

The Influence of Family Structure on the Social Development of Children in Nigerian Families: A Management Perspective

Journal of Management and
Social Sciences
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Adegboyega, Nurudeen Ayobami

Fountain University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines the influence of family structure on the social development of children within Nigerian families from a management perspective. The study's objectives are to identify the social issues arising from various family structures and to understand how family dynamics affect the social outcomes of children, which is also in line with research questions and research hypotheses. Descriptive survey research design is adopted. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires aligned with the study's objectives. The questionnaire contained closed-ended questions organised into sections addressing specific variables. Regression analysis utilising the SPSS Package was employed for data analysis. The findings from the study reveal that family structure in Nigeria significantly influences social problems in Nigerian families. The study also reveals that family structure significantly influences the social outcome of children in Nigerian families. The study concludes that addressing social problems and social outcomes of children in Nigeria necessitates acknowledging the influence of family structure. Therefore, the study recommends that the Nigerian government should work towards improving the well-being of its citizens by mitigating the negative effects of social problems associated with family dynamics, implementing interventions to accommodate diverse family structures, and recognising the importance of family dynamics in targeting policymakers, social workers, educators, and societal organisations.

Keywords

Family structure, social development

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving world, the dynamics and functions of families are undergoing profound transformations, largely influenced by the increasing personal mobility and individual autonomy characteristic of the modern era. Despite these shifts, families remain central to contemporary society, wielding significant influence across various institutional domains (Alabi & Olonade, 2022). This centrality is particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where family ties are deeply embedded within the fabric of social life, serving as pillars of support,

Corresponding author:

Nurudeen Ayobami Adegboyega, Fountain University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria
Email: nurudeenayo816@gmail.com

identity, and communal cohesion. The intricate interplay between traditional values and modern influences shapes the diverse landscape of family structures in Nigeria.

The phenomenon of procreation outside traditional marriage institutions is not only prevalent but also increasingly visible in Nigeria, marking a significant departure from conventional norms and values surrounding family formation. The widespread adoption of terms such as "baby mamas" and "baby daddies" reflects a societal shift towards more fluid and non-traditional relationship dynamics, where the boundaries between marital and non-marital unions blur (Alabi & Olonade, 2022). These shifts in relationship patterns have sparked widespread discourse and inquiries into the implications for family structures and social cohesion within Nigerian society.

Moreover, the socio-economic landscape of Nigeria exerts a profound influence on family structures and social outcomes. Disparities in wealth distribution, access to education, and healthcare services contribute to varying levels of social mobility and influence the well-being of children across different families. For instance, children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may face greater challenges in accessing quality education and healthcare, thereby impacting their overall development and future opportunities. Additionally, cultural norms and traditional gender roles intersect with economic pressures to shape decisions regarding marriage, childbearing, and family responsibilities. These dynamics contribute to the complexity of family structures and the social outcomes experienced by children in Nigerian families.

Despite recognising the importance of family structure in shaping the social development of children, Adeyemi *et al.* (2024) observed that children in two-parent families generally show better peer relationships, while Yewande Oladejo and Oluwaseun Adenuga (2022) noted how Nigerian families conceptualise family structures in ways that influence social dynamics within the home. Ekoh *et al.* (2022) also provided insights into shifting family roles, particularly in contexts of displacement in Abuja, and discussed how these changing dynamics can impact family members' well-being. However, these studies do not specifically identify the social issues arising from different family structures or examine how family dynamics influence social outcomes in children within Nigerian families.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by examining the influence of family structure on the development of children in Nigeria from a management perspective. By elucidating the mechanisms through which family structure influences the social problems and social outcomes of children in Nigeria families and exploring how management perspectives and strategies can contribute to promoting positive social outcomes within diverse family arrangements in Nigeria and to form policy and intervention strategies aimed at fostering positive family environments and promoting the holistic development of children in Nigeria.

