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## EXPECTED ROLES OF FAMILY LEADERSHIP AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The role of the family as the first agent of primary socialization is widely recognized. As the principal socializing agency of the child, the family is very important because the child comes into the world through the family. In the family or the home the child is taught the first things he/she needs to know. The paper explores the definition of family, leadership, types of leadership, importance of leadership, nation building and contributions of family leadership to nation building. Family leadership according to Odedele and Egotanwa (2010) consists of various families based on the family setting, age and kinship. No group can exist effectively without a leader. The welfare of the nation rest on individual families. Family is the bedrock of the society and can be proven by the fact that all over the world every society is structured by the same pattern. It is indeed true that our family is the basic unit of the society and it is considered as the frontline security of our nation. The rise and fall of the nation depends on the rise and fall of the family. If the family is weak, so is the nation. The family is one of the basic moulders of a nation's culture and value. The family leaders should be a model of exemplary character for the children. They should set good example and help the children to emulate them. They should set and maintain a good value system and standard of living for the family. Building a strong family will require effective family policy. The fundamental role of the family is to ensure continuation through procreation socialization etc. If the family can succeed in its responsibility of building its members, transfer good moral behaviours, then nation building would succeed. The woes in the society today among other factors, are a function of the lapses in the contribution of the family towards building a formidable society. This is because the society is a collection of individual families. The family is the platform where the mindset is first moulded which will end up manifesting not just in the family but in the society as well.*

*Keywords: Family, Leadership and Nation Building.*

### Introduction

The family is the basic unit in any society. Each society is made up of many families and the welfare of the nation rests on the individual families. As a unit, the family carries out specific functions for the survival of the society. Within and outside the family individual family members carry out specific functions. Through marriages and childbearing, families are perpetuated. The need to maintain and perpetuate families emphasizes the importance of child bearing and rearing (Eboh and Egwu, 2014)

### Concept of Family

Family is a group consisting of one or two parents and their children who are closely related by blood through marriage. Onyesom (2012) sees family as a group of people who are closely related by blood. The family in this respect originated from both men and women coming together usually through marriage which is a legal union of man and woman to become husband and wife. Odor and

Nwaham (2005) described family as a group of related kins linked by blood and marriage who occupy a household and usually are characterized by economic co-operation and solidarity. By this assertion, they mean that family is a group consisting of parents and children. The family in any society is an institutional structure which develops through society's deliberate efforts to get certain tasks done. Family is also a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children owned or adopted by the sexually cohabiting adults; Edinyang (2012) defines family as a group of persons (man and woman) living together having been officially known and accepted by both parents as husband and wife and perhaps with children if they are blessed with them.

### **Concept of Leader/Leadership**

Leadership is the exercise of power or influence on a group of people to achieve a goal. Therefore a leader is a person who co-ordinate or direct the activities of a group of people or community. Man is a social animal because he lives with other members in different forms of societies; such as families, schools, villages, clubs, town etc. In this regard, there are laid-down rules of conduct which must be obeyed. For effective obedience, there must be a leader who co-ordinates or directs the implementation of the basic rules and regulation for peaceful co-existence. Therefore, a leader is a person who controls or directs the affairs of a group in a society while leadership is the ability to influence a group of people to achieve a goal. It is a process of influencing people toward the achievement of predetermined end.

Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. Successful leaders are able to influence others. They use their innate qualities to inspire a workforce, a team, or a nation to achieve goals. Leaders can see beyond themselves and beyond the task at hand to look at achieving long-term goals by utilizing their strengths combined with the strengths of others. Effective leaders are able to manage relationship with others and create positive outcomes. Leaders make change happen but their values remain steady and unchanging. According to Graig (2005) leadership is defined as a social influence, process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organizational goals. While Robert (2004) affirms that leadership involves a complex interaction among the leaders, the followers, and the situation.

Hackman (2006) classified these conceptions into four primary definitional theme. These are: Leadership is about what you act. From this perspective leadership is defined as the exercise of influence or power. To identify leaders, we need to determine who is influencing whom. For instance, Hersey (1984) defines leadership as "any attempt to influence the behaviour of another individual or group.

Leadership is about what you do. This definitional thread focuses on the role that leaders play.

Leadership is about how you work with others. This definitional theme emphasizes collaboration. Leaders and followers establish mutual purposes and work together as partners to reach their goals (Poulin 2007).

