

**FAMILY FORMS AND FOOD SECURITY IN CALABAR SOUTH LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The family in executing its primary function of food supplies to its young is affected by the form it assumes. The study seeks to investigate the role of family forms on food security in Calabar South Local government area of Cross River state, Nigeria. Respondents were from the study area guided by the survey type of research design. A total of 200 respondents were selected from the area using accidental sampling. Data was elicited via the instrumentality of the four-point Likert Scale Questionnaire. On the basis of the responses gathered the two hypotheses postulated for the studies were tested with the aid of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r). Findings show that Matrifocal families and Large family size have relationship with food security. The study recommends among others that the Government expand her population policy of 2004 to encompass child birth resulting from illegitimate sexual relations which is the basis for the multiplicity of matrifocal

homes and implement same along other aspect which prohibits families from having beyond 4 offspring.

Keywords: Matrifocal families, Large family size, food security and Patrifocal families

INTRODUCTION

In a society where people are not taking to birth control and where a number of Matrifocal (Female headed) Families exist in the face of a sickly economy, the reality of food insecurity may become inevitable like Thomas Malthus predicted. Family forms as used in this study simply refers to family type, shades and shapes encapsulating size, age and authority system. In recent times some forms of families which has emerged include, blended, single parent, Same sex parent, Grandparent reared, adoptive, and the childless family (Rhodora, nd. and Blessing, nd.) Besides these, large family size is also another outcome particularly observed mostly in developing nations and for the purpose of this study, is regarded as families with more than four offspring.

Food security according to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2006) is expressed as “a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. For Andersen (1990) food security refers to the availability and access to nutritionally adequate and customarily accepted food by everyone who constitutes a household for

healthy life gotten through socially acceptable means. The definition by FAO above highlights four key indicators about food security namely: availability, stability, accessibility and utilization. The absence or uncertainty and of any of these four indices would thus suggest a vulnerable provender system (FAO, 2008). Andersen’s definition in addition suggests that if people will need to cut corners to secure access to food, then they are food insecure. Implying that armed robbers, pen robbers, extortioners, money launderers, fencers, prostitutes, and the likes have no food security irrespective of the abundance they may be basking in because they deviate from the culturally approved means.

FAO, (2013) notes that the number of world undernourished persons was estimated at 842 million and approximated at 12 % of the entirety of the world’s people and 92% of them are resident in Asia which accounts for approximately 226.2 Million and Africa which houses about 552 Million persons. In the same vein the 2016 National Policy on Food and Nutrition in Nigeria (NPFN) avows that the trend in malnutrition among children below five years has only improved insignificantly from the statistics of Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys

(NDHS) 2003, 2008 and 2013's observations. On the other hand, wasting among same category of children rose from 11% in 2003 by 14% in 2008 and added by 4% in 2013. Contemporaneously underweight was 24%, 23%, and 29%, respectively, indicating problematic nutritional status. Additional account shows that the entire statistics of provender insecure people was 17 million in 2012, and projected to be more than 3 times higher a decade later if left to chance (Ministry of Budget and Planning (MBP) 2016).

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) in a report of 2019 ranks Nigeria 93rd among 117 countries with the score of 27.9 (GHI 2019, P. 1). In 2018 the same body ranked Nigeria at 84th position out of 119 countries ("84th on the Global Index" 2017, p.2), incontrovertibly indicating that the nation has a major challenge with food supplies. Following this trend, it is suspected that this situation will be felt intensely in Calabar South Local Government area of Cross

River State which is a part of Nigeria and one of the least prosperous states and one of the lowest federal allocation as well as internally generated revenue (IGR).

Being a multidimensional Concept, food security is may be affected by natural disasters, Social Norms and Climate change (Abdullah Deyi Zhou, Tariq Shah, Sajjad Ali, Waqar Ahmad, Izhar Ud Din & Aasir Ilyas, 2019). In the same vein, Ahsan, Arifeen, Al-Mamun, Khan and Chakraborty

(2017) contends that Mother's age at child birth, Mother's educational attainment, individual's current age, Mother's acquaintance with the media, Mother's membership of NGO, Mother's working outside, Socioeconomic status, Duration in current locality, household size, Urban sphere (slum vs. non-slum), Distance from health facility etc. may contribute to food security in any society. For Akpan (2009), factors that may influence food security are corruption, fiscal profligacy, state indebtedness and policy irregularity, for Kassie, Ndiritu, and Stage (2014) it is the gender of the household head and for Bogale, (2012), the factors include: family size, size of cultivated lands, soil fertility, irrigation access, and improved seed among others.

