

Religious and Moral Impacts of Broken Families on the Children in Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Families have been disrupted with the rapid change that comes with the globalization. What was unacceptable in the olden days like broken families is now becoming fast and rapidly rising trend. Children may become victims of broken families as a result of separation due to incompatibility, adultery among others. Therefore, the study investigated the impact of broken families on the moral and religious life of children in Church of Christ in Nations in Plateau state, Nigeria. The research design was survey method with a population of four-two thousand, four hundred and thirty-eight (42,438) from which seven hundred and ninety (790) were sampled but seven hundred and forty-one (741) copies of questionnaire were retrieved and used. Oral interview was conducted with twenty (20) respondents to collaborate the responses of the questionnaire. Data obtained were analysed using simple percentages for bio data variables, mean and standard deviation for the research questions and independent t-test was used to test the strength of the impact because of the two groups. The study found out that children from broken families find it difficult to join church sub-groups and also some female children engage in prostitutions which makes it difficult for them to attain church (Sunday school) services. The study recommends that members of COCIN Church and religious organizations should work together and develop training programme on love, marriage and care for parents in order to educate the people on the importance of family care for healthy families' in Church of Christ in Nations in Plateau State.

Keywords: Religious, Moral, Broken Family, Children, Impact

Introduction

Marriage is an ancient institution established by God in the Garden of Eden for the purpose of creating families where children are born and brought up under the protection, love and care of parents. Marriage is viewed as the fusion of two partners, that is, a man and a woman into one. The two persons are no longer two but one flesh (Matthew.19:5). According to Carlihan (2019) the beginning of every marriage hopes for permanence. Every marriage is expected to last till death and there is always sacredness attached to marriage by religion. The Christian marriage is for several reasons, which include two individuals living conjugal life together as well as for the creation of new generation.

Having a healthy and happy family is every one's dream. A family is a group of people related by blood, marriage or adoption, who live together. Husband and wife are related by

marriage, while children and parent are related by blood and adopted child is related by adoption. Members of families constitute a household; they share resources, responsibilities, decisions, values, goals and have commitments to one another overtime. The family therefore, constitute a complex bound, interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles, as husband and wife, son or daughter and relations.

The family is the child's first place of contact with the world. The child as a result, acquires education and socialization from parents and other significant persons both in and outside the family circle. The family lays the psychological, educational, moral and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child. The family has enormous amount of influence on the children both directly or indirectly in the formative years of the child. It transmits culture and knowledge to the child, correcting the child where he or she goes wrong and directing him or her in various aspects of life in the society. The child's family offers the best upbringing as they serve as teachers. Parents lay the foundation for the desire social and economic well-being of the child. The training a child received from the family is of great importance in his or her personality formation. It is expected that love should bring two persons together and it is the same love that should be transferred to the children. Most of the children who come from broken families instinctively lost the sense of morality, hence a crisis of identity. The children consistently lose their emotional stability, because of the inflicted raging wounds in the minds of the families through separation. Guilt and persistent fear began to dominate with concomitant moral defection.

The increasing rate of broken families in Nigeria is an intricate incident happening among many families and in the world at large. Family is indeed the bedrock of every society. The rampant occurrence of broken families is found to have socio-economic and political implications in the society. In the same vein, in recent years, Nigeria has witnessed the high rate of broken families as a result of westernization, globalization, urbanization and industrialization (Abdulhamid, 2015). Many families have broken without consideration to what scriptures say about marriage. Marriage should be considered as a blessing from God. Marriage implies till death separate the two. But it is obvious that, this is not always the case. In the past decades, one could hardly hear of marital problems leading to broken families or separation. This was so because many people practiced polygamy, where less attention was place to intimate growth of partners. In the contemporary society however, people tend to emphasis on monogamy and expected intimate relationship which eventually leads to increase in broken families causing considerable impact on children. Thus, the extended families that used to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings that arise between parents are no longer functioning effectively like in the past. The extended families structure eventually broke up in the process; and there was a shift towards the nuclear family system characterized by less involvement of members in the resolution of marital conflicts. Perhaps, the most important factor is the increase in broken families throughout the 21st century has been the greater social acceptance of separation. In particular, this increased tolerance has resulted from relaxation of negative attitudes toward separation among various religious denominations. Although, broken families is still seen as unfortunate, it is no longer treated as sin by most religious leaders.

