

Example of research paper on changing families

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Abstract

The family, as an important social institution, has formed the foundations of life for many centuries are exposed to all sorts of change based on dramatic events in the society. Undeniably, changes within the environment have played a major role in altering the normal functioning of the family. Simply put, change is a ubiquitous aspect in society and hence, it should be expected in any facet or level. Transformations and changes within the family are evident in areas such as occupation, fertility, childbearing, divorce, separation, family relationships among others. This paper supports the idea that change within the family institution is ubiquitous, whether expected or unexpected.

Changing Families

The family, as an important social institution, has formed the foundations of life for many centuries are exposed to all sorts of change based on dramatic events in the society. Undeniably, changes within the environment have played a major role in altering the normal functioning of the family.

Examples of events that have altered the normal operational functions of families include divorce and separation levels, declining significance of the marriage institution, increased involvement of women in economic activities, and introduction of alternative forms of marriage arrangement such as single parent families and cohabitation. Such changes have transformed the structure, routines, and responsibilities among family members as compared to the structure of the traditional family institution. Equally important are the effects of governmental policies and regulations on the family. For instance,

changes affecting the economy have been known to bring varying amounts of pressures to the family unit. Technological innovations and the effects of globalization have brought one of the greatest transformations and revolutions to the lives of human beings. In light of these transformations, it is evident that change is ubiquitous in all families, whether expected or unexpected, rewarding or painful, and this paper aims to examine the different changes occurring within the family institution.

Family Changes

Virtually all families experience change over the course of time, majority of such changes being normative changes. It is therefore very unlikely to find a world without being affected by the pervasiveness and realities of change (Harper and Leicht, 2011). As families transform, generations acquire different ways of behavior and living as compared to other generations from the past. Examples of normative changes within any family include birth of children within the family, change in behavior among adolescents, older members of the family getting older and beginning their own lives, and retirement for all working individuals within the family. Alternatively, other types of changes happening to the family institution include non-normative changes such as divorce, death, unemployment, or other unexpected but painful events.

According to McQuillan, and Ravanera, (2006), there are over 1.5 million divorce rates among couples each year leading to the increase in the number of children either living with grandparents or living on their own. The statistics also reveal that nearly 25% of such families are stepfamilies with another 14 % being headed by a single parent. Majority of the families

reported to have been moving a lot during their lifetime. In all these situations, the impact of change is relevant and seems to have an effect on the personal and parenting strengths of many individuals. Sadly, changes within the family can affect family members in different ways depending on the effects in bring to their normal functioning and activities. It might increase the levels of stress among family members, leading to confusions in parenting roles, change the behavior of children, and as well affect communication channels within the family (Poole, 2005). Other family members might resort to alcohol and drug abuse in situations where the effects of change overburden them.

Effects of change on Family relationships

Families play a significant role in shaping the lives of its members given that help is sought from family members during times of crises. Nonetheless, the readily available intimacy and support levels among family members is not guarantee to happiness and smooth relationships because different situations bring different changes. As families becomes, the roles among family members also change. For instance, children grow older and cease to be consumers due to new and productive roles allocated to them. Roles of fathers also diversify as the population ages thereby influencing the level of intimacy and power within the family. The father figure often experiences increased responsibilities that not only include the need to fulfill increased family demands but also to balance family life and work. Failure to fulfill any or some of these roles leads to increased stress levels and dissatisfaction thereby impeding the level of family relationships. Poole (2005) argues that the vulnerability of family relationships to disintegration is increased with the

toughening of economic times. Situations associated with disablement, death or sicknesses are times when family relationships are put into test.

Change also influences cultural relationships and values but in a more negative way. For instance, majority of cultural values and tenets are being abandoned at the expense of new forms of relationship patterns and behaviors. Past cultural patterns and rules had defined roles and codes of ethics and behavior from which every family member was expected to uphold. Sadly, the effects of globalization and the changing times have led to the erosion of cultural values and tenets with majority of family members copying styles from other westernized cultures. Such a situation leads to disagreements with parents or older family members and eventually, the development of sour relationships within the family unit.

Regarding marriage and intimacy, love and attraction seems to be the determinant factors in influencing these aspects. Marriage and intimacy in most traditional family institutions was an activity that involved different members within the family and the immediate society. In most cases, marriage relationships were planned and most responsibilities were left to the selected few to oversee the turnaround of events. The traditional view of marriage is outdated and is no longer existent in most family institutions because love and sexual attraction plays a significant part in influencing such relationships. Even though men and women perceive love in current relations differently, there are other complexities that, when taken into account, reveal the effects of change in the social institution of love and marriage. Admittedly, love fades and so do the expressions of love and

commitment due to degenerations of factors that brought individuals together (Poole 2005). Equally, romantic love should not be considered a factor for determining firm foundations of marriage or long-term relationships. This can be attributed to lack of same level of happiness and stability in relationships based on love and sexual attraction when compared to arranged marriages that was prevalent in traditional family institutions.

