

Socio-Ethical Concerns for Changes in Parental Roles among Couples in Etche, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The effects of combining career and parenting have been a subject of concern to researchers because it presupposes a transition in family roles and responsibilities. However, the positive effects have been given more vents, while the negative impacts have been downplayed. This study corrects such imbalance by deepening discussions on the gains and especially perils of the burgeoning new role order, particularly the grave moral constraints it poses to child's proper upbringing. The work examines the impact of working on parents, their parenting and their children. It views parents' work as part of the ecosystem that exerts a major influence on children's development. Aside bibliographic sources, data were generated through unstructured interview among 30 married working class parents in Etche, Rivers State and were content analyzed. The findings reveal that, indeed, there is occupational mobility that has altered the traditional agrarian economy to urban industrial society, leaving parents to work outside the home. Beyond its much emphasized gains, the change in parental roles births equal or even more negative outcomes especially on moral development of children. Its negative effects on children's behavior constitute moral burdens with social implications. The paper also highlights the nature of these changes, as well as the change driving factors. The paper recommends that parents should place premium on moral upbringing of their children far above material concerns; negotiate and agree on their roles particularly, who between them should take less time consuming job, in order to take proper care of the children.

Key words: Career, Etche, Socio-Ethical Concerns, Parental Roles, Work and Parenting

Introduction

Child care patterns have to do with the ability of parents or a family to provide attention, time, guidance and support to meet the physical, mental, and

social needs of children throughout their various stages of growth. In this sense, "care presupposes the task of guiding, leading, or managing" (Srikandi, 2020, p.339). According to Darajat cited in Srikandi (2020, p.339), "parenting means educating and caring for children, taking care of their eating, drinking, clothing, and success in the first period, until they mature into adulthood." In view of prevailing social circumstances, the family responsibility is quite huge and tough: it is supposed to take proper care of the children's health, physical development, overall education, the development of their intellectual affinities, as well as creation for a better moral values, convictions and attitudes (Ceka & Murati, 2016, p.61).

Indeed parental roles have to do with the responsibilities of parents to form and maintain close emotional relationships with the children and modify children's behaviours, so they can function in a competent and socially acceptable manner. How well parents in Etche are actually actualizing these goals in a rapidly changing society has become a subject of scholarly investigation. This constitutes one of the key concerns of this paper.

As long as the division of labour between men and women remained clear as in the traditional setting; where the husbands' responsibility was for wage earning and the wives' was for the performance of domestic chores, male and female roles were clearly defined. But recent changes in women's participation in the labour force and in the definition of masculinity, has given rise to a state of ambiguities and tensions as well as new opportunities for self-fulfillment. Many socio-economic factors account for both the changes observed in family roles over the past four decades and the great diversity in contemporary lifestyles (Brooks, 1988, p.7). As parents especially married couples in Etche land of Rivers State move from their traditional roles of total care for the child to the modern practice of sharing their time between family demands and career demands, the children suffer whatever the attendant outcomes may be. What affects the family invariably affects the society. In other words, the changes in parental roles have social implications. There is urgent need to address the impact of the organizational setting on the family, in terms of dual careers and organizational demands that impinge upon family life.

The paper is divided into three main sections. Section one examines the nature of the changes in parental roles among married couples, section two

traces the factors that constitute the change drivers, while section three critically and objectively establishes the consequences of the changes in parental roles. In an attempt to generate information on the socio-ethical implications of changing roles of parents, thirty parents in Etche land, Rivers State were interviewed in addition to secondary sources.

I. Nature of the Changes in Parental Roles

Family unit consists of parents and child or children, but over the past one hundred years, our understanding of what families are and what they do has drastically changed. Today, families are varied than ever before. In majority of families, both parents have paid job (Brooks, 1988, pp.2-3). In the past, in the so called developed societies as well in some developing societies, it was commonly assumed that women's main roles were the ones they performed at home, but contemporary social and economic trends have drastically altered women's roles. Majority of married couples now want to have both a family and a career. Indeed, expectations of marital roles have been substantially redefined (Keith, 1988, pp.214-215). Most families no longer adhere to the traditional ideal in which the husband is the sole provider, while the wife is a full time housekeeper and mother. In addition to this shift towards dual wage-earner families, another development is the pressure for more equal partnerships - marriages in which the tasks of home-keeping and child care, as well as wage earning, are shared more equitably between husband and wife. Indeed, this new emphasis on more equal marital partnerships is redefining marital roles and relationships, causing marriages of many contemporary couples to be quite different from their parents' marriages (Keith, 1988, pp.212-213).