From the forgoing Nigeria is facing high level of food insecurity, and a number of family forms listed among factors influencing food security in society are prevalent in the country. It is against this background that the authors decided to examine resident's perception on the relationship between family forms and food security in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River state which is one of the most vulnerable LGAs in the nation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Matrifocal homes and large family size are prominent features of families situated in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. It is a common place to find young ladies living with poor parents or

independently and yet have one, two or more biological children and most times with different paternity. Worrisomely, the progenitors of these children are not financially stable enough to take responsibility and therefore abandon the children for the young ladies and the ladies' family to care for.

This abysmal arrangement in the face Calabar South deteriorating economy characterised by high rate of unemployment, high level of poverty, boarder closure and skyrocketed prices of food items makes it difficult or almost impossible for these Matrifocal families to secure their daily bread. The difficulty in securing daily bread is also a major challenge to most families with large size in the area giving rise to Malnutrition and undernutrition as natural outcomes. The inability to manage the children by the economic figures of these families often times makes them loose their socialisation power over the wards. These children often times leave parental cover for street life in order to forge a living for themselves even at early age. A number of the children do not go back to their homes after the day's transaction thereby compounding the social problem of multiplying street children.

Though the Federal government through national Population Policy have tried to control population growth by limiting the number of children in every family to four, implementation has not been achieved in the area till date. Though the Mass Media and the various Health Posts in the area have done so

much to educate the people on the importance of family planning. Still most families go beyond the expected number of children amounting to an unmanageable family size. Again, the Population Policy will not be applicable for premarital sexual relations in the name of relationship among young people in the area and there is no single policy yet prohibiting premarital/extramartial sex in the jurisdictions implying that there will continue to be a challenge of provender accessibility all things remaining equal. It is in the face of this challenging situation that the researchers decided to assess the nexus between family forms precisely matrifocal families as well as large family and food security in Calabar South Local Government Area. To achieve the above objective, the following null hypotheses were formulated for testing.

- (1) There is no significant relationship between Matrifocal Families and Food Security in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State.
- (2) There is no significant relationship between Large Family size and Food Security in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Matrifocal Family and Food Security

Existing literature argue that gender of the head of household has a pertinent function in household food security. Kassie *et al* (2014)

in their investigation of the connection between virtual security and sex of households lead in one of the countryside of Kenya discovered that even when the heads may have same overt features, covert qualities are accountable for the variances in provender security level. According to Felker-Kantor and Wood, (2012) matrifocal families were more susceptible to provender uncertainty than their patrifocal counterparts. Ibnouf, (2011) found that as producers women lack access to advanced production techniques due to gender-biased traditions.

A National Household Survey (NHS) which comprised of 121,708 representative households was conducted by The Brazil Bureau of the Census in 2009 with results showing that households with female heads suffers more insecurity than the patrifocal ones. In addition, the result discloses that the existence of children below the age of responsibility accounts for food inaccessibility (Felker-Kantor & Wood, 2012). Similarly, Abdullah *et al* (2019) studying the subject in rural northern hinterland of Pakistan, identified sex of the household lead, age, education, among others as influencing factors. Age for instance was significant with (odd ratio = 2.65, $p = 0.008$). Bashir, Schilizzi, and Pandit (2013) cited in Addullah *et al* (ibid), in a Punjab study indicated that about 23% of the households were found insecure because of the prevalence of matrifocal homes with young parents among others. These studies implies that the vulnerability of the matrifocal homes are

exacerbate when combined with the young age of the head as in the case of teenagers and young adults who get involved in careless romance with men who do not have what it takes to be responsible for them and the children that come out of the relationship. Furthermore, Felker-Kantor (2012); Anyanwu (2010) there is a higher incidence of indigence amongst matrifocal as compared to patrifocal families, hence, leading to a greater probability of food dearth amongst the former.

Large Family Size and Food Security

In Limpopo province of South Africa a study conducted De Cock,

D'Haese, Vink, Van Rooyen, Staelens, Schönfeldt, and D'Haese, (2013) utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data found that 53% of the rural households were food insecure owing to large household size, high dependency ratio, low household income etc. meaning, the more the house hold size and the dependency ratio the higher the food insecurity for the family affected. Asghar and Muhammad (2013) as quoted by Abdullah *et al* (2019) examined the determinants of food insecurity and found large household size to be significantly responsible. Adopting the calorie intake methodology, Bashir, Schilizzi, and Pandit (2013) contends that livestock ownership, monthly income, and size of the family among others were responsible for provender insecurity in Punjab. Similarly, Sultana and Kiani, (2011) just like Bogale, (2012) in an Ethiopian study identified large

family size which worsens dependency ratio as a primary cause for food dearth.

The report of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (2019) indicates that little less than 50% of all children less than age 5 in the Northeast and Northwest geopolitical regions were estimated to be stunted in their growth for their age in 2013, compared to 22 % in the rest of Nigeria, implying the chronicity of malnutrition and undernutrition in the North as one of the worst worldwide. This development may not be unconnected to large family size which is a prominent feature in the region due to one of the prevalent religious tenets that permits a man to marry up to four and very young wives at a time as well as divorce at will only to remarry another and procreate almost without limit.

