

Influence of Economic Recession on the Extended Family System in Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study focused on the influence of economic recession on the extended family system in Ohafia local government area of Abia State, Nigeria. The specific purpose of the study were: to determine; ways economic recession has influenced extended family systems norms in Abia State, other challenges of economic recession on extended family system. It was a survey design. The population for the study was 350 women who were registered members of Ohafia Improvement Union (OIU) women wing. Questionnaire and FGD were used for data collection. A random sample of 187 women who was drawn for the study. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study include 10 functions of the extended family to its members for example inculcates family values to the young ones; collective economic survival, level equality among others, 12 ways economic recession has influenced the EFS, for instance; Being each other's brother's keeper is rarely practiced, care of the elderly has been shifted to the government, and other types of influence not related to the FFS are. It has led to increase in insurgency, armed robbery, increased youth unemployment among others. Recommendations were based on the findings of the study thus; families must make drastic changes to their pre-recession lifestyles which will include adjustment among others.

Keywords: Economic, Recession Extended, Family, System.

Introduction

Families in Nigeria, including those in Abia State have experienced various economic hardships as a result of economic recession. Ikot (2017) reported that there is still an outcry of hardship everywhere in the land which means that the country's economy is still neck-deep in recession. Also, Ologbon-Ori (2016) observed that the effect of no

source of income to meet basic family needs and obligations causes frictions among family members which may lead to long lasting damage to extended family relationships. This is because the affluent members of the extended families can no longer help the less privileged members as usual. Other reports also indicate various challenges for families. For instance, Kolawole

(2016), reported that the recession has caused family members not to spend quality time with each other not to talk more of meeting their financial needs. Furthermore, Nigerian Capital News Online (2016) stated that during recession, economic hardship, knows no limits and boundaries, it affects livelihood of everybody in one-way or the other. It also observed that in a recession, families with little or no buffers to resist the effect of economic recession are most likely to be hit severely. In another report, it was found that the combined effect of hunger, inflation, very high exchange rates and debt burden on the wellbeing and lifestyle of members of any family should be imagined than experienced. The psychological, physiological, social and economic disposition of people are affected and these may have serious effects on the wellbeing of the extended families members.

In the same vein, Amadi (2016) reported that to finance Children's education usually becomes tougher on families during recession as schools would adjust tuition fees upwards due to high operating cost, so parents with three or four Children in schools are at the cross-roads at the moment and so cannot be of help to the extended family members. This raises the critical question of how effective the families are discharging their natural roles especially with regard to extended family members who are vulnerable. Recession is a period of reduced economic activities in a country (Anyanwu, 2001). However, in a recession, business ceases to expand

and the rate of unemployment rises. Recession in a country also leads to inflation. Meanwhile, inflation is a sustained increase in the general level of prices of goods and services. However, the prolonged economic recession occasioned by the collapse of the world oil market has become emerging issue that is threatening families survival because it has resulted in fallen incomes and all these have affected the extended families lifestyle.

The family has been part of the history from the earliest days until now. It is a universal reality because everyone has a family but everyone does not necessarily have a spouse, a child or siblings but everyone belongs to a family with father and a mother who in turn had a father and a mother (Hawkins and Motherbaugh, 2010). Therefore, the extended family is such a common denominator for the human race. Anyakoha (2015), stated that there are three types of families; nuclear, polygamous and extended families. The extended is the oldest and most common type of family in Nigeria. The extended family is defined as a grouping broader than the nuclear family which is related by descent, marriage or adoption. It existed as a structure of collective responsibility for its members even if they do not all live together in the same household (Brown, 2011). Extended family is one that extends beyond the nuclear family, consisting of parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and all living nearby or in the same household (Ruggles, 2010). The extended family is an institution that plays an important role in influencing

individual and household choices in developing countries and through this their well-being is secured (Maide, 2014). He also observed that the oldest member of the family becomes the head of the extended family. He equally opined that the head of the family makes resources available to all other family members, apart from making resources available, there are other functions performed by the extended family such as; an extensive system of exchange of goods, collective economic survival, level in equality and build community life, picks up pieces of a broken marriages, acts as a reservoir of healing and strength for survivors, care of the elderly and children, teaching/training the younger ones among others (Kazianga and Wahhaj, 2013). Nwokolo (2011), observed that in Nigeria care of the elderly has always been taken to be the responsibility of the extended family members with little or no government support. In another development, William and Mcilwaine (2014), stated differently that elderly care in Nigeria has been within the extended family system, while some parents also send their children to the villages to live with their grandparents and run errands for them, while in return the grandparents teach them cultural and moral values (Dasgupta and Malashri, 2007).