### **Concept of Family Leadership**

Odedele and Egotanwa (2010) see family leadership as leaders in various families based on the family setting, age and kinship. They are the heads in various families that direct the affairs of families.

The father in Nigeria setting is the head of the nuclear family while the oldest man in an extended family is the leader.

Apart from family leadership, there are other types of leadership such as:

1. Traditional leadership
2. Charismatic leadership
3. Legal or political leadership
4. Educational leadership
5. Professional leadership

**Traditional Leadership:** This kind of leadership is based on tradition and customs. The leadership is acquired through inheritance. The instructions and orders are unquestionable. Examples are Obas, Obis, Emirs, Ezes, Sultans etc.

**Charismatic Leadership:** This is the type of leadership that is based on personal quality. Such extra personal quality influences others to accept instruction and orders from such an individual e.g. class monitor.

#### **Legal and Political Leadership**

This is the type of leadership which is derived or acquired from law and constitution. This kind of leadership is held by those who have legal qualifications e.g. governors, president etc.

**Professional and Economic Leadership:** This type of leadership is based on individual qualification or technical know-how. Instruction is accepted from such individual because he is an expert in that very field.

**Religious Leadership:** Religious leadership is based on the highest position of the individual in such a setting.

There are also different leadership styles which include:

1. Authoritarian leadership
2. Democratic leadership
3. Laissez-faire leadership
4. Authoritarian Leadership

The classical approach according to Arubaye (2015) sees autocratic leader as a person that retains as much power and decision-making authority as much as possible. He does not allow his subordinates to participate in decision making process. He exercises total or absolute power. Everything is centered on the leader, and complete compliance is expected of the followers. He instills fear on those working under him. His rewards and punishment are structured.

#### **Democratic Leadership**

This implies more to a liberal form of control. He encourages his subordinates to be part of the decision making process. Followers participate in decision making and free press is guaranteed (Freedom of speech).

#### **Laissez-faire Leadership**

This style is neither autocratic nor democratic. It has no specific direction. Hence, orders are flouted with impunity. It is an "I don't care for easy does it" style of leadership. Power is given to the subordinates to determine their goals, make decisions and resolve problems on their own.

### **Importance of Leadership**

The importance of leadership at the national level could not have been captured vividly than in the following statement by Myles Munroe (1993):

*"Whenever a nation has lack of quality, legitimate and just leaders, national deterioration occurs. Quality leadership is a key to a prosperous and peaceful life and nation" (Myles Munroe (1993) Becoming a leader).*

Quality in the above quotation includes being competent, knowledgeable and skilled in the job of national leadership. Legitimacy in this context is more than winning an election. It has to do with the acceptance by the governed of leaders who command mandate and trust people to whom they can entrust the authority of governance. The third is just, it is known that a feeling of exclusion or injustice by a crucial mass of any nation on tribal, ethnic or social lives often leads to conflicts, loss of social capital and ultimately undermines progress.

According to Stephen (2003), he stated that effective leaders tend to display three important characteristics which are: character, competence and care which he labeled as three Cs of legacy building leadership.

The major distinguishing mark between functional and dysfunctional leadership tends to be in their character. This includes honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, principle-centredness. Leaders are competent to be honest, maintain their integrity, be trustworthy persons and also have a principle of centredness.

Leaders must be competent in terms of the relevant leadership skills and also in terms of the development of management oversight ability. Leaders are supposed to be competent and this will assist them to govern their followers.

The last one is care. Leaders owe it as a duty to care for their followers and this will make them to have a sense of belonging. Followers must feel empathy that the leaders understand their situations and that in some form they are valued, through participation. Leaders can achieve this through empowerment and mobilization or what Kouzes and Posner (1995) call "encouraging the heart" (<https://www.studymode.com>).

### **Concept of Nation Building**

Nation building refers to a concerted effort to bring people together for the purpose of achieving common objectives. In other words, it is a planned and determined effort to bring people together for the purpose of achieving common goals. Nation building is the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state by unifying people, so that political stability and socio-economic viability are ensured (ask.com, 2014).

Omolade (1998) described nation building as an attempt to promote the survival of a nation and to build a virile and dynamic nation. It is an attempt to harness all the potentials of the nation, human and natural resources for the benefit of the citizen of a nation. Nation building also involves the contributions of the individuals, group and organizations in the realm of politics, economics, religion, social and cultural.

