October, 2007

Value System and The Nigerian Child

Edited by:
Christiana Ugodulunwa Ph.D
Chibueze U. Mgboro Ph.D.

Official Publication of
The Nigerian Society for Educational Psychologists

Table of Contents

128

A Survey of Perceived Values of Families in Benue State

Grace W. Akuto
Department of Educational Foundations & General Studies
University of Agriculture, Makurdi.

Elvis O. Ihaji
Terzungwe Ayebe
Fred I. Tamen
Department of Psychology
Benue State University, Makurdi

Abstract

The Study investigated the perceived values of Benue families in order to determine core values of Benue Families and what constitutes positive and negative values among them. Two hundred and fifty-one participants made up of males and females old and young, from rural and urban setting took part in the participatory, qualitative research. Focused Group Discussions, free listing and Ranking were the main tools for data collection. Content analyses of the results revealed that the general positive values (acceptable Behaviours) prevalent in Benue families revolve around education and social issues such as religion, tradition, moral behaviour, stable home, Honesty, Farming, Wealth, nutrition, Politics, communal living, Leadership, and Respect for elders. Key negative values (unacceptable Behaviours) identified among Benue families were stealing, unfaithfulness, disrespect for elders, witchcraft, immoral behaviour, family neglect, Pride, Abortion, & Indecent dressing. The study also revealed that there were differences in family values between young and old, rural and urban, rich and poor. Positive values which are greatly cherished by Benue families are highly under threat of change due to globalization effect. It was recommended that families, schools, policy, makers and other agents of socialization should note the positive values held by Benue families and work towards inculcation of same in children.

Introduction

In the recent past, there has been a lot of concern about family values in Nigeria. Uzoka (2005) and Gire (2005) stressed the need for family values in the changing Nigeria society. Each family has values which do not only determine the focus and behaviour of the family but play important roles in the stability of the home. Every human being belongs to a family that has a set value that he carries along and which influences his thoughts, actions, and feeling. Values imply a sense of what is wrong and right. Values involve things that are important to us. Therefore Santrock (1999) believed that we attach values in the family to all sorts of things like politics, religion, money, sex, education, helping behaviour, cheating, stealing and so on. However, families' values differ significantly and vary from family to family, urban to rural, young and old.

These values keep changing from time to time due to socio-economic and technological changes. The complexities of modern society has created confusion in the Nigerian value system such that even glaringly unacceptable conducts (cheating in all forms, indecent dressing, unruly behaviour in children etc) are being tolerated or inappropriately handled to stem the web. This is contributing to the fast decay in our societal value system. Therefore it is necessary to examine the perceived values of Benue families in the present day. This will have implication for socialization, education and harmonious living among the different families in Benue State and Nigeria at large. Families

throughout the world are believed to be custodians of socio-cultural, economic and political values, which sustain societies as they evolve through time (Ganyi and Deakaa, 2006). The family values are essential element for societal stability in Nigeria where family is related by kinship or close emotional attachment. According to Mattessich and Hill (1987) every family displays four systemic features, namely intimate independence, selective boundary maintenance, ability to adapt to change and maintaining their identity over time in performance of the family tasks.

The task performed by family revolves around family values and physical maintenance, such as socialization, sexual education, and control of social and family moral, motivation to perform roles inside and outside the family. According to Walker and Crocker (1988), a family can be defined as any social unit with which an individual is intimately involved and which is governed by family rules. The two key features of family are that members reciprocally influence each other over time and the family is greater than its members because of its values. A family may take any of the following forms; a residential home made up of parents and their children; a mother/father and children; the couple alone, any of these with grand parents, aunts, uncles' cousins and others where family values exist.

The question of values become important in Benue families in the present day of emerging technological society because,

it is the core issue which determines the background of the individual members that manifest in the societal lifestyle. The families respect cultural norms that society attempt to preserve and pass on to the next generation. There seems to be no consensus among parents, religious organisations and society regarding what constitutes core family values. According to Denga (1983) values represent reasons, beliefs, conviction or virtues that guide people's actions.

