

Research Report

Modernity and changing family values in Nigeria: implications for effective parenting

Lydia Isioma Chineyemba

Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

E-mail: isichiney2005@yahoo.com

(Received 16 May 2023; Accepted 4 June 2023; Published 25 June 2023)

Abstract - The family as a social institution has undergone changes occasioned by modernity; these changes have positive and negative implications. The family inculcates virtues, values, morals, ethics, and beliefs that define and shape the behaviours of members of society. Modernity is the vehicle that drives progress and development, yet it has brought changes that have altered family values and consequently hampered effective parenting in Nigeria. This paper focuses on the declining value system and its effect on parenting and society, as well as the overall outcome of the rising incidence of crime and insecurity in Nigeria. Primary and secondary data were sourced through in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, journal articles, and books. Qualitative analysis was done and presented as narratives. Findings revealed that changing value systems impact family time and relationships. Industrialization and improvements in information and communication technology resulting from modernization have impacts on parenting. The effects have spilled over to the larger society and informed the moral decay and insecurity that have bedevilled Nigeria. The paper recommends the redefinition and reactivation of the value system through the family to restore eroding family values in Nigeria.

Keywords: modernity, modernization, family value, parenting, insecurity

Introduction

The family is the foundation and bedrock of society. The family procreates, nurtures, and inculcates societal norms and values in its members through the process of socialisation. As a social institution, the family is dynamic and has undergone changes in structure and functions resulting from modernization, and this has impacted all aspects, including the crucial role of parenting (Dzintra and Marite 2015). Modernity refers to the era of change and development in which society moves from a traditional agrarian society characterised by a unified system and simple mode of production to a complex, pluralized, industrial society that relies on the use of machines (Giddens 2006). Modernization imparts people's lives, culture, and social system, including their belief system, norms, and values, dressing pattern, religion, economy, and family, both positively and negatively. On the positive side, modernization enhances people's standards of living through technological breakthroughs, industrialization, urbanisation, and improvement in vast areas of life. In the family, modernization has improved the family economy by creating jobs and enhancing businesses. In healthcare, massive improvements in maternal and child healthcare result from the availability of vaccines for the control of diseases. In education, access to education has more than doubled, and instructional materials are available for teaching and learning electronically. Socially, relationships are enhanced as communication gadgets like telephones are available for ease of communication. On the contrary, modernization affects the family adversely because it brings changes that alter family structure and functions, curtail family relationships, and undermine the all-important role of parenting. Whereas every society has some basic values that guide the behaviours of members and from which, in most parts, family values derive, in recent times; some of those values have been unintentionally ignored, undermined, or omitted in children's upbringing. The consequences of such omissions are often grim for individuals, families, and society, as is evident in the moral decadence, criminality, and insecurity that have bedevilled Nigerians in the past decades. This study is aimed at identifying family values in Nigeria and highlighting the changes that have occurred in them. It will assess the impact of modernity and the challenges it poses for parenting. Lastly, it will examine the implications of changing values vis-à-vis the moral crisis and the rising incidence of

crime and insecurity in Nigeria. This study has become necessary because anthropological inquiry has largely ignored the impact of declining values on parenting, whereas value system is an integral part of the culture on which the discipline focuses. It is thus relevant as it interrogates modernity from an anthropological perspective. Also, linking eroding family value to the rising incidence of crime and insecurity makes this study relevant to contemporary Nigerian experience and to criminology and security studies as a discipline.

Material and theory

It is imperative at this point to explore the conceptual review and the theoretical framework on which this study rests. They include:

Modernity

Modernity refers to changes or transformations that occur over time. It relates to the evolution of society from primitive agrarian undifferentiated society characterised by mechanical solidarity to complex, industrial, and organic solidarity (Durkheim 1964). Modernity was categorised in the timeline into periods, namely the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Present Time. The Renaissance marked the decline of the feudal system; it was a period when development was measured using Roman and Greek civilization as standards, implying that societies desiring to advance needed to cultivate lifestyles based on classical Greek or Roman values. It witnessed a wave of interest in classical scholarship (Britannica 2023). At the Enlightenment, development was based on knowledge of science, rationalism, and the pursuit of progress. It was the age of reason (Duignan 2023). Presently, modernity is measured in terms of economic, political, and technological advancement. Economically, it is based on a capitalist economy and the level of industrialization. Politically, democratic principles are the basis for measuring modernity. These indexes used as a yardstick for measuring modernization are, in our view, adopted from the west.

Modernization is the transformation that occurs in society. It is the vehicle that drives the change and development that result from inventions. Since society is dynamic, transformation is inevitable and ensures better ways of doing things. It is characterised by industrialization, technological advancement, urbanisation, and improved information and communication, among other things. These changes transform society positively, leading to an improved lifestyle and a revolution in health care, education, and employment opportunities. While modernization contributes

positively, it also has negative outcomes because it disseminates and conveys negative changes that threaten the future of humanity. [Muzaffar \(2008\)](#) captured the negative impact of the internet when he noted that it has become a suitable channel to propagate pornography. Access to information has increased cybercrime, internet fraud, and terrorism because it has made possible the manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction. Modernization encourages cultural assimilation and integration, which infuses other people's norms and values into society ([Njoku 2017](#)). Some of those values impart negatively on the family, exposing children to values that may be opposed to societal or family values they have imbibed. For instance, the culture of violence that has infiltrated Nigeria, threatening national peace and unity, is alien to our cultural ethos and normative order. They pose a serious threat to national security and our collective existence.

