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CHANGING NOTIONS OF PARENTING IN NIGERIA

FIELDNOTES FROM EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

Editors
Sharon Adetutu Omotoso
Mutiat Oladejo

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Strengthening Capacity for Research and Policy
Engagement in Shifting Notions of Motherhood and
Fatherhood for Improved Children's Well-being in Africa
(SCaRPE-A) Project

Content

Acknowledgments

Preface

Considered as the microcosm of society, the family is one of the most important social institutions whose collapse or alteration hugely negatively impacts on the entire society. As opposed to the rich trado-cultural heritage that bolstered traditional African family system, the dynamics of contemporary African parenting have been affected by the interaction of biosocial factors. Conflict, economic displacements, (perceived) biological deformities, social disabilities, communal victimization and modernization are known to have hugely affected the whys and hows of parenting in Africa, and thereby prompting us to raise relevant questions to guide scientific research.

Strengthening Capacity for Research and Policy Engagement in Shifting Notions of Motherhood and Fatherhood for Improved Children's Well-being in Africa (SCaRPE-A) Project, therefore, sought to strengthen family identity formation and enhance policies on family and parenting, (where they exist) and/or recommend them (where they are missing) in order to account for the changing notions of parenting across Africa.

The project comprised six universities drawn from East Africa (Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, Moi University, Kenya and the University of Rwanda), West Africa (University of Ibadan), and Southern Africa (University of Witwatersrand and University of the Western Cape both in South Africa). The project was funded by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), supervised by the African Research Universities Alliance's (ARUA)

Center of Excellence (CoE) in Notions of Identity domiciled at the Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. With funds from UKRI, the project commissioned a range of studies to underscore the changing notions of parenting, family identity, and motherhood and fatherhood practices across Africa.

The Nigerian Team on the project focused on how the biological factors of albinism and social factors such as widowhood practices, conflicts, terrorism, and chaotic border lifestyles, have impacted parenting in Nigeria. This monograph, therefore, emanates from the different field studies conducted by the Nigerian early career researchers on the project.

The monograph makes unique contributions to the intended objective of the research. It draws attention to existing and emerging African family identities while calling for the advancement and implementation of policies on parental practices rooted in rich African cultural values. For instance, the study on albinism and parenting among Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria (un)covers the intersection of parental identity formation and the task of raising children with special needs. The study on victimization experiences and parental caregiving in Northeast Nigeria draws attention to the concept of "double widowhood" resulting from terrorism which has highly impacted on both the structure and institution of family and the identity of parenting. Regarding the dynamics of parenting at Seme border, attention is called to the volatile economic arrangements in and around borders and their impact on normative idea of parenting in borders communities.

The study on complexities of widowhood practices in Nigeria established that both socioeconomic and politico-religious affordances of widowhood have immensely contributed to the change in notion of parenting in Nigeria.

These studies, therefore, raise compelling issues on the crevices of family and parental identity construction and exigent policy intervention in family and parenting (re) alignment in Africa.

This is a call for research and policy interventions on motherhood and fatherhood practices in Nigeria. We reckon that the project is not exhaustive of myriad issues about parenting in Nigeria. As concepts such as single parents (now female and male), blended families, living widows, foster parenting, hybrid identities, and so on continue to change in understanding and application, we recognize how identity conceptions and concepts are created and being recreated considering globalization, migration, conflict, and economic challenges. This document presents a glimpse into the various studies and highlights key points and areas from which readers, researchers, and policymakers may begin the process of understanding the changing notions of fatherhood and motherhood in Nigeria. We also invite you to be on the lookout for other publications that will emerge from this research to have a full grasp and find comparative analysis among member countries engaged in the project.

Sharon Adetutu OMOTOSO
PhD Mutiat OLADEJO PhD
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Editors

Project Team Lead
Associate Prof Sarah Ssali
Dean, School of Women and Gender Studies,
Makerere University,
Uganda

Dr. Sharon Adetutu Omotoso (Principal Investigator, Nigeria)
Gender Studies Program,
Institute of African Studies
University of Ibadan.

Dr. Mutiat Oladejo (Co-Principal Investigator, Nigeria)
Department of History,
University of Ibadan.

Contributors

1. Esther Temilola Ololajulo
   Doctoral Student
   Gender Studies Program
   Institute of African Studies,
   University of Ibadan

2. Modupe E. Animashaun
   Doctoral Student
   Peace, Security &
   Humanitarian Studies,
   University of Ibadan

3. Bolaji Olaronke Akanni
   Doctoral Student
   Department of Philosophy
   University of Ibadan

4. Ujene, Ikem Godspower
   Doctoral Student
   Department of Sociology
   University of Ibadan

Raising Children with Albinism and Notions of Parenting in Nigeria

Esther Temilola Ololajulo
Gender Studies
Programme Institute
of African Studies
University of Ibadan
Email: teminy73@yahoo.com

Introduction

In a rented small room at Agbowo, a densely populated neighbourhood in Ibadan, Nigeria, I interviewed Mama White on her experiences as a mother of two children with albinism. For two hours, I listened to her speak on her parental identity, the challenges encountered raising two children with albinism, and the creative practices she deployed to ward off the negative attitudes that could impact the development of her children. At a point in the interview session, she became emotional, and her voice trembled as she voiced out what seemed to be some difficult words: "As a mother of a child with albinism I deal with special problems." I interjected

when I realized she was almost breaking down in tears, and said: "Madam, I think you will thank God for blessing you with these children if you know the challenges of barrenness." Mama White looked at me and said: "Aunty, you can counsel on this because you are not in my position."