II. Factors Responsible for Changes in Parental Roles in Etche, Rivers State

Many interacting socio-economic factors are responsible for both changes in family life and great diversity in contemporary lifestyles of married couples in Etche. Some of these factors include but not limited to the following:

A. The Influence of Colonialism /Western Education

Following the advent of the European imperialists, many men became personal attendants/cooks to the white missionaries. The language barrier

between the white men and the Africans, made the former to embark on the education of the latter. The men were given more access to education for a very long time before the women. This contact with the Western world brought also with it the wage labour. Colonial rule entrenched the European's ideas about the social role of the sexes (the Victoria Ideology of “male-breadwinner” and the “dependent” female) into their administrative behaviour in the colonies. The men having been educated, subsequently gained employment in the new production system: trading, administrative processes, and nation building, thus, leaving the home (Aina, 1978, pp.16-17). Sadly, at the inception of colonialism in Africa, assertiveness and frankness became unwomanly and a history, thus, ushering in a different form of patriarchy (Josiah, 2019, p. 161).

B. Attainment of Independence

However, the attainment of independence from colonial rule by many African countries gave birth to the introduction of free primary education in some of these countries. This gave rise to education of both the males and to a certain degree, the females. The establishment of many secondary, technical, commercial, teacher training institutions and universities in the country correspondingly fuelled the desire of many men and women, including the married to study and choose their own careers (Boateng, 2002, p.5). This view was validated by majority of the respondents interviewed who identified the quest for knowledge as one of the reasons parents pursue career. Awoyokun (2002) equally identified the relative increment of girls' access to education as one of the factors responsible for changes in gender roles (p.289). About nine percent of the respondents interviewed opined that the attainment of independence was a remote cause as it created demand for employees in white collar occupations to fill the various agencies of government following the exit of the white managers/administrators of the economy.

C. Economic Factors

Financial pressures create day-to-day problems and cause parents to experience increased irritability, depression and demoralization (Brooks, pp.8-9). Keith has also argued that most women work because their family needs more than one income to purchase basic necessities or to obtain the luxuries of a middle-class life. He went further to say that women may work to keep their

families from the edge of poverty, or to pay for a house rent or to pay for the children's educational expenses; in this regard, they view outside work as an extension of their family role (Keith, 1988, p.224). A total of 57.7% of the respondents believe that the major reasons parents work is to enable them cater for themselves and their families. To these parents, paid employment helps to boost their financial status, and thereby enable them provide reasonably for the family in light of prevailing economic realities. From the submissions of these parents, it could be inferred that the quest for material advancement accounts for their exodus into organized/wage earning workforce.

D. Aspiration for Equality among the Sexes

Respondents totaling about 67.4% who were majorly males alleged that the liberation movement and the struggle for gender equality among the sexes have resulted in the unbridled competition among the sexes for equal work, equal pay. Keith (1988) noted that most working wives are no doubt drawn by the visions of fulfillment and equality with their husbands (p.224). Central to the gender equality debate is the egalitarian ideology (egalitarianism), which attempts to obliterate all gender role-distinctions (Koranteng-Pipim, 2001, pp.139-142). According to World Bank research paper; there should be equality of opportunity (including equality of rewards for work and equality in access to human capital and productive resources that enable opportunity) to both men and women. It further advocates for freedom of women and men to choose different (or similar) roles and different (or similar) outcomes in tandem with their preferences and goals (World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2001. p. 23).

E. The Mass Media

Some of the respondents identified majorly home videos (films), entertainment and romantic magazines, as well as some of the plays/dramas acted on televisions as contributory factors. These respondents argue that by watching and reading some of these films and literatures, which reflect more the lifestyle and culture of the white man, parents, especially the young ones and women crave for these fictional or make-belief life-styles. About 57.6% of the respondents were quick to point out that fictional picture painted by the actors which tries to ascribe opulence, respect, satisfaction and fulfillment, crisis free

marital life to working couples in the film while projecting those who are in the rural areas and not engaged in paid jobs as wretched, beggarly, poor, unhappy, hungry and unfulfilled have negatively affected most contemporary parents particularly in Etche, Rivers State. Sofola (1973) has argued in a similar sense, when he asserts that among many factors influencing change in Nigeria is the media. The cinema has played important and all-pervading role in importing foreign, especially, American culture into the country. The television, in addition to the cinema, since its introduction in 1959, has been operating in influential fashion (pp.15-16).