The Family

The family is the basic unit of society. It is the locus for procreation, reproduction, socialisation, and the education of children. It is also the centre for economic production, redistribution, and consumption. [Ojua et al. \(2014\)](#) argued that the family transmits norms, values, knowledge, beliefs, and skills to members for societal survival. Hence [Adamczyk \(2014\)](#) described the family as a bridge between individuals and society. [Bongaarts \(2001\)](#) posits that it is the conveyor of family values and offers the critical needs of love, care, and nurture, socialisation, physical protection, social security, especially at old age, emotional support, sexual satisfaction, economic cooperation, and a sense of belonging. [Dzintra and Marite \(2015\)](#) are of the view that the definition of the family is relative to cultural values, economic, political, social, and personal contexts because family is influenced by these variables in the context of time. In contemporary times, the family has experienced changes resulting from modernization. [Dzintra and Marite \(2015\)](#) concurred, attributing the changes to family structure and the changing roles of women to the economic and personal autonomy of women. According to their views, the results are an increased divorce rate, low childbirth rates, the rise of single-parent households, the prevalence of children raised by single mothers, declining marriage rates, and other lifestyle changes.

In Nigeria, such changes are impacting the family; for instance, Nigerians value and promote kinship bonds that are inextricable in extended family structures, but this family structure is waning ([Modo and Chineyemba 2015](#)) in favour of the nuclear

family, which is a product of modernization. Whereas parenting is a daunting task that requires support, in today's busy world, the quest for survival, particularly in a depressed Nigerian economy, takes parents away from home to offices and businesses, depriving them of quality time with their families. The importance of family time cannot be undermined in the crucial role of parenting because behaviours must be regulated for the welfare of others. Therefore, family time offers the opportunity to observe children's behaviours, identify idiosyncrasies, correct, instruct, discipline, and inculcate family norms and values to help members conform to societal expectations. However, these crucial roles are often neglected or left in the hands of inexperienced house helps. This has become rampant, especially among elites, whose fad for modern lifestyles and urban culture has lured them into individualism and a secluded lifestyle.

Parenting:

Parenting is a core responsibility that involves care giving for the proper development of children. [Morrison \(2009\)](#) defined parenting as the process of developing and utilising the knowledge and skills appropriate to planning for, creating, giving birth to, rearing, and providing care for offspring, be it financially, emotionally, or economically. Thus defined, parenting is a huge and demanding responsibility that requires deliberate effort. Parents, as primary caregivers, exert great influence on the development of their children ([Pretorius 2000](#)) and much of what becomes of them in the future is largely dependent on parenting. [Hops et al. \(2003, 2004\)](#) hold that the development, behaviours, personality, and academic performance of children are influenced by parents because, as [Cienki \(2007\)](#) observed, our ideas, perceptions, and interpretations can all be influenced by the frames we put them in. Hence, the relationship between parents and children is very important, as children observe, imitate, and learn from their parents. Thus, adequate support, care, monitoring, love, and discipline are required for effective parenting. But this divine responsibility has become difficult to handle owing to and arising from the combined influence of information technology, the internet, media, cultural diffusion, and industrialization, all of which stem from modernization. These factors influence children to the degree of parents' ability to monitor and control their activities based on their level of involvement and influence in their lives and the parenting style they adopt ([Zaman et al., 2014](#)).

Values

Values are what people perceive as desirable, cherish, and hold in esteem. They are components and attributes of the cultural system and constitute the basis for social action. They foster and promote group existence and welfare. Values typically derive from norms or moral principles that people uphold. Norms and values are interrelated and complement each other. Values provide broad guidelines and define what is imperative and worthwhile. Halstead and Taylor (1996) defined value as fundamental convictions, principles, standards, ideas, or life stances that act as general guides to behaviour or reference points in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or actions. Omofehinse (2001) posits that values may be ideas that propel man's daily actions. Values can be institutional, communal, family, group, or individual. They are common, which implies that every culture has things they value that may differ from people, families, or communities. However, there are common values; they exist based on value consciences (Durkheim 1967) — what people accept as good or evil, which realistically stem from their cultural predilections. Values are not static but subject to change relative to external influences and social change. People conform to and uphold values because of personal integrity, pressure for group identification, and the existence of sanctions (Ademilokum 1990). Values are significant in many respects. They are the basis for actions, set standards for behaviours, and determine the course of our lives (Dağ and Cinar 2015).

Family values

Family values are things families hold in high regard and desire to pass on to younger generations. Family members share them, and socialisation is frequently the means of transmission. Common family values in Nigeria include integrity, family name or reputation, unity, mutual respect, value for human life, children, marriage, sexual chastity, and hard work, among others. In contemporary times, some of these values have been altered by modernization. However, changing family values is not peculiar to Nigeria. A survey on attitudes to family life in the UK and Europe (2021) confirmed that family values have changed between 2006/2007 and 2018/2019. The report indicates that attitudes towards family life changed from being conservative to becoming postmodern within the said time. Being postmodern implied that people

became liberal in their approval of cohabitation, childlessness, having children out of marriage, divorce with underage children, and being in full-time employment with underage children. The study further revealed that younger generations are more inclined towards liberal family values. They are inclined towards individualism and freedom of choice, apparent in their preference for cohabitation and divorce (6% and 12%) rather than marriage. The findings of the study are consistent with [Nwabuisi's \(2000\)](#) studies, which indicate that family values in Nigeria have changed from the colonial era to the present. [Dzintra and Marite \(2015\)](#), however, argued that adoption of family values by children and youths should be based on voluntary acceptance, appreciation, and adoption of such values as theirs. adding that youths can comply and be self-regulated when they voluntarily embrace and internalise certain values. [Knafo and Schwartz \(2009\)](#) stressed that acceptance or rejection of parental or family values is an important part of socialisation; therefore, parents should be flexible in their demands, recognising that encouraging children's unique perspectives gives them more leeway to pursue their own interests and live in accordance with their own set of values because personal values shape one's views and actions, as [Soenens et al. \(2007\)](#) posited.

