



CAN IDEAL FAMILY VALUES BE PROMOTED IN NIGERIA THROUGH WELFARE COUNSELLING?

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ABSTRACT

Societal values are no longer appreciated in Nigeria as it was in the past. The problems in our society can be traced down to positive values being thrown into the wind in many families. This paper has discussed how values can be promoted as crucial role of the family in the society. Family is seen as the core of the society where values can easily be trained and nurtured. Both civility and universal family values could be learnt in various places such as home, school, religious centre, neighbourhood. The paper has highlighted the genesis of problems facing family values and the consequences on Nigeria society. Solutions and recommendations were also proffered through welfare counseling to solve the problems facing family values for its promotion in Nigeria society.

Key words: *Ideal, Family, Values, Promote, Welfare Counselling*

INTRODUCTION

The union between a man and a woman is the building block of the family and the cornerstone of any society. The concept “family” can be defined in various ways which depends on individual’s point of view. The Family is the most basic unit of government. A family is simply a group of people who are expected to love, support and help each other unconditionally and endlessly. Traditionally’ family comprises of a father and a mother bound to each other by legal marriage, raising biological children. Promoting and strengthening marriage is the surest way and most stable way of raising children. Children are best brought up where you have two natural parents and it is more likely to be a stable family if they are married. Family is the root of family formation, the primary source for social behaviour. Despite the changing life style and ever-increasing personal mobility that characterize modern society, the family remains the central element of contemporary life (Meyerhoff, 2013). A stable family structure is one of the basic building blocks for a healthy society. Societies in which the family unit is falling apart are societies in trouble.

Family is fundamental for personality formation. As the first community to which a person is attached and the first authority under which a person learns to live, the family establishes society’s most basic values. A family shares goals and values which reinforces relationship and cohesion in the family. Family values are what a family cherishes and teaches the children. A value is a social principle, goal or standard held by an individual, class, society, or a group (Oxford English Dictionary). Values are socially shared conceptions of what is good, desirable and proper or even bad. Value is what we cherish most in our lives. Our values influence our orientations, actions, reactions and interpretations. Values can also be referred to as principles or standards followed and revered by a people continuously from generation to generation. Family values can then be defined as beliefs, way of life transmitted by a family environment into the individual and this impartation guides the individual in his actions within and outside the family world. Within the family, the interactions are guided by these values only and this practice



of following the values extends outside the family as well. It is apt to observe that for constructing a good sustaining society, family is the basic unit which needs to be given attention. Family values can also be guided by disposition, depending on the type of family structure.

There are different types of family structures which will call for inequality in family values. Emery cited in Koon (2012) declared that having two parents in a household is beneficial. For example children in nuclear families receive strength and stability from the two parent structure and generally have more opportunities due to the financial ease of two adults, whereas single parent families are always looking for ways to solve problems such as dividing up household chores and financial crisis. Director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, Wilcox, cited in Koon (2012) in his study found that children who are raised in single-parent families are two to three times more likely to drop out of high school, that boys raised in such families are more than twice to be arrested by age thirty.

Koon (2012) also pointed out that children growing up in such (single parent) a family structure are more likely to struggle hardships such as delinquent or teenage pregnancy. Hence if family values are supportive and sustaining, they will surely be accepted or at least be considered by those who experience the conduct based on such values. The ideals of one family unit often differ drastically from the ideals of one another. For example, one family may price formal education above other values, while another family cherishes creativity and individualism among its members (Lediaeve, 2013). Nevertheless, societal values do cut across families and cultures.

The most important value that we can teach to elicit other family values is civility, Civility is a learned behaviour in which we treat others with kindness and respect. Universal family values are family unity, honesty, integrity, love, education, religion, culture. Others include confidence, learning, happiness, encouragement, prayerfulness, harmony, wisdom, dignity, peace, compassion, generosity, mutual respects, to mention but a few. These family values could save the children from future crisis. The well-being of every family should be strengthened by restoring the fundamental moral values that have sustained the hearts of minds of our citizens for generations.