Research Question

What are the impacts of broken families on the moral and religious life of children in Church of Christ in Nations in Plateau state, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

- H0₁.** There is no significant difference in the opinions of male children and female children from broken families on the impact of broken families on their moral and religious life in Church of Christ in Nations in Plateau state, Nigeria.

Family

According to Boye-Laryear (2012) the family is the oldest human institution. It is society's basic unit. Scholars in the field offer various perspectives on what constitutes a family. It had been stated that family is a set of people united by ties of marriage or related by blood or through adoption. The family therefore constitute a complex bond, interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles, a husband and wife or father and mother, son and daughter, brother, sister, cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews and niece. Christopher (2015) sees family as a group of people affiliated by a specific relationship. The family is a group of people who share a very personal level of relationship. A family is a group of people affiliated by genes or living situation. A family is something that influences each and every one of us. One common definition is that family is a group of persons related by blood, marriage or adoption who may or may not live together. Husband and wife are related by marriage; children and parent are related by blood. An adopted child is related by adoption. Members of a family constitute a household. Even if they live apart, they still consider themselves as part of the house hold. Members of a family share resources, responsibility for decisions, values and goals and have commitments to one another over time (Boye-Laryear, 2012).

Biblical Perspective of Broken Families

God's divine plan for the institution of marriage from the beginning has been permanency. But man has failed to live up to this ideal because of sin and disobedience. Consequently, broken families have become subjects of much debate in Christendom today. The damage of broken families is irreparable. It is one of the worst tragedies in human life. It shatters the hopes and aspirations of many families. Parents who disregard Gods plan for permanent and blissful marriage plunge themselves into many dangers, grief's and even death (Andal, 2018).

The scriptures teach us that the pandemic of broken families we see today is nothing new. Many of us attribute the problem to recent cultural shifts, the decline of religion and morality. But the scripture point in a different direction. In scripture we find families built with love and chastity and families formed from rape and sin. Children are born from one father to mothers who were sisters, children born out of adultery, through prostitution and into polygamous marriages. Children born to people of humble means and then to relinquished through adoption to rulers and royals (Morgan, 2019).

Broken families are nothing new. Broken family is almost as old as humanity. Sibling rivalry existed in the very first family and culminated with Cain killing his brother Abel (Genesis.

4:3-8) while other examples may not be that extreme, broken families is a recurring theme in the Bible, from Athaliah killing all her children and grandchildren so she could seize the throne (2Kings 11:1) to Jesus own mother and brothers becoming embarrassed by his preaching (Mark 3:21) examples of broken families illustrate what happens when family members treat their flesh and blood as liabilities instead of blessing (Bergant, 2020).

In a fallen world, those we should love the most in our families often become the ones we fight with the most. The Bible does not gloss over sin, and it records a number of broken families starting with Adam's blame shifting, with his wife as the target (Genesis 3:12). Sibling rivalry crops up in the stories of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers. Jealousy among wives, one of the negative consequences of polygamy is found in the stories of Hannah and Leah and Rachel. Eli and Samuel dealt with wayward children. Jonathan was almost murdered by his father, Saul. David was broken hearted by his son Absalom rebellion. Hosea experience marital difficulties. In each of these cases relationship is damaged by sin (Eichhorst, 2017).

The Bible has a lot to say about broken families, the first institution God established for human interaction was a family (Genesis 2:22-24). In the beginning, God created man and woman Adam and Eve were a family. He created a wife for Adam and joined them in marriage citing this event; Jesus later said "what God has joined together let no man separate (Matthew 19:6). But before they even got around making children, they fell and broke. Broken families actually appear very early in the Bible. They come into view when God pronounced judgement against our parents Adam and Eve. God established the family as the man's social unit by which this multi-generational mission would be fulfilled (Genesis 2:19-24). It was not long before Adam and Eve sinned and fell under the judgement of God. The early chapters of Genesis explain that the brokenness of nearly every facet of family life stem from God's judgement against our parents (Gratsch, 2021).