Family values and parenting: then and now

Every family adopts a definite style of parenting that is best suited for it. Therefore, what individual families emphasise in the upbringing of their children may differ based on family values, goals, ideas, social class, or religious affiliation. Families and communities also model behaviours based on their value consensus, that is, the common values that guide the collective actions and responses of members of that community ([Durkheim 1957](#)). The Nigerian value system was obvious in the behaviours and actions that members of society adopted. Currently, the influence of western values adopted through colonialism, modernization, and globalisation has altered the value system and moral ethos of Nigeria ([Nwabuisi 2000](#)). The pressure to amass wealth, aka 'get rich quick syndrome', has debased the social, economic, political, and cultural milieu of Nigerian society. The quest for materialism and capital accumulation has obscured the moral consciousness and value system at the family and national levels. This value devaluation informs the corruption that has weakened the moral fibre of society, resulting in the insecurity that the nation grapples with ([Agbese 1993](#)).

It is pertinent to state that, formally, parents, as moral entrepreneurs, modeled family values and, by their examples, provided a moral compass for their children to

navigate their way. Today, most parents are ensnared by corruption, greed, selfishness, and poverty to the point that family values and virtues are compromised. Dishonesty, cheating, lying, falsification of age, electoral malpractice, embezzlement of public funds, bribery, extortion, and other criminal acts are perpetrated under the glare of impressionable children. When this happens, parents lose the moral audacity to enforce family values because they cannot give what they do not have. So, the erosion of family values is partly the result of the failure of parents, as [Nmom \(2003\)](#) asserts. He noted that this variance is linked to the failure of the family to inculcate their values through effective parenting as divinely enjoined by the Bible (Proverb 22:6). Consequent on this failure, there is a latent shift and redefinition of societal values from what [Nwabuisi \(2000\)](#) described as traditional Nigerian values (truthfulness, love, respect, integrity, honesty, chastity, etc.) to the unconscious adoption of aberrant values such as greed, dishonesty, materialism, violence, disunity, and other deviant or criminal tendencies that birthed the degeneracy of Nigerian youths, as [Wokocha \(2002\)](#) stated.

Theoretical review

Anthropologists attempting to understand how societies progress employed evolution studies to explain the way cultures and societies develop. Unilineal evolutionists opine that societies evolve in a uniform manner, beginning from simple (primitive) cultures to complex civilizations. This progression in their views is how developed countries like America evolved to attain their present stage. Others explained that evolution is specific to societies and cultures until they arrive at civilization (multilinear evolution). Contemporary approaches explain societal development from the perspectives of neo-evolutionism and modernization theories.

This paper adopts modernization theory, specifically W.W. [Rostow's \(1961\)](#) Stages of Economic Growth. The modernization theory opined that for third-world countries to develop or attain modernization, they must jettison their traditional ways and embrace modern technologies, cultural values, and economics that emphasise savings and investments ([Giddens 2006](#)). [Rostow](#) believes there are developmental stages countries inevitably pass through to attain modernization. He opined that countries like America and other western societies that are economically (capitalist) and politically (democratic) powerful emerged through these stages. For low-income countries, his view is that some of their social institutions and traditional values inhibit their economic development. Therefore, for such societies to attain modernization, they

need to model their development after the four linear stages he proposed. They include the following:

- The traditional stage is a mainly agrarian economy in which production is subsistent, saving is low, and the value system is fatalistic.
- Take-off stage: at this stage, industries begin to set in, employment outside the home begins to change, traditional values and institutions begin to change, and a culture of saving develops.
- Drive to maturity: technological advancement, economic growth and reinvestment, increase in the standard of living, adoption of values and institutions of developed or high-income countries, etc.
- High consumption: rise in living standards, increase in technology and the national economy, diversified economy.

It is worthy of note that there is no stringent, clear-cut alignment with the stages, as societies in one developmental stage can also exhibit features attributable to another. However, the assumption of modernization theory that the values of low-income countries impede their development is significant to this study because it explains the rationale underpinning the change (abandonment) of the traditional value system in favour of new values propelled by modernization. While Rostow's theory focuses on economic development, its explanation of the traditional stage, particularly the values and institutions it embodies, is relevant in explaining changing values that have impacted the family and society at large.

Functionalist theory:

Functionalists likened society to a biological organism. They believe that a system has different parts that must individually function for the maintenance of the whole system. They argued that the existence of the system depends on the functionality of its parts. [Merton \(1968\)](#) extended functionalists' arguments, alluding that a system can also be dysfunctional. He further extended levels of functional analysis beyond society to organisations, institutions, and groups. Merton introduced the idea of manifest and latent functions. He conceived manifest functions as the intended functions or outcomes, which in most instances are positive and purposeful, while latent functions are the unintended outcomes.

Merton's approach will be used to explain changes in family values resulting from modernization. His extension of levels of analysis incorporates institutions such as the family. His concept of dysfunction implies that there are outcomes that could be negative for the system, and that relates to this study. Lastly, his explanation of manifest and latent functions relates to this study because modernity, intended to be functional (manifest), has unanticipated consequences (latent dysfunction) for the family as it alters family values and effective parenting.

Methods

This qualitative study employed random sampling to give everyone an equal chance of being selected for the study of a topic that is common knowledge. Fifty people were sampled and used for this study. They comprised fourteen men, sixteen women, twelve youths, and eight children. In all, twenty-four males and twenty-six females participated. Their ages range from 7 to 60 years old. Qualitative data was collected using focused group discussions and in-depth interviews.