Values are also philosophical considerations which help an individual personally to appropriate his actions and relationship with others: In a similar way Akinpelu (1981) refers to values as objects we cherish, appreciate, desire, want or need. It may be social, religious, moral, spiritual, aesthetic, political, economic, technological material and so on. In this study, family values simply means "acceptable" versus "unaccepted", good versus bad, positive and negative behaviour in a family. A survey reveals that Nigerians commonly cherished the following values: success in career, procreation as a major goal of marriage, sufficient education to achieve good things in life, equality of opportunities, kindness, helping others, a sense of accomplishment, loyalty, truthfulness, kindness, respect for elders and other peoples' right and property, being humane and so on forth (Uduigwomen, 2004). While values of family are important, there is a general absence of what constitutes a family values; therefore many Nigerian families still grope in the dark in terms of

Generally accepted values in the present day. Hence the need for this study to identify the major family values. However, there are certain factors that determine value selection in a family. These differ from one family to another, urban to rural, rich to poor, young to old family. This understanding has implication for counselors, leaders and social scientists; Titus and Smith (1974) listed the following principles that guide the existence of values in family.

Values may be chosen freely and not imposed, willingness to publicize values inspite of criticism of others, values must be prized and cherished, considerations of values in relation to those of society and when there is a clash, one must be ready to sacrifice his personal values in the interest of the common good, intrinsic values are more important and to be preferred to extrinsic ones. This means that things that are good in themselves are to be preferred to things that are means to the attainment of others, productive and relatively permanent values are to be preferred to less productive and less permanent values, when there are two competing values for selection, the greater value is to be chosen.

These factors that guide in the formation of family values differ from one family to another, one culture to another and the prevailing socio-economic factors in the family and the society at large. It seems that the cultural factors, influence of peer pressures, religion, the media and economic factors may be playing significant roles in the present day family values in Nigeria and perhaps responsible

for changes. Time and changes in the above factors may have great influence on the Nigerian family values presently. What it was in the past may not be the same today. However, the principles of right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, good and bad still remains the yardstick for deciding on positive and negative values, which to a large extent is influenced by global influences. However, society-specific strategies should be adopted to help parents, teachers and religious leaders to identify the common family values in Nigeria in order to promote ideals that will make Nigerian society to be reasonably consistent and predictable in common family values.

Statement of Problem

The identity of any group of people is found in their value system. Values which constitute the life and essence of any social unit including the family are of concern particularly in the emerging technological society. This is because values determine the background of the individual members that manifest in the societal lifestyle. The families respect cultural norms that society attempt to preserve and pass on to the next generation. Due to changes arising from globalization in our value system, there seems to be no consensus among parents, religious organizations and society regarding what constitutes core family values. While values of family are important, there is a general absence of what constitute family values; therefore many Nigerian families including those of Benue, still grope in the dark in terms of

generally accepted values in the present day society. It appears values of urban and rural families, rich and poor as well as old and young members of families are different. While one family is emphasizing this value, another is de-emphasizing and stressing the very opposite of what others teach, yet we are in the same country/State and are one people! While it is an accepted fact that certain value idiosyncrasies exist in families, it is still not out of expectation for all families alike to buy into certain basic human values that ensure existence of a people as one and distinguishable from others. Hence the need for this study to identify the major family values in the State.

Purpose of the Study

The study was set out to determine the core values held by Benue families, identify what constitute acceptable (positive) and unacceptable (negative) values among the families as well as consider if there are differences/similarities in the family values based on the varying factors of age, socioeconomic status and rural/urban or even religion.

Objective of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to...
1. Survey the prevailing values in the families in Benue State.
2. Identify the positive and negative family values in Benue State.
3. Examine differences in values between families of different socio-economic, rural/urban, old/young and religious background.

Research Questions

1. What are the core values that families in Benue hold?
2. What are the positive and negative values of the families in Benue State?
3. Are there differences in family values in Benue State based on identified factors?
4. Have family values in Benue State changed overtime?

Method
Design

The research was a participatory qualitative survey. The variables studied were not manipulated but noted as they were. The choice of this design was aimed at allowing for a wide range of views which may have been difficult with structured questionnaire.

Instruments

Focus group discussion (FGD) guide, free listing and ranking were the tools used to elicit responses from the participants. The FGD guide sought to elicit responses on values of families in Benue from the perspectives of participants based on factors as: rural and urban, old and young, rich and poor views of Christians and Muslims. Issues on the changing values were also examined. The priority ranking required each group of participants to prioritize the 10 most important positive values and 10 top negative values in Benue families from the list of values they generated.

Participants

Participants for the survey were made of adult males and females as well as youths drawn from urban and rural areas of Benue State. Altogether, 251 persons made up of 112 females and 139 males participated in the study. Participants were randomly selected on the basis of availability and their willingness to participate in the discussion. The researchers also ensured that the participants in the study were those with varying levels of education. This was intended to get views of literate and semi literate persons.