Consequently, all these practices are declining and changing gradually due to urbanization and economic recession. Many studies in agreement to the above statement maintains that there is an erosion of the extended family system due to globalization, technological

development and economic recession which has contributed to accelerate this disintegration of traditional African family structure (Cheng and Siankam, 2009, Abebe and Aage, 2007 and Dahl, 2009). Also Hoff (2007) posited that the decline of the care in the extended family are caused by the decline in the economy, disintegration of the extended family system, unemployment and female paid employment to augment the family income, all these have affected the extended family lifestyle. However, MayerLoff (2012), observed that the extended family system faded away by the industrialization process and that the social welfare has taken over the responsibility for the care of the ill, the aged and the unemployed in some countries.

Meanwhile, lifestyle is a way of living of individuals, families (households and societies which they manifest in coping with their physical, psychological, social and economic environment on a day to day basis. It is expressed in both work and leisure behavior patterns and in activity, attitudes, interests, opinions, values and allocation of income. (Anyakoha, 2011). Also, it reflects people's image or self-concept the way they see themselves and believe they are seen by others. Kembe and Ifejiaka (2013), stated that lifestyle is a habit, attitude, tastes, moral standards and economic level that constitute the mode of living of the family or individual. In a similar vein, Okoye (2014) opined that lifestyles are the different ways people live their lives, which include those that they do, with whom they do the things as well as

where, how, and what they use to do their things. In the same vein. It has also been observed that lifestyle manifest in the families daily life which involves what the family does and how the individual members does those things, families develop lifestyle in order to meet their needs. This infers that the recession has caused families to change the way they do most of the things.

However, Collins (2012), had observed differently that the ongoing economic recession in the country has changed the idealized image of a traditional extended family as couples live separately from other family members with many consequences on family cohesion. Rivera, Guarnaccia, Mulvaney, Lin, Torres and Algeria (2009), defined cohesion as emotional bonding and level of support and commitment that family members have towards each other. They narrated that as people work more hours away from the family it affects cohesion and weakens the extended family system because most people are no longer ready to bear one another's burden which is the hallmark of the extended family. The extended family system in Ohafia is a means of collective economic survival. The Ohafia people believes in being their brothers' keeper. The extended family system is the strong bond which is mostly described by the saying that blood is thicker than water and the anger of the brother does not get to the bones (Eme, 2016). He further stated that despite the economic recession, slowly sipping into the community, the issue of marriage, burial, retirement ceremonies are not

private affairs, this ceremonies are rarely contracted without the interference of the extended family members. Today, it is no longer the same, because there is noticeable decline in the level of care provided by the extended families to its members. The family structure in Ohafia has been distorted as a result of a storm of economic recession and social factors. People today are becoming individualistic and the old sense of brotherhood which held society together is vanishing (Jona, 2017). If the emerging trend in the contemporary Ohafia society is anything to go by then the good old extended family system might as well be falling into the dustbin of history (Jona, 2017) This formed the problem of the study; influence of economic recession on the extended family system in Abia State.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of economic recession on the extended family lifestyle in Abia State Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined:

1. Ways economic recession has influenced extended family system norms in Abia State.
2. Other challenges of economic recession on members of EFS.

Research Questions: The study answered these research questions:

1. In what ways do economic recession influence the extended family system?
2. What are other challenges of economic recession on members of EFS?

Methodology

Design of the Study: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey design helps to study people's attitudes, activities, opinions, motivations and other characteristics. It is therefore suitable for this study which focused on the influence of economic recession on the extended family system in Abia State.

Population for the Study: The population for the study consisted of 350 registered members of Ohafia Improvement Union (O.I.U) women wing. The Ohafia Improvement Union is an association binding all Ohafia people together. The union has male and female sections separate and they have separate meeting days. Ohafia people believes in being their brother's keepers as a well of life (Eme, 2016). These women are matured adults and married with children. They are registered members of the association who know the culture and tradition and have a common goal of up-holding the culture.