Three focused group discussion sections were conducted. Each group consisted of six members. The first group was comprised of three relatively young couples with 2–10 years' experience of parenting. The second group comprised three couples with 15–30 years of parenting experience. The last group comprised youths of both sexes between 19 and 30 years of age. The groups were carefully selected to represent varied experiences in the context of time and changes due to modernity. Also, to capture various experiences as they relate to parenting, family relationships, and the value system, among other concerns, Thirty-two in-depth interviews were conducted with children, teens, and parents. In some cases, the interviews began in the form of informal interviews focusing on the challenges of parenting in modern times and progressed into in-depth interviews. Issues concerning children's behaviours, moral decadence, parents' roles, and economic hardships were raised. Unstructured interviews were used, and questions were open-ended to give participants the opportunity to fully express their views and experiences that will be useful to the study. However, a question guide was used to maintain focus on the objectives of the study. In-depth

interviews and focused group discussions lasted between 20 and 30 minutes each. Informed consent was verbally obtained from each participant before the focused group and in-depth interview sessions. Secondary data were obtained from journal articles, books, and online resources. The data obtained were manually sorted based on connecting themes and presented as narratives, as discussed in this paper.

Findings

- The study revealed that family values are drastically changing due to modernization. It found that while the all-time value of children has remained high, the time parents spend with them at home is greatly reduced due to involvement in their jobs and other economic engagements.
- Also, advancements in media and information and communication technology (ICT), urbanisation, urban culture, and industrialization resulting from modernization have a significant impact on parenting.
- Lastly, changes in values resulting from modernization brought about moral decay, a high crime rate, and the insecurity that has bedevilled Nigeria.

Discussions of findings

The discussion is done based on thematic capture of the research objectives:

Family values and changes in Nigeria

Chastity of Marriage:

Nigerian society places a premium on marriage because it confers status and bestows honour and respect on people. Marriage is seen as a sign of responsibility. The Bible accords honour to marriage, stating that "marriage is honourable and the bed undefiled" (Hebrew 13:4). This biblical perspective points to the chastity of marriage, a highly valued value in Nigeria. For instance, it is expected that every young girl preserve her virginity as a mark of honour to her family and spouse. Likewise, couples are expected to remain faithful to each other, as marital infidelity is abhorred, especially by women. So, people who violate sexual chastity were sanctioned through shaming, scolding, verbal abuse, and satirical statements because they brought disgrace to themselves and their families. Interview with Some of the youth stated that virginity is inconsequential when choosing a marriage partner. *'Old school'* and *'archaic'* were used to express their views about sexual sanctity. This and other cherished values are fast eroding because the moral standard of society is debased and traditional values are

redefined in the modern context of freedom. Indeed, the increased divorce rate, cohabitation, and single parenting that have become rampant in society are not unconnected with the demand for freedom. Beyond freedom, 'old school' and 'archaic' indicate intergenerational differences in values, which [Dzintra and Marite \(2015\)](#), found to be polarised as modernity (readiness for risk, new experiences, and change) or conservative (tradition, security, and order) among youths. When youths consider family or societal values outdated, it becomes difficult to imbibe them and poses problems for parenting. [Izem's \(2013\)](#) findings contribute to this, when it was found that marital life, though a significant value, was not politicised by youths in their study, but rather informal partnership relationships were preferred. This perhaps explains the high rate of divorce and marital instability, among other decadences prevalent in society today.

Value for children

Children are highly valued in Nigeria and around the world. They are the desire of every family. Marriages are considered blessed when they produce children. This explains the joy and celebrations that heralded the birth of children. The value of children stems from the belief that they are the legatees that continue the family lineage. So, they are assets on whom posterity depends. Children are utilitarian assets; they provide varied support to parents. In childhood, they carried out chores and rendered domestic services. As they grow older, they serve as insurance, providing social security and support to their parents. Based on these, parents do all within their capacity to cater for them. Informants unanimously agreed that children are highly valued and used terms such as "precious gifts", "source of joy", "future hope", and "covering for parents" to describe them. Elaborating on the value of children, respondents affirm that marriages still break up for lack of children.

But while the value of children remains high, the time parents spend with them has decreased. The study found that the attention of parents is decreasing in some respects. For instance, in child care and upbringing, since the study cuts across social and economic boundaries, the findings revealed a different understanding of the concept of child care among respondents. Some limit child care to meeting basic needs like food, education, medical care, and shelter. An interview with some parents revealed that they work all day to be able to provide for the needs of their families. However, this sacrifice deprives families of their time together. The attention that is required to effectively monitor, correct, and discipline children as part of parenting is mostly

lacking; consequently, children grow up lacking parental guidance. Surprisingly, some of the children (teens) perceive what parents regard as 'sacrifice' differently. One of them mentioned during the focused group discussion that while she appreciates all her parents do to provide for her needs, she feels abandoned. In her words, "they buy me things ooo, but Dad is never there when you need him. He is either at work, attending a meeting somewhere, or busy with his laptop or friends. So I don't get to talk with him. I feel those things are more important to him". Similar views were commonly expressed by the teens during focused group discussions. Some of them said parents are too busy and are hardly involved in their children's lives. [Dzintra and Marite \(2015\)](#) stated that due to increased pressure, most families are incapable of providing a safe and nurturing atmosphere for children. They considered child care and family support imperative and maintained that they must be sustained irrespective of other responsibilities. While parents must provide for their children as part of their parental responsibilities, listening to them, spending time with them, and giving them attention are parts of parental care that must not be undermined in parenting. On their part, parents claimed that parenting teenagers has become increasingly difficult owing to ICT. One of the mothers interviewed lamented that some of the children stay glued to cell phones and social media and are so indifferent about what goes on at home. This goes to affirm the position of [Hashmi and Hashmi \(2017\)](#) that family institutions are adversely affected and ignored due to advancements in technology.