Literature Review: Conceptual Review of a Family Structure

The cornerstone of society resides within the family unit, serving as the fundamental context for a child's growth and development. Families represent the initial and most impactful environment in shaping a child's mental well-being and personality development (Olaniyi, 2015). Rooted in the Latin term "Familia," families comprise individuals connected by blood ties, marriage, or shared residency. From a management standpoint, families are tasked with effectively overseeing various resources, finances, and emotional support, to adequately address the needs of their members and navigate the complexities of modern-day life.

In the realm of family structures, the nuclear family, consisting of parents and offspring, stands as a prevalent model, juxtaposed with extended family arrangements. Nevertheless, societal norms and migration patterns frequently challenge established family paradigms, resulting in diverse family compositions that adapt to evolving environments (Machell *et al.*, 2016). From a management perspective, families must traverse these transitions by implementing efficient decision-making processes and resource management strategies to safeguard the well-being of all members.

At the core of family functionality lies individuals' bearing and social reproduction, which evolve in significance over time. Children perceive the family as a unit guiding their enculturation and socialisation, while parents regard it as a unit responsible for integrating and socialising offspring (Adigwe, 2023). From a management lens, families must balance nurturing individual development and fostering cohesion within the family unit. This necessitates utilizing effective communication and conflict resolution strategies to bolster resilience and well-being.

Effective communication is the linchpin of robust and harmonious families, facilitating meaningful interactions and nurturing familial relationships (Peterson *et al.*, 2014). Family interaction encompasses verbal and nonverbal exchanges among members, fostering psychological capital and enhancing relationship quality (Wu *et al.*, 2024).

The conceptual review underscores the pivotal role of family dynamics and management strategies in shaping individual well-being and societal cohesion. This highlights the importance of effective resource management, communication, and conflict resolution within the family unit, emphasising their significance in navigating contemporary challenges and fostering resilience.

Functions of the Family

As a cornerstone of societal structure, the family holds dual responsibilities to society and individuals. It serves as a crucial tool for socialisation and cultural transmission, while also ensuring its members' survival, protection, and support (Pannilage, 2017).

Essential Functions of the Family

The family serves several essential functions that support both individual fulfilment and societal continuity. One primary function is the satisfaction of sexual needs; within the family, marriage provides a legitimate context for sexual expression, which contributes to individual stability and fulfilment. Additionally, the family plays a crucial role in reproduction, ensuring the continuity of society by creating a supportive environment for childbearing and nurturing, thus preparing responsible future generations. Families also fulfil a sustenance function by caring for and protecting dependent members, including the young, elderly, orphans, and widows. This role provides personal security and support, especially in times of adversity. Furthermore, the family establishes a physical and emotional home, creating a haven of comfort and belonging where members can find solace amid life's challenges. Lastly, families are central to socialisation, as they impart cultural values, norms, and beliefs to help individuals integrate into society. Through this transmission of cultural legacies, families ensure the preservation of societal norms and traditions across generations.

Kinds, Structures, and Functions of Indigenous Families

Family structure refers to relationships within a family unit, encompassing recurring interactions and developmental stages that define familial dynamics (Allman *et al.*, 2007). Indigenous families exhibit diverse configurations influenced by cultural, economic, and social factors, each with unique characteristics and functions.

Extended Family Structures

Indigenous communities often adhere to an extended family system characterised by a vast network of relatives, including grandparents, parents, and children (Alabi & Olonade, 2022). Rooted in agrarian traditions, extended families leverage collective labour for agricultural productivity, contributing to social cohesion and economic stability (Ajayi & Owumi, 2013).

Nuclear Family Structures

Industrialisation and urbanisation have spurred the emergence of nuclear family structures, comprising parents and offspring in smaller, independent units

(Cherlin, 2012). Driven by economic and social factors, nuclear families prioritise intimate relationships and individual autonomy, reflecting shifting societal norms.