Malthusianism

Malthusianism is accredited to the work of Reverend Thomas Malthus “Essay on the Principle of Population” 1798 and the theory argues that when population growth outstrips the available means of support, the human race would experience acute food insecurity Food insecurity which when combined with the influence of plagues and war act will result in high mortality.

Malthus (1798)’ predicts that human lives will always live in famishment and wretchedness except they practiced what he dubbed “moral restrain” to contain family size. Though Iwarimie- Jaja (2013) has flawed this theory for

not factoring in other indices like poor resource management, underutilization of resources, corruption bad leadership in his explanation for food shortage, there is no doubt that the theory suitably explains the connect between large family size and food security in Calabar South Local Government area of cross river state. A number of family are observed to be living in famishment and misery in the area because their population outstrips their meagre resources just as Malthusianism holds. The theory is therefore apt for the study.

Marxian explanation

As a proponent of Marxism, Engels (1972) argued that the patriarchal nature of society makes it difficult for women to have the same access to employment opportunities as males. Hence patrifocal households are stronger in terms of food provisions than the matrifocal ones. The theory is criticized on the arguments that in today’s world women also rise to become captains of industries like Alakija Folorunsho the Executive Vice Chairman of Famfa oil limited, Mrs Winifred Akpani the founder and Chief Executive officer of Northwest Oil and Gas Co. limited. Also, women have risen to managerial positions in banks, industries and academic institutions etc. The criticisms irrespective, the theory is suitable for the study as it portrays the existing fact of most women’s second-class treatment in employment, access to credit facilities etc., thereby supporting other literature on

Matrifocal families which aligns with the observed circumstances in the study area.

On the whole, while the Malthusian theory adequately analyses the relationship between large family size and food security in Calabar South Local Government Area, the Marxian theory helps to x-ray the nexus between the Matrifocal homes and food security in the area. This made for their adoption among myriads of other possible theories.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed the survey type of research design with samples amounting to 200 were selected opting for the accidental sampling technique. Study Respondents were drawn from four randomly selected localities in Calabar South namely: Eserebom, Anantigha, Bayside and Nsidung. The four-point Likert scale questionnaire, with 18 items encompassing both respondents' demographic data and their perception of how family forms

(matrifocal and large family size) tell on food security in the area.

Data retrieved were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, while the hypotheses were tested with the aid of Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An observation of the sociodemographic information on Table 1 below show that (n=107) amounting to 53.5 % of the respondents were female making them majority of the respondents when juxtaposed with the 93 that is 43.5 % male respondents. Respondents below the age of 30 were (n=93; 46.5%), those within the age bracket of 31 and 40 were (n=42; 21%), respondents within the age bracket 41-50 were (n=36; 18%) and those that were 50 and above were (n=29; 14.5). Respondents' marital status reveals that single respondents were (n=92; 46%), married ones were (n=81;

40.5%), Widows/widowers were (21;10.5%), separated/divorced were (6;

Table 1: Bio data of respondents

Variables		N	%
Sex	Female	107	53.5
	Male	93	43.5
	Total	200	100
Age	Less than 30	93	46.5
	31-40	42	21

	41-50	36	18
	Above 50	29	14.5
	Total	200	100
Marital Status	Single	92	46
	Married	81	40.5
	Widow/widower	21	10.5
	Separated/divorced	6	3
	Total	200	100
Educational Attainment	Non-formal Education	18	9
	FSLC	21	10.5
	SSCE	56	28
	NCE/OND	23	11.5
	First Degree/HND	65	32.5
	Masters' Degree	17	8.5
	Ph.D	0	0
	Total	200	100
Religion	Christian	177	88.5
	Islam	7	3.5
	Others	16	8
	Total	200	100
Occupation	Student	84	42
	Self employed	36	18
	Civil Servants	28	14
	No Economic Venture	39	19.5
	Private employee	13	6.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Fieldwork 2019

3%). Respondent's educational status show that person with Non-formal education were (n=18, 9%), persons with First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) were (21; 10.5),

those with Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) were (n=56; 28%), others were (n=65; 32.5%) holding First degree/Higher National Diploma (HND),

(17, 8.5%) holding a Masters' Degree and (n=0; 0%) holding a Ph.D. On the religion, (n=177; 88.5%) respondents professed the Christian faith, (n=7; 3.5%) profess Islam while (n=16; 8%) professed other religion. Data on occupation indicated that (n=84;

42%) respondents were students, (n= 36; 18%) were self-employed, (n=28; 14%) were civil servants, (n=39; 19.5%) had no economic engagement, while (n=13; 6.5%) were private employees.