F. Quest for Improved Social Status

About 36.8% of the respondents identified the quest for improved self-esteem cum enhanced social status, as one of the factors that drive couples to take up paid employments. The male respondents opined that it is no longer fashionable for men to maintain their traditional roles and still be respected either by their wives or the society. They argued that pursuing a career or taking paid employment boosts one's self-concept before the society. The wives who responded equally alleged that a woman who decides to remain a full time house wife in the present society is seen as a "burden" to the husband. The husband's family sees her only as a consumer who contributes nothing meaningfully to improve their social and economic status. The women also noted that some of the women, who are working, look down on those who are not working, seeing them as inferior, of lower class or old fashioned. Davis (1982) echoes similar opinion when she writes that if a woman chooses to stay at home and take care of her home and children, then she suffers the loss of self-esteem and self- concept that society gives to those who are gainfully employed (p. viii).

Keith (1988) expresses similar sentiment when he observes that women derive some satisfaction from their jobs, one of which is that they feel useful and important in a way that being a home maker often does not make them feel; that working also offers the satisfactions of being with other adults outside the home environment (p.224). In his own contribution, Awoyokun (2002) argues that as demanded by the condition for measuring success, inordinate ambition to peak in career, love for materialism and social respect have substituted reproductive and family duties (p.290). Indisputably, engaging in wage paying

jobs, especially outside the home, help women widen their social contacts and networks.

G. Divorce, Illness and Death of a Spouse

Desertion and death of a partner send some parents into industry. While 32.0% of all the parents interviewed listed the desertion or death of a spouse as one of the reasons couples take up paid employment in Etche, 17.0% of them noted that the incapacitation of their partner especially the husband forces many women in Etche to go into the industry. The response was immediate in the case of most widows. They expressed their helplessness and constraints in providing materially for the needs of the children and maintain themselves. This view has been scholarly validated. For example, Gwendolyn (1925) reports that just like widowed working women, deserted working women represent homes deprived of their chief wage-earners. He argues that when the chief wage-earner abandons his family, the wife has practically no choice but, as a matter of necessity, embrace paid employment of one kind or the other. He further argues that the death of the husband presents an economic burden, which cannot be relegated to the background (p.23).

Other factors identified by respondents include: Attitude of new generation churches who ordain women as pastors and elders and allow them to occupy significant positions. The elevation of the status of women by these new generation churches has fuelled the spirit of competition in the mind of other women. Respondents opined that this new practice has contributed to making women abandon their traditional roles as they travel here and there, counseling, teaching, and so on. They also identified the civil war as another cause which created a lot of vacancies in organizations due to loss of human capital during the war.

III. Effects of Changing Roles of Parents in Etche on the Moral Life of the Family

For many people, the child's greatest development influence comes from the family. The effect occurs during infancy and adolescence. Unfortunately, dysfunctional families also produce negative effects on old and young. So, families can produce great happiness or great misery. Many children and adults receive their best emotional, moral, social, mental and physical push from the

family. However, there are those who experience only suffering and anxiety in their poisoned family relationships. Although the direction of family life could be influenced by external circumstances that sometimes are beyond parental control, they can still be managed by the family (Raul Posse, *et al*, 2001, pp. 13, 14). This section of the paper discusses some of the positive and negative effects of changes in parental roles.

A. Negative Effects of Changing Roles of Parents on Family Life

Though the negative effects of combining parenting and career could be many, this work shall narrow itself to the moral angle. About forty-seven percent of the research respondents agree that parents are no longer spending enough time with their children, due to the demands of work. This equally has made it difficult for parents to adequately give their children the kind of sound moral education they would have loved to. Parents hurry to work in the morning with less attention to the child's welfare. Such parents come back later in the afternoon or evening very tired and sometimes when the children are about to sleep. The next morning, the same routine repeats itself, leaving little or no time for the child's moral upbringing, to check regularly and consistently, their educational progress in their schools. As Dhammananda (n.d.) noted, a child at its very early age needs the attention, affection, love and care of the parents, when a child is denied these, such a child will be emotionally handicapped and will find the world a bewildering place to live in. He admonished parents to spend more quality time with their children – giving them the gift of healthy parenting instead of leaving them to the care of relations, day care centers or paid servants (p.3). Brooks (1988) has also noted that several studies have proved that when infants in the first year of life experience more than twenty (20) hours of non-parental care per week, they are at risk for having insecure attachments to their mothers at twelve and eighteen months of age; that preschoolers whose mothers worked more than ten (10) hours a week when they were infants are more likely to develop behaviour problems, and these results affect both boys and girls irrespective of their poverty status. She went further to state that there is a symbiotic relationship between maternal employment in the first year of a child's life and lowered cognitive performance by the child in preschool as well as distractibility and inability to focus attention on tasks in kindergarten; that lack of supervision and monitoring of early