Occupations and Changed roles within the family

In modern times, rapid changes and increased uncertainty levels characterize roles, responsibilities, and occupations of many individuals in society. A multiplicity of options and choices in lifestyles influences individual choices and life-long careers. Drawing on the division and specification of roles in traditional family institutions, the current family indeed lives in the changed periods. Gender equality and feminism have allocated more powers to the modern women thereby enabling her to switch her roles from normal household chores to more respected positions that had were mainly reserved to her male counterparts. Equally, women have taken up leadership roles not only in societal positions but also within the family institutions. Most women are either breadwinners or share equal responsibilities with their husbands when it comes to providing the family with basic needs. There is equality in access to education with no preference whatsoever given to the male child on matters regarding education. Merit seems to be the determinant factor in most situations.

Consequently, the changes in occupation levels have brought different changes to the family institution. The change in the role of women has equally changed the roles of men and children. Delegation of authority to

care takers has brought significant influences to the upbringing of children. Mothers have little time for their children due to work-related functions. This brings an influence to the type of relationships existing between children and their mothers or parents owing to lack of limited time for bonding. If enough care is not taken, it can be a risky process to the child's upbringing and behavioral development because most behavioral tenets and behaviors are acquired during this period (McQuillan, and Ravanera, 2006). On the other hand, relationships between husband and wives changes with the change in occupation. The situation often becomes unfriendly in cases where the woman earns more income than the man does. Cases have been reported of disrespectful women abusing their husbands just because they (women) hold respectable and better paying positions when compared to their male counterparts.

Separation and Divorce

The rates of separation and divorce in many contemporary families have increased tremendously. No finger can be pointed to the exact cause of the increase in separation and divorce cases but it is possible to relate the changes and transformations that have surpassed the traditional family institution. To begin with, current marriage relationships are determined by a number of factors that include love and sexual attraction, the level of wealth, and even contractual agreements such as prenuptial agreements. In the event of faded love, reduced wealth, or expiry of the marriage agreement, separation and/or divorce will be unavoidable. This represents one of the most difficult times for couples and it is even worse in situations involving children. Most family members often experience stress and depression levels

during such times. There are few remedies to prevent such cases from occurring due to complexities surrounding the current marriage institution. Even at the best of circumstances, separation and divorce becomes unavoidable within most family institutions.

Fertility and Child Bearing

In traditional family institutions, families were meant purposely for the expansion of future generations through childbearing processes. Married couples could bear as much children as their fertility levels could allow them. On the contrary, modern families hold varied views and perspectives regarding fertility and child procreation. Interestingly, couples prefer to adopt children rather than bearing their own, for those that decide to bear a child or children, there is a limited number. Speaking of fertility, statistics have shown that fertility levels among married couples are declining (McQuillan, and Ravanera, 2006). This is partly due to the exercise of family planning methods and as well health related issues and complications. Worsening economic times and pressures are largely to blame for the social changes happening among family institutions. Couples plan and budget for their lives and further using probable certainties in the future. Fear of adverse economic conditions makes couples to limit the number of their families.

Emergence of alternative family arrangements

In contemporary, there has been an increase in the popularity and formation of alternative family arrangements such as cohabitation. Couples decide to live together without necessarily having to initiate any formal arrangements.

This popularity can be attributed to the degradation of family and marriage institutions because it is viewed as the easiest and cheapest way of entering the family institution.

Economic effects and Government activities

Changing families can be related to changes and transformations brought about by prevailing economic conditions and governmental activities. The effects from such factors have immensely contributed to the alteration of normal family routines and divided responsibilities within households.

Couples are forced to devise new measures that avoid the idea of dependency on one individual as the breadwinner. Economic effects also have a significant impact on the levels of luxury and comfort that can be enjoyed by families. On the other hand, governmental efforts aimed at promoting economic competitiveness have led to increased taxation thereby curtailing the spending capabilities of most families following increased costs of living.

Conclusion

Undeniably, modern times are characterized by rapid changes and increased uncertainties that have led to major transformations among family institutions. Simply put, change is a ubiquitous aspect in society and hence, it should be expected in any facet or level. Of significant effects are the change transformations to the family institution in the contemporary society. Virtually all families experience change, both expected and unexpected. Equally noteworthy are the effects of change transformations in various areas of within the family institution. Majority of such changes and

transformations can be used to characterize the changing families and family institutions. First, changes within family institutions are unavoidable and as families transform, generations acquire different ways of behavior and living as compared to other generations from the past (Poole, 2005). This leads to huge differences between traditional family institutions and the modern family institution. Second, social change has brought a diversity of changes to different relationships within the family. Changes are evident in family relationships beginning with child development relationships to relationships between family members and eventually, relationships among married couples. Third, the changing times have brought notable changes to the types of roles and occupations among different family members. A clear example is the subject of gender equality and shared roles among couples.

Fourth, separation and divorce cases have also increased tremendously among family institutions. A number of factors majority of which are short term currently determines marriage relationships. Closely related is the aspect of child bearing and fertility among married couples, who prefer to adopt children or bear only a limited number based on their own views and perspectives. Fifth, changing families are also characterized by an increase in the popularity and formation of alternative family arrangements such as cohabitation whereby couples decide to live together without necessarily having to initiate any formal arrangements. Finally yet important, economic conditions and government measures and practices have played a huge role in influencing aspects within changing families. These measures have increased the cost of living, therefore, affecting the spending capabilities of

families. From the above discussions, it is evident that change within the family institution is ubiquitous, whether expected or unexpected.

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