According to Mark (2016) one of the Bible's most prominent examples of broken families is illustrated in 1st Samuel 2-3. This account is unique in its application to Christians because it revolves around a man who knew the Lord, yet indulged the sins of his adult children and fall under God's judgement for it. The Lord sent a prophet to rebuke Eli, the high priest for allowing the wicked behaviour of his two sons to go unchallenged. God said his failure brought dishonour to the name of God because he honoured "your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel." Despite this rebuke, Eli remained a passive parent right to the end. He took no action against his sons other than pass on weak warnings that are in danger of provoking God's wrath. By the time Eli warned his sons about their blatant sins, it was much too late to change their lifestyles. Eli's sons had grown into hardened sinners like many modern parents. Eli and his wife had most likely began overlooking their sons' disobedience and selfish behaviour while they were still young. The story of Eli and his sons is a lesson to parents for all. Most broken families emerge when we rebel against God's design- polygamy, adultery, and divorce all cause family problems because they deviate from God's original plan (Morgan, 2019).

The Bible gives clear instructions about how family members are to treat each other. God's plan is that husbands love their wives in the same way that Christ loves his church (Ephesians 5:25, 31). Wives are to respect their husband and submit to their leadership (Ephesians. 5:22-24, 1st Peter 3:1). Children are to obey their parents (Ephesians. 6:1-4, Exodus. 20:12). How many family problems would be solved if husbands and wives and children simply followed those basic rules? (Mba, 2019). The key to harmony in broken families is not one we naturally want to apply. (Ephesians 5:21) says to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ; submission is in direct opposition to our flesh's desire to rule and to have its way, we defend our rights, champion our causes, defend our opinions, and assert our own agendas whenever possible. God's way is to crucify our flesh (Galatians. 5:24; Romans 6:11) and submit to the needs and wishes of others whenever we can. Jesus is our model for that kind of submission to God's will. 1st Peter 2:23 says when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats, instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly (Gratsch, 2021).

Moral and Religious Impact of Broken Families

A family may influence a person's behaviour either negatively or positively both at childhood and adulthood. An intact family can be said to be a functioning union between a mother and a father, so when a break up exist, the turmoil may implicate a child to a greater extent. A functioning family is beneficial to a child than a dysfunctional one. Family's separation is a great contributor of child neglect which generally leads to child deviant behaviour.

According to Juby and Farrington (2021) delinquency rates were found to be higher among the children who live in permanently disrupted families compared to those living in intact families. The same pattern was found in case of intact but high-conflict families. The lack of parental supervision and the absence of close relationships between the teenager and his or her parents are factors that influence delinquency. Children from biologically intact families have a lower incidence of illegal behaviour that is paralleled by their lower rate of susceptibility to peer pressure to commit deviant acts. Children who are charged with more serious acts of delinquency are from incomplete families than juveniles charged with lesser acts of misconduct. Children from broken families are more likely to run away from their families than children living in intact families. The core belief is that a broken family has an imbalance and as a result is detrimental to a child's socialization and personality adjustment. As a result, a child may be more susceptible to negative peer pressure and may ultimately commit acts of delinquency not committed by children from intact families where there is a balanced structure of man and women who act as good role models in child acquiring proper roles.

Ngale (2019) explores the relationship between family structure and juvenile delinquency. The analysis revealed that, moral education of juvenile delinquents is undertaken more by others than their biological parents; most delinquent children come from the lowest socio-economic stratum of society; about two-thirds of the juvenile delinquents come from families where seven persons and above live under the same roof; most parents have low paid jobs which keep them for long periods away from their children.

Kimani (2020) is of the views that there was a strong correlation between murder and a child having come from an intact family. For a single parent family parenthood, there was a strong correlation between street life, sex and defilement offences. Children brought up in a step parent home had a strong inclination towards substance abuse but the correlation was even greater for stealing and refusing school. For children having come from broken families, they had a strong correlation towards substance abuse and street life but showed a negative strong correlation with refusing school. For children brought up in a grandparent family structure, the correlation was strong for substance abuse and the highest for stealing. Murder was the least committed offence while refusing school and street life were the most dominant.