Family cohesion

Part of the change in the family relates to family cohesion. Typically, the family is closely knit, with love, support, acceptance, forgiveness, and other virtues freely expressed. The family is a safe place to make one's mistakes, with the assurance of reprimand and discipline sandwiched in love truly aimed at correction. These days, family cohesion is threatened by divorce, domestic violence, child abuse, and general family upheaval commonly reported in the news. These attest to eroding family values, which some informants confirmed. The story of one informant highlights weakening family cohesion. He cited the example of two brothers in their compound who are at loggerheads over family property. He said that the younger son of their landlord sold the family land without their consent. He confirmed nobody reprimands him because when they do, the mother takes offence. His misconduct often leads to quarrels and fights, and now the whole family is divided because of him. The above narrative highlights internal conflict within the family. One deduction from the story is the impact of parenting.

When parents are not united on purpose and in the upbringing of their children, the consequences can be dire, as evident in this case. Unity is one family value that cannot be undermined because societal peace and unity depend on it.

Similarly, unity and brotherhood were values that were upheld and sung in the past. The unity and brotherhood of all Nigerians were central to our collective existence, as reflected in Nigeria's coat of arms. It is also captured in the lyrics of the former national anthem: "Though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand". Today, that bond of national unity and brotherhood is severed by tribal sentiments and ethnic bigotry. News of wanton destruction of lives and property, abduction, murder, violence, and insecurity attest to the eroding values of brotherhood and unity that are fundamental to our collective existence.

Family name and reputation:

In Nigeria, names go beyond identity because they are significant in many respects. Names convey messages, express wishes, and sometimes reflect the feelings and experiences of the giver of the name. The Bible emphasises the value of names when it states that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches (Proverbs chapter 22:1). Names mean a lot to people because it is believed that when you give a man a name, he will play the role associated with that name. In other words, names influence behaviour. This agrees with Becker's (1975) self-fulfilling prophecy, in which he posited that when you label a person, with time, he begins to see himself in the light of that label and act in accordance with the label. This perhaps informs the value attached to names and the conscious efforts made in choosing names. Typically, family names are inherited and shared by members of the family. It reflects the integrity of the family, and members were committed to it at the expense of personal gains. It was a pillar that supported the moral ethos of the family. Thus, it behoves members to protect their family names and reputations. Adeparusi (2017) confirmed the value of family names, likening them to pearls. Noting that parents consciously monitored and guided their children to ensure family names were upheld. In recent times, this family value appears to be eroding as behaviours that undermine this cherished value abound in society. For instance, our discussants in focused group (2) noted with dismay that people's fad to make money these days negates this value. Citing ritual killing and other crimes prevalent among youths as examples, they verbally decimated those that engage in such acts, claiming it soils their names. One of the discussants stated that you can imagine the shame they

bring to their families; in fact, they are a disgrace to their families. The aversion to disgrace underscores the value of the family name.

Modernity and the challenges of parenting

The impact of modernity on family values and its implication on parenting will be explained based on industrialization, urbanisation, information, and communication technology.

Influence of ICT and media on parenting:

Information and communication technology (ICT) has witnessed a boom in the last few decades, creating unprecedented access to information through the internet. ICT has integrated communication channels offering communication capabilities and a range of network websites that have enhanced e-commerce, e-learning, banking, education, healthcare, knowledge acquisition and transfer, access to countless online resources, and improved living standards. These arrays of information are accessible in homes through devices like televisions, laptops, tablets, and phones that are commonly used to transmit information. Access to information has improved living standards and influenced behaviours and people, particularly the youths who find it intriguing and some of whom are addicted to it.

Despite their usefulness, they exert a negative influence on family values. This poses a challenge to effective parenting because some of them transmit values that are alien, and children imbibe them. For instance, participants in focused group discussions expressed serious concern over some of the programmes their children access on television channels and YouTube. Unrestrained access to videos, films, and publications through the internet and satellite broadcasts has a detrimental impact on family values. One of the families interviewed stated that their son has developed skills to manipulate the television despite the efforts of his dad to disable some of the channels. She said her seven-year-old son would always find his way around it. Worse still, they (the parents) are not always around to monitor them as their jobs take them away most of the time. To curtail and monitor the children, they have installed a closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera. This control strategy, they hoped, would help monitor the activities of the children, but she remarked that it did not stop them because they were not on the ground to enforce the rules. Another parent affirmed that they face a similar challenge but appear to be more at risk as they are oblivious to what to do about it. She honestly confessed that she had attempted to stop the use of television at home to curtail what the

children watched, but confessed that it had not worked because they also needed it for educational purposes. Speaking of educational programmes on television, suffice it to say that some teach values that contradict and undermine family values. Parents unanimously agreed that their children have picked up some characters from some of the programmes they watch. One said that the younger of the children (5 years old) plays rough and attempts to be violent as he mimics a character in the cartoon they watch. Violence has become a disturbing phenomenon in Nigeria. The insurgency that has troubled Nigeria stems from the culture of violence that has crept into families unchecked through the media. Movies and home videos that portray violence and aggression are played at home, and parents and children spend precious time watching them, instinctively imbibing the culture of violence. Suffice it to say that family is the foundation of society, and whatever behaviours are learned at home are carried into society. Little wonder that herders' and farmers conflicts, insurgencies, and agitations have escalated, disrupting national peace and promoting insecurity that has threatened the nation. Aside from television, other social media outlets display some values that are harmful and have influenced behaviours. Behaviours are learned; scholars assert that children imitate their parents, and part of the behaviours they exhibit are learned from them (Zaman *et al.* 2014). The development of ICT and the media and their influence on parenting aptly capture Merton's unintended consequences. While improved ICT and media are functional for societal development, their latent outcomes are dysfunctional for effective parenting and society at large.