adolescents is associated with increased use of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. Self-care, Brooks still argues, breeds feelings of greater autonomy and exposes early teens to risk of being influenced by peers who are substance abusers (pp.228-230). Dhammananda added that, devoid of parental affection and guidance, the child may grow up to be a delinquent (P.5).

The principal result of parental absence from the home had been to deprive their children care and supervision. It leads to weakening of parental control. According to majority of the respondents, their long absence from home leaves them little time to personally transmit cultural, social and religious values to their children at the time when children are best attuned to receive them. According to these parents, bulk of their energies and creativity are invested in their work and thus, the resources they commit to the family are merely the 'leftovers'. They expressed the dilemma they face – rushing home from a hard day's work, weary, and still meets household chores waiting for them. When the day's work is finished, it would be time for supper, and then watch television. The time left is hardly enough to attend to the child's need for love and affection. Some of these parents further submitted that they even take their office work home and bring back stress and tension they gathered at their work place. As a result, they may react violently or irritably at the children. Explaining one of the effects of work on parenting, Books (1988) argues that work increases the stress of parenting by demanding extra work hours, creating impossible deadlines, and fostering a negative work atmosphere so that parents are more irritable and impatient when at home with their children. When parents are upset and frustrated, they argue with each other, and give each other less support, thereby causing a decline in parenting because parents are not in agreement with each other. The direct impact of such psychological tension on parenting and on the children manifests in parents not communicating with children as openly or share power as much as in less stressful times. This tension can affect children's school work and behavior (pp, 18, 220).

It is the argument of this paper that time is precious and that the quality of time shared by parents and child is important. Quality time means being all there with the child, having active play with the baby. Parents and children learn about each other's special strength and weaknesses as they interact and work together. How is quality time related to quantity of time? Brooks provides insight on this when she opines that quality time is time spent with children

when parents have the energy and interest to focus on the children putting other concerns and worries aside. This could be difficult when so much needs to be done (Brooks, 1988, p. 237).

The lapses created by work on parenting are being exploited by the secular media. Majority of the parents interviewed expressed fear and regrets over how the secular media is tirelessly working to upstage their parental authority in educating the children. Behaviour of most youths are now a product of their consumption of the 'junks' served by the media through immoral music, films, magazines, literatures, bill boards, etc. Akpa (2001) also argues that:

The much cherished story times in the village squares under the moonlight at night have gone with the winds with the advent of television sets and home video. In like manner, all the morals and virtues that were taught during those story times have also gone with the winds, in exchange for fictitious or sentimental stories and scenes on the television, things that have little or no moral or virtues to inculcate in the contemporary African youth. It is therefore not surprising to find educated African youth who lack common sense or what the elders call native intelligence, which is totally different from Western education (pp.6, 7).

Akpa (2001) also goes further to discuss the effects of the mass media on the African youth. He posits that the African Youth constitute the largest media audience and are indeed the major target of most of the media advertisements. He opines that most materials and programmes from the media are uncensored and pornographic. The bill boards have the messages boldly written while the warning like “The Federal Ministry of Health warns that smokers are liable to die young” is placed at an obscure angle in small characters that are almost difficult to read without one standing closer. Because most of the advertisements like those of cigarette and alcoholic drinks portray successful men and women, the immature youth is deceived to believe that success and acceptance are associated with deviant behavior (pp.32-33). Awoyokun (2002) expresses similar sentiments when he argues that because parents as educators are unavailable to minister to the needs of attuning the values of their children in consonance with the splendour of virtues, the children resort to the media for 'modern' standards of behaviour; the children are left to the vortex of their own

whims, friends, and the media (pp. 289- 290).