Location

Rural participants were drawn from Ikpayongo (Gwer LGA) and Iga-Okpaya (Agatu LGA) both of Benue State. Urban participants were made up of mixed ethnic groups of Benue State residing in Makurdi.

Research Team

The research team was made up of 4 persons, 1 from the University of Agriculture and 3 from Benue state University who were supported by two research assistants.

Procedure

The team of researchers took three days to plan, develop and pilot test the instrument for the study. The instrument was revised to get rid of ambiguous and repeated questions to ensure its validity. Data collection was done in four days. Researchers paired up to conduct the Focus Group Discussions, with one person facilitating and the other taking notes. In the rural areas researchers

conducted the discussions in the relevant local dialect to ensure adequate understanding by participants.

The FGD was conducted in groups of varying numbers between 7 to 10 persons both in the rural and urban areas. At the rural community levels the head of the family was briefed for permission to talk with his subjects across the neighborhood. In the urban areas participants who consented were gathered under trees, in empty halls and market shades for the discussion.

In each FGD group participants were made to relax, told the purpose of the discussion and encouraged to share their views freely and honestly as there was no right or wrong answers. Feedback on their views was presented to them for validation at the end of the discussion.

Data Analyses

Content analysis as is typical with qualitative research was the main method of data analysis used. Views of participants from the various groups were collated & categorized. Weighted average was used to arrive at the over all priority values of Benue families across all the groups of participants.

Limitation

The study was limited by financial constraint which did not allow researchers to cover wider areas in the state. The study was financed by the researchers.

Results: Presentation and Discussion

The result of the study is presented and discussed under the following sub headings: Basic (core) Family Values in Benue; Values of Urban/Rural families; Young/old; rich/poor, Christian/Muslim, and changes in values.

Benue Family Values

All the Categories of participants in this study identified the following 36 positive values (i.e. good and accepted characteristics or cherished behaviors) they consider core in families in the State and 30 negative family values (unaccepted behaviours). These can further be re-grouped as Aesthetic, Education, Religion, Moral, Social and Political. The positive and values generated by participants were, Education, Tradition (Bride price, virginity, Age grade etc), Religion, Agriculture, Loyalty, Respect, for elders, Communal living (unity& togetherness), Love (Sense of belonging, kindness), Proper training of children, Wealth, Health, Responsibility (parents and children), Decent dressing. Participatory family decision-making, Children , Children's participation in household chores, Economic empowerment of women., Stable homes Integrity, Politics (Democracy), Sound moral behaviour, human right, polygamy, Honesty, Community development, Hard work, Sports and exercises, Humility, Social activities (Dancing, Music), Hospitality (love & acceptance of others), Openness, security, Politeness, Tolerance, circumcision, Marriage, Leadership.

The participants on the other hand generated the following negative values, Cheating, Prostitution/Promiscuity,

Dishonesty, Pride, Drug abuse, Exam malpractice, Child abuse, Immoral behaviour, Bribery and corruption, Stealing/armed robbery, Deceit, Juvenile delinquency, Witchcraft & Cursing, Indecent, Violence, Incest, Idol worship, Laziness, Unfaithfulness, Disrespect for elders, Gossip, Jealousy, Stinginess, Negligence of family, Abortion, Religiosity, Dependency, Get rich quick syndrome, Conflict, Enmity. This collaborates the work of Uduigwomen (2004) who identified similar values cherished and encouraged by Nigerian families. However, the participants in this study also enumerated 30 negative values which are unaccepted behaviours among Benue Families.

Ranking of Positive and Negative

Using the top ten priority ranking of positive and negative values by participants in their various groups, the researchers used weighted average to come up with an overall list of ten priority positive values based on weight average is as follows. The positive/unacceptable values were Education, Religion ,Tradition, Moral behaviour, Stable homes, Honesty , Good health, Farming Wealth, Nutrition, politics, Participatory decision making, Good leadership, Respect for elders.

The Negative/unacceptable values were Stealing, Unfaithfulness (deceit, dishonesty, disloyalty), Disrespect for elders, Prostitution, Witchcraft, Immoral behaviour, Jealous/envy, Laziness , Incest/ promiscuity, Conflict, Negligence of family, Pride, Abortion, Indecent dressing.