Industrialization and parenting

Another outcome of modernity is the establishment and growth of industries. Industrialization transformed the mode of production from traditional agrarian to modern industrial form and took work out of the home to offices and business environments. It created employment opportunities. This welcome development has improved family income, especially in a depressed economy like Nigeria. However, these jobs and the desire to achieve economic independence take parents out of the home and regulate their activities according to the dictates of employers, who determine work duration and dictate the schedules of employees. This regimented job demands and career prospects take precedence over family time and parenting roles. Occupied with job demands, working parents have little time to effectively attend to their parenting roles and other family needs. Consequently, parents are increasingly losing control over their children. The absence of parents to care for, correct, discipline,

monitor, and control the activities of their children has given room for unbridled freedom and moral laxity that pervade society. The increasing involvement of youth in crime attests to the loss of parental control. The ever-busy parents sometimes abdicate their responsibilities to others — schools, religious institutions, neighbours, friends, and domestic help. Again, this collaborates with Merton's theory that unintended outcomes resulting from latent functions could be negative and dysfunctional for an institution. Though industrialization leads to job creation intended to improve the family economy, the unforeseen absence of parents and consequent loss of control over children are unintended and dysfunctional for effective parenting. To buttress this, parents during the focus group agreed that the quest for economic wellbeing contributes to eroding family values. One of the mothers emphatically stated that some parents have unknowingly lost their values. According to her:

Job demands have created a misplacement of values. The crazy pursuit of money is evidence of lost value. Otherwise, why will a mother consistently leave her house by 5 a.m. to work and return home by 9 or 10 p.m. when the children have all slept? This is a regular practise due to the traffic situation in Lagos, where this study was conducted. My sister, tell me, which one is more valued here, money or children? Why did my people say that *nwakaego*? (A name translated as child(ren) is worth more than money) if not that children are highly valued? You see, we have all missed it. But the realities of our time made it so.

The realities of our time, as implied here, relate to the economy. Nigerians live in a depressed economy where hardships and unemployment pervade and survival is largely based on individuals' efforts. So, it becomes difficult to quit a demanding job for fear of uncertainty. Also, the reality of our time relates to an unbridled quest for capital accumulation. Nigeria is a capitalist society where a dichotomy exists between the haves and the have-nots. It is particularly glaring in Eti-Osa LGA, where this study was conducted. The rich continue to amass wealth and conspicuously showcase it through ostentatious lifestyles—fleets of cars, imposing mansions, and exquisite estates that surround the area. Confronted with these realities every day, people who desire upward mobility are left with two options. The first is to seek employment or businesses to attain economic freedom. This comes with a demand for time and has robbed many of family time. This has posed challenges to effective parenting. The second is to devise

illegitimate means of acquiring wealth. Regrettably, some, especially the youths, have resorted to illegitimate means, namely, internet fraud (*yahoo-yahoo*). The quest for capital accumulation has led to a loss of integrity as people lie, cheat, defraud others, and even kill to make money. Wokocho (2002) alludes to this, noting that materialism and poverty combine to weaken family values. He attributed the degeneracy of Nigerian youths to the loss of family values. Rostow's (1961) proposition that societies desiring economic growth must abandon their traditional values applies here, as capitalism (a value system) and its lure for accumulation replace traditional values. Swindling, dishonesty, and money rituals escalate in the quest to make quick money.

Urbanisation and parenting:

Another outcome of modernization is urbanisation, resulting from the availability of industries, businesses, schools, and better opportunities in urban areas, invariably leading to massive drifts from rural communities to urban cities in search of jobs. Urban cities have their own characteristics, as Giddens (2006) highlighted. The influx of people from diverse places presents vast cultures in cities, which imply varied values relative to the numerous cultures they integrate. This on its own poses challenges for parents, who must struggle to retain their family values amid conflicting options since varieties of cultures imply freedom of choice. Freedom of choice in this instance limits parental control, which has a detrimental effect on children's upbringing. Parental control enables parents to moderate children's behaviours and keeps them in check. When this is lost to unbridled freedom of choice, parents lose control over their children.

Also, urban cities are differentiated; the relationship is mechanical, as Giddens posited. This implies that the kin-knit relationships and supportive role of the extended family may be reduced as members stay apart in cities compared to rural communities. This has implications as the huge task of parenting, which traditionally is a collective responsibility of the extended family, is left to the nuclear family. One informant affirmed this, noting with nostalgia that living in Lagos has made it difficult for her to cope:

It is even worse here in Lagos, as you do not know whom to trust with the children. When my sister was here with us, it was a lot easier. But you know, I can't keep her here forever because she must pursue her own life. My last option now is to hire a nanny or get house help, but you know it is very risky. The stories we hear about domestic help are scary. But I need them

to cope with the very high demands on me as a banker, wife, and mother.
(personal interview, August 2021).