The concerns of Mama White about raising children with albinism were hardly isolated. Similar problems were shared with me by nearly all parents of children with albinism whom I interviewed in the course of my fieldwork. Their parental experiences expand the domain of assumptions on parenting and bring to the fore urgent issues to address in research on parenting, especially in Nigeria. In this short essay, I draw from my experiences conducting fieldwork among parents of children with albinism to explore emerging concerns about parenting in Nigeria. I employ a few anecdotes from the interviews I conducted to illustrate the need to disaggregate research on parenting to reflect the peculiar situations of parents raising children with special needs. Pseudonyms were used for these parents and their children to ensure anonymity.

This essay is divided into three sections. Following the introductory part, I present aspects of my experiences conducting fieldwork among people raising children with albinism. Next, I analyze these experiences in the context of parenting scholarship. I then conclude by offering insights into specific areas of the scholarship that deserve attention in Nigeria.

Encounter with Parents of Children with Albinism

The southwestern part of Nigeria where I conducted my research is populated mainly by Yoruba people who are known for their early history of urbanization. Beyond their cosmopolitan and liberal lives, the Yoruba are also renowned for their rich cultural

values, many of which have endured the onslaught of Western modernism. Hence, when I ventured into researching the parental identity of people raising children with albinism, I had expectations about tolerance, acceptance, perceptiveness, and sensitivity. Although a chance encounter with discriminatory treatment of a person with albinism motivated my research, I never expected the parental experience of their mothers and fathers to be as difficult, especially for parents who do not live with albinism. Perhaps I was wrong.

My fieldwork spanned three southwest states, and the experiences in each state are like that of Mama White. The stories are comparable, and the challenges of parenting are the same. Meanwhile, I find a couple of accounts both interesting and depressing.

The first time I interviewed a mother of a child with albinism, listening to her travails made me so emotional that I nearly lost track of my role as a researcher. A commitment to becoming an activist for persons with albinism somehow formed in me right there. Going forward, I became enthused by stories of how parents interceded for their children to ward off bullies, offered them assurance, went extra miles to learn about their special needs, showed them love, and boosted their self-esteem.

For Mrs. Latinwo, a middle-aged petty trader, parenting role was a mixed grill. Bolu was the only child with albinism out of her four children. His albinism status made him the center of attention for the mother. The rules at home were different for the children, as Bolu's life presented a case of indulgence and restriction simultaneously. Although he got away with many infractions for which the siblings could receive some latches, Bolu was never allowed to venture out of home unaccompanied. The mother lived under the perpetual fear of him getting bullied or stigmatized. During one of our meetings,

she spoke of the guilt she felt bringing the boy into the world. "It is because both his father and I had albinism in our lineages that made him come out like this. He is just unlucky," Mrs. Latinwo said in a tone of regret and finality. I was shocked to know that she was knowledgeable about the causes of albinism. At last, I met someone who was not given to superstitious beliefs that drive the various conceptualization of albinism in Nigeria. Later, I got to know that Mrs. Latinwo had a younger brother who was a medical doctor. Few months into my fieldwork, I was introduced to a woman, Mrs. Adeleye, whose all four children have albinism condition. Her husband had abandoned the home upon the delivery of the fourth child. According to Mrs. Adeleye, when the husband, who worked in Lagos got the news of her safe delivery, he asked whether she gave birth to the "usual thing" that she used to have. Upon knowing that the fourth child also had the condition of albinism he stopped coming home altogether since then. It was not difficult for me to find my way to her house because everyone in the neighbourhood knew her. Mrs. Adeleye showed love to her children but that did not stop her from seeing them as a burden of sort and the main factor of her failed marriage. The few times I spent with her; she wore a look of stoic resignation. Although I felt she needed some emotional support, I could not fathom where such support could come from. I felt she needed to know more about albinism than the superstition she provided, so I took my time and explained the biological basis of albinism to her and assured her of the possibility of her children attaining the peak of any career they might choose for themselves. She listened to me, but I was not sure she was convinced.

For the rest of the time that I spent on the field, I was on the lookout for stories of parenting not so depressing like that of Mama White and Mrs. Adeleye. Then I encountered Folake whose account was quite intriguing. A thirty-five-year-old single mother,

Folake earned her living from creating content for TikTok, an online video hosting service. The first time she posted the picture of her four-year-old daughter who has albinism, she discovered that her viewers were fascinated by her pale skin and ginger colour hair. The post received so many positive comments and likes. Folake was encouraged to start creating video contents by dressing her daughter up to dance and advertise her products. She claimed that with her sizeable followers, she made some money from their patronage of her hair products. Hers was the first instance I knew of a parent profiting from the albinism status of their children.

In another instance of my fieldwork recollection, I got to speak with some parents who said they were exhausted from their parental responsibilities. Interestingly, their stress did not come from juggling many responsibilities such as taking care of the children at home, meeting deadlines at work, and doing household chores. Rather, they got tired from going everywhere to stand up for their children. This was an extra burden they needed to bear, and I believe they did not figure it out as part of parenting roles before having children with albinism.