Benue Family ranks Education as the number one top most priority value in their families. This confirms the importance Benue people attach to Education as shown in the number of higher, secondary and primary institutions in the state. For instance, Benue State has three (3) Universities, two (2) Colleges of education, College of Agriculture, two (2) Poly-techniques among other private ones. Benue is one of the states with a very high number of private nursery schools in the country. Thus education is indeed an important value in families in Benue State. Next to education is religion and tradition. This shows that families in Benue attach high values to religion and adherence to tradition. This is seen in various cultural activities that the State Benue is known for. Morality and stable homes are also important values to the Benue family as ranked by respondents. Because of the importance attached to moral uprightness, stealing ranks first as an unaccepted conduct in Benue family, followed by unfaithfulness, deceit, dishonesty, cheating, disrespect for elders, prostitution, immoral behaviour etc. The Benue families and other agents should therefore note and devise strong strategies to discourage these unaccepted behaviors in their families and promote the positive ones.

Values of Urban Rural Families in the State.

The study also investigated into differences among Benue Urban and Rural family values. The participants'

responses *show that there are shades of differences between the values of* urban and rural families in Benue State are as follows.

Benue families in urban setting value western dressing, education, wealth, individualism, Little value on witchcraft, High value for health, High value for health, Sports and exercise, Few children, Monogamy, High value for Nutrition, Delayed marriage, Dependent children (due to long period of education), More participatory decision-making, More permissive in control of children, Less value for tradition and virginity. The rural families in Benue on the other hand place greater emphasis on decent dressing akin to tradition, less education, farming, less material wealth and collectivism (togetherness), family ties, bonds and relationships, Great value on witchcraft, Some value for health, Sport/exercise less valued, many children, Polygamy, Nutrition somewhat valued, Early marriage, Independent children (directly involved in income generation for sustenance), Less participatory decision-making, More rigid in control of children, Tradition including virginity are highly valued in rural families than urban. The general data collected shows that the urban families in the State are moving away from tradition to western values however; the urban families still value the traditional values. There is wide gap between the values of urban and rural families in Benue State as shown in the table.

Also differences exist between the values of Benue urban and rural youth in

families. The former are pro-western in values such as fashion, music and permissive sexual values while the rural youth are traditional in fashion and less permissive in sexual values. The differences in urban rural family values can be attributed to several environmental factors (Lloyd 1974). The two categories of family live in different socio-economic environment which have significant impact on their family values and life style in general. This implies that the closer the families are to technological changes the more the impact on the once dearly held traditional values. Again this calls for a holt in the eroding of our positive traditional values by all agents of socialization.

The Rich and Poor family Value

The rich families in Benue values, white color jobs, High value for nutrition, Education, Less value for traditional age grade activities, Both boy & girl child education valued, children dependence on parents for long, Position and recognition in society, Less control & permissive training of children while the poor families on the other hand place values on Farm work, Some value for nutrition, Farm work followed by education, High value traditional age grade activities, More value boy than girl child education, Children contribute early to family income & develop sense of independence early, A good name, fairness, justice in society, Strict control and training of children. The differences between urban and rural families are due to proximity to modernization and global changes.

Changing Values in Benue Families

The foregoing discussion shows changes in Benue family Values. The participants perceived changes in the values that prevail in Benue families in the immediate past. This means that values that existed in families and were appreciated are no longer the same. This may be due to the influence of technological advancement and globalization. The findings shows that

Benue families values have changed overtime according to the participants. They perceived a change from value on farm work and manual labour to education including girl child education, from poor health seeking behaviour in the past to better health-seeking behaviour, traditional dressing to western dressing, and early marriages to late marriages. Other areas of changes in family value include decision-making, virginity, circumcision, marriage, and religion. The participants perceived that there is a general shift in values from what was important in the past to what is modern in the present day. This again points to the existence of intergenerational gap in family values between the past and the present day society. The participants believed that this change was due to western education, and globalization generally. The present day family places emphasis on modern technological advancement which is perceived to be more superior to the primitive traditional values. Such values are now considered obsolete and are giving way to modern values in the family. This finding corroborates Munn (1995)

who believes that younger people show greater values in self fulfillment and self expression compared to the older people who keep to tradition. The younger people in Benue place high value on delayed marriage, education and white-collar jobs, fashion and modeling. This is an indication of gap between the two groups and perhaps the reason why the two generations have many areas of friction & disagreements. This is consistent with the findings of Ekwe (1986), Munn (1975) who have identified intergenerational gaps in the changing world" between younger and older people. This means that there are differences in family values between old and new families.

