

**THE IMPACT OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL VALUES ON UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES' SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

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**Abstract**

*The societal cherished values seem to be eroded by the younger generation of our university undergraduates through their attitudes to embracing western culture in lieu of our age long values. The whole blame could not be put on them as there are families that have jettison the inculcation of the cherished values and left it in the hands of strangers called nannies or house helps. Not only this, families have disconnected themselves from their origin/ background as they embrace western ways of life at the expense of African cherished social values. Hence, the study examined the impact of family structure and social values on university undergraduates' sexual behaviours in the twenty-first century. The research design used in the study was a descriptive research of the survey type and respondents were determined through multi-stage sampling technique. The sample which was selected through simple random sampling technique was made up of one thousand, five hundred and eighty one (1581) university undergraduates. A self-designed instrument titled "Social values and Sexual Morality Questionnaire" was used for the study. The instrument was validated by experts in Social Studies, in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. A reliability co-efficient of 0.92 was obtained using test-retest method which was correlated with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. Data collected were analysed using ANOVA and t-test statistics. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that family size significantly influenced university undergraduates' social values while family type did not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values and sexual morality. Based on the findings, it was recommended that family members should join hands together to nurture a child and inculcate the right type of values to them for the betterment of the individuals concerned, the family institution and the society at large.*

**Keywords:** Family structure, Social Values, Sexual Morality, University Undergraduates

**Introduction**

The family failure to raise a morally (sexually) responsible person was considered to have failed the society brought disgrace on one's family and kindred because the task of raising a child properly is sacred due to its far reaching consequences on the sexual behaviours of the child and the survival of the soul of the society (Ekah, 2009). The significance of the family institution and its structure cannot be overemphasized in any society and that is the reason why the society celebrates the family institution. Today, the family is

celebrated by the society that day's were set apart to commemorate the uniqueness of family members such as: Mother's Day which comes up on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March every year; Father's Day on 17<sup>th</sup> June of each year; and the Children's Day of 27<sup>th</sup> August of every year.

The family as a social institution and as an agent of socialization remains the oldest and a strong institution in Nigeria where the child first has contact with for the first few years of life. It is the first institution that provides protection, warmth,

security, shelter, food, clothing and guidance for the child. It is expected that through close interaction with a small number of the people who are basically members of the child's immediate family, the child learns to think and speak, internalized the societal norms, beliefs and values and to also develop personal relationships with others. The child was brought up in the society where the social behaviours required, the mores and the values, the obligations and expectation of the society were all transmitted to the child in the course of socialization.

Recently, observation revealed that a number of changes have taken place in the family structure which has in one way or the other influence the societal values as related to its compliance and sexual behaviours of the university undergraduates. In the modern society, the society is faced with the diversity of family structure which varies from the traditionally married families to single parents families, to families built around partnerships with or without marriage which include members who may be step parents, grandparents, gay or lesbian parents or partners.

Among the reasons assuaged for the changes in the family structure and values includes; the isolation of the family from cultural supports, greater frequency of separation and divorce, and lastly, economic and social independence of women in the family. In addition to the above is the increasing replacement of mothers by an inadequate nanny or house helps who are strangers to the child they are to look after i.e. the house helps.

Howard, Lefever, Borkowski and Whiteman (2006) posited that the breakdown of the family structure (family size and family type) may also be responsible for the loss of values as against the increase in the sexual immorality among the undergraduates. In the Nigerian society, for instance, divorce is a common occurrence; often

times, children of divorced parents are forced to live with one parent for the majority of the time or of the time depending on the arrangement between the divorced parents. It seems as if children living with their parents may be more supervised, nurtured and taking care of as against a child that is nurtured by only either of the parents. It was also observed that undergraduates who live with their mothers but also have consistent contact with their biological fathers were less likely to have behavioural problems. Interestingly, according to Howard et al (2006), mothers that raised children all alone are found to lack the grips of such children and you see many of such children engaging more in antisocial behaviours that run contrary to societal standards and values.