Sample for the Study: A sample of 187 women was drawn from Ohafia Improvement Union association. The women studied were selected using purposive sampling technique because the women are registered members of the association and being registered members they know the culture and tradition more than any other group. So they are relevant for the study

Area of the Study: This study was carried out in Ohafia, Abia State. Ohafia is one of the local government areas in Abia State. Ohafia has 25 villages on the whole. Some of the villages are

classified as urban and rural areas (Independent Electoral Commission, INEC, 2006). Some of these people are registered members of an association called Ohafia Improvement Union (O.I.U). In the study area, there is prevalence of extended family system because the people believed in being their brother's keepers as a way of life (Eme, 2016). They also believed that EFS is the primary mechanism where cultural and subcultural values and behavior patterns are inculcated and handed over to the next generation (Eme, 2016; Hawkins and Motherbough, 2010). Also in the area, they believed in collective economic survival and care for the elderly among the family. The OIU has a motto that states "*onye ahala nwanne yaa , umunna bu ike*".

Instrument for Data Collection: Two sets of instruments were used for data collection for the study. These were; structured questionnaire developed through extensive review of literature and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide. They were validated by three Home Economics Lecturers.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using test-retest reliability method. The questionnaire was administered to 30 women who responded to the question items. These women use for the test retest reliability were not part of the main sample of the study. To establish the reliability of the instrument, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used. The mean responses were used to calculate the Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Index was used to determine the

internal consistency of the instrument on the data obtained: The analyzed data yielded a co-efficient of 0.98 which showed that the instrument was reliable and consistent.

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques: A total of 187 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents. All of them were collected on the spot because it was the meeting day and they were pre-informed. One, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) session was organized and used to answer questions on the functions of the EFS to its member's influence of the economic recession on the EFS not related to the functions of the EFS. They were 15 participants. A Focus Group Guide

developed by the researcher, based on the purpose of the study was used. The FGD was organized in Ebem Ohafia in Nkwo market day by 5pm. The timing was to be sure they will be available and they were not part of the study group. Data collected were analyzed using means and standard deviation.

Findings:

The following findings were made:

1. 12 ways economic recession has influenced economic system norms in Abia State.
2. 11 other challenges of economic recession on members of extended family system.

Table 1: Ways economic recession has influenced extended family system norms. Mean Responses on the Influence of Economic Recession on the Extended Families.

S/N	Ways the EFS norms has been influenced by the economic recession	\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂
1.	Being each other's brother's keeper is rarely practiced	4.22	1.19	4.48	1.1
2.	Care for the elderly in the extended family system	4.15	1.13	4.02	1.1
3.	People do not believe in communal life of sharing again	3.84	1.24	4.53	1.13
4.	Children are no longer sent to the village to live with their grandparents	3.41	1.4	4.20	1.23
5.	Grandparents now rarely teach and train their children about the culture of their people	3.33	1.38	4.00	1.16
6.	Only few children are allowed to run errands for their grandparents because they are hardly seen.	3.62	1.38	3.90	1.08
7.	There is no more extensive system of sharing of goods among members of extended family system	3.62	1.35	4.50	1.23
8.	There is no more collective economic survival activities in the extended family	3.56	1.41	3.90	1.28
9.	EFS members hardly mediate in marital problems of couples in the extended family	3.86	1.26	4.02	1.28
10.	EFS rarely inculcates family values to the young members	3.91	1.21	4.20	1.12
11.	EFS rarely supports aged single parents within the system	3.77	1.37	4.50	1.25
12.	Labour needs of aged family members are no longer met	3.84	1.40	3.84	1.12

X_1 = Mean for urban; X_2 = Mean for rural; SD_1 = Standard Deviation for urban; SD_2 = Standard Deviation rural;

Table 1 shows that all the 12 items were accepted by the respondents as ways economic recession has influenced extended family system norms. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) revealed that the economic recession has made people not to be their brother's keeper, do not care much for the elderly, do not build on communal life again, children no longer live with grandparents as they are sent into hawking to help the family among others.

Table 2: Other challenges of economic recession on members of EFS Mean Responses on other challenges of economic recession on members of EFS.