### **Requirements of Nation Building**

The following are some of the requirements of Nation Building:

**Good Leadership:** For a nation to be strong, it must have a predicated honest and capable leadership. The leadership of any nation must exhibit the qualities of patriotism, commitment and must lead by example. Any leader who wants to build a strong nation must show transparent, accountability in order to instill discipline among his followership. Corrupt and lazy leadership breed corrupt and lazy followership.

**Democratic Values:** A good leader should be democratic in nature so that he can carry his followers along. Any nation or body who does not embrace democracy is bound to peril or crumble. The views of people should be welcome. People should be allowed to express their views freely and fairly. The acceptance of other people's view allow flexibility and adjustment in the government.

**Respect for the constitution of the people:** A constitution represents the laws by which and with which the government operates to develop its people in peace and orderly conduct. It is the document which spells out what should and should not be done in the country. It states clearly the three arms or tiers of government and their functions to prevent them from encroaching on the duties and responsibilities of others. The leaders should have regard and also work with what is in the constitution in order to build a strong nation.

**Intelligent and fair uses of Resources:** There should be fair and equitable distribution of resources by the leaders. Most conflicts in many countries arise from disappointment of leaders who distribute amenities unequally.

**Equal Distribution of Political Powers:** The political powers should not be skewed. The appointment of powers should be equally distributed. Room should not be given to where some are regarded as first and second class citizens. All the ethnic groups in the country should be well represented in order to build a strong nation.

**Recognition of the Minority Ethnic Group:** The minority group should be accorded recognition. The minority group who are the producers of the nation's wealth should not be marginalized. Fair treatment should be given to all ethnic groups whether majority or minority to enhance effective nation building.

#### **Expected Roles of Family Leadership to Nation Building**

The family is the first agent of primary socialization of the child. In the family the child is taught the things he/she needs to know. Things like morals, good attitudes, acceptable behaviours, religious beliefs, language, ways of greetings of his people, domestic works as well as how to interact with other members of the society are learnt by the children from the family. They are either taught directly or learnt through observation and imitation at home. The welfare of society rests on individual families. Family is the bedrock of society and can be proven by the fact that all over the world every society is structured by the same pattern. A man and woman marry and form a family. This process is repeated multiple times making multiple families which form villages, regions and eventually countries. When several countries come together they form a continent and all the continents make up the world. The foundation of this process is the family. The functions or roles of family leadership cannot be overemphasized. Family leadership promotes education, children acquire both formal and information education from the family. The best treasure that families should pass to their children is education which will make them to have a bigger chance of achieving success. With proper education, they can become whoever they want to be and contribute to the development of the nation. The family leaders from individual families, should inculcate right education into their children that will enable them to accept other people, irrespective of ethnic group or tribe. The type of education should be the one that

will enable them to see the needs of other people and accept their country first before personal interest. The family leaders should be able to contribute to building of a virile nation, if they could be able to give the child the right type of education which will make them to do away with discrimination and be neutral in all their dealings.

Family leaders should act as a good role model to the family members. Leaders from individual families should be a model of exemplary character for their children to emulate. They should set and maintain a good value system and standard of living for their families. By raising responsible and righteous people, you are already helping in creating a better country. The best way to train children is to inculcate discipline into them. The family leaders should themselves be disciplined so that the people they are piloting, will follow as children learn through emulations. Family leaders should give proper guidance, control and direction to family members. The leaders from various families are expected to be fair and firm in dealing with the family members and get the family well behaved.

Direction is very important in the upbringing of children. The family leaders owe it as a duty to direct the members of their families in a right way which will eventually be of good help to the society and also contribute to effective nation building. King Solomon the wisest man in the history of mankind as recorded in the book of Proverbs 22:6 said "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it. A child from a disciplined home and is well nurtured will not go contrary to the ethics of his nation rather he will contribute positively to the building of his nation. Children from homes where the family leader are fair and firm in dealing with every member of the family will practice same outside the home or in a larger society. If this function is carried out effectively, one will see that there will be equitable distribution of resources by our leaders. In other words, the leaders will be fair and firm with every member of this nation irrespective of their tribal group.

Another important role expected of family Leadership is appreciation/motivation. According to Eboh and Egwu (2014), it is important to be aware of the effort of family members and express gratitude with meaningful words and gestures. This helps to increase family bond between family members. Motivation is essential for the upward movement of the family. It is important for the family leaders to motivate good behaviour and hard work to give the child more encouragement. Punishment should be the reward for deviant behavior. A child who has this spirit of appreciation and motivation right from home will possess positive attitude towards nation building.

