

Family Security: An Approach to Achieving Household Livelihood in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Family is the center of one's personal universe, where individual's needs are met and protected from known and perceived danger and harm. In the developing countries, one of the challenges experienced by households is family insecurity resulting from multi-dimensional factors such as poverty, lack of resources to grow/buy food, poor nutritional education and much more. The other major factors associated with family insecurity are economic decline and political instability in Nigeria as a case study. This paper discusses family security as a panacea to achieving family livelihood in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Family security, Family insecurity, Food security, Livelihood, Quality life.*

I. Introduction

Family is an important institution in all human society. It ensures smooth running of all activities in the society. Household members enjoy intimate relationship and interdependence for their basic needs, including security. When the needs in the family unit are uncertain or unattainable, there may be feelings of insecurity. For a long time, Nigerian families have been in poverty and hardship arising from economic and political instability. Poverty is described as a predictor of family insecurity [1], and national insecurity which results in high level of criminal activities such as the insurgence of "boko haram" in Nigeria. Nigerian families as well as those in some parts of the world experience insecurity [2].

Family insecurity encompasses instability of available food, nutrition, finance, economy, education, and health care accessibility among others. The most vulnerable to family insecurity are the women, children, aged people, the physically challenged, low-income families, people in the rural areas, and the unemployed. Research report shows that rural residents, low-income earners, single mothers, the unemployed, under-employed, and low wage workers may likely suffer family insecurity especially food insecurity [3, 4]. Ironically, the employed families also feel the wave of insecurity due to delayed payment of their wages. A larger percentage of Nigerians live on wages [2]. This paper therefore examines family insecurity as a problem to achieving household livelihood, and proffers the pathways to facilitating family security in Nigeria.

II. Concept of family security

Family is a well-known universal institution which has certain values and procedures on meeting the basic needs of the household [2]. Among these values is ensuring quality of life for its members. Quality family life consists of five components, namely: family interaction-relationships among family members, parenting, emotional well-being, physical/material well-being and supports for family members with a disability [5]. [6]The family also functions in protecting and providing the needs in the home in order to promote quality life.

Family security is described as the consistent safety household members acquires through availability of food in adequate nutritional proportions, health care, education, finance among others to maintain livelihood. For instance, if the family is food, finance and nutrition secured, they would have a quality life, and the nation will experience social and political progress. This implies that family security is composed of all aspect of security such as food, nutrition, health, job, education, agriculture, empowerment and lot more, all of which work together to make the family achieve a quality life as well as ensure peace in the nation. Hence, the absence of family security hinders the progress of a nation [2].

III. Theoretical background

Family security emphasizes the primary need of family members which are described by Abraham Maslow [7] as physiological need (food, clothing, and shelter), safety or security need, social or love need, self-esteem need and self-actualization needs. Family needs revolve around certainty of food supply, and safety of its members, the absence of which causes physiological, social, and psychological problems. The functionalist approach holds the believe that if an aspect of social life does not contribute to a society's stability or survival, it means it does not serve some useful function or promote value consensus among members of the society [8];

therefore, in order to ensure family security, the functionalist is of the view that family functions include: reproduction, protection, socialization, regulation of sexual behavior, affection and companionship, religious training, education and recreational [9].

Family system theory applies to family security in the sense that the whole component of the family as a system interact, connect and interdepend on one another to form a whole [10]. This theory says a change in one component will affect the other part of the system; hence family system organizes them to meet the needs of the members of the household. In a dwindling economy, a family feels insecure when there is inconsistency in the provision of the family's needs. In spite of the challenges confronting the family and the limited resources available, the families still strive to maintain equilibrium through resiliency. Resilience theory emphasizes the ability of the families to cope in times of adversities despite the overwhelming challenges [11]. The theory identifies risks and protective factors that help in building resilient qualities. The risk factors for the family experiencing insecurity at the micro level are lack of job, food, adequate nutrition, education, good parenting and so on; at mezzo level: unsafe neighborhood, crime, and at macro level: poverty, unemployment, delayed wages, poor health care facilities and so on. The protective factors for the family at micro level include small scale business, extended family support system; mezzo level (safe neighborhood, regular wage payment) and macro-level (government support, job availability, free or subsidized health facilities). Resilience theory helps to facilitate intervention at micro, mezzo and macro level. The coping method commonly adopted by families in Nigeria are beliefs in religion, fate, small scale farming, small businesses and support system from relations, and possibly finance organizations such as cooperative society.

IV. Dimensions of family security

Family security is of multiple dimensions. These are: food, nutrition, job and financial security. Food security is associated with nutritional security [12], and is promoted through job and financial security in the family. Food security is defined as consistent and reliable access to sufficient food for the families to maintain an active life [13]. In addition, Food and Agricultural Organization [5] defines food security as a social condition when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe nutritious food to meet their dietary need and food preferences for an active and healthy life. On the other hand, food insecurity refers to lack of nutritionally adequate food to sustain the family. If food insecurity is persistent, it may result in poor quality of life [14]. The more food insecurity persists, the poorer the socioeconomic conditions of such a nation [12]. A nutrition and food insecure child may be vulnerable to physical and mental health problems [15], developmental outcomes, and poor academic performances. As an adult, there may be high stress level resulting in depression and other mental disorders. Food insecurity for example, was associated with maternal depression [16]. High morbidity, and mortality rate as well as increased criminal activities like embezzlement, murder, dupers, and much more are the effects of insecurity in the nation [17].