S/N	Other challenges of economic recession on members of EFS	\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2
1.	Families are no longer happy	3.60	0.78	3.65	0.82
2.	Insurgence (rebellling against authority) in the state	3.68	0.85	3,60	0.82
3.	Armed robbery by youths is on increase	3.42	0.79	3.44	0.80
4.	Youth employment has also increased	3.18	0.72	3.24	0.84
5.	Kidnapping for ransom to make ends meet is rampant	3.19	0.74	3.49	0.94
6.	Child labor is on the increase.	3.35	0.86	3.55	0.92
7.	Increase in prostitution by both married and single ladies.	3.51	0.87	3.09	0.89
8.	Killing for rituals is on the increase.	3.49	0.63	3.63	0.79
9.	More children are dropping out of school	3.35	0,65	3.47	0.86
10.	There is human trafficking	3.40	0.65	3.47	0,68
11.	Lifestyle has generally changed that what the society frowns at is rampant now.	3.33	0.68	3,60	0.85

X_1 = Mean for urban; X_2 = Mean for rural; SD_1 = Standard Deviation for urban; SD_2 = Standard Deviation rural;

Table 2 reveals that the eleven other challenges of economic recession were accepted as other challenges of economic recession on members of the extended family system directly. The Focus Group revealed that there are other challenges of economic recession on members of the EFS like insurgence, arm robbery, kidnapping for ransom to make ends meet are not rampant, child labour is also on the increase among others.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study showed that the EFS is peculiar to Abia society with its various norms. EFS in Ohafia is the strong bond which is mostly described blood is thicker than water and anger of the brother does not get to the bones (Eme, 2016). EFS in Ohafia are guided by the strict system of seniority (Jona, 2017). For instance, Anyakoha (2015), stated that extended family serves as an extensive system of exchange of human and non-human resources. She further

stated that everyone has something to offer and contribute to the sustenance of its members. This is in agreement with Kazianga & Wahhaj (2013), who opined that extended families provide other services that has the characteristic of public goods. Again, they stated that they care for the elderly members of the family. Also in agreement, Willis & Mcilwaine (2014) observed that the extended family provides welfare and training to members. This finding corroborates with Nwokolo (2011) who observed that in Nigeria care of the elderly has always been taken to be the responsibility of the extended family members without any government support. The finding is also in line with Hawkins and Mothersbuogh (2010) who opined that extended households are important not only for their direct role in the consumption process but also for the critical role they perform in socializing children. They further stated that the extended family is the primary mechanism whereby cultural and subcultural values and behaviors patterns are passed on to the next generation. Hawkins *et al.*, (2010) opined further that value-expression influence occurs when individuals have internalized the groups values and norms taught. These then guide the individual's behavior without any thought of reference group sanctions. They also observed that the individual behaves in a manner consistent with the group's values because his or her values are the same with the group. The findings infers that extended families do a good job for their members. The findings of the study is not in

agreement with Kazianga & Wahhaj (2013) who opined that the cherished belief that the extended family and relatives will take care of Orphans as a safety net in Africa, whenever the situation arises is fallacious. Furthermore, Foster (2000), puts it in metaphorical language when he stated that "the extended family is not a social sponge with an infinite capacity to soak up Orphans". These findings infer that the extended families have important functions which it performs to the individual, family and wider society and it should be maintained sustainably. Also in agreement with the findings, Andrew (2002) observed that African society was organized in lineages and members of the lineage cooperated and shared resources with others and adult members of the family carefully controlled and monitored the sharing of the resources. In line with the findings, Meyerholf (2012) stated that extended family system connects members to their family traditions and give value to lineage.

The findings on Table 1 on ways the economic recession influences the extended family system shows that the respondents accepted the various ways economic recession influences the extended family system. The various ways are in line with the opinions of Anyanwu (2001) who observed that prolonged economic recession occasioned by the collapse of the world oil market have resulted in fallen incomes and devalued standards of living among the citizens and this has helped in weakening the ties of extended family relationship. The

findings on children sent to dwell with grandparents, grandparents teach and train the children on the culture of their people, children being allowed to run errands for their grandparent among others are also in line with the opinion of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) who observed that during the economic recession, children are particularly vulnerable as they undergo critical conditions for example, they may be forced into hawking, child trafficking, child labour in order to generate income for the family instead of going to live with their grandparents for tutelage and errands.