Great values could be observed and adopted from the spiritual perspectives (Bible, Quran and Traditional) as part of the principles that govern the home. An example is hard work, putting in your all at work or school in order to excel. Also, respect for life, elders and obedience to authorities at home, community, school, work or government, is a vital value. Contentment is a taught value which means being satisfied with whatever is available and using only legitimate means to acquire wealth or to make progress. Children can also be taught to be their brother's keeper and learn to be neighbourly and relate well with fellow human beings (Adeboye, 2013). In order to bring individual and family life into accord with natural law, we can largely erase the present epidemic of family breakdown and moral decay and create a society in which parents, children, families and society mutually nourish and strengthen each other in their growth toward fulfillment.

The Problem

Positive societal values are fast eroding in Nigeria. In the past, Nigerians were highly guided by appreciated values that led to success stories often told by the aged and old parents, which brought the country into limelight- "the giant of Africa". Unfortunately, today, it is a different ball game. Most states in our country experience violence, rape, bomb attack, kidnapping, ritual killing, robbery attack, corruption, bunkering, to mention just a few among others. The society we have today that is devoid of expected societal values could be traced



down to “the family” that is no longer mindful of the right values to teach the children, if they (parents) have those values at all. Some children even have their developmental stages in violent family that has affected them in giving dignity and respect to human being.

Nevertheless, there still exist families that appreciate values, always ready to teach their children, but are incapacitated by problems beyond them. Nigerian families today are under unprecedented financial, social and environmental stress, making it difficult for parents to create loving, stable homes for their children to learn values and inculcate it in the society.

Financial Stress – The high cost of living in Nigeria has made most two – parent families to work relentlessly to maintain a reasonable existence. Wadsworth and Rienks (2012) pointed out that low family income and negative financial events lead to economic pressure (stress) in the family which leads to parenting problems. Financial stress usually develops in two ways either because of adverse incidents, like divorce or job loss or from long-established and destructive financial behaviour. No matter the cause, financial stress can warm its way into a family creating a devastating impact. This economic stress has made many homes to lose touch with their children. Many of these children do not know their parents intimately (parents’ dos and don’ts). They are at the mercy of house helps, probably with faulty foundation, who begins to teach the child things that negate the family values. Some children are even assaulted by the helpers.

Quite a good number of parents make use of grandparents, who are invariably to be looked after, to look after their children. Many of these grandparents are too old and tired; some run away from being labeled and tagged “witch” while correcting the children, so they find it difficult to teach values when necessary. The increased financial tension has led to high divorce rate for new marriages. As a result, many children no longer receive the love, attention, and guidance from their parents, which were enjoyed by the previous generations. Within the family, it is the husband and wife that are expected to play the normal socialization role. In the traditional Nigeria society, the man is not only seen as the sole director of the affairs taking place in the family (Nwosuji, 2008). Although Christianity polished the position of the wife in the family as being complimentary to that of the husband, both the husband and wife are expected to play the role of raising their children along the line of societal norms. Families with only one parent face even greater challenges.

Most single-parent families live in poverty. One of the most striking changes in family structure over the last twenty years has been the increase of single parent families. In this family there is only one parent in the household raising the children. Due to high divorce rates and adults choosing not to marry, this is currently the fastest growing family all over the world. Most of such family is headed by women. Too often, children living in single parent households have to contend with negative stereotypes and hurtful remarks made by insensitive adults. Despite the devotion and hard work of many single parents, studies indicate that children in single-parent families are at greater risk of crime such as rape, incest, drug and alcohol abuse and dropping out of school. In such families, positive family values are not in place.

Social environment – The environment is socially decayed and corrupt. Parents today have little or no control over negative influences assaulting their children such as peer group influence, drug and alcohol abuse, premature sexual activity, rape and so on.



Values are no longer regarded in the society. Teachers are even afraid to teach values in schools because of the fear of being disgraced, chastised and reprimanded by parents. Some parents feel value training is not in the curriculum or syllabus, so students should not be bothered with such trivial issues.