Implications for the Scholarship of Parenting in Nigeria

Notions of parenting and child well-being have been studied substantially in the scholarship of family. In Nigeria, however, it is mostly researched in relation to child health and development, and the conditions that promote the ability of parents to attend to the well-being of their children. However, some literatures focus on the ways parenting and childcare is impacted by a company of factors, such as the intersection of identity construction of parents, disability in children, and how these impact on the wellbeing of children. According to Jack (2000), the well-being and total

development of children are not solely dependent on their parents but include other complex sets of interacting factors at individual, family, and community levels. Still, some other scholars like Hoffman (2010) and Shirani et al, (2012) put the bulk of the responsibility on parents assuming a conscious and intentional role by managing the surrounding risks and mitigating their effect on the children. Furthermore, Hays (1999) and Lee et al, (2010) insist that parents carry an intensive parenting posture that demands being aware and knowledgeable in a proper child-centered approach to parenting, in addition to being able to provide financially for the upbringing of the children.

Parenting in Nigeria has undergone significant transformations over the years. These transformations have been shaped by cultural, social, economic, and technological advancements. The traditional norms and practices that once governed parenting in Nigerian society have evolved, influenced by globalization, urbanization, and the integration of modern values. Yet, my fieldwork experiences demonstrate that there are still many gaps in the scholarship of parenting that scholars and other stakeholders need to address.

The example of Mrs. Latinwo speaks to the importance of knowledgeable parenting. Beyond showing love to children, listening to them, supporting them, and being a worthy role model there seems to be more to parenting. The attitude of Mrs. Latinwo toward her children was different from the apathy demonstrated by Mrs. Adeleye. This is obviously about the knowledge that Mrs. Latinwo has of the cause of her child's condition. But can Mrs. Adeleye be blamed for harboring a superstitious stance on albinism? Are there no institutions responsible for building knowledge about certain conditions? Where knowledge is limited, superstitions thrive, and parenting tends to suffer. In other words,

the relationship between knowledge and parenting needs to be further explored to bring out the values of knowledgeable parenting.

The encounter with Folake, who commoditized the albinism condition of her daughter provides insight into the interface between parenting and information/communication technology. For instance, social media is replete with examples of mothers sexualizing their minor children in different image forms to attract the needed traffic. This translates to money for them. Even though this might be a viable ground for Folake's daughter to build resilience from the publicity she enjoyed at that early age, scholarship on parenting needs to explore this emerging problem to understand the impact on child development.

Lastly, there is a dearth of research on the relationship between parenting children with special needs and parental identity. The focus of most research works on parenting has been the activities of bringing up children as parents. However, the aspect of identity construction of parents has been noticeably neglected. While this is the focus of my dissertation, I believe there are yet other research themes on parenting that occur at the intersection of identity constructions of parents.

Finally, the evolving notions of parenting in Nigeria reflect a complex interplay between tradition and modernity. While there is a movement towards more democratic and individualistic parenting styles, the role of knowledge and the new media remains influential. Understanding these dynamics is crucial in navigating the challenges and opportunities that come with shaping the future of parenting and ensuring the holistic development and well-being of the younger generation.

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Widowhood, Complexities and Shifting Notions of Parenting in Nigeria

Bolaji O. Akanni

Department of Philosophy
University of Ibadan
bolajiakanni2015@yahoo.com

Introduction

The family assumes a pivotal role in the socialization of children and imparting crucial values of citizenship that are essential for their development within society (Nnaemeka, 1996). Consequently, the active roles of both the father and mother in nursing, nurturing, training, and disciplining the child(ren) are crucial to the well-being of that child. In the traditional Yoruba setting, the father is expected to be the provider as well as the disciplinarian in the home while the mother is the home keeper and carer. However, with colonialism, the narratives began to change

from the traditional norms (Akanle and Nwaobiala, 2020). In this 21st century Nigeria, the narratives have changed due to religious beliefs, modernization, and economic factors. The question of who takes care of the children depends on who is available between the father and the mother. Nowadays, women are taking up more responsibilities in the household, especially when the husband earns a lower income, is unemployed, or works in another state away from his family. Men are increasingly taking up child-care roles such as preparing their children for school, cooking, and helping with their school assignments. As a result, there are no defined roles for either parent.

However, what happens when one parent passes away? How does the surviving spouse handle parental responsibilities? What are the effects of losing a spouse? What challenges do widowed parents face when it comes to parenting, and how do these challenges impact the well-being of their children?

This study explores these complexities under the overarching title, "Widowhood Dynamics and Complexities of Parenting in Osun State, Nigeria." The study aims to closely examine widowhood complexities concerning changing notions of parenthood for widows/ widowers (15 -55 years old) in Osun State, Southwest Nigeria.

The study employed participant/non-participant observation, oral interviews, content/textual analysis, and qualitative methods aimed at understanding shifting notions surrounding parenthood spanning decades while assessing changes occurring within governance systems affecting identity formation among parents and impacting upon their offsprings' wellbeing.

From this point, there are four sections:
- Field experience
- Findings
- Implications of findings
- Discussions and conclusions (identify key issues stakeholders should address urgently).

Field Experience(s)

Before Conducting the Interview

The researcher proceeded on her field trip with two research assistants. The research was carried out in three local governments in Osun state, South-west region of Nigeria. The local government it covered were Ikoyi, Ayedaade local government, Osogbo capital city, Osun State, and Obokun local government of the state. The researcher selected these local government areas to be able to compare the experiences of widowed people based on their different locations; rural versus urban.