Another negative effect of work on parenting is that it causes excessive demand on children for services in the home. Out of the 26 respondents who answered the structured interview question on who does the cooking, cleaning, and other household chores in their home, five (representing 19.2%) revealed that the children were involved in the said domestic works. This means that wage-earning by the parents undoubtedly exerts additional burden on the children. Such children are forced to assume a greater responsibility for their own well-being than children of single wage families. While other children are enjoying recreational activities, these children are busy helping at home. Their involvement into the household duties could also be through marketing, preparing their own lunches, and eventually sharing in other domestic works. (Gwendolyn, cited in Onyezonwu, 2008, pp.82, 83). Similarly, Brooks (1988) observes that working parents may find out that they demand too much from the children – asking them to perform house works that are too difficult. For example, asking them to care for younger children when they are just able to care for themselves; asking energetic children to be quiet while a parent sleeps in the day time so that he/she can work at night. Parents must watch their expectations of children: the ability of the child to perform the task assigned to him/her; if the child is able to, the amount of work or responsibility must not be so great that the child is robbed of childhood pleasures. Brooks further maintains that when parents permit their children to come home and care for themselves, the children may feel bad and rejected; accidents or mistreatment may befall these children when alone; children may not develop appropriate skills when unsupervised, such as not becoming responsible for school work and other tasks; and children may engage in disapproved behaviour like delinquent acting out or premature sexual activity (pp. 233, 237).

Another evil of combining work and parenting is that it leads to transfer of parenthood to either a house help, a relative as house help or day care givers. The parents are God's agents to train the children in godly principles. The life mission of parents is to educate their children for usefulness in the society. Parents who take jobs that consume all their quality time make human plans to shift their responsibility to a third party. This choice can lead to the poor handling of the child. It could equally lead to breaking up of the home among other associated ills. When working parents resort to hiring inexperienced

house helps, transfer their parental role to a bigger child from the village or neighbourhood, such inexperienced house help can cause damage to the home, especially to the little child. The house help may not know how to change napkins or diapers and the clothes of the baby. When she hears the baby cry, she brings the feeding bottle to the mouth of the baby, whereas the baby's cry may be complain of too much food or pain. Some of the worse house helps taken from the slums of the city will consume all the food of the baby immediately the parents leave the home. Thus, the little baby is deprived of the parental love, smile, patience, touch, song, protection and assurance. The child raised in this kind of atmosphere grows up to hate the society, and be very wicked (Boateng, 2002, p.13).

Some parents reluctantly engage the services of a more mature young adult house help. Some of them who are from the city have experienced the corruption of the city life – they are “spoilt” so to say. When parents transfer the care of the child into their hands, they bear unholy and immoral influence over the children. Some of them watch pornographic or other romantic films with the little children. Some seduce or force the little male child to have sex with them. While some of them keep sexual partners outside the home who come in to have sex with them even when the children are at home and the parents are away. All these immoral acts have taken their toll on the young children who are exposed too early to sexual immorality and related vices. Some of the female house helps have equally taken over the husband of their mistress causing a divorce or a polygamous home. This also has its multiplier effects on children's moral life.

The use of Day Care services is not without its own attendant problems. About 73.0% of the research respondents alleged that some of the affordable Day Care centers are below acceptable standard, while most of the good ones are quiet expensive since they are all privately-owned. Some of the care-givers are not affectionate and friendly. They are not calm, gentle and fair to the children, they are inexperienced, lack sense of humour, use abusive language and cannot guarantee the happiness of the children. Such centers lack warm and homelike atmosphere, the children are not disciplined or corrected in love. Because children spend greater portion of their daily time in these centers, they bear a lot of influence on the character and behaviour of the children. When these care givers cannot impart by words and practice, the sterling values of tenderness, compassion, sharing, concern, patience, tolerance, etc, the children

grow up to condone aggression and related immoral behaviours. As Brooks (1988) rightly pointed out, children are at risk because an increasing percentage of them are experiencing poor-quality care in the early years of life, which puts them at risk for later social and cognitive difficulties. Clearly, secure attachment to a teacher requires the same qualities in the teacher as those that promote attachment to parents (229- 230). Ideally, the first school is the home, and parents are the first teachers while children usually learn their elementary lessons in good and evil from their parents. Parents are the teachers at home; teachers are the parents in school. As children sit at the feet of adults during their juvenile age, they are influenced by their thoughts, words and deeds. It is therefore expected of parents to create the most congenial atmosphere both at home and in the school as well as show exemplary conduct rather than inculcate vices into their children's impressionable minds (Sutta cited in Dhammananda, 1986).