Conclusion/Recommendation

The study has identified positive and negative values among Benue families as well as the differences in values between the poor and rich, young and old, urban and rural, Christian and Muslim families. The values identified to exist in families in Benue State have undergone changes over the years due to western education and changes arising from globalization. However, differences exist between rural family values and urban families, as well as between younger and older families, Christian and Muslim. Thus the determining factor in value is the environmental force. Since values play important roles in all families, the authors make the following recommendations to parents, educators, policy-makers and religious leaders.

1. The top ten (10) Benue family values identified in this study should be the

focus during the process of socialization. Thus Kirschenbaum (1992) suggested that younger people should be exhorted to adopt good values after identifying them. Children should be rewarded or punished accordingly to ensure observance of the positive values.

2. Policy makers, teachers, religious leaders should intensify campaign against negative values in families in view of their detrimental effects on children. Adults' should serve as models for family values. Counselors, psychologist, and social workers should contribute to promoting these values.

3. Conflict managers in family values should note the differences in values between, young and old, Rich and Poor, Urban and rural, Muslim and Christian as bases of intervention in Benue and in Nigeria in general. For instance, instituting a code of dressing in our universities· may curtail academic freedom but is desirable as a big step to curbing the excesses in our youths. After all the society must remain sane for effective continuity.

4. There is need to bridge the gap between urban and rural, Rich and Poor family values through education, rural development and employment. Government, NGOs and individuals have roles to play here to improve rural life and consequent maintenance of core family values in Benue State.

5. Young Benue people should be prepared for responsible decision making by exposing them to the inculcation of values by adults through verbal instruction and appropriate modeling.

6. There is need for linkage between home and school where children encounter more of western education that influences changes in family values. The desirable and positive values should be stressed at home and school. Thus teachers and community members should be involved in promoting positive values in Nigerian families. Interaction between teachers and parents through PTAs should strengthen such values inculcation.

7. There is need for further in-depth study of family values across the country. Other researchers are challenged to do this and bring out their findings to promote family lifestyle in Nigeria that clearly makes us a distinct Nation.

In conclusion, the study has significantly contributed to the studies of family in opening new area of family values. Family values developed at home and there is need for parents not only to be models but inculcate appropriate positive values to their children. The existing gaps in Benue family values among the different categories of families are noted and can be worked upon. The authors believe that it is not possible to have uniformity in family values but it is possible to establish core family values among Benue families and in Nigeria in general through legislation, education and proper socialization.

References
Akinpelu, J. A. (1981). *An introduction to Philosophy of Education*. London

Macmillan.

Denga, D.I. (1983)• *The School Counselor in a Developing Nation*: problems and prospects. Calabar. Wusen Press Ltd.

Ekpeke, A. (1995)• *Changing Rural Values in Nigeria*, of a essay in ethical Relativism in Omaha and Ozioko contemporary issues in social science Acena Pub. Enugu.

Ekwe, A. O. (1956) cognitive development in Adams. *Understanding Adolescent* Boston. Bacco.

Genyi, G. & Deaka, M. E., (2006)• The family Economic crises and corruption in Nigeria: critical challenges for the 21" century. Journal of family development vol. 2.

Kirschenbaun (1992) *A comprehensive model for value education and moral education* Phidela Keppan.

Lioyed, P.C (1974)• *African in social change:* Changing traditional

Mattessich, P. & Hill, R (1987)•*Life Cycle societies in modern world*, M.D. Pengium and family

Development in M.B. Susman of marriage and family, New York Plenum press. 437-469.

Munn, M. (1995)•values of adolescent compared with parents and peers Adolescent? (28) 519-524.

Uduig women (2004)• strategies for values education in a society: the Nigerian case. *American symposium* vol No 1 March Mauto: Plognofo @Ohio eduor.

Titus, H. & Smith, M. (1974)• *Living issues in philosophy*. New York; D. Van Nostr and company.

Uzoka, F. (2005)•Psychology, Attitude change and nation building, A lead paper presented at the national conference of Nigerian psychological society Makurid.

Walker, D.K. & Cocker, R, W. (1988)•Measuring family system outcomes in H.B Weiss and F.H Jacobs e.d *Evaluating family programs*. New york. Aldine a Gruyte 153-176.

Santrock, J.W. (1999)•*Life span development* 7" edition Boston: McGraw-Hill college.