Plans were made to interview 50 widowed individuals with the help of two field assistants. However, over 100 widowed persons, including persons with disabilities, were present in the field. The researcher was faced with a dilemma on how to select respondents due to the large crowd. With the help of assistants, they divided respondents into 3 groups: elderly grandparents (aged 60-82), middle-aged (45-60), and young widows with babies. To choose respondents from a large crowd, the researcher and assistants divided them into three groups: old grandparents, middle-aged, and young/pregnant widows. The researcher found that the youngest widower was 42 years old, while there were widows as young as 22 years old. Additionally, in Ikoyi-ile and Obokun, the widowed

individuals were illiterate, poor, and helpless, while those in Osogbo were educated or semi-literate. Out of a crowd of over 100, only 25 were widowers, leaving more women as widows than men. It was observed that nearly all the participants were enthusiastic to be interviewed and share their stories. They were content with being with the field research team and had no objections to the interview process.

During the Interview

The interview session began at 10:15 am in the village head's compound. Field assistants called respondents in groups for the interview. During the research, the respondents were in good spirits and answered the questions effectively. To capture their responses, their voices were recorded using a camcorder, and videos and photographs were taken too. To speed up the process, some groups were interviewed by research assistants, while field assistants helped with translations and distributed food items and honorariums to the respondents during the interview.

Findings

The recent study conducted in this research in Osun State, Nigeria has shown that parenting for widowed men and women in the region is a complex and dynamic process. The factors affecting parenting dynamics and complexities vary greatly depending on cultural norms, social, economic, age, gender roles, and legal factors.

From the interview with all the respondents, the researcher found that;

- The death of their spouses was sad and unexpected.

- Widowed persons are vulnerable people.

- Life expectancy drops for the children.

- Unlike in the past, widows are no longer agitated to remarry. They are rather concerned with taking care of their children, except for young widows in their twenties.

- They realized the importance of education and were willing to send their children to school.

- Majority of the widows were abandoned by their in-laws immediately after the burial.

- The widowers with only one wife find it difficult to cope after their spouse's death.

- Educated and rich widowed men also become vulnerable as they get several advances from women to marry them.

- They become confused as well on the choice of another wife that will take care of their children.

- Cultural beliefs sometimes prevent widowers from remarrying if their previous spouse died of a certain ailment.

- For some men, the fear of the additional financial burden of caring for the new wife and her children prevents them from remarriage.

- Religious and cultural norms are strong and not easy to change.

- The death of a spouse leads to economic hardship.

- There is no database for widowed parents in Nigeria.

- Financial stability is a crucial factor that can affect parenting for widowed individuals. For instance, bereaved children may drop out of school if their mother lacks the financial resources to pay for their education, which can be a significant problem.

What are the Implications of these Findings?

Without measures in place to support widowed persons and their children, the following outcomes are likely:

1. Change in parental role. However, in some cases, parenting duties are delegated to housemaids, grandparents, neighbours, religious leaders, or siblings.

2. Increase in death rate when the physical health of the widowed person is neglected.

3. Increase in social vices if children from bereaved homes are left uncared for.

4. High level of illiteracy due to financial constraints.

5. However, in the cause of the death of one of the parents, the parenting role is left in the hands of the living parent. (Falana et al., 2012).

6. Poverty if they were dependent on their spouses before death. (Olaleye, 2017).

7. Depression and drop in mental health due to grief, cultural rites, and financial stress (Smith, 2001). The findings of this study, based on interactions with respondents during the interview, indicate that the psychological well-being of bereaved parents in Nigeria has been quite low, owing mostly to loneliness and stigmatization of the widow. (Vanguard Newspapers, 4 March 2014).

8. The future of youths is threatened which could affect the overall well-being and productivity of the community and Nation at large.

9. Neglect of this demographic may indicate gaps in social policies and welfare systems.

10. Failure to support widowed parents may result in an increased burden on social services and healthcare systems as individuals may require assistance in various forms (Akinyemi, A. et al 2014).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made after the research for the government and stakeholders to ensure the well-being of widowed parents and their children.

- There must be a database for government to provide annual palliatives for vulnerable widowed persons. This must be monitored to ensure they the targeted groups at the grassroots.

- Traditional leaders should be enlightened on the need to review customary laws to include the care of widowed individuals and their children in the community.

- Frameworks must be carefully formulated and monitored to end repressive cultural practices against widows and protect their rights.

- The media also needs to enlighten the public on the ordeal ofwidows and their children, and the need to give support and encourage them.

- Information dissemination in local languages must be encouraged to enlighten the widowed people and their children on safety measures.

- Policies, programs, and initiatives can help widowed parents and their children, contributing to society's stability and well-being.

- Governments, communities, and individuals need to recognize the challenges faced by this demography and work towards creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

- Communities must be re-engaged to address unfriendly norms, such that widowed persons and their children can be well cared for.

Discussion

This study is cognizant of the requirements of widowed individuals and the welfare of their offspring and engages governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social institutions, volunteers, and pertinent stakeholders. It recommends implementing changes in local communities, states, and countries at large by prescribing policy actions that bring to light the needs of children from widowed homes while advocating for health policies for widowed persons.

This study aims to inform policymakers about the need to provide support for widowed individuals and their children. It highlights the importance of child-friendly parenting policies in Nigeria and calls for relevant stakeholders to urgently engage in this matter.

The Nigerian constitution makes provision for widows' inheritance rights but is not specific about the rights of children from bereaved homes. Apart from this, implementing most of these laws is a major setback. The study proposes a review of the sections of the Nigerian constitution covering the unique challenges faced by widowed

individuals in raising their children. The study also recommends implementing policies aimed at stabilizing the lives of children from bereaved homes. Furthermore, it identifies a necessity to empower and safeguard bereaved persons while promoting inclusivity and supportive environments for all families.