The family is supposed to provide daily support that serves as an oasis in the middle of daily activities both to the child and adult. The family provides a setting for meaningful communication. When interpersonal relationships develop in a friendly atmosphere, they stimulate easy and agreeable communication between members. When shouts, threats and taunts are absent, happiness and trust can develop. Good home relationships, enlivened by easy and friendly conversation in which trust and calm prevail, are characterized by friendly attitudes blended with affectionate expressions, which produce an appealing home environment and also encourages a positive “psychosomatic development” of the child. In such environment, family members especially the children cultivate secure and harmonious personalities and interpersonal relationships devoid of trauma (Posse & Melgosa, 2001, pp.14, 18). A strong family, characterised by support, sharing, honesty and care, is vital and foundational to developing a fulfilled, productive and positive person as well as building a peaceful, harmonious and safe society.

However, all those high expectations of a family could be endangered by the effects of combining work and parenting. This is true because as Brooks (1988, p.221) opines, studies have shown that an increase in minor work stresses such as work overload and arguments with co-workers also diminishes morale of parents. When parents experience interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors or co-workers, they are more likely to come home and argue with a

spouse about home responsibilities. Work disputes are more injurious to family relationship than work overload because the marital arguments that follow, subject parents to stress and depression and these in turn disrupt parenting skills. Keith (1988) also noted that what parents did on their jobs has a pervasive influence on what takes place at home. The manager's fatigue and distraction keep him or her from being emotionally available to their families (pp. 232-233).

Research has shown that there is a link between combining parenting and working and divorce. For example, an exploratory interview of thirty families on this work saw 34.8% of the respondents attributing the rate of divorce in contemporary families to the phenomenon of parenting and working. Paula and George (1986) in their opinion also tried to establish a symbiotic relationship between divorce and parents' employment (pp. 7, 14). Gainfully employed and self-sufficient women may be more willing to opt for divorce because they are not considered financially dependent spouse. It is easier for a financially self-sufficient female head of household to exit a broken marriage (Olaniyi, 2015, 19)

Keith (1988) observes that divorce occurs in dual wage families where the wife earns more than the husband. Men in such marriages are less happy with their marriages than men who earn more than their wives; the former also reported that their sex lives are less satisfactory; their marriages are often bedeviled with arguments about money; the husbands feel and act like the "stereotypical housewife"; the husband generally suffer low self-esteem; feel neglected sexually and less loved by their spouse. Wives who earn more than their husbands agree that they are less likely to return their husbands' love. Keith therefore concludes that marriages in which the wife earns more than the husband are more likely to end in divorce than marriages in which the wife works at a low-level, low-status job (pp. 231- 232). Boateng (2002) adds that such break-ups can occur when the husband, due to long and constant absence of the wife, falls in love with their teenage or young adult female house help who has assumed the wife's role in the house by cooking for him, talking with him, planning with him, and serving him. While the wife is decreasing in beauty, due to excessive demand of work, the house-help increases in beauty (p.14). About 24.0% of those interviewed alleged that wives are no longer submissive to their husbands and therefore causing disharmony and clash of

interests in the home, and this could influence children to become quarrelsome.

The afore-mentioned situations negate the ideals of a happy family and rob the children the needed warm, affectionate, friendly home atmosphere necessary for their true and responsible growth and development. It is therefore the strong position of this paper that strong family ties can contribute to the healthy growth of the child. Good values cannot be transmitted through mere words, but by exemplary conduct. Parents are expected to be good models themselves for the children to emulate. If every family in a given society is happy, the whole of that society, perhaps, will correspondingly be happy.

Another way work and parenting affect children upbringing is through excessive permissiveness of such working parents in a bid to placate their children. Many parents feel that they are shortchanging their children and feel frustrated about not having enough time for household chores or for discretionary activities involving their children – children are left in the care of a substitute child care arrangement or left to their own devices at home. Parents, feeling guilty about their lack of attention, attempt to placate the child by yielding to all sorts of demands. Providing the child with all sorts of sophisticated modern toys (as a form of appeasement) such as machine guns, pistols, or swords are detrimental to character and psychologically harming. Loading the child with such toys as a substitute for tender love and affection expected from parents, only spoil the child. The child is unwillingly being taught to condone aggression and destruction instead of being taught to be kind, compassionate, patient and helpful. Such a child might cultivate violent tendencies as he/she grows up and subsequently turn a delinquent or wayward (Dhammananda, n.d. p. 65).