Single-Parent Family

Single-parent families, headed by a sole caregiver responsible for day-to-day tasks and child-rearing, represent a prevalent family structure (Alabi & Olonade, 2022). While single-parent households may face unique challenges, they play a vital role in providing care and support to children (Caputo, 2020).

Monogamous Family Structures

Monogamous relationships, characterised by exclusive marital bonds between one man and one woman, form the basis of monogamous family structures (Ezegwui *et al.*, 2012). Monogamous families prioritise stability and fidelity, fostering environments conducive to children's well-being and development (Ugwu *et al.*, 2020).

Polygamous Family Structures

Polygamous family structures involve multiple spouses, typically with one man having several wives. While polygamy presents unique challenges, such as resource allocation and interpersonal dynamics, it remains prevalent in certain cultural contexts (Adesina *et al.*, 2019).

Indigenous families exhibit diverse structures influenced by cultural traditions and socio-economic factors. Understanding the various family functions is essential for addressing the complex needs of individuals and communities at large.

Theoretical Review

Functionalism Theory

Functionalism theory seeks to comprehend society through the operation of numerous components (things, institutions, activities, etc.) that support the satisfaction of the fundamental demands of the social system (society as a whole). Pope (1975), one of the founding authors, concentrated on the requirements or circumstances essential to society's existence, to which social structures must conform. The components or institutions are regarded as interdependent and interrelated. Society is seen as an organism with interconnected functional elements. These components carry out tasks that are

crucial to the continuation and existence of society. Each component helps to maintain this (Gómez-Diago, 2020).

The Functionalism theory holds that society is greater than the sum of its parts because each helps keep the whole stable. Lamanna (2001) regarded society as an organism since each component plays a crucial role while relying on the others to function. The others must adapt to fill the gap when one component is in trouble (Ayisi & Krisztina, 2022).

According to functionalist theory, most social structures comprise social institutions, each developed to meet a particular need. Understanding the family, government, economy, media, education, and religion is essential to understanding this theory and the basic sociological structures. According to Functionalism, an institution only exists because it is critical to society's functions. If an institution has served its purpose, it will cease to exist. New institutions will be developed to meet evolving or developing needs.

In many civilizations, the government pays for the education of the family's children in return for their paying taxes to the state. The family relies on the school to assist children in becoming productive adults who can look after and support their families. As a result, the children develop into law-abiding, tax-paying adults who support the government. The functionalist perspective asserts that production, stability, and order result from a functioning society. If things don't go as planned, society's elements must adapt to provide new forms of productivity, stability, and order (Tolentino & Tullao Jr, 2017).

The technique of (Lamanna, 2001) and the idea that society functions as an organization was developed by (Parsons, 1985). According to Parsons (1985), society and the human body contain functional parts that work together to achieve a primary goal. He described it as the "organic analogy." In this comparison, each element is necessary to maintain social cohesiveness. Every social institution function as a unique "organ" with a specific function. All institutions collaborate to maintain proper operation, much like our organs do to keep us alive (Katz, 2013).

According to Parsons (1985), society is a system with demands that must be met for the "body" to function properly (Katz, 2009). They are as follows:

Adaptation

Without its citizens, society would not be possible. It must exert some influence over its environment to fulfill the basic needs of its constituents. These include shelter, food, and water (Adekunle, 2023).

Goal Attainment

This relates to the goals that society desires. Social policy and resource allocation are applied in many societal activities to achieve these goals. The government is the main entity in charge of this. If the government feels that the

country needs a better defense system, it will increase its defense budget and allocate more funds and resources to it (Adekunle, 2023).

Integration

Integration is a solution to conflict. This refers to the collaboration between numerous parts of society and the individuals who make it up. To encourage cooperation, the law integrates norms and principles. The court system is the principal institution in charge of resolving disputes and legal disputes. This in turn promotes societal integration and unity (Adekunle, 2023).