Are There Health Policies for Widowed Parents and Their Children?

This study highlights the importance of internal support networks in promoting resilience and emotional well-being. These networks can take various forms, such as shared experiences, volunteering, community engagement, or support groups for widows. The findings suggest that such initiatives can be highly beneficial, and should be encouraged, without solely relying on external intervention from the government or other stakeholders.

Conclusion

The family plays an essential role in raising children and helping them with their socialization. In the traditional Yoruba cultural setting, fathers were considered as providers, protectors, disciplinarians, and caretakers. They were also responsible for teaching cultural values, traditions, and skills. Mothers, on the other hand, were expected to nurture the children and take care of the home. They were responsible for instilling morals and providing home training. With technological advancements, society has shifted towards recognizing the importance of shared emotional connections with children and providing positive role models for them, resulting in a move away from rigid gender roles. The experience of being a parent can be particularly challenging for widows or widowers, with added complications arising from single parenting. They are confronted with loneliness, psychological and emotional trauma, socio-

cultural problems, and financial stability. Widows tend to have an easier time in this regard, as compared to widowers who may face more difficulties, especially as regards raising the children and home management. However, in cases where the widowed parent is financially stable, they may support fellow widows who are less fortunate by contributing food or money, or by supporting non-profit organizations.

Double-blended marriages (widower/widow unions) could benefit children but can become complicated if a partner passes away again. Losing a father could affect children and being cared for by a new mother could be beneficial. However, there is a risk of maltreatment that cannot be ignored. Children from bereaved homes tend to suffer more compared to those whose parents are alive because most widows refuse to remarry, which further increases their financial burden and deprives their children of proper care.

Widowers have different experiences than widows, often remarrying and having access to income through farming or local government offices. These experiences can be influenced by their level of education, exposure, and financial status. Research suggests that households with multiple parents can provide better support to their families than single parent households. However, in the case of polygamous families, if one of the wives is absent, the adult partners may not be affected, but the children are likely to feel the absence of their mother, which can have a significant impact on them. This research examines the societal impact of parental role changes following spousal death on households and society. Urgent attention is needed in South-west Nigeria, highlighting areas requiring intervention from relevant stakeholders.

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Dynamics of Parenting at the Seme Border; Violence and Changing Notions of Parenting in Nigeria

Animashaun, E. Modupe
Peace, Security and Humanitarian Studies
University of Ibadan
moanimashaun1@gmail.com

Introduction

Parenting across the globe continues to evolve. Periods, environmental conditions, and societal differences have impacted the way parenting is performed. In Nigeria, the practice of parenting has witnessed gradual but constant shifts to reflect the periodic, socially accepted, and normalized standards and ideas that guide the dynamic process, both socially and biologically, of nurturing a child. However, the act of parenting is not a systematic arrangement of activities that is self-sustainable. In other words, the process relies primarily on other external interacting factors that can alter the course of a parent's ideal method of nurturing and can

complicate the process despite the initial intent (Arendell,1997). Therefore, it has been established in the literature that an array of social, environmental, political, economic, and cultural factors, among others affect the outcome of parenting, some of these factors play a huge role in the development of the child's worldview and how well such a child can function optimally as an adult in the society.

The complex dynamics of parenting are further made daunting when it is carried out in conditions that can be described as volatile and precarious. This is a daily lived reality of parenting in conflict zones, during violent conflicts, in spaces where the structural system does not enable the parent-leader-authority arrangement like the internally displaced person's camps (IDP), and in volatile border communities where my work is situated. The ideas and notions of parenting take a shift as it responds to the specific demands of the conditions of the space, and alters its course to be positioned, to navigate the precariousness (Erlank & Williams 2020). Similarly, the child also is impacted and will respond to the action of parenting based on the construction of an ideal that is pushed forward by the ecosystem. It then can be said that the environment, or specifically geographical spatiality is a cogent index in understanding the shifts in parenting that occur in specific complex conditions, and spatiality.

Life as Experienced at Seme Border and Shift in Notions of Parenting

Nigeria border communities are an intriguing and an entirely different reality compared to other parts of the country. Seme border particularly is a space that is characterized by volatility, a mixture of illicit economies and activities, militarized space, and

a particularly difficult place to align with structured and normative idea of parenting.

Seme border community questions and struggle with the idea of benevolent parenting, the idea of 'good' 'moral' parenting and the construction of these terms. Based on my field experience at Seme, there was the overriding, implicit notion that parenting can be done without subjecting the active parents to societal scrutiny of 'goodness' and 'morality' in their conduct. The average community members live by the saying 'do as I say not as I do'. Therefore, we find children struggling to decide on what side to align; a good example is that of a seventeen-year-old boy, who attends school in the Badagry area and lives in Seme. Both parents are well into illicit criminalized economic activities. He also has been invited to partake in one of the many illicit border-related economic activities common with children of his age, however, he is conflicted on what is taught him in school about criminality and the daily reality of his life at home in Seme.

The structural features of the border also greatly impact parenting. The fact that illicit activities are the mainstay of the border, and that there are limited legitimate alternatives already positions the parents to embody criminality. There is also a systematic permissiveness to illicit activities, and the idea that the political economy of the border is to be exploited. The children, therefore, grew up knowing no other way of life aside from the business of criminality, in addition to being inspired and admiring people who have become wealthy through criminalities. During one of the focus group discussions conducted, nine out of the ten young adult and teenagers mentioned that they are inspired to become 'fayawo' (smugglers), oil bunkers, and those who own fuel stations, and sell illegal fuel along the expressway from Badagry

to Cotonou. This aspect of my field experience was a crucial eye-opening moment where it became clear that research in parenting and factors affecting the successful process of parenting is urgent and necessary. This pointed to the fact that the environment can influence and impact the parents' potential. It is therefore important to pay attention to the types of lessons that an ecosystem teaches to children.