Lekule and Clinton (2018) see children of broken families suffer abuse and deprivation in terms of guidance that will supplement the role of parents in their moral upbringing and as such children of broken families are left to do whatever they feel like doing whether right or wrong, no one cares. Ahmed (2020) notes that children of broken families, due to single parenting and absence of parent diligent guidance become subject to higher risk of dangerous sexual behaviours and pregnancy, higher chances of drug abuse and alcoholism.

Tikkumah (2019) states that, children of broken families, due to the death of parents especially the girls heading their family are the most vulnerable to various kinds of problems. They are overburdened by shouldering adults' responsibilities of care giving to siblings and as such engage immorality such as prostitution, arm robbery, stealing and hazardous labour in exchange for food. Similarly, Hake (2020) notes that, children of broken families are exposed to many problems that causes harm to them and the society. Some of them engaged in promiscuous sexual abuse, exploitation and social exclusion leading to psychological feelings of inferiority.

According to Rebecca (2017) children of broken families tend to be more disciplined in their approach towards life. Having faced with the difficult situations in life and seen their parents struggle to put up with various things to ensure a comfortable life for them, makes the children more disciplined in their approach. To be of help to their parents, they start sharing the responsibilities and tasks with their parents and try to agree on a set schedule to make things easier in the family. Gaurav (2017) is of the view that, children raised by broken families are more disciplined because of the difficult situations they might have faced in life. The discipline aspect comes as a result of responsibilities and a task between them and their parents.

Methodology

A cross sectional survey research design method was adopted for the study with a population of four-two thousand, four hundred and thirty-eight (42,438) from which seven hundred and ninety (790) were sampled to represent the total population. Out of which seven hundred and seventy (770) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. The breakdown is, three (3) men from broken families were sampled from the 55 COCIN LCC making the total of 165. Three (3) women from broken families were sampled from the 55 COCIN LCC making the total of 165. Four (4) male children from broken families were sampled from the 55 COCIN LCC making the total of 220. Four (4) female children were sampled from the 55 COCIN LCC making the total of

220. In addition, five (5) each of the variables were sampled for interview making a ground total of 790 respondents. An oral interview was conducted with twenty (20) respondents to collaborate the responses of the questionnaire, the researcher used stratified and random sampling. Five (5) men from broken family in COCIN Church, five (5) women, five (5) male children from broken families and five (5) female children from broken families in COCIN in Plateau State. seven hundred and forty-one (741) copies of questionnaire were retrieved and used.

Results

Table 1: opinion of responses on the impact of broken families on the moral and religious life of children in Church of Christ Nations in Plateau state, Nigeria

s/no	Items	Response categories				Mean	Remark
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	Children from broken families find it difficult to join church sub-groups	386	325	14	16	3.45	Agreed
2	Children from broken families are likely in crime and be delinquent	230	478	10	23	3.23	Agreed
3	Children from broken families are not properly groomed in the Christian faith	250	456	20	15	3.27	Agreed
4	Some female children of broken families engage in prostitutions for survival	284	471	13	27	3.29	Agreed
5	Children from broken families find it difficult to attain Sunday school	294	395	23	29	3.28	Agreed
6	Children from broken families are more prone to secret cult	250	448	13	30	3.23	Agreed
Cumulative mean						3.29	

Standard/decision mean = 2.50

As much as the children could be said to have felt the adverse effect of broken families the impact could be said to have influenced their moral and religious disposition.

In item 1, 386 (52.1%) and 325 (43.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed and disagreed that children from broken families find it difficult to join church sub-groups. Respondents 14

(1.9%) and 16 (2.2%) disagreed with the opinion in the item. The mean score for the item is 3.45. The item 4 of the table, 284 (38.3%) and 417 (56.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the opinion that some female children broken families engage in prostitution for survival. Respondents 13(1.8%) and 27 (3.6%) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the item. The mean score for the item is 3.29. In item 5 of the table, it is noted that most respondents were of the view that children from broken families find it difficult to attend Sunday school. This is 294 (39.7%) and 395 (53.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed. On 23 (3.1%) and 29 (3.9%) rejected the opinion. The mean score for the item is 3.28.