Nigeria Quarter four [18], says food crisis is caused by low food production resulting from subsistence farming practiced in the country. The report further says food security statistics on food deprivation analyze the proportion of undernourished (%) in 1995 – 1997 to be 9 while that of 2001 – 2003 was also 9, and the number of undernourished (millions) in 1995 – 1997 was 8.9 and 2001 – 2003 was 11.5. This is an indication of nutrition insecurity. Nutrition security refers to the dietary intake of the members of the family. This include: proteins energy, vitamins and mineral, and water for house hold members at all times. The nutritional status of each member of the household depends on several conditions being met; food available to all and shared according to individual needs. Food must be of sufficient variety, quality and safety, and each family member must have good health status in order to benefit from the food consumed [5]. Nutrition insecure family often experience insufficient nutrient intake, and this is more visible in children [12]. A study says that nutrition deficiencies have been found to contribute to high rate of disability, morbidity and mortality in Nigeria, especially among infants, young children and women [19]. Nigeria Fund mobilization [20] report that the impact of low food production and the current price increase on household food items reduces access to food, dietary diversity, and nutritional status of vulnerable groups.

Moreover research findings shows that there is a positive relationship between food security and caretakers' knowledge of nutrition as a factor influencing dietary intake of children as well as adults[12] ; hence, adult nutritional education is a means of nutrition intervention for better household food security

Family Financial Security is dependent on continuous and regular income in order to meet present and future needs of the family while keeping pace with day to day expenses and addressing the basics needs, spending, savings, investing, and housing issues. Financial education on available resources should include; budgeting, credit management, savings, and retirement planning, financial capability, financial coaching strategies and much more to ensure adequate personal money management, and encourage continuity in meeting household needs [21]. Job security is an associate of financial stability in the family. This helps the family achieve a quality life.

Education Security: Education is a human right that should be accorded all human. The relationship between education and development cannot be overemphasized in the individual, family and the nation. Education improves productivity, health, and empowerment [22]. Therefore, education helps to achieve family security in terms of empowerment; employment opportunity, job security, nutrition knowledge, and it may invariably bring about transformation of a nation.

Health Security: Health is wealth, family health is very important in the community. A healthy family produces a healthy nation. Health security in the family is enhanced when all members have access to nutritious food, and good health care facilities at a subsidized rate.

V. Strategies to achieving family security in Nigeria

Unemployment, job instability, economic depression, poverty, high rate of illiteracy mostly for women and girls, poor living standard, poor knowledge about nutrition, inadequate health facilities among others cannot be overemphasized as the major factors inhibiting family insecurity. Hence, to keep the family safe and secure, there should be a careful and thoughtful plan on finance, economy, health care, education, and all other areas of life [23]. Unemployed family members can be self-employed to have a means of survival for the home. Low-income household can improve their nutritional status through nutrition education.

The government role in promoting family security can be through: job creation, [24] more jobs should be created, credit facilities made available to small – scale enterprises, and to the existing businesses in Nigeria. Youth and women should also be empowered. Poverty alleviation programs can help to forestall security in the homes to reduce or eliminate the percentage of people living below poverty line. Therefore, the government should establish appropriate infrastructure and support system to facilitate alleviation of poverty by implementing programs, projects, enterprises, and lifestyle sustainability at all levels in Nigeria [24]. To further promote economic stability in Nigeria, the micro-finance banks and other finance houses can provide soft loans to the less privileged families as a means of empowerment.

Moreover, to enable all people achieve sustainable livelihoods; there should be a thorough aggressive pursuit of the policies and strategies that simultaneously address issues of development, sustainability of resources management and poverty eradication [24].

Family health security is very vital to the development of a nation. The government should secure for all Nigerians an environment adequate for good health and well-being, such as effective Health Insurance Scheme that will serve as a relief to the poor. Birth control methods should be encouraged so as to help check rapid spurt in population growth. Moreover, household food security depends on the ability to grow, buy or both foods adequate for the diet of all family members depending on household income, food prices, and family size food, and nutrition knowledge, availability of agricultural land as well as knowledge of how to maximize the use of land, and household resources to ensure food security [20]. Therefore, government should provide the facilities to support, and encourage agricultural practice with emphasis on food production and security.

Family security can be achieved at the family, community and national level in terms of readiness to the learn skills of wealth creation, nutritional requirement, ensuring food security.

VI. Conclusion

Security is an important value in the family and the whole nation. The family as a unit promotes interdependence of household members and is obliged to develop resilient qualities in order to achieve a minimal level of security despite the insecurity of food, nutrition, and all other factors that facilitates a quality life. Therefore, a collaborative effort of the government and each family can be of great benefit to the nation in achieving family security. So also, provision of a safe environment with adequate food, nutrition, economic, financial, education, health, and job security will enhance family livelihood in Nigeria.

VII. Recommendations

In addition to the afore-mentioned strategies on achieving family security, the following are hereby recommended;

- Extended service delivery to target families through a community-based network by community leaders; at community level through the decision makers who will influence the policy makers.
- To ensure family nutrition security, the vulnerable groups such as children, and women and so on should be protected against malnutrition through mass media education on nutrition.
- Family support program such as food pantry, free or subsidized health care and much more should be made accessible to all.
- National and sectoral development policies and programs on improving household food security should be implemented.
- The government should support the development and adoption of eco-agriculture like investment on crop, livestock, forest, and fisheries.

- Education opportunity should be made available to all at an affordable rate.
- Reproductive health education should be encouraged in the society through the mass media, religious centers and so on.

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