"Seme o to omo", was a common saying among participants of the research. This can be loosely interpreted to mean Seme, does not have the leeway to properly train a child, or it could also mean you cannot successfully train a child at Seme. This statement was usually backed by parents asserting that very few children have lived in Seme and turned out properly. Many of the women said that they would rather work in Seme and make money to send their children to school in Lagos, Cotonou, and Ghana. This strong opinion was based on the fear of violent conflicts between state actors and members of organized syndicates, the loose moral environment, and the quick accessibility, and availability of illicit border activities that incentivize children and young adults to border crime.

Scholars like Weber & Pickering (2011) argued that long years of structural neglect of border communities is tantamount to systemic subjection of children, parents, and other community members to vulnerability and violence. Border inhabitants become vulnerable to crime, embrace it, and are categorized as illicit actors by the State legislature. These scholars insist that the state is responsible for the structural violence that community members encounter daily as they negotiate the volatile and precarious condition of the Seme border (Margolin & Gordis, 2000).

Another finding from Seme about parenting is how the role and impact of Fathers and Mothers are constructed based on specific assessment by community members. It was discovered that a man can only be categorized as a good and successful father if he can provide food, clothing, education, and other welfare demands. This assessment does not consider how he makes the money. It matters little if he would need to be involved in criminal activity to get the money.

This pushes to the fore the question of how those categorized as criminals perform parenting? Do they justify their actions as necessary to cater for their children? (Cardoso et al.,2018) How do the children manage their expectation of the role of leadership and source of influence that they have of their parents, within the realities of being birth by potentially violent and illicit actors?

Becoming a parent is a biological and social process, it does not consider criminalization. Therefore, when sex workers, smugglers, drug peddlers, and traffickers become parents, how does research help in understanding these complex dynamics that are part of the daily realities of humans and Nigerians? What are the concerns of a mother at Seme, who smuggles contraband goods and goes home at night to teach her child to obey rules and regulations? These are some of the questions that need to be interrogated to give an in-depth and widespread analysis of parenting in precarious conditions.

The data from the field also unearth important information on the ways parents at the border instruct their children to achieve compliance. Many of the participants mentioned that they resolved to persuade the children to make the right decision, despite the prevailing condition of the border. They add that they appeal to the

children's emotions and the instinct to want to please the parents. Some others added that they rely on faith and religion to help the children stay focused. One parent said that she takes her children to church daily, to listen to sermons and that she prays, believing that God alone can help her train her children since she does not have the option of leaving the Seme border community to stay elsewhere. Another set, however, does not align with persuasive and gentle parenting. This set insists that the border community is not a place where parenting can be achieved with a soft or gentle form of parenting.

A parent said that when his child misbehaves, he beats that child into submission, enforces a strict curfew, and deprives the child of some of the items that she/he likes. The latter parent is responding to the border dynamics by negotiating his children's success, and by adjusting or changing his parenting style to meet the realities of the border. None of these methods is sufficient to successfully parent a child; one of my key informants asserts that a combination of methods as necessary to fit the situation is better deployed.

Area of Focus in Scholarship and for Stakeholder

Notions of parenting will continue to shift in response to external factors that influence the turnout of the children. In that regard, research must respond to this reality by attempting to cover as many as possible grey areas that have not yet received adequate scholarly intervention. Studies on how parenting is performed, and influenced by criminalization for example, and how the livelihood of the parent influences how the role is assessed and accepted or repelled. In addition, parenting is subject also to the physical environment. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on research on specific locales and their impact on the changes that may be recorded in parenting within that space. In addition, structural violence may not be

immediately felt; however, the implication is revealed gradually, affecting every phenomenon. Therefore, it is important to continue researching the intersections of state response, structural violence, and lived experience of community violence on the success rate of parenting and changes recorded in parenting patterns.

Finally, many border community members recognize the local, non-state leadership, either in the form of traditional leaders, youth leaders, or staff members of non-governmental organizations. These avenues must be explored to unearth strategies for intervention programs that will be beneficial to parents, children, young adults, and the general border community members. These intervention programs are expected to privilege a gradual re-orientation of border community members from crime and illicit economies. This is to go together with a state-led effort to create a more conducive environment for raising children. Some of the ways the state can achieve this is by providing basic amenities and giving incentives for exploring legitimate options of earning a livelihood. Another way parenting can be helped in Seme border is by investing in education. Many of the children and young adults have little access to quality and affordable education within the border community. Most of them would have to go as far as Badagry or communities that are about ten kilometers from Seme to attend school. This can be discouraging and may be a reason why boys and girls at Seme will opt to venture into illicit economic activities. A safer environment is a more conducive one for raising children. A solution-centered approach, whereby suspected violent actors are not arrested but engaged in educating the community on the benefit of a safe space for their children is needed.