Our educational system unconditionally fails to instill core values in students, such as honesty, mutual respect and social responsibility. Neighbours who were regarded as the parents “eyes” or shepherds to make sure that the children inculcate the right values are negatively using themselves to bring calamity on the flocks. Many children are victims of rape even through the adult neighbours. Technological advancement is another problem affecting the learning of values. Children find it difficult to marry technology and values together to guide behaviour and actions. Unfortunately for us, the technological inventors do cherish the values embedded in Nigeria culture, hence their wards are being sent to Nigeria to learn the culture. People fail to realize that science without values will destroy a nation. Although science contributes greatly to national development but cannot replace family values. In addition, children watch an excessive amount of television without gaining valuable things, again wasting the time that should have been spent with parents, teachers, or other role models to learn values.

Physical environment –Our environment is devoid of basic needs which would not allow citizens to think of appreciating and inculcating values. Parents can no longer guarantee the quality of even the most basic, necessities for their families, such as food, air, water, shelter, security, so the children are prone to danger and attacks. Isolation of families as a result of increased work hours, travel time, lack of affordable housing in urban areas of the country, and migration means that many families who have little support in their local communities can affect their values. Children may be living with different kinds of families and learning to live with differing family values which may affect the child negatively. Strunk (2012) commented in her article that active living is dwindling because people no longer create recreation centres in their neighbourhood where exercise can take place to facilitate inculcating good active living value.

French (2007) in his study recommended that outdoor and indoor learning environments should be motivating and inviting to all children, so that they are occupied, encouraged and helped to explore and to use all the possibilities offered for fun, adventure, challenge and creativity. Macmillan cited in Smith, Cowie and Blades (2005) believed in the importance of first-hand experience and active learning, convinced of value of play, she ensured that there were ample materials available to stimulate children’s imaginations. The moonlight tales that used to pave way for value learning is no longer in place.

These financial, social and environmental challenges that parents face today have given rise to lack of positive family values. Many political parties, governmental and non-governmental organization decry these problems – domestic violence, child abuse, divorce, rape, child trafficking, prostitution, breakdown of morality, but they have been unable to offer effective solutions to these problems. The problems of inability to inculcate the right values in Nigerian children have greatly affected the adolescents and youth which have led to moral decadence in the society.

Solution/Social Welfare Counsellor’s View In Promoting Societal Values.

- The values that people hold also depend on factors within individuals such as personal needs. Thus the extent to which family environments support people’s intrinsic needs may have additional relationships to the values people acquire. Hence family unity



should be sustained and strengthened against external forces that can cause disintegration to it. Family should reorient their children with right values.

- Accumulated stress in the families should be reduced so that individuals, especially parents, are able to make the most life supporting decision in their personal lives and inculcating values that are most nourishing to the lives of their children.
- Religion can be used to bring back the right values into the individual citizens just as supported by governor Omehia of Rivers state while speaking on “Rivers Chronic Moral Decadence.
- The government has a big role to play in bringing back the well appreciated values of the past into limelight. Display of positive values by the citizenry can be rewarded by the government and discouraging corruption and social vices. Every Nigeria citizen should be regarded and appreciated.

The most effective solution to the above is to deal with all these problems that hinder family values, just as they arise. However, the general and long lasting solution lies within four domains: the family, school, neighbourhood and peer group, all of them have to be scrutinized by the parents to foster family values.