The challenges of urban life are overwhelming, especially for women, who must combine several roles and grapple with the demands of parenting. To cope with these and similar challenges, an alternative is worked out with its attendant risks and concerns as expressed by the informant. An alternative parents resort to is sending children to crèche of school while they are at work. This undermines parents' efforts, as discussants opined that when children meet with others from different backgrounds and values, they can be influenced by them. [Njoku \(2017\)](#) supports the role of education in accruing divergent values when he notes that misdemeanours and negative knowledge can be acquired from school. He noted that vices increased in Nigeria when moral education was expunged from the curriculum, and thus schools produced graduates who were worthy of learning without character. Debasing of values and moral decay in Nigeria is significantly linked to character deficiency, and schools charged with character formation and character moulding have not sufficiently imparted this to students, as vices like examination malpractices, cultism, forgery, and drug and substance abuse are commonly reported among students in the Nigerian educational system. For instance, one of the parents interviewed revealed that his son was expelled from school because of substance abuse. The despairing father stated that the expulsion of his son from school was disgraceful for the family. He asked rhetorically, "How do I explain this? Where did he learn it from? I do not smoke, I do not drink; this is a serious ignominy on my family; how do I redeem the family image?". The disillusionment of this parent over his child's misdemeanour portrays his concern both for his son and the family image that is marred by his conduct. The behaviour of children and family reputation are intricate webs because children are their family image-bearers. So, when their behaviours contravene family values, it rubs off on the family. This underscores the need to uphold family values, for to do otherwise is to bring disrepute to the entire family, especially since family image and reputation are of uncompromisable value, as [Nwabuisi \(2000\)](#) noted.

Implications of changing values for society.

Although every society desires to attain modernization because of its benefits, in hindsight, it has dire implications for families and society because when family fails,

it spills its contents on society. In recent times, Nigeria has grappled with moral decay, high crime rates, and unprecedented insecurity of life and property.

Moral decay: the family, as an agent of socialisation, inculcates societal and family values in its members. High moral standards are a cherished value instilled by those [Becker \(1974\)](#) referred to as moral entrepreneurs" — parents, teachers, clergymen, and others who collectively impact them through formal and informal education. These days, the moral fortitude of Nigerian society is weakened, as evident in the rising incidents of crimes of rape, incest, adultery, murder, cheating, embezzlement, and other misdemeanours that are commonly reported. This moral laxity, in part, can be attributed to the family's negligence in effectively inculcating societal values. Resonating with moral decay, [Rahman and Uddin \(2017\)](#) argued that the family has changed drastically. They attributed moral decay, value degradation, and societal disintegration to the family and civilization.

Of course, the anomie in society reflects the deteriorating moral values of the family. Its basic moral and ethical principles are sometimes compromised by parents before their children. When parents lie, cheat, and engage in despicable acts, how can they teach or enforce moral values on their children? Sexual perversions are perpetrated with impunity, and shamefully so, by some parents who molest their children. The news is replete with reports of the ignoble acts of fathers who sexually abuse their children. For instance, Afeez Hanafi of Punch Newspaper reported the case of a 16-year-old girl molested by her father. Such a despicable act questions the moral values of some parents and mirrors the debasement of family and societal values. Beside sexual violations, greed and materialism have perverted ethical values so that the interests of others are no longer considered. This underscores why people defraud and embezzle public funds. [Nwabuisi \(2000\)](#) alludes to materialism, noting that anything, including human life, is a means of making money. True to his assertion, money has bought over people's consciences; the unbridled quest for money and the get-rich-quick syndrome prevalent in society stem from the quest for material accumulation. Nigerian society is stratified, with a wide divide between the rich and the poor. So, the quest for upward mobility for some translates to cheating, embezzlements, fraud, ritual killing, kidnapping, and other criminal acts that are rampant nowadays. More so, society itself has lost its sense of value, as evident in the worship of money, as [Njoku \(2017\)](#) observes. The way wealth is applauded without consideration for the means of acquisition Public recognition, accolades, and the bestowment of chieftaincy and

honorary titles on people of questionable character who amassed wealth through loathsome means are indicative of the debasement of societal moral values. The danger is that despicable people have become negative role models, influencing and luring youths to illegitimate engagements in their desperate quest to get rich quickly.

Debased values have obscured societal moral judgment to the point that human life is devalued. [Njoku \(2017\)](#) alluded to debased values as the bane of insecurity in Nigeria, noting that a lack of respect for the sanctity of life led to an increase in murder and kidnapping. Insurgency, violence, conflicts, and wanton destruction of lives and property permeate all parts of the country: in the north, banditry, insurgency, and terrorism from boko haram; incessant clashes and ritual killings in the west; agitations and violence in the east; cultism and gang violence; abductions and kidnappings for ransom in the south; and the general state of suspicion and distrust as everybody has become a suspect due to misplaced values ([Njoku 2017](#)). [Nmom \(2013\)](#) concurred, adding that insecurity in the country is not unconnected with debased family values because the perpetrators of these malicious acts are products of the family.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the family under the pressure of modernity has expunged its cherished values. While behaviours are formed and individuals are shaped through their family values exemplified and instilled by parents, the impact of modernity has made the task daunting. Consequently, the critical role of parenting is undermined, and this has impaired family functionality. When the family, as the bedrock of society, fails in performing its fundamental role of parenting, the consequences are grim because the mess spills over to the entire society, as evident in the deterioration of moral values that precipitated the distrust, insensitivity, inundated violence, crime, insecurity, and general malaise facing Nigeria today.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest