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Family Victimization Experiences and Parenting in the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Boko Haram Members

Ikem Godspower UJENE

Lecturer, Achievers University, Owo
PhD student, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Email: profikechukwu@gmail.com; iujene2146@stu.ui.edu.ng

Introduction

Burgeoning studies on conflict and terrorism have emerged over the last century, creating a rich pool of literature on the victimization experiences of people in conflict areas (Argomaniz & Lynch, 2018), counterterrorism methods (Sandler, 2015), peacebuilding as well as rehabilitation and reintegration programs (McBride, Carroll, Mellea, Hughes & Savoia, 2022). However, in Nigeria, acts of terror have ravaged the Northeast since 2009 when Boko Haram became radicalized. Majorly, individuals, families, and institutions have been desecrated due to the activities of the group (Ujene,

2018). The cycle of terrorism and counterterrorism in Northeast Nigeria has been well represented in literature.

Despite these huge impacts of terrorism and conflict on individuals, groups, and society at large, scant literature still exists on the implications of Boko Haram (BH) on the family unit as well as the specific roles of the family unit in the ongoing rehabilitation and reintegration of Boko Haram members given the magnitude of the damage done to the family unit by the group. This necessitated this study which inquired into the victimization experiences of the family unit and its involvement in Nigeria's ongoing terrorists' rehabilitation and reintegration program.

The study inquired into the unique victimization experiences of ex-BH family members in the cycle of terrorism and counter-terrorism; the role of the father and mother of an ex-BH member in the ongoing rehabilitation and reintegration program and the benefits of rehabilitation and reintegration to the family units in Northeast Nigeria. It applied qualitative cross-sectional research design with a blend of non-participatory observation. The qualitative instruments of data collection involved a sample of 74 purposively selected participants. These ranged from family heads, family members of ex-BH fighters, internally displaced persons, religious and community leaders in the study areas as well as members of Operation Safe Corridor (the military arrowhead of rehabilitation and reintegration programs). The staff of the International Organization for Migration and Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development were also involved in the study.

Field Experiences

The study was conducted in Maiduguri and Bama in Borno state and Malam Sidi in Gombe state. First, we (I and my research team involving two research assistants and a psychologist) visited Borno state where we interfaced with internally displaced persons in some of the camps around Maiduguri municipal and later proceeded to Bama local government area of the state. I was lodged at the Nigerian Airforce Senior Staff Mess in Maiduguri from where we commuted to the field for data collection.

This was a way to ensure my safety as the Nigerian military was aware of my coming and was expecting me due to the ethical approval secured from Nigeria's Chief of Defense Staff.

As the study concerned victimization experiences and parental caregiving, we proceeded to engage family members and community heads on the research objectives. Informal transformations that had occurred in the family because of the Boko Haram conflict were poked into and traditional cum cultural custodians were also engaged. Manifestations of the impact of the conflict on the family, especially from the economic perspective, were glaringly evident at the internally displaced persons' camps. Parents were overly willing to participate in research given their experience with financial remuneration at the end of them. The air of uncertainties that pervaded the length and breadth of both the IDP camps and the reintegrated communities made economic activities very limited. (Agriculture is the mainstay of the area's economy). This gave them ample time to participate in several other things such as serving as research participants. Because of this, we had parents and family members who were willing and glad to participate in the research for as long as they were asked

to. This willingness to participate in the research was also because these victim communities seized every opportunity to tell their side of the story and also appeal to relevant authorities to facilitate the return of peace to their region.

In the IDP camps, children were seen playing at the community playing grounds and the sight of visitors (including researchers) excited them. Visitors were identified by the way they dressed, the way they spoke, their kind of locomotive (majorly in the communities), and in rare circumstances, what they carried in their hands(fancybags,paper/books, cameras, etc.). Research participants were willing to show us where they sleep, where they cook as well as their bathrooms because they had the prenotion that researchers or visitors could either be government agents or can influence the government for change. Throughout the interview sessions, the participants kept smiling as they encouraged themselves (especially during FGD sessions) to speak up and not be afraid. Community leaders also assisted wholeheartedly in locating research participants as requested by the research team.

Findings and Discussion

Impact of Boko Haram Conflict on Family

The data covered the impact of the activities of Boko Haram on the family unit to hugely appreciate the extent of the damage done to the family. One of the recurring issues that have impacted both the structure and the institution of family is the condition of "double widowhood".

From time immemorial, several traditional practices around the world have painted marriage as an economic venture. In Nigeria as well, many women see marriage as majorly an economic

venture and the advent of Boko Haram solidified such belief. This is not unusual as the restrictions on economic activities such as farming, fishing, and other agro-allied activities (due to the high risks attached to them) made it outrightly pertinent that only men could engage in them. Again, with the establishment of internally displaced persons' camps around the major cities and the restrictions on movements within the "safe areas", economic activities became a luxury that only very few men could dare to afford.

As a result of the above, women (widows) purely saw marriage or getting remarried as an economic empowerment program and the majority of them believed it was the only economic safety net. These remarriages contracted in the study areas create a concept of double widowhood, which further exacerbates the economic situation of the people involved as they found themselves inheriting families.

There are indications of how some families lost their breadwinners more than once. For instance, a lady lamented how her husband got killed in the village of Bama (Borno state) before she relocated to the IDP camp in Maiduguri with her two children. She later discovered her inability to cater for the two children and decided to remarry. Her entanglement with a widower with four children made their family larger. Unfortunately for her, a few months into her new marriage, she became a "double widow" after the second husband was killed on his way from the farm. At the point of fieldwork, the woman was left with six children (four adopted from her immediate-past marriage and two of her biological children from her previous marriage) while also in search of another man to marry for economic stability.