- **Unity and good family relationship** – Parent should endeavour to foster unity within the family and exhibit examples of positive values. Children’s problems are more likely when parents fail to monitor or supervise their children. Knowing where children are, who they are with and what they are doing is one of the most powerful means of avoiding crimes. Authoritative parenting style is associated with very few problems unlike authoritarian parenting that is too strict, so also the permissive or uninvolved parenting. Authoritative parents are warm and responsive, while still providing firm, consistent rules and standards for positive values. There would be heart to heart discussion when the children open up to their parents which make them to inculcate the necessary values into the child. Problems are less likely when families communicate clear position on issues such as drinking, smoking, sexual involvement and establish consequences if rules are broken. Parents that are involved in their children’s school activities, such as attending parent–teacher conferences, P.T.A meeting, can easily blend with the school to teach the children the right values. Parental involvement in schooling is a potent predictor of family unity. Marital conflict interferes with competent parenting which hinders family values. Family can be protected against all these crimes with unity in the family.
- **Dealing with negative peer influence** - In order to ascertain that children are not infected with negative values, there has to be proper monitoring even of the friends. Parents should be close to their children, to the extent of knowing their friends. The parents could become friends so that they can easily send signals to themselves if they notice any unpleasant value in their children. The children should be encouraged to have a close friend and avoid too many friends so as not to pick wrong values.
- **School** - Academic success should be monitored to avoid the students’ involvement in truancy, alcohol abuse and smoking. Right values should be taught in schools through some subjects such as religious studies. Teachers could shun intimidation by teaching family values which they equally teach at home, and also lead by example showing the right values in their behaviour. The children should be monitored to be committed to schooling. The children’s school should not be larger than 500, when the school is too large, it is easy for children to be negatively influenced with wrong values. Their school should not be too far from home except they are in the boarding house where they are being monitored.



- **Neighbourhood/Community** - Children rely on a greater number of people such as neighbours, teachers, and clergy. Parents should ensure that their children are within a community with good neighbours where they can learn positive values. Neighbours could be regarded as the ears, eyes, and nose of any community. For example, social isolation is one of the best predictors of a child abusing family. Culturally, neighbours are there to help and care for themselves including mentoring the children in the neighbourhood, through which positive values can be inculcated in the children.

Implication for Social Welfare Counselling

- Social workers are necessary to be in all levels of education to monitor the pupils/students to their respective homes. Family is the nucleus of the society, very essential to the social worker. Social work counsellor needs to work directly with the family to create unity and avoid divorce because it does not only affect the couple, but adversely the children.
- Social work counsellor need to work with many homes in giving value orientation making them to know the implication of passing down wrong values to the children.
- Time should be created in the home for family forum and care of the children. This will enable the parents to see the lapses in their children's behaviour and nurture him with the right values.
- Importance of values should be stressed when handling cases such as bombing, rape, killings, and other maladaptive behaviours.
- Families in Nigeria need to be resolute to adapt and adjust to any situation or condition they find themselves. The right values should be maintained even at difficult times.
- Right type of parenting will lead to positive values. Good parenting style will raise happy, healthy resilient children in an ever- changing world.

Recommendations

- Parents should give high priority to necessities that affect social relationships within families
- Parents should endeavour to create time for their children no matter how busy they may be.
- Traditional or nuclear family structure should be highly encouraged in order to discourage other types of family such as single parent, step family, gay, lesbianism.
- The government, through the local government, should provide recreation infrastructures in locations in every community to engage the children in useful activities that would lead to positive values.
- Teaching of values should be introduced into the school curriculum in Nigeria, if self-defence could be taught in American schools yielding to more crimes.
- Good governance should reflect positive societal values for the governed to emulate.

Conclusion

Nigeria is known to be a country of diverse culture with different ethnic groups but highly blessed with societal norms of great values. The values are gradually eroding leaving behind social problems that are chaotic on the indigenous family and the society.

However, bonding to family, school and other social institutions do promote values greatly. It has been found in studies that children who feel emotional ties to their family, school or



community are more apt to accept good values (Milo,2008). Hence parents should ensure that this is in place for their children. The family is the source of life for every individual, and as such is the primary training ground for social behaviour by inculcating the right values. The quality of the home determines the quality values and civilization. By strengthening and encouraging the family from the inside, and by eliminating stress attacking the family from the outside, parents can be given the opportunity to re-awaken universal family values in their children and thus secure and give hope of a crime free and bright future for Nigeria.

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