Ensuring Sustainable Family Living In An Unstable Economy

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Introduction

The world has just come out of total lockdown occasioned by the ravaging effect of COVID-19 pandemic when all economic activities were grounded. Family members stayed together for one full year with little or no economic activities. Tension, uncertainty and depletion of family income with little or no means of replenishment contributed to family crisis in some households making sustainable family living questionable. In addition, several countries of the world including Nigeria were experiencing economic instability prior to COVID attack. The situation is becoming worse by the day resulting in unstable economy. Unstable economy when left unchecked can affect the living standard of individuals, families, communities, nations and the whole world. Individuals come together to form families and families are the building blocks of the society. An unstable economy can affect family living.

A family is made up of two or more people living in the same home related by ancestry, marriage or adoption. The group of people which live together constitute a household. Members of the household are expected to be caring, loving, sharing joy, pains and responsibilities. Family living therefore involves living with one or more supportive persons related by ancestry, marriage or adoption with shared experiences. Family living with a caring household and a functional family head has the prospects of remaining sustainable.

Sustainable Family living

Sustainable Family living is the ability to manage resources to meet the present family needs without dismantling the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It involves maintaining continuity of the standard of living of a family or household (Uko-Aviomoh, 2019, Uko-Aviomoh, 2020).

There are two key players required for sustainable family living. They are: a functional family head and responsible members of the household. It requires commitment, team spirit and informal monitoring and evaluation of household resource and activities. The family head is expected to provide: Food, shelter, healthcare, love, clothing, formal and informal education, financial education and support, discipline, leadership training, security, information, maintenance of law and order, prudence, spiritual and moral training as well as good exemplary life. (Uko-Aviomoh 2020)

Members of the household are expected to imbibe this training and become respectful, prudent, homely, loving, considerate, economical in household resource management and resource allocation, obedient, vigilant and provide feedback (information) to the family head, respect family rules, laws and norms, morally upright and resourceful. Apart from the home, such

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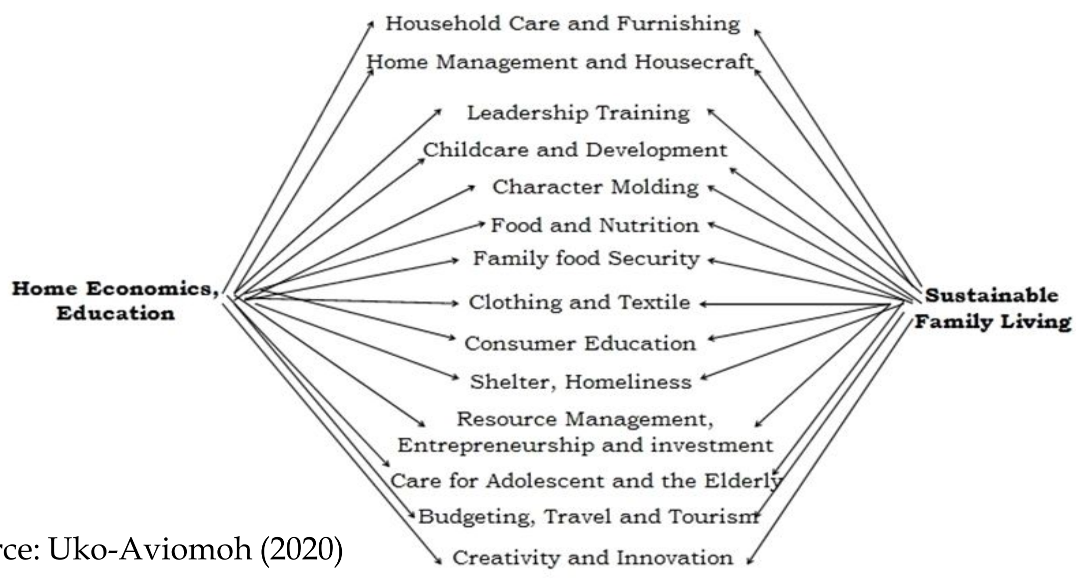
training can also be acquired through exposure to Home Economics education.

Home Economics and Sustainable Family Living

Home Economics is a field of study that applies modern arts, science and technology to improve family living. Home Economics helps the learners to establish the relationship between the individuals, families and the environment they live. Home Economics provides the learners with saleable skills to become gainfully employed or employers of labor. These skills include but not limited to food and Nutrition, clothing and textiles, child-care and Development, Home Management and housecraft, entrepreneurship, care for adolescents and the elderly. In addition, learners are also exposed to skills in budgeting, accountability, character molding, team spirit, homeliness and resource management, investment, resourcefulness, creativity, innovation, interior decoration, budgeting, travel and tourism, hospitality, and catering among others.