Another role expected of family leaders is character development. Alexis (1945) stated that family is the first institution to teach habit of hearts and discourage the worst excesses of individualism, by emphasizing responsibilities to others. Ideally, children develop a sense of belonging right from home and acquire skills essential for life by watching their parents. Family leaders being able to mould their children's character in a positive way, and making them to acquire the essential skills needed in life will have positive effect on the child. This will assist in building a virile nation.

Affection is also an essential role which family leaders are expected to carry out in individual families. It is the duty of individual family leaders to show love to the family members. This affection is essential for growth and development. This will equally assist the child as he goes into the wider society that instead of being hostile, he will extend affection as being taught from home.

The leaders should carry out their civic responsibilities and also encourage their children to do same. That is, they should exercise their right of franchise at election.

The family has great responsibilities in building the society because it is the unit of the society. In other words, the individual families put together make up the society at large. Building a strong

family will require effective family policy. The fundamental role of the family is to ensure continuity through procreation and socialization. If the family can succeed in its responsibility of building its members, transfer good moral behaviour, the woes in the society will be minimal. The woes in the society today among other factors, is as a result of lapses in the contribution of the family towards building a formidable society. This is because the society is a collection of the individual families. The family is a platform where the mindset is first moulded which will end up manifesting not just in the family but in the society.

#### **Orderliness and Fear of God**

Family leaders should bring up their children in the fear of God. A child whose parents are godly will most probably himself or herself be godly. Also a child who grows under parents who cheat and do other evils will see it as the norms and do same from early in life. How beautiful and glorious Nigeria would have been if all family leaders have the fear of God and brought up their children in the same manner? Then our resources would have been harnessed and used to benefit able Nigerians. All Nigerians would not have known poverty and the suffering, which most Nigerians meanwhile experience, would have been avoided. A child brought up in the fear of God will be very uncomfortable to see people suffer deprivation as we have in Nigeria while he or she lives in opulence, acquiring properties all over cities of the world. If every family in a nation has the fear of God, then that nation will stand firm. Where there is orderliness in families then the orderliness in the nation is ensured.

The rise and fall of the nation depends on the rise and fall of the family. It is indeed true that our family is the basic unit of our society and it is considered as the frontline security like a feet, it is the foundation of man's body system, for it carries the weight of the body which characterizes the nation as a whole. If the family is weak, so is the nation. Also the family is one of the basic moulders of a nation's culture and value. It is the natural and primary right duty of the parents in rearing the youth for civic efficiency and development of moral character. It serves as the root of production of primary individual who become priest, governor and law enforcers, artist, teachers, businessmen, reporters, etc.

#### **Conclusion**

The family is the corner stone of the society. The welfare of the nation rests on individual families. The rise and fall of the nation depends on the rise and fall of the family. Therefore the individual family leaders should be a model for the children to emulate. They should have the fear of God in them which they should pass on to their children who will be future leaders of the nation. In order to ensure sustainable development in our society, the job must begin from the micro-unit which is the society. The family has a decisive role having the capacity and responsibility to impact on the entire society by its positive examples. The parents must show love to their children by spending time with them and building intimate personal relationships. Spouses must love each other according to the pattern of Jesus Christ. In order to fulfill its roles in the society, the family must educate their children in moral values so that they will not deviate from it and also pass these values to the future generation, making society a safe and happy place for all people to live and enjoy.

#### **Recommendations**

The family leaders should be a model to the family members because family life is an initiation into life in the society.



Children should be taught the importance of assisting one another at home so that as they go into the outer world, they will have the desire to help the nation. Charity they said begins at home. Therefore every child should be given good parental care and upbringing so as to inculcate good morals in the child that he will not deviate from it.

The leaders of individual families should be disciplined, honest, patriotic, fair and firm, in dealing with other fellow beings so that the family members who will be future leaders will follow suit. If individual families could carry out their functions judiciously, building a nation will not be an uphill task. Family leaders should not be autocratic neither be laissez-faire leaders. They should be democratic in nature so that the family members who will turn out to be future leaders will give room to peoples view which will enhance effective governance and nation building. Individual family leaders should maintain their integrity, be trustworthy and also have principles of centredness.

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