At the level of the individual, there were some defects in the adherence to the moral and religious obligation. This is seen in item 3 of the table where 259 (35.0%) and 456 (61.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the suggestion that children from broken families are not properly groomed in the Christian faith. Though, 11 (1.5%) and 15 (2.0%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with this opinion but with a mean score of 3.27. As indicated in items 6 and 2 with mean scores of 3.23 and 3.23, the negative moral and religious impact were accompanied with children from broken families going into secret cult and crimes in the society. Only 13 (1.8%) and 30 (4.0%) respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed because they did not see children from broken families are prone to secret cult. The idea of children from broken families are likely in crime and be delinquent view from different background is indicated by 230 (31.0%) and 478 (64.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the item. But 10 (1.3%) and 23 (3.1%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with this item.

Test of Null Hypothesis

Table 2: Independent t test statistics on the opinions of male children and those of female children on the religious and moral impacts of broken families of children

Variable	Gender of child	N	Mean	STD	Mean	Df	t cal.	t cri.	P
Moral and religious	Male	207	19.234	2.417	0.055	402	0.231	1.96	0.818
	Female	218	19.291	2.497					

P = 0.818 > 0.05, t computed = 0.231 < 1.96 at df 400

The independent t test statistics above shows that there is no significant difference in the opinions of male children and female children from broken families on the impact of their moral and religious life in Church of Christ in Nations in Plateau State Nigeria. This is because the calculated p value of 0.81 is greater than the 0.05 alpha level of significance and the computed t value of 0.23 is lower than the 1.96 t critical value at df 402. Their descriptive statistics showed that their computed mean opinion by male and female children are 19.23 and 19.29 respectively, this implies that the mean of both male and female children from broken families regarding difference in the opinions of male children and female children from broken families on the

impact of their moral and religious life in Church of Christ in Nations in Plateau State is the same. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant difference in the opinions of male and female children from broken families on the moral and religious life of the children in Church of Christ in Nations in Plateau State Nigeria, is hereby accepted and retained.

Discussion

The study however unveils that, Children from broken families find it difficult to join church sub-groups and also some female children engage in prostitution and makes it difficult for them to attain church (Sunday school). Level of significance 0.818 ($p > 0.05$). The impact of broken families on the moral and religious life of children in Church of Christ in Nations was investigated. The result reveals that children from broken families find it difficult to join church sub-groups and also some female children engage into early prostitutions for survival which makes it difficult for them to attain church (Sunday school). This is in line with Juby & Farrington (2021) who reveals that delinquency rates were found to be higher among children who live in permanent disrupted families compared to those living in intact families. Moreover, Ngale (2019) also add that moral education of juvenile is undertaken more by others than their biological parents, most delinquent children come from broken families. Lekule & Clinton (2018) also agree with the findings that children of broken families suffer abuse and deprivation in terms of guidance that will supplement the role parent play in their moral upbringing and as such children of broken families are left to do whatever they feel like doing whether right or wrong no one cares. Moreover, it also agrees with Ahmed (2020) who notes that children of broken families due to single parenting and absence of parent diligent guidance becomes subject to higher risk of dangerous sexual behaviours and pregnancy. More so, it also agrees with Tikkumah (2019) who posits that children of broken families due to the death of parents especially the girls heading the family engage in immorality such as prostitution and fornication in exchange for food, because they are overburdened by shouldering adult's responsibilities of care giving to siblings. This also agrees with interviewee 2, 3 and 7 (2019) in an interview who also agree that children from broken families lack spiritual backing because no one is there to lead them through the Bible. They are found roaming the street without going to church, they are spiritually and morally cold; they lack both spiritual and moral growth, because no one will teach them how to pray, or even read the Bible.

Conclusion

Broken families negatively impacted on the moral and religious characters of most children in COCIN Church in Plateau State. The children find it difficult to join church sub-groups and become a nuisance to their communities.

Recommendations

Base on the finding of the study, it is recommended that;

1. Religious organizations should work together and develop training programme on love, marriage and care for parents in order to educate the people on the importance of family care for healthy families' in Church of Christ in Nations in Plateau State.

2. Parents should understand the importance of staying together as husband and wife to raise good family. They should persevere and tolerate each other in marriage for the academic, emotion and social adjustments of their children.
3. Children from broken families should be taught entrepreneur and skills development.

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