The implication of this is that parents may likely have different impacts on the behavioural problems of the university undergraduates. This statement was corroborated by Okpako (2004) who opined that the basis for good behaviour orientation and good youths' attitude development is founded on positive parenting. He stated further that whatever misfortune that befall the youths, their parents should be blamed and be held responsible for such unwholesome acts, especially where loss of family stability due to urbanisation and socio-economic factors have made it more difficult to teach children responsible behaviours. Okpako (2004) concluded that parental attention, love and warmth will go a long way in assisting the child's emotional development and adjustment. Children at adolescence stage require parental love, care, warmth and serious attention to adjust adequately in the environment in which he/she finds himself/herself.

Nanlesta, Saifuddin & Wawer (2014), assessed the association between household family structure and early sexual debut among adolescent girls in

rural Rakai district, Uganda and they discovered that adolescent girls were slightly more likely to debut sexually if neither parent resided in the household due to such reasons as separation due to job location, divorce among others. Absence of the living biological father from the home was associated with higher risk of sexual debut, regardless of the biological mother's presence in the home. This further suggests that family structure is very important to adolescent girls' sexual behaviour

Sturgeon (2008) affirmed that undergraduates from smaller family size whose parents are together are likely to embrace good values and less sexual activities than their peers from larger non-intact family background to embrace less of societal values and they engage more in sexual activities. Although this may not be true in all cases but on the average level, undergraduates from smaller families seem to postpone sexual activities to older years than their counterparts from larger families who are always exposed to various social vices.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to find out the impact of family structure and social values on university undergraduates' sexual behaviours. It is also to determine whether family type could influence university undergraduates' social values and how family size influence university undergraduates' social values and sexual morality in the twenty-first century.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses have been formulated in the study,

1. Family type will not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values

2. Family size will not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values.
3. Family size will not significantly influence university undergraduates' sexual morality.

### **Methodology**

The research design used in the study was a descriptive research of the survey type and respondents were determined through multi-stage sampling procedure. The population consisted of all University undergraduates in both private and public Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. A total number of 1581 university undergraduates were selected through multi-stage sampling procedure. A self-designed instrument titled "Social Values and Sexual Morality Questionnaire" was used for the study. The instrument was validated by experts in Social Studies, Sociology, Guidance and Counselling in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. A reliability co-efficient of 0.92 was obtained using test-retest method which was correlated with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as Percentage Scores, Mean, Standard Deviation, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Results**

**Hypothesis 1:** Family type will not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values

Scores relating to university undergraduates' values were computed and subjected to t-test based on family type at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in table 1.

**Table 1:** t-test showing university undergraduates' values based on family type

<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t<sub>cal</sub></i>	<i>t<sub>tab</sub></i>	<i>P</i>
Monogamy	1276	62.16	9.287				
Polygamy	305	60.65	11.072	1579	2.457*	1.960	0.004

\*P&lt;0.05

Table 1 shows that  $t_{cal}$  (2.457) is greater than  $t_{tab}$  (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that family type significantly influenced university undergraduates' values. However, monogamy family had a higher influence on university undergraduates' social values.

**Hypothesis 2:** Family size will not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values.

In order to test the hypothesis, scores on university undergraduates' values were computed and compared for statistical significance using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) based on the family size at 0.05 level. The result is presented in table 2.

**Table 2:** ANOVA showing university undergraduates' values based on their family size

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F<sub>cal</sub></i>	<i>F<sub>tab</sub></i>	<i>P</i>
Between groups	147.163	2	73.582			
Within groups	147641.995	1578	93.563	0.786	3.000	0.456
Total	147789.159	1580				

P&gt;0.05

Table 2 shows that family size did not significantly influence university undergraduates' values ( $F=0.786$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that family size did not significantly influence university undergraduates' values.

**Hypothesis 3:** Family size will not significantly influence university undergraduates' sexual morality.

Scores relating to university undergraduates' sexual morality were computed and compared based on their family size using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in table 3.

**Table 3:** ANOVA showing undergraduates' sexual morality based on their family size

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F<sub>cal</sub></i>	<i>F<sub>tab</sub></i>	<i>P</i>
Between groups	1636.403	2	818.201			
Within groups	674008.011	1578	427.128	1.916	3.000	0.148
Total	675644.414	1580				

P&gt;0.05

Table 3 shows that  $F_{cal}$  (1.916) was less than  $F_{tab}$  (3.000) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that family size did not

significantly influence university undergraduates' sexual morality.