References

- Adamczyk M. 2014. In Filipek, A. W. (2020), Family as a fundamental social unit shaping security culture: Polish realities. *Security and Defense Quarterly*. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/125778> <https://securityanddefence.pl/> © 2020
- Adeparusi T. 2017. Corruption versus family values in Nigeria <https://punchng.com/corruption-vs-family-values-in-nigeria/>
- Admilokum M.K. 1990. Moral values among the Yorubas. Ibadan: New Era.
- Afeez H. 2021. Defilement: Dad said he didn't want me to learn it outside –a 16-year-old girl. <https://punchng.com/defilement-dad-said-he-didnt-want-me-to-learn-it-outside-16-year-old-girl/>
- Agbese D. 1993. Corruption. In Nmom, O.C (2013). Nigerian family values amidst security challenges. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 4(4): 82. ISSN: 2222-1700 (Paper). ISSN: 2222-2855 (Online), Available online www.iiste.org.
- Becker H.S. 1974. Labeling theory reconsidered. Deviance and social control. P. Rock and M. McIntosh. Eds. 172 -180. London: Tavistock.
- Bongaarts J. 2001. Household size and composition in the developing world in the 1990s. *Population Studies*, 55(3): 263–279. DOI: 10.1080/00324720127697
- Britannica 2023. The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Renaissance". Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Renaissance> . Accessed 6 May 2023.
- Cienki A. 2007. Frames, idealized cognitive models, and domains. In Geeraerts, D and H. Cuyckens. *The Oxford handbook of cognitive linguistics*, Oxford: OUP, pp. 170–187.
- Dağ İ., and Cinar M. 2015. Various perspectives in values education by elementary school teachers. *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology* 6:. 1-7. Available at: <http://www.soeagra.com/ijert/ijertsept2015/1A.pdf>
- Duignan B. 2023. Enlightenment. Encyclopedia Britannica, 3 Apr. 2023, <https://www.Britannica.com/event/Enlightenment-European-history>. Accessed 6 May 2023.
- Durkheim 1957. Professional ethics and civil morals. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London.
- Dzintra I. and Marite K.P. 2015. Sustainability of family values throughout the generations as viewed by the bachelor program students. *Journal of Society, Integration, Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*. DOI: 10.17770/1(1).154

- Giddens A. 2006, Sociology (5th edition), United Kingdom, Polity press. Pp 405-409.
- Halstead, J. and Taylor, M. (1996), Values in education and education in values. London: Falmer Press.
- Hashmi M. Hashmi A.R. 2017. Impact of modernization on women empowerment in Pakistan: A study of Multan and Dera. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*. ISSN: 2455-2070; www.socialresearchjournals.com 3: (1). Pp 45-53
- Hops H., Davis B., Leve C. and Sheebe L. 2003. Cross-generational transmission of aggressive parent behavior: A prospective, mediational examination. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 31(2): 161- 169.
- Izglītības and zinātnes ministrija. 2013. Research on youth values, attitudes and possibilities. In Dzintra, I. and Marite, K. P. (2015). Sustainability of family values throughout the generations as viewed by the bachelor program students. *Journal of Society, Integration, Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*.
- Knafo A and Schwartz S.H. 2009. Accounting for parent-child value congruence: Theoretical considerations and empirical evidence, in Dzintra, I. and Marite, K. P. (2015). Sustainability of family values throughout the generations as viewed by the bachelor program students. *Journal of Society, Integration, Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*. DOI: 10.17770/ 1 (1) .154.
- Merton R.K. 1968. Social theory and social structure (enlarged edition). The free press, New York.
- Modo I.V.O. and Chineyemba L.I. 2015. Individualization in a web of kinship system among Nigerian families: An emerging urban phenomenon. *International Journal of Innovation and Research in Educational Science*. 2(5), ISSN (Online): 2349–5219. [https:// www. ijires. org>index.php>issues](https://www.ijires.org/index.php/issues)
- Morrison F.J. 2009. Parenting and academic development. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*: Vol. 55: Iss. 3, Article 9. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/mpq/vol55/iss3/9>
- Muzaffar C. 2008. Hegemony: Justice; peace. In Rahman, S.A. and Uddin, M.S.(2017). The impact of globalization on family values. *International journal of advanced research*. www.journalijar.com . DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/5143>
- Nmom O.C. 2013. Nigerian family values amidst security challenges. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*. Vol.4:4, :82. ISSN 2222-1700 (Paper) ISSN 2222-2855 (Online), Available online www.iiste.org.
- Njoku D.I. 2015. Re-orientation of value system in Nigeria: A critic. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 3(11): 25 - 32
- Nwabuisi E.M. 2000, Values and education. Onitsha: Spiritan publications.

Njoku 2017, D.I. Re-orientation of value system in Nigeria: A critic. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Vol.3, No.11, pp.25-32*

Ojua A.T., Lukpata F. and Atama C. 2014. Exploring the Neglect of African Family Value Systems and its Effects on Sustainable Development. *American Journal of Human Ecology*, 3(3): 43 - 50.

Omotehinse J.K. 2001. Ethics of virtue and vice. Ibadan: Ben-El Books.

Pretorius N. 2000. Aspects of parenting styles and the expressed fears of a selected group of pre-school children. *World Cat*

Rahman S.A. and Uddin M.S. 2017. The impact of globalization on family values. *International Journal of Advanced Research* 5(8): 968 - 977
DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/5143

Rostow W.W. 1961. The Stages of Economic Growth. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Soenens B., Vansteenkiste M., Lens M., Luyckx K. 2007. Conceptualizing parental autonomy support: adolescent perception of promotion of independence versus promotion of volitional functioning. *Developmental Psychology* 43(3): 633 - 646.

Sproul R. C. 1990. New Geneva study bible. Nashville: Thomas Nelson publishers.

Survey: 2021, Changing family values in the UK. Attitudes to family life in the UK and Europe <https://revisesociology.com> August 2021.

Wokocho A.M. (Ed.) 2002. Parenting, the greatest need of our youths today. A Book of Readings. APQEN Publication.

Zaman R., Arslan M., Khatoon R.M. and Mehmood A. 2014. Effect of Parenting Style on Child Behaviour: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 5(26): 112 - 228.

To cite this article:

Chineyemba L. I. 2023. Modernity and changing family values in Nigeria: implications for effective parenting.

International Journal of Modern Anthropology. 2(19): 1129 - 1152

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijma.v2i19.5>



This article, as all articles published in this journal, is under The Creative Commons Attribution: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>