Pattern Maintenance

This speaks of sustaining societal institutions' entrenched underlying beliefs. A multitude of institutions, including the family, the legal system, education, and religion, help to maintain a set of core values (Adekunle, 2023). Every institution in society, according to Robert Merton, has a specific function that keeps society running. However, he did contrast several functions, asserting that some are hidden while others are (Bodie, 2019).

A system or activity's apparent aims or consequences are its intended purposes or results. For instance, the obvious reason students go to school every day is to receive an education, which will help them do well on examinations and allow them to continue their education or find a job. Similarly, attending religious services at a place of worship helps people with their spiritual practices (Motowidlo & Kell, 2003).

These are the unintended consequences or outcomes of a system or activity. The fact that daily school attendance gives children the knowledge and abilities they need to succeed in both college and the workforce is one of the benefits that is often overlooked. Schools may help children develop their interpersonal and communication skills by encouraging pupils to establish friends (Motowidlo & Kell, 2003).

There are several underlying benefits to attending religious activities, such as encouraging meditation or a sense of community and solidarity. The concealed goal of such an activity, however, may be to promote hope and solidarity amid hard situations (Adekunle, 2023).

This theory holds that strong families are essential pillars of a stable society. The family serves important roles in the successful and efficient functioning of society, just like other social organizations. Families play important functions for society as well as for the individual. It has a big impact because it looks at every aspect of society, how it functions, and how it supports society. This

concept exemplifies how society maintains balance by uniting all facets of society to advance the needs of its constituents (Perry *et al.*, 2024).

Structuralism Theory

Radcliffe-Brown's Structuralism (1940) is a sociological theory that explains human behaviour through the marriage of structure and agency effects, or the "duality of structure." Instead of demonstrating how the capacity for human behavior is constrained by strong, reliable societal frameworks (such as educational, religious, or political institutions) or how it is determined by the individual's expression of will (i.e., agency), the Structuralism theory acknowledges relationships of meaning, standards and values, and power. It indicates an evolving relationship among these different facets of society (Saarts & Selg, 2018).

Carruthers (2016) focused on the conditions necessary for the survival of social structures. He also believed that some laws control how societies function. He substituted the idea of necessity with circumstances that must hold for human civilizations to thrive, and these criteria can be discovered through appropriate scientific research. However, social interaction inside a social system ensures that the framework endures. RAJI (2023) interpretation of function, and structure plays a part. The social structure is maintained by several constituent unit entities included in this structure (Fisher, 2020).

Lee and McLanahan (2015) list and explain the following as the Structuralism features of social life:

Existence of Social Group

All different types of social groupings, such as families, clans, moieties, social sanctions, totemic groups, social classes, caste groups, kinship systems, etc., are included in social structure. The core of the social structural phenomenon is the relationships between these groups.

Internal Structure of the Group

These organizations have a particular internal structure. For instance, a family consists of the father, the mother, and their offspring.

Arrangement into Social Classes

These groupings are categorised and classified according to social classes. Consider the social classes in Western societies.

Social Distinctions

There is social segregation between various classes based on sex, economic differences, authority differences, and caste differences.

Arrangement of Persons in Dyadic Relationship

Person-to-person relationships, such as master and servant relationships, are examples of dyadic relationships.

Interaction between Groups and Persons

People's interactions can be observed through social processes involving cooperation, conflict, accommodations, etc., whereas groups' interactions can be observed when one nation is at war with another. The Structuralist approach to understanding the structure or organization of the family has implications for this study since it places a strong emphasis on family interactions. It is a way of understanding nature, and human life is more concerned with relationships than isolated objects.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design, chosen because it allows the researcher to select respondents without manipulating variables or exerting control over them. This approach was suitable given the study's purpose, nature, and variables related to the social development of children in Nigerian families. It facilitated the exploration of how family structure impacts children's social development within a management framework.

