

## STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY FOR QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD IN POST COVID-19 ERA – A REVIEW

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### Abstract

This paper explores the possibilities of strengthening the family for quality and sustainable livelihood. The paper focuses on the challenge to family sustainability which includes rapid population growth, poverty rate, economic insecurity, food inflation, social insecurity, economic recession. It further examines surviving options for quality and sustainable livelihood in the family and their implications to Home Economics.

**Key Words:** Family, Quality, Sustainable, Livelihood.

### Introduction

The family is the basic social unit of any society characterized by common habitation and co-operation in social and economic activities. Anyakoha (2015) sees the family as a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption and often characterized by common residence and economic co-operation. The family carries out many functions that enhances the wellbeing of its members and sustenance of society, (Ezema 2017). These functions include among others, procreation (child bearing), socialization, protection, economic role, religious functions and civic responsibilities. The family according to Anyakoha (2013) performs multifaceted functions in the society. It provides a special cushion and springboard for numerous life decisions, challengers, demands and goals.

Maintaining a quality and sustainable living for every family is an important issue that needs to be achieved in the society, but the situation in Nigeria today does not seem to be helping matter, rather things are getting worse by the day. The combined effect of hunger, inflation, very high exchange rates

and debt burden on the well-being of family members should be better imagined than experienced. The psychological, physiological, social, physical and economic dispositions of people are affected. People feel uncomfortable, growth is stunted, intelligence is stifled, emotional equilibrium is destabilized, body immunity is lowered and clear thinking and overall sensibility of people are affected (Umeakuka 2017). This multifaceted challenges of families and sustainable livelihood have worsened as more families relapse into extreme poverty as a result of the impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

Before the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic, the outlook for the world economy and especially developing countries like Nigeria was fragile as the global Gross Domestic Product growth was estimated to 2.5 percent in 2020. (Onyekwena and Ekeruche 2020).

Also Nigerian government had been grappling with weak recovery from the 214 oil price shock with GDP growth tapering around 2.3 percent in 2019. National Bureau of statistics (2020) stated that prior to the pandemic, the number of poor Nigerians were expected to increase by about two million largely due to population growth.

Also before the covid-19 pandemic, Nigerian unemployment rate was already high at 23.1% while underemployment stood at 16% (National Bureau of Statistic 2020). As stated by International Labour Organization (ILO) (2020), the covid-19 pandemic will result in a massive income and health shock for many households as household income of many families is likely to decline as rates of unemployment and underemployment rise. As posited by National Bureau of statistics (2020), 27% of families have been exposed to some degree of financial burden as a result of increase in prices of major food products, while nearly 12% of exposed families report reducing consumption in order to manage the impact of the shock.

The financial stress caused by the pandemic may force family members to shy away from their roles and responsibilities. Researches have consistently found a relationship between financial strain and distress which can take the form of increased level of anger, hostility, depression, anxiety, somatic complaint and poor physical health (Maknery and Price, 2005). Some forecasts suggests that Nigeria's unemployment rate could rise to 33.6% (or 39.4 million people) by the end of the year if urgent steps are not taken. In addition, a recently released National Bureau of Statistics (2020), family survey showed that over 40% of Nigerian families could be classified as poor.

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resources base. (Akrantz 2001). According to Chambers and Conway (1991), a livelihood comprises of people, their capabilities and

their means of living, including food, income and assets. A persons livelihood refers to their means of securing the basic necessities (food, water, shelter and clothing) of life. As a result of many challenges faced by families in post covid-19 era, there is need to find ways to strengthen the family for a quality and sustainable living.

#### **This paper thus focuses on:**

- Challenges to family wellbeing
- Quality and sustainable family surviving options
- Implication of quality and sustainable family survival options for Home Economics.

#### **Justification for Quality and Sustainable Livelihood for Family**

Many factors combine to justify the need for quality and sustainable livelihood for the family. There is increasing evidence that covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected the quality of life of many families, job losses and cuts occasioned by covid-19 pandemic affects the stability of families and individuals. Our status, self-worth, health and well-being can be drastically impacted by loss of a job. With unemployment rates running extremely high during this period, individuals and families struggle to find work to pay the bills each month.