The findings on table 2: on other types of challenges of economic recession on EFS are also in agreement with Anyanwu (2001) who narrated that economic recession has disastrous effects not only on the lives and dignity of persons but also on the health of members of the families and other dependent relations. He further stated that masses are no longer happy and many families lack peace within. In agreement with the findings, Andrew (2002) opined that the rise of the private family which is focused on individual emotional satisfaction has undercut the ability of the extended family to carry out its responsibilities to the other extended members. Also, Hoff (2007), stated that there is a noticeable decline in the level of care provided by the extended family and narrated further that the decline is as a result of economic recession in the country. Ajie and Wokekoro (2012) noted that recession has a dynamic impact which is felt more by poorer households. They

further stated that the dynamic effect of recession has a long run negative impact on growth primarily through the reduction in human capital. However, Abebe and Aase (2007), Dahl (2009) Cheng and Siankein (2009) maintains that the erosion of the extended family is due to socioeconomic development in the country. Nonetheless, Foster (2000) also agreed that despite the weakening of the extended family, it remains predominant caring unit for the unfortunate members of the society and that this shows its resilience and strength. In another development, it has been observed that the extended family system's network still exist and although many members are physically spread all over a wide geographical area, communication occurs with the aid of internet, phones, whatsapps, cars among others (Anderson and Taylor, 2007). This also infers that the families are now after their immediate nuclear family members needs and if the recession is not checked by Federal Government, it may eventually collapse the extended family system in the society. The strong and frequent interaction of the extended family has been damaged by the recession in the country and this infers that the economic recession affects the extended family negatively. This also is in line with Mayerhoff (2012) who observed that the extended family system faded away by industrialization process and that social welfare has taken over their responsibilities for the sick, aged and the unemployed. FGD findings also revealed that recession has led to insurgency, armed robbery,

kidnapping, youth unemployment, increased prostitution, ritual killings, school dropout, human trafficking, change in life style of people, creates dual families, married women has gone in to adultery, it has caused a lot of health related challenges like HIV/AIDS among others.

In agreement with the findings on insurgency, youth unemployment, kidnapping among others, the National Bureau of statistics (2016) reported that the unemployment rate as at March first quarter of 2016 stood at 12.1 percent up from 10.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015 and the number of unemployed person rose by 18 percent. It affirmed also that the youth unemployment increased to 21.5 percent form 19 percent. It further observed that the youth restiveness, insurgency, armed robbery, kidnapping, raping and numerous other vices have being attributed largely to unemployment as a result of recession. In the same vein, Goldin (2016) affirmed that unemployment impact matters beyond economic measures such as identity and social cohesion are also affected and these activities detract so much from what is expected from well- adjusted individuals.

In another development, Lawal (2016) observed that modern day slavery is one evil practice of economic recession which many may have been underestimating its impact on human and social development. He characterized modern day slavery as human trafficking, forced labour, forced or servile marriage, commercial sex exploitation and kidnapping.

Meanwhile, Goldin (2016) noted that unemployment presents a big threat to family's well-being and this has direct bearing on youth restiveness. This infers that recession influences all round development of the individual which invariably affect the extended family system (EFS) in Abia State. The point still remains that better results will be achieved when family members work together as their "brother's keepers" than when the individual members work in isolation of each other.

The family structure in Ohafia has been distorted as a result of a storm of economic recession and social factors. People today are becoming individualistic and the old sense of brotherhood which held society together is vanishing (Jona, 2017).

Recommendations

The extended families should adopt the following recommendations to overcome the Influence of economic recession.

- ❖ Families must make drastic changes to their pre-recession lifestyle which will include adjustment.
- ❖ Extended family members must cut back on extras during the recession period so as to be their brothers' keeper.
- ❖ They must change plans to suit the situation at hand and also maintain brotherhood.
- ❖ Extended family members should prioritize expenses and pay bills in order of importance; that is focusing on the necessities of life in order to maintain happiness and peace in the EFS.

- ❖ They must understand the difference between needs and wants in order to overcome other challenges of economic recession
- ❖ They should put investment accounts on hold and play catch-up at a later time when the recession must have been checked.

Conclusion

The study revealed the functions of the extended family to include collective economic survival, level inequality among others. It also found that recession has many challenges on the extended families. The recession has affected the system negatively that members are no longer their brother's keeper. It was also revealed that the extended families are important not only for their direct role in the consumption process but also for the critical role they perform in socializing children and it is the primary mechanism whereby cultural and subcultural values and behavior patterns are passed on to the next generation. Therefore the recession should not be allowed to disintegrate the EFS in Abia State. It also gave recommendations on ways to make sure that the recession does not collapse the extended family system.

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