The study focused on different family structures across Nigeria, targeting a population of 100 respondents. selected to represent different family structures across Nigeria. The sampling procedure used was convenience sampling, chosen to allow the researcher to gather data efficiently from accessible individuals within the Nigerian population. Data was gathered using structured questionnaires designed to align with the study's objectives and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Hypotheses were tested through inferential statistics, particularly linear regression analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, selected for its versatility and compatibility with the data collected. Correlation and regression analyses were utilised to evaluate the degree of significance and the influence of family structure on the social development of children in Nigerian families from a management perspective.

Result and Discussion

Hypothesis one: H_{01} family structure in Nigeria has no significant impact on social problems in Nigeria.

Table 1: A Summary of Regression Analysis of the Interaction between Family Structure and Social Problem

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.484 ^a	.234	.227	2.54708	1.878
a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Structure					
b. Dependent Variable: Social Problem					

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1 shows the model summary of the regression analysis of the interaction between family structure impacts on social problems. With an (R) value of .484 (48%), this implies a positive strong relationship between family structure and social problems. This magnitude of direct interaction is statistically significant at a 5% significance level.

The R square value of .234 means that a 23% change in family structure is explained or accounted for by the support rendered by the social problem in Nigeria. The remaining 77% of variations are caused by other factors or variables not included in this model but captured under the stochastic error term. Durbin Watson's statistics result fell close to two that is, (1.878), this is evidence that there is no autocorrelation in the model.

Table 2: Regression Showing Significance of Predictors of Social Problem

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	194.572	1	194.572	29.991	.000 ^b
	Residual	635.788	98	6.488		
	Total	830.360	99			

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 2 shows the F-statistics value for regression to test the overall significance of the independent variables or predictors in explaining the dependent variable. Figures in Table 2 show that the family structure variable used in the study significantly predicts the level of a social problem, F(1,99), 29.991, P-value or sig value <0.05 (sig .000). This indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis, as there is less than 5% probability that the null hypothesis will be rejected. F – Statistical indicated that the overall regression model is highly statistically significant in terms of its goodness of fit since the value of $F_{tab} (1,99) > F_{cal} (29.991)$.

Table 3: Contribution of the Predictor Variable to Social Problem

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.337	1.859		4.465	.000
	Family structure	.519	.095	.484	5.476	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Social problem						

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 3 shows the regression coefficients of the contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. The results show a standardised beta coefficient of .484. This means that family structure contributes to social problems when the variance explained by all other variables in the model is controlled. This means that a 1% increase in the rate of the level of family structure led to a 48% increase in the rate of the social problem of the Nigerian families.

From the results obtained from Table 2, the p-value calculated for 0.000 is lesser than 5%, 0.05 critical value. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected. The study, therefore, concluded that family structure in Nigeria has a significant impact on social problems.

Hypothesis two: H_{02} Family structure has no significant influence on the social outcome of children in Nigeria.

Table 4: A Summary of Regression Analysis of the Interaction between Family Structure and Social Outcome

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.682 ^a	.465	.460	2.32973	2.032
a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Structure					
b. Dependent Variable: Social outcome					

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 4 shows the model summary of the regression analysis of the interaction between family structure impacts on social outcome. An (R) value of .682 (68%) implies a positive strong relationship between family structure and social outcome. This magnitude of direct interaction is statistically significant at a 5%

significance level. The R square value of .465 means that 46% of the change in family structure is explained or accounted for through social outcomes in Nigeria. The remaining 54% of variations are caused by other factors or variables not included in this model but captured under the stochastic error term. Durbin Watson's Statistic result fell close to two that is (2.032), this is evidence that there is no autocorrelation in the model.

Table 5: Regression Showing Significance of Predictors of Social Outcome

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	463.130	1	463.130	85.328	.000 ^b
	Residual	531.910	98	5.428		
	Total	995.040	99			
a. Dependent Variable: Social outcome						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Family structure						

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 5 shows the F-statistics value for regression to test the overall significance of the independent variables or predictors in explaining the dependent variable. Figures in the Table show that the family structure variable used in the study significantly predicts the level of social outcome, F (1,99), 85.328, P-value or sig value < 0.05 (sig .000). This shows evidence against the null hypothesis, as there is less than 5% probability that the null hypothesis is rejected. F – Statistical indicated that the overall regression model is highly statistically significant in terms of its goodness of fit since the value of $F_{tab} (1,99 > F_{cal} (85.328))$.

