family stability	1.73 ± 0.81	Disagreed
7	Anti-Social behavior of a parent is a challenge to family stability	2.75 ± 0.96	Agreed
8	Insecurity is a challenge to family stability	2.57 ± 0.76	Agreed
9	Intertribal marriage is a challenge to family stability	3.25 ± 0.67	Agreed
10	Children will be divided over religious issues, hence, family instability.		
11	Pressure at work/school is a challenge to family stability.	3.57 ± 0.67	Agreed

Source: Field data 2018.

Table 2 reveals the respondents' responses on challenges of family instability in Pankshin LGA. Eleven items were listed as possible challenges to family stability with the lowest mean and standard deviation scores of 1.25 ± 0.86 respectively and highest mean and standard deviation scores of 3.57 ± 0.67 . Three items were however agreed upon which are: "teaching children good/acceptable morals is not a challenge to family stability", "Differences in parent's religious

believes is not a challenge to family stability" and, "Inferiority complex of a parent is not a challenge to family stability", with highest mean and standard deviation scores of 1.73 ± 0.81 and a lowest score of 1.25 ± 0.86 respectively. This however implies that all the items listed on the table were generally challenges to family stability in the area of study.

Strategies for Improving Family Stability

Table 3: Mean Responses on Strategies for Improving Family Stability in Pankshin LGA

S/No.	Strategies for Improving Family Stability	Mean \pm SD
1	Deal with the root causes of the challenge through family discussions.	3.15 \pm 1.09
2	Regular community forum to resolve crisis.	2.93 \pm 0.80
3	Encourage good parent/child relationships.	2.63 \pm 0.81
4	Sensitization programs on media.	3.00 \pm 1.10
5	Governmental intervention in resolving communal issues	2.71 \pm 0.87
6	Avoid the blame game and unnecessary arguments	2.81 \pm 0.83
7	Choose peace and be patient, no matter what happens	2.71 \pm 0.90
8	Learn to always say sorry politely, when you are wrong.	2.93 \pm 0.86
9	Acquire useful skills to enhance economic wellbeing.	2.63 \pm 0.82
10	Consult religious leaders for spiritual counselling.	2.64 \pm 0.94
11	Involve professional Counselors and attend counselling session, where the issues become difficult to handle.	2.93 \pm 0.80
12	Keep praying until you see complete peace on both sides.	3.15 \pm 1.08

Source: Field data 2018.

Table 3 shows the responses of the respondents on the strategies for improving family stability in Pankshin LGA. All the items listed were agreed upon with a highest mean and Standard Deviation scores of 3.15 \pm 1.09 and a lowest mean and Standard Deviation scores of 2.63 \pm 0.82. The results of the table shows that strategies such as: dealing with the root causes of the family instability through discussions, regular community forum to resolve crisis and encouraging good parent/child relationships were important strategies in resolving family instability problems. This implies that when these strategies are used appropriately, families will experience stability in marriage and in their homes.

Discussion

The research question one established various causes of family instability in Pankshin LGA of Plateau State. Some of them include: infidelity, incarceration, polygamy and poor socio-economic status of the family. The findings of this study

are in agreement with those which Amadi & amadi (2014) and Igbaji (2018), enumerated in their studies as causes of family instability in Nigeria. Other causes according to Animasahun, & Fatile, (2011), include: poverty level of the family, dishonesty, lack of mutual respect for each other and negligent behavior of spouses. These could be reduced if couples, children and other family members can communicate their grievances to each other during counselling sessions as well as learning to forgive, forget and forge ahead with their family responsibilities.

Research question two identified the challenges to family stability in Pankshin LGA some of which included issues of illiteracy, socialization, payment of children's fees and health conditions of the family members, among others. These findings are also supported by the studies of some researchers (Bennett, 2004; Keswet & Dapas; Amadi & Amadi, 2014), where they mentioned challenges such as drug abuse, negligence, loss of employment and juvenile delinquencies as challenges to

family stability in Nigeria. In like manner, some other researchers (Smith & Moore, 2006; Varley, 2007; Mathias, 2018), indicated other factors such as poor nutrition, poverty, divorce, health status of the family, inter-tribal marriages, education and alcoholism as challenges which could be remedied by literacy of parents and change in economic status of especially women. In another study, Aiyetan & Kalopo (2005), reported intertribal marriage as one of the challenges to marriage stability, but in the present study, it was not seen as a challenge. Also, experiences of happenings in families and some communities have led and are still leading many children and even adults to commit suicide as a result of frustrations due to the challenges they are faced with. The outcomes of these and other researches can help families and the society at large to manage some of these challenges positively and to avoid serious family crisis.

Research question three shows some of the strategies that were identified to improve family stability in Pankshin LGA. Some of them include: dealing with the root causes of family instability through family discussions, community workshops and seminars, as well as sensitization programmes on the media. This strategies are also in line with the works of other researchers like (Dada, & Idowu, 2006; Ugau, 2018; Mathias, 2018), who suggested that parents should always discuss issues of concern with their children, so as to help them reduce the reactions that may occur later, especially when parents are contemplating divorce and remarriage, among others. Family counselling was also encouraged,

especially where grown-up children are involved. This should help the family to reconcile or face challenges without much guilt, which will in turn help each family member to deal positively with their frustrations and forge ahead with other issues of life. Parents should among other things, learn to understand with each other and with their children on personal issues that concern them, especially where children are grown ups.

Conclusion

In conclusion, causes of family instability are numerous and are aggravated by social and economic hardships faced by individuals, the family and the society at large. These hardships further lead to dishonesty and breakdown in communication among family members, which affects the society at large. The way forward is to improve the literacy level of the spouses in the study areas and furthermore, improve their economic status for more meaningful living.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this research and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

- Awareness campaigns on causes and challenges of Family Instability should be made and proper advertisement channels should be created for wide publicity.
- More funds should be made available by the government to provide quality educational institutions, facilities and training programs in order to increase the people's knowledge and reduce the level of their illiteracy.
- Government, religious bodies and NGOs concerned about family life

should encourage mutual understanding among the spouses by offering quality Counseling services

- The economic life of the people should be of concern to government and it should be improved upon to curb social vices and other juvenile acts.

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