Home Economics can provide the knowledge and skills needed to transform the society. The wealth of knowledge provided by Home Economics can help to ensure sustainable family living. When an individual is armed with this wealth of knowledge there is every tendency that it will be used to transform the environment through regular contact with friends, neighbors, colleagues, church members, school mates and other social cycle members/ contacts. Uko-Aviomoh (2020) established a relationship between Home Economics and sustainable family living (Figure I). In the figure several knowledge and skills transferred to the learners of Home Economics were found to empower them practice sustainable family living. On the other hand, sustainable family living is capable of producing same outcome on members of their household thereby producing Home Economics professionals/ learners armed with knowledge and skill to function well in the profession and give better quality skills and knowledge to the society thereby contributing to sustainable family living and the cycle goes on. One of the features of this cycle is resourcefulness and income generation therefore continuity of this cycle will not only help in sustaining family living it will also contribute towards ensuring economic stability.

Fig. 1. Relationship between Home Economics Education and Sustainable Family Livi



Source: Uko-Aviomoh (2020)

Stable Versus Unstable Economy

Economy involves careful management of resources. It is the state of production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money to a country. An economy is the large set of inter - related economic production and consumption activities that determines how scarce resources are allocated (Boyle, 2021). Ability to reconcile cost of production and consumption activities especially commodity price stability can lead to economic stability.

Economic stability is the absence of excessive fluctuations in the macro-economy (IMF, 2016). An economy with fairly constant output growth, low and stable inflation is considered economically stable. An unstable economy is a wavery economy that is likely to give way or collapse if left unchecked. It is an economy with frequent large recessions, a pronounced business cycle, very high or variable inflation or frequent financial crisis (World Bank 2018).

Nigerian economy displays most of the features of an unstable economy with high fluctuations in the micro economy. Members of the households are at the receiving end of the impacts of an unstable economy.

Causes of Unstable Economy

The following are the Causes of Unstable Economy:

- Changing commodity prices (inflation)
- Lower investment
- Lower spending power
- Lower confidence level
- Sustainable fiscal deficits
- Credit crunch
- Balance of payment crisis
- Fluctuations in exchange rate
- Government debt crisis
- Black swan effects
- Low GDP
- Bad governance/ Erratic leadership
- Accumulation of Debt servicing especially foreign debt
- Fall in aggregate demand, fall in wages and income (Pettinger 2020)

Consequences of Unstable Economy

A quick look at most of the causes of unstable economy shows a high level of connectivity to Bad governance/ erratic leadership with its consequences. Economic stability must be sustainable for the generations unborn to build on. Economic stability exists when a government has plans and goals for the country with serious efforts to achieve the goals and the succeeding government building on the preceding goals. Nations with unstable economy are described as weak nations. Most weak nations are governed by bad and erratic leaders.

Consequences of Bad Governance/ Erratic Leadership

The following are the consequences of Bad Governance/ Erratic leadership which over time leads to unstable economy

- Tolerating or participating in corruption and mass embezzlement of government funds
- Faulty electoral sponsorship process resulting in election of mediocre
- Poor economic planning
- Budgeting delay
- Deceitful foreign exchange policy
- Poor Implementation of Economic Planning
- Policy conflict
- Failed promises
- High interest rate – causing damage to liquid money and

decreasing the amount of money available for investment

- Homelessness
- Decrease unemployment rate (any unemployment rate above 5% depletes the GDP)
- General loss of confidence in government
- High taxation rate
- Visible drop in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- Inability to cater for the welfare of the citizens especially during pandemics e.g. COVID 19
- Family displacement
- Brain drain
- Emergence of IDP Camps
- Low life expectance
- Increased level of hardship and poverty
- Increased crime rate – kidnapping, armed robbery, suicide bombing, Internet fraud, child trafficking, ritual killings
- Food insecurity and hunger (Noko, 2016, Uko-Aviomoh, 2017)

Ensuring Sustainable Family Living In An Unstable Economy

The family is the building block of the society. Proper family upbringing coupled with positive environmental influences can mold children into responsible adults. Strong families produce functional leaders and responsible members of the household who are the epicenter of sustainable family living.

Sustainable family living provides love, confidence, protection, food, shelter, warmth, healthcare, formal and informal education, homeliness, clothing, financial support, leadership training discipline, moral training, security and so on. This helps in transmitting norms, values, ideas and culture to family members and the society at large. The family is the Centre for generating all indices of human leadership and economic potential. There is need to strengthen sustainable family living to maximize economic development

Home Economics knowledge and skills if well utilized will not only enhance sustainable family living but will go a long way to promote income generating activities which can alleviate economic instability. Home Economics is passionate about family living and development of strong families. Strong and sustainable families are responsible for producing responsible leaders who are compassionate, firm, upright, accountable, focused, selfless with creative ideas which are policy and economy driven.

Conclusion

Good governance, strong families' functional family heads, responsible household members, coupled with knowledge and skills drawn from Home Economics education were found to be offshoots of sustainable family living and the main determinants of economic stability. Economic instability will remain a thing of the past if sustainable family living is always maintained.

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