## Discussion

The finding of this study on influence of family type on university undergraduates' social values is significant. The family type whether polygamy or monogamy does influence university undergraduates' values. In Southwest Nigeria, polygamous marriage was a common practice in the olden days and socialisation of the child was seen as the responsibility of all where children were monitored by all members of the community. In such a situation, different societal values were easily inculcated to the undergraduates. Nowadays, monogamy has taken over and the 'two parents family' with 'two-income families' are now in vogue and the child care is now left in the hand of foster parents and house-helpers (Zulu, 2002). The collapse of the family institution in recent time has greatly affected university undergraduates' values (Owumi & Jerome, 2007). This study agreed with Olugbenga-Bello, Adebimpe & Abodunrin (2009) who discovered that family structure does influence students' compliance to moral values. They observed that the degree of degradation of moral values in the society and the extent to which parents and religious leaders lay emphasis on preventive measures as against premarital sexual intercourse was not helping matter. This was corroborated by Oluwasegun (2017) that values placed on sanctity of sex for procreation appears to have been overthrown in favour of sexual promiscuity. Even the university undergraduates seem not to see any difference between socialisation and sexual perversion as a good number of them express premarital sexual practices as a must for socialisation.

To curb such practices that negate the societal values on sexual immorality, Wamoyi, Mshana, Mangi, Neke, Kapiga & Changalucha (2014) opined that intervention should be focused on the entrenchment of social values and norms; and such values would focus on those in relation to gender inequality, gender violence and norms on child socialisation. And since, the

role of parents and families in young people's sexual decision making is gaining prominence, there is a considerable evidence showing that family influences and has a major influence on young people's lives and sexual decision making and this is done principally through socialisation.

It was discovered that smallness or largeness of a family (family size) did not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values and sexual morality. This is contrary to the findings of Wamoyi, Wright & Remes (2015) which affirmed that family structure was found to affect young people's sexual behaviour by influencing young adult's self confidence and interaction competence. It also attested to the importance of sexual values and norms as laid down inform of parents explicit prohibition and the sexual behaviour of the adolescents.

This was corroborated by the work of Reichert, Atkins, Ituah & Atkins (2016) that the role of family structure on sexual health behaviour in Saint Lucia Youth can not be overemphasised as the role of single parent versus two parents household as well as maternal and paternal influences were considered and discovered to be very germane in determining the sexual debut and sexual health behaviour of the youth. With this finding, one can conclude that the compliance to cherished social values and sexual morality by university undergraduates has to do with the way individual parents bring up their children. This is in contrast with Howard et al (2006) study which discovered that family size do influence adolescents' values and sexual morality because mothers who raised children all alone are found to lack grips of such children which invariably resulted into engaging in anti-social behaviours.

Likewise, Defo and Dimbuene (2012) opined that, adolescents living in

households with a polygamous father may receive less monitoring and supervision if the father lacks sufficient time with each child. On a general note, fathers in patrilineal societies like Nigeria and other countries in Africa have been reported to be authoritative and hold strict values, including expected sexual behaviour. In other words, girls without resident fathers may lack protection, becoming targets for sexual advances and exploitation. In contrast to this, Sturgeon (2008) discovered that adolescents from smaller family size and intact are likely to embrace good values and less sexual activity than their peers from larger non-intact family background.

### Conclusion and Recommendations.

Family institution is currently going through great challenges in the twenty-first century as related to child bearing and nurturing coupled with the inculcation of cherished social values to this generation of children given birth to nowadays. The study affirmed that family type did influence university undergraduates' social values as monogamy has a higher influence. In another perspective, family size did influence university undergraduates' social values but family size has nothing to with the sexual morality of the university undergraduates. Thus, the following recommendations were made:

No matter how laudable the social values of the society might be concerning the upbringing and nurturing of the younger generation, the process of transmission or agent responsible for the transmission of the various social values must be rightly positioned, the size of the family notwithstanding.

Though, there is an increase in the level of moral decadence in the society, the number of the family size has nothing to do with the sexual morality of university undergraduates but the family members should be united in calling a spade a spade when

it comes to the issue of sexual morality and assist one another in the nurturing of their wards in the appropriate way that would make them responsible citizens of the nation.

Family members have great roles to play in the inculcation of the cherished social values to the younger generation in the society, and so it is imperative that every member of the family should join hands together in doing this.

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