While many families do their best to carry on as if nothing is wrong with the world, the harsh economic realities in the country can have profound effect on the family day to day interactions and the way they live. The stress of not finding work and the loss of income can lead to damaging inter-family relationships that can take years to mend. In some families there is even an unfortunate increase in child labour and abuse, drug abuse, sexual abuse, physical violence, adult crises among others. The family should be a

place where people feel comfortable and safe. It should provide all the needed support to face all the challenges faced by its members.

### **Challenges to Quality and Sustainable Family Livelihood**

Many factors contribute to challenges to quality and sustainable family livelihood. These include:

#### **Rapid population growth;**

Quality and sustainable livelihood for families cannot be achieved with a continuous growing population. According to Ukpore (2012), in the 1950's, the estimated population of the planet was 2.5 billion, by the year 2000, it was projected to grow to more than six billion and by the year 2025 to more than eighty billion. It is also projected that by 2030, there will be three billion more people on earth than today. The consequences of such growing population pressures especially in already densely populated and poor countries include rapid urbanization, further reduction in living standard, increased environmental distress and degradation, rise in violence and escalating poverty.

According to research, unrestrained population growth eventually leads to falling wages and rising food prices because as the labour force expands, a rising ratio of labour to land leads to smaller and smaller increments in output per worker. (World Bank, 2020).

- **Poverty rate:**

Poverty is marked when families lack income and resources to ensure sustenance of livelihood. This situation makes families unable to provide basic needs of the family such as food clothing, shelter, health services and education (Ezema, 2017). Poverty in families results in challenges such as hunger,

malnutrition, poor housing, degrading environment, social vices and family hopelessness.

- **Economic Insecurity:**

Related to poverty is economic insecurity which threatens the societies and families. As posited by Anyakoha (2013) economic recession presently characterizing many countries including Nigeria, results in such problems as downsizing in various sectors of the economy, job cuts and job losses, forced and premature retirement. All these impact families and constitute big threat to social security for individuals and families. World Bank (2020) stated that as the outbreak of covid-19 intensifies, Nigeria service trade and financial sectors would suffer significant disruptions. These disruptions and contractions could result in significant job losses, both in formal and informal job markets. This could also be a severe blow and could be a threat to instability as youth unemployment/underemployment is already high at 55%.

- **Food inflation**

Rising inflation in the country of nearly 200 million people means that more Nigerians are unable to afford food, according to Nigeria's data agency. More than 37% of households report being exposed to an increase in prices of major food products, while nearly 12% of exposed households report reducing food consumption in order to manage the impact of the shock. According to Olurounbi (2020), food inflation in Nigeria has risen to 15.04% the highest rate since March 2018.

- **Social insecurity**

Families are faced with numerous social vices that infringe on their wellbeing. Such social insecurity ranges from armed robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking, insurgences, ritual killings, youth restiveness, terrorism

and so on. As noted by Ezema (2017), social disruption leads to forced migration of people from their homeland to a new livelihood and housing. These situation according to Ezema (2017) have some social and health implications and they challenge the peace and happiness of families.

- **Economic recession**

This situation involves the reduction in the process of economic activities of a family and/or a nation. It generates different kinds of stress or pressure on families such as loss of jobs, malnutrition, high blood pressure, high cost of living and general breakdown in economic system. The covi-19 pandemic has caused a recession from which global economies are only expected to recover by late 2022, if a vaccine is available. According to World Bank forecasts (2020) the global economy will shrink by 5.2% in 2020. That would represent the deepest recession since the second world war, with the largest fraction of economies experiencing declines in per capita output since 1870. Cerra and Saxena (2018), pointed out that economic recession leads to hunger, desperation, anxiety, crimes, suicide and other deadly consequences and this is a big challenge to the family.