Table 6: Contribution of each Predictor Variable to Social Outcome

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.161	1.341		4.595	.000
	Family structure	.639	.069	.682	9.237	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Social outcome						

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 6 shows the regression coefficients of the contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. The results show that a standardised beta coefficient of .682. This means that family structure contributes to the social outcome of Nigerian families when the variance explained by all other variables in the model is controlled. This means that a 1 % increase in the rate of the family

structure led to a 68% increase in the rate of the social outcome of the Nigerian families.

From the results obtained from the table. Table 5 shows that the p-value calculated for 0.000 is less than 5%, which is a 0.05 critical value. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The study, therefore, concludes that family structure has a significant influence on the social outcome of children in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study examines the influence of family structure on social development of children within Nigerian families from management perspective through two hypotheses. For Hypothesis One, which examined the relationship between family structure and social problems, regression analysis revealed a moderate to strong positive correlation ($R = 0.484$), showing that 23% of social problems could be attributed to family structure, with statistical significance confirmed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.878. Hypothesis Two explored family structure's influence on children's social outcomes, finding a strong positive correlation ($R = 0.682$), with 46% of variance in children's outcomes explained by family structure, and a Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.032 indicating no autocorrelation. These findings reveal that family structure significantly influences both social issues and children's development in Nigeria, suggesting that family-centered strategies could be effective in addressing these challenges.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to understanding the critical role of family structure in shaping both social issues and the developmental outcomes of children in Nigeria. By empirically establishing significant correlations between family dynamics and social challenges. This research highlights family structure as a key factor influencing societal well-being. Additionally, the study's findings emphasize the unique impact of family structure on children's social development, contributing valuable insights for policymakers and social organizations.

The study's robust statistical evidence supports the need for family-centered interventions and policies that address the diverse family structures in Nigeria. By broadening the management understanding of family dynamics as they relate to social challenges, this research lays the groundwork for targeted interventions that can enhance organisational outcomes, improve workforce development, and foster a more resilient, productive society.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This research examined the influence of family structure on the social development of children in Nigerian families from a management perspective, which is the primary aim of the current research study. Based on this, the study delved into the intricate relationship between family structure and social problems in Nigeria, as well as the impact of different family structures on the social outcomes of children. The study's findings shed light on the critical role family dynamics play in shaping social issues within the Nigerian and the profound influence they exert on the well-being of children.

This research underscores the crucial importance of family structure in understanding and addressing social problems in Nigeria and in fostering positive social outcomes for children. By recognising and acting upon these insights, Nigeria can work towards a more equitable and prosperous future for its citizens, particularly its children, who represent the nation's future.

Based on the findings and contributions of this study. Addressing social problems in Nigeria that emanate from family structures and enhancing the impact of different family structures on the social outcomes of children requires a multifaceted approach. It involves policy changes, community engagement, educational initiatives, and ongoing research. By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can work towards improving the well-being of its citizens and mitigating the negative effects of social problems associated with family dynamics. Implement family-centered interventions that target specific social problems emanating from family structures. These programs should provide support and guidance to families, especially those facing challenges, such as single-parent households or non-traditional family structures. These interventions could include parenting education, counseling services, and access to community resources. Launch community awareness campaigns and educational programs that emphasize the critical role of family structures in shaping social outcomes. Raise awareness about the potential consequences of family-related issues on broader social problems. This can be done through workshops, seminars, and public service announcements. Develop and implement parenting support programs that cater to the unique needs of different family structures. These programs should offer guidance on effective parenting strategies, communication skills, and conflict resolution. Consider culturally sensitive approaches to accommodate diverse family backgrounds.

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