B. The Positive Effects

Despite the identified ills associated with combining work and parenting, there are still some benefits that parents and children enjoy which could enhance proper development of the children. Majority of the respondents opined that work provides families with the material resources for daily life. They argued that poverty brings in some psychological strain that decreases parents' effectiveness with children, and increases children's problem behaviours. Work therefore provides income for basic support of the family, especially providing the physical needs of the children. An improved economic

condition of the family can improve parenting skills as well as children's behaviour. Proper shelter, food, clothing, and medical care are big expenses that come as part of the job of parenting. Thus, parents have the responsibility of seeing that these physical needs of their children are met (Ryder, 1985, pp. 14-16). It is the belief of most of the parents that when the children have their physical needs supplied, they feel loved, concentrate more in school, and less prone to steal. For the adolescent ladies, it goes a long way to reduce their dependence on boyfriend (s), thereby reducing the tendency of succumbing to the pressures from the opposite sex in order to provide for their basic needs.

Brooks (1988, pp.224-233) avers that when parents work, it encourages family co-operation in household work. For example, fathers engage in household works hitherto reserved for women. The participation of fathers in traditionally female household chores serves as a positive example for the children in the sense that, both boys and girls do less stereotyping when fathers do such chores. Again, children who engage in routine chores that benefit the family are more likely to show concern for others' welfare. Some children of these working families engage in self-care. This, aside its negative effects, gives children sense of independence and competence because they can care for themselves. As children receive their share of the family chores, it promotes feelings of being important participants in family life and by implication, improves their self-worth and self –esteem especially when they are appreciated for works well done. The benefits are more pronounced for girls who obtain good grades and think of careers for themselves, probably because their mothers become role models of competence. Gwendolyn cited in Onyezonwu (2008, p.76) also observes that household duties, particularly the little ones, which working parents apportion to their children, help to teach the children to develop a sense of responsibility and self-reliance. Children who are giving more work to do with their hands are less susceptible to the influence of gangs, movies and all sorts.

White (1994) supports this position when she affirms that:

labour was appointed as a blessing. It meant development, power, and happiness. And it is a safeguard against temptation. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence, and promotes industry, purity and firmness. The youth need to be taught that life means earnest work, responsibility, [and] care-taking. They need a training that will make them practical-

men and women who can cope with emergencies. They should be taught that the discipline of systematic, well-regulated labour is essential, not only as a safeguard against the vicissitudes of life, but as an aid to all-round development (pp. 135, 143,).

White further adds that idleness and selfish dependence rather than honest toil, degrades a man/woman. Idleness, according to her, fosters self-indulgence which results to an empty and barren life (p. 135).

The use of substitute child care by working parents could have positive effects on the child especially if the day care is of high quality. Children who enroll in high quality Day Care in the first years develop many positive social qualities seen later in preschools and elementary school: They are well-controlled, popular children who are considerate of peers in preschool, and socially competent children, able to focus and stay on task in kindergarten. In school, they are outgoing affectionate, non-hostile children who perform well in school (Brooks, 1988, p. 229).

IV. Conclusion

The study has established that indeed, there is occupational mobility that has altered the traditional agrarian economy to urban industrial society, leaving couples in Etche to work outside the home; to the extent that wives are competing favourably with their husbands. All these have caused a sharp split between the man's world and the woman's world. The social constructs in terms of status and roles of parents are no longer static, they are progressively undergoing changes. This paper has endeavoured to address most of the factors ranging from social to economic, religious to political and even gender parity concerns which give rise to the changes. It equally examined the effects of these changes on family morality/lifestyle among couples in Etche, highlighting both the positive and the negative. From the findings of this study, it is safe to conclude that beyond its much emphasized gains, the change in parental roles births equal or even more negative outcomes, especially on moral development of children; that its negative effects on children's behavior constitute moral burdens with social implications; that limited time does not favour married couples particularly in Etcheland, to manage both the home and career, and a choice has to be made for effectiveness. Therefore, it is noble and honorable if

one role is chosen and done very well. Parents should negotiate and agree on their roles particularly who between them should take less time consuming job, in order to take proper care of the children. This calls for placing premium on moral upbringing or development of their children far above material concerns (Onyезonwu, 2018, pp.96-97).

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