This was not far from the stories that permeate the length and breadth of the region since the advent of Boko Haram. A similar

view was expressed by an internally displaced person who shared his experience that the weight of running a joint family with a widow, is an economic exigency.

From their responses, marriage as a process and as an institution has been reduced to a dual functional unit- economic exigency and sexual satisfaction. The limitation to dual functionality has been hugely attributed to the effect of armed conflict and terrorism.

Victimization Experiences of the Family in Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Given the crimes committed against the members of the family and the desecration of several traditional institutions by acts of terror perpetrated by members of Boko Haram, it is overtly expected that the reparation of the society must commence with the family and be all-inclusive of the family. It is expected that specific reparation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs be tailored to meet the specific needs of the family and its members. However, technical exclusion of the family is exhibited within the slightest resistance to the program of rehabilitation and reintegration in Northeast Nigeria.

For instance, in a focus group discussion held with a group of internally displaced persons, it was discovered that many of the participants are not happy with the rehabilitation exercise and their best revenge for the atrocities committed against them is the vehement opposal of its implementation.

Their submissions present a feeling of compliance by coercion and acceptance by regulation. It emits a feeling of powerlessness on the part of the individuals hence, their resentment towards the program. This idea was corroborated by a male focus group discussant when asked about the roles played by the families in the

ongoing rehabilitation and reintegration. However, in a twisted view, a woman leader observed that her support for the program is in the capacity as a community head and not as a widower. She opined that her role in the community demands that she plays along with the government but as a double widow, she has her reservations for the program. She revealed that since family members are not complying to support the program to the satisfaction of the government, the government has decided to bypass them and work with community heads.

The dangers of the above exclusion of the family members of ex-BH fighters in the entire process lie in the outright rejection of the program by most of the members of the communities. This was echoed by Owonikoko (2022) who studied the community receptivity of reintegrated Boko Haram members and concluded that the lack of outright programs tailored to meet the specific needs of specific groups of victims (families for instance) has led to the rejection of the program by members of the communities where reintegration program is being implemented. He complained of the risks of outright failure of the program as with community rejection, it lacks the ability to truly introduce and enhance peace in the region.

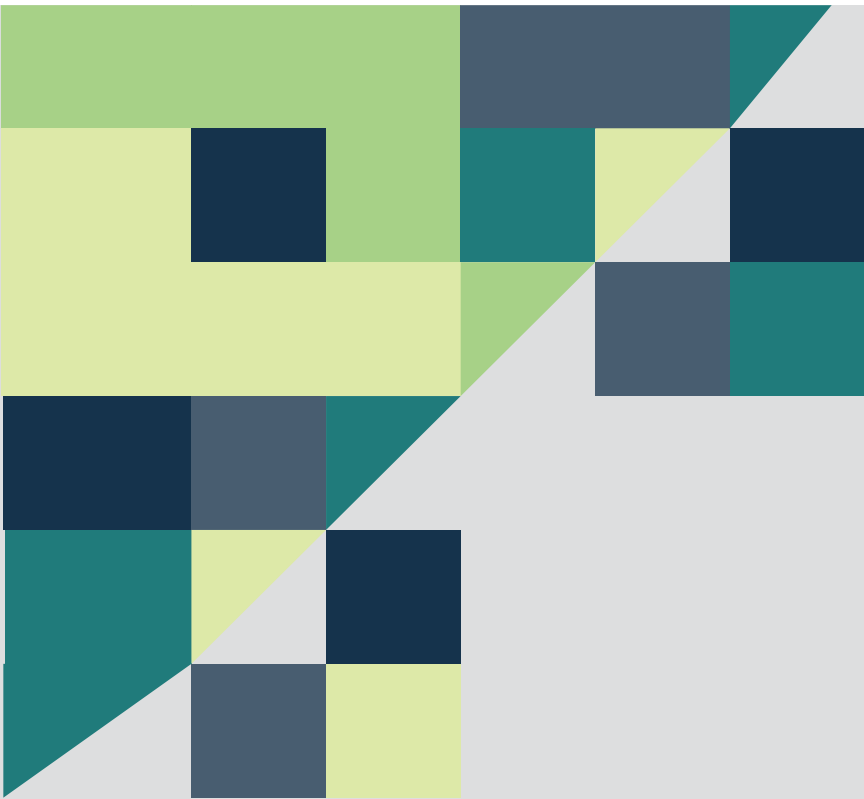## Need for Research and Policy Interventions on Parenting

Given the magnitude of the damage done to the family unit, marriage structure, and parenting by the Boko Haram menace, it is urgently relevant to beam scientific research light on accessing the way forward for the family as a unit. The family is regarded as a crucial agent of social change, hence, its efficacy in turning the tide of events and strengthening peacebuilding processes in Northeast Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. More studies should be

commissioned to inquire into the current nature of parenting in Northeast Nigeria as pieces of evidence show the alteration of the role because of Boko Haram activities. Full-blown scientific inquiries should assess the level of damage done to the family unit and its various sub-institutions such as marriage and parenting and its changing nature since the advent of the Boko Haram conflict in the region. This will guide policymakers on what to ameliorate, what to retain, and what to jettison- a panacea to the restoration of the family as it should be. Through this, both national and international organizations will be well guided as to what intervention programs should be implemented to enhance the functionality of the family unit. Neglecting the specific needs of the family will lead to its total collapse. This has the potential to turn out to be the bane in the post-conflict reconstruction process of the communities affected by Boko Haram atrocities.

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SYNTAX
CREATIVE SPACE