Hypothesis I

There is no significant relationship between Matrifocal family and food security. The Households Pearson Product Moment correlation (r) was used in testing this hypothesis. Result of were indeed the analysis as put forth on table 2 show that the calculated r value of 0.345 is greater more than the critical table value of 0.082 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of vulnerable freedom. Following this result, the null hypothesis as stated above was rejected and to food alternate hypothesis accepted. Hence, Matrifocality is linked to food security Calabar in security South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The result is in agreement with than male that of Babatunde, *et al* (2007) Kassie, *et al* (2014) headed households.

who demonstrated that female-headed

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation coefficient for Matrifocal families and food Security in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Variables	M	SD	EX Ey	EX ² Ey ²	E _{xy}	Y –value
Matrifocal Family	3.02	13.30	1680	14820		
					11190	0.345
Food Security	2.11	20.11	1290	8970		

Source: Fieldwork 2019; Significant at 0.05 level, df = 198, critical r = 0.082

Hypothesis II

This hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between Large Family Size and Food security in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The Pearson Product Moment correlation (r) was used in testing this hypothesis. Result of the analysis as put forth on table 3 below show that the calculated r -value of 0.778 is greater than the critical table value of 0.082 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom.

Following this result, the null hypothesis as stated above was rejected and alternate hypothesis accepted. Hence, Large family size affects food security in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The result is in alignment with that of Sultana and Kiani, (2011), who identified dependency ratio, and Bogale, (2012) which both pointed fingers at Large family size as a negative contributor to food security.

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation coefficient for large family size and food Security in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Variables	M	SD	EX Ey	EX ² Ey ²	Exy	Y –value
Large Family Size	12.03	1.02	1680	14520		
					11230	0.778
Food Security	10.11	2.15	1290	8970		

Significant level at 0.05, df – 198, critical r – value 0.082

Source: Fieldwork 2019.

Discussion of findings

According to Babatunde, *et al* (2007) female headed households were indeed more vulnerable to food insecurity than male headed households. Despite improvement in women's capabilities, gender gaps in entitlement and the resources which women and men can command through available legal means, this situation continues to persist. In consonance to this assertion, this study demonstrated a significant negative relationship between Matrifocality and food security in the Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The study revealed that Matrifocal families are susceptible to food insecurity. This is owing to the fact that women do not find it easy to access credit facilities and some kind of well-paying jobs. This position corroborated Ibnouf (2011) who contended that the major problems which women face as a producer are lacking access to advanced production techniques such as high-quality seeds, fertilizers, credit access, pesticides and marketing services due to gender-biased traditions. Also, Abdullah *et al* (2019) pointed out that even though women naturally would love to ensure food security in the family than men, they are limited due to a number of factors of which unemployment is key.

The study further demonstrated a significant negative relationship between large family size and food security in Calabar South Local

Government Area and food security. Meaning that the larger the family size the more food insecure a family tends to become. In harmony with this finding is De Cock *et al* (2013) who studied factors affecting food insecurity in Limpopo and indicted large household size as a major culprit among others for provender insecurity. Also, Bashir *et al* (2013) studying the determinants of food insecurity in Punjab found large family size incontrovertibly culpable among others. Additionally, the finding agrees with Bogale, (2012) who studied the factors which makes for susceptibility to food insecurity at the household level using the expected poverty approach with data obtained from 277 randomly selected households in Ethiopia and found family size as a primary causative.

The finding further suggests that most of the street children working and living on the street are product of large families where their daily food needs have not been met. The finding that large family size is a determinant of food insecurity may also be linked to the finding of (IFPRI, 2019), who in their anthropometric study revealed that the worse cases of child malnourishment and undernourishment were found in the Northeast and Northwest geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The regions where the widespread religion permits polygyny and almost unrestricted procreation. The malnourishment challenge in that region as it is today to ossifies the argument of Reverend Thomas Malthus who

propagated that humans will continue to leave in famishment except a “moral restrain” is the placed over procreation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The capability of the family in performing its food provision functions can be affected by the form it assumes. The paper analysed family forms such as Matrifocal families as well as Family with large population size and their interplay with food security in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State Nigeria. Related literature was examined and two theories discussed, linked and adopted for the study. The findings of the study in tandem with that of similar studies show that there is a significant relationship between family forms and food security in Calabar South Local Government Area.

Sequel to the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Women should be allowed access to credit facilities.
2. Women should be considered in the productive labour force with a level of peculiarity due to their biological uniqueness.
3. Humans should find a way best suitable to them to ensure they do not get children beyond their economic wherewithal. “Moral restrain” in the word of Malthus particularly as it has todo with the unmarried people is strongly recommended.
4. To help regulate child birth the government should expand the population policy of 2004 to encompass child birth resulting from illegitimate sexual relations which is the basis for the multiplicity of matrifocal homes and implement same along other aspect which prohibits families from having beyond 4 offspring.

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