- **Unemployment**

This is a big challenge to the family wellbeing; family members remain unemployed despite their level of education. Some become unemployed due to down sizing in some establishment, forceful retirement, etc. according to Africa report (2020). The combination of coronavirus pandemic-dependent factors – including lockdown measures and depressed global crude prices completely derailed the economy. It has also led to a sharp rise in unemployment rates in Nigeria. According to report, there will be 39.4 million job losses by

December 2020 due to the pandemic. This is a big challenge to Nigerian families as many family members has been pushed into menial jobs such as keke driving, okada riding, street hawking, bus conducting and so on.

- **Domestic violence**

In economic recession, a significant increase in domestic violence can be seen. As stated by Zheng, Xiaohoand Wang (2019) income loss and economic hardship can lead to feelings of economic stress and consequent marital conflicts. In the current covi-19 crises, there has been reports from all over the world about a significant increase in domestic violence (the Guidian 2020) exposure to domestic violence significantly affects mental health of family members and has the potential to create long-term consequences.

### **Surviving Options for Quality and Sustainable Livelihood in the Family**

Sustainable livelihood is defined as capabilities, assets (both material and social resources) and activities required for living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resources base ( Khatiwada, Deng, Paudel,Zang and Su 2017 ). The following serving options for quality and sustainable livelihood in the family include:

- **Positive communication**

Positive communication must be maintained. This means listening without judgement and expressing your thoughts and feelings openly and respectfully. Family communication is the major key in creating, supporting, maintaining or destroying a family. Appreciation and affection are expressions of

how family members show their feelings for each other.

- **Family flexibility**

Family flexibility is the ability to change its power structure, roles and rules when needed. Two qualities related to family flexibility are: the ability to cope with stress and crisis and spiritual wellbeing.

- **Management and decision-making**

Strong sustainable families are both flexible and adaptable. Leadership within the family is more democratic and less authoritarian. People share responsibilities according to available time and competencies and they include children in decisions about things like family activities and holidays.

- **Family cohesion**

Family cohesion is defined as a feeling of emotional closeness among family members. Two qualities related to family cohesion are commitment and spending time together: Commitment refers to a willingness to invest time and energy in family activities and not let careers/jobs or other priorities take too much time away from family interaction. Spending time together with family members promotes the emotional bonding family feel for each other.

- **Affection**

Stable families shower care and affection through hugs, kisses, words and acts of thoughtfulness. An individual's opinion or idea is respected and valued which can help relationship to flourish and grow. Sharing of positive feelings like appreciation and admiration for each other can assist in setting up a bond of inseparability.

- **Commitment**

Strong sustainable families follow the norms, family always comes first. No amount of

trials or difficulties can shake the unwavering faith that they have in each other. This constant dedication towards each other helps them sail through both bad and worse times.

- **Support**

Strong and sustainable families are always there for each other through thick and thin. They refuse to give up on one another when situations become unpleasant. No matter what, they stay together and support every family member providing the reassurance which may help overcome the adverse conditions.

- **Adopting a viable financial management options**

Families should adopt appropriate financial management options that allow them to live within the limits of their income. Recklessness in the expenditure of family financial resources should be avoided.

- **Learn a trade or skill.**

In situations where it is impossible to get paid work, families can create own livelihood. This can be done by learning a trade or skill, planting of vegetable and other perishable foods for family sustenance.

- **Education**

Governments and families should ensure that individuals are given opportunities to acquire education, such education should empower people for survival and self reliance.

### **Recommendations for Quality and Sustainable Family Survival Options for Home Economics**

Researches should be carried out by Home Economists on the challenges facing families and at the same time evolve workable

strategies that can help alleviating these challenges.

Home Economic professionals could assist in bringing out the characteristics of quality sustainable livelihood for families discussed in this paper.

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## Conclusions

Many factors contribute to challenges to quality and sustainable livelihood among families, such factors include poverty rate, economic insecurity, social insecurity, food inflation among others. Surviving options for quality and sustainable livelihood in the family include positive communication and family cohesion among others. It is important to use Home Economics in assisting, achieving quality and sustainable living in the family.

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