

ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY LEVELS OF FUNCTIONING AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY ABUJA

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ABSTRACT

The family is a social institution responsible for child upbringing and economic support for its members. This study assessed levels of family functioning among civil servants in Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA). The study is a descriptive cross-sectional survey. One hundred and sixty-six civil servants working in FCTA were assessed using questionnaire adapted from standardized Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES IV). Data was analyzed using descriptive and Pearson correlation test. Findings showed that 103 (62.1%) families are “connected”, 133 (80.1%) families are “flexible”, 85% of respondents reported very high levels of family communication and 56 % of respondents reported high levels of family satisfaction. There was significant positive correlation between family communication and family satisfaction ($r = .676, p < .01$). The families studied demonstrated high level of cohesion, flexibility and positive relationship between family satisfaction and family communication in a stressful capital city.

Keywords: Assessment, Family, Functioning, Cohesion, Flexibility, Communication

INTRODUCTION

Family can broadly be defined as the extent of closeness, attachment and emotional bonding that family members have towards one another (Roman, et al. 2016). In spite of the changing lifestyles and ever-increasing human mobility that characterizes the modern society; the family remains the central unit of contemporary life and the foundation of health

human society (Ngale, 2009). Industrialization has however gone a long way in undermining the traditional structure of the family bringing about lack of role identity of men, changing role in women, peer group and mass media influence on children. All these have resulted in serious family conflicts and dysfunction. Furthermore, there is inadequate emotional bonding between parents and children (Cohesion), leadership and role conflicts (flexibility) and poor communication between members (Adebayo & Ogunleye, 2010).

Family functioning is concerned with how interactions among family members influence the relationship and functioning of the family unit as a whole (Haliday, Green & Renzaho, 2013). It is thus defined by levels of cohesion, flexibility, communication and overall satisfaction among family members (Openshaw, 2011). Cohesion among family members is described as the emotional bonding that members have toward one another and the degree of individual independence (Jin, 2015). There are four levels of cohesion ranging from disengaged (very low) to separated (low to moderate) to connected (moderate to high) to enmeshed (very high) (Olson, 2000).

Family flexibility is the amount of change in family leadership, roles and rules (Matejevic, Todorovic, & Jovanovic, 2014). The four levels of flexibility range from rigid (very low) to structured (low to moderate) to flexible (moderate to high) to chaotic (very high) (Olson, 2000). Family Communication is defined as the act of making information, ideas,

thoughts and feelings known among members of a family unit and it can range from poor to very effective (Bailey, 2009; Peterson, 2009). Family functioning is an important factor that determines the health status and quality of life of an individual and family at large. Families that are united experience a higher level of wellbeing (Farajzadegan, Koosha, Sufi & Keshvari, 2013). It has been discovered that family functioning helps in building individual resilience (Walsh, 2012). Furthermore, there exist a strong relationship between poor family functioning and physical diseases such as sleep disorder, stress and some other mental illnesses. A family with appropriate family functioning will not only produces a healthy individual such procreate resilience individual who are able to cope and survive in the face of illnesses (Bahremand, et al. 2015).

Overall impact of family functioning is family satisfaction. Family satisfaction is defined as the degree to which family members feel happy and fulfilled with each other in area of family cohesion, flexibility and communication. The end result of family functioning on individual health is individual satisfaction of level of social support within the family (Roman, et al. 2016).

The importance of family function and its effect on health is so clear and noticeable. In many countries, family nursing is used to promote the level of health of family and community as a whole (Farajzadegan, et al. 2013). Family health nursing is a branch of community health nursing which has received little or no attention in most developing nations of the world of which Nigeria is inclusive (Bell, 2010). Little or no studies have been carried out in developing countries on association between family functioning and family satisfaction, hence the researchers assess the level of family functioning in the Federal Capital territory of Nigeria and its relationship with family satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Cross sectional descriptive survey was adopted. The study was carried out among civil servants working within Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the capital of Nigeria, West Africa. Multistage sampling technique was used in the selection of 189 civil servants in Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA). A self-designed questionnaire was used for the study. Ethical approval was obtained from Ethical Approval Review Board and consent was obtained from the participants. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze demographic characteristics of respondents. Dimensions of family functioning scores were analyzed using standardized FACES IV Excel programmed spreadsheet. Pearson correlation test was used to test for relationships between family communication and family satisfaction at 5% level of significance.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic variables

One hundred and sixty-six (166) questionnaires were adequately filled and returned. Response rate 87.8%. Respondents consist of seventy-two males (43.4%) and ninety-four females (56.6%). Sixty-one (36.7%) are single; eighty-five (51.2%) are in their first marriage; five (3.0%) are married but not in their first marriage; seven (4.2%) are living together or cohabiting; four (2.4%) claim to be in “live in partnership”; two (1.2%) are widowed and two (1.2%) are separated. Eighty-four (50.6%) of the participants responded to scales based on their Family of Origin, that is they provided information about the family they originated from. The remaining eighty-two (49.4%) of the participants provided information about their Family of Procreation, that is, the family they formed. Of the one hundred and sixty-six participants surveyed, forty-one (24.7%) are living alone; seventy-two (43.4%) are living

with partners and children; twenty (12%) are living with parents; twelve (7.2%) are living with others; twelve (7.2%) are living with partner while nine (5.4%) are living with

children. Table 1 gives a summary of the frequency and percentage distribution of age, marital status, ethnicity, level of education and income.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of respondents' Demographic

Age Category	Frequency N= 166	Percentage
21-30years	60	36.1%
31-40years	67	40.4%
41-50years	28	16.9%
51-60years	11	6.6%
Mean Age \pm SD	34.4 \pm 9.1	
Ethnic Group:		
Yoruba	78	47.0%
Hausa	19	11.4%
Igbo	21	12.7%
Others	48	28.9%
Level of Education:		
Primary Education	8	4.8%
Secondary Education	24	14.5%
Tertiary Education	134	80.7%
Income Level per Month		
Less than N50,000 (\$140)	25	15.1%
N51,000 – N100,000 (\$141-\$280)	58	34.9%
N101,000 – N150,000 (\$281-\$420)	45	27.1%
N151,000 - N200,000 (\$421-\$560)	18	10.8%
Above N201,000 (Above \$1235).	20	12.0%

Findings about family structure showed that one hundred and thirty-three (80.1%) of the respondents were within “a two-parent biological structure”; four (2.4%) are under “a two parent same sex” family structure (Though, this is not legalized in Nigeria); three

(1.8%) were from “a two parent stepfamily” structure. Twenty-four (14.5%) of respondents reported that they are from “a one parent” family structure. Two (1.2%) respondents reported that they are from a family structure of “two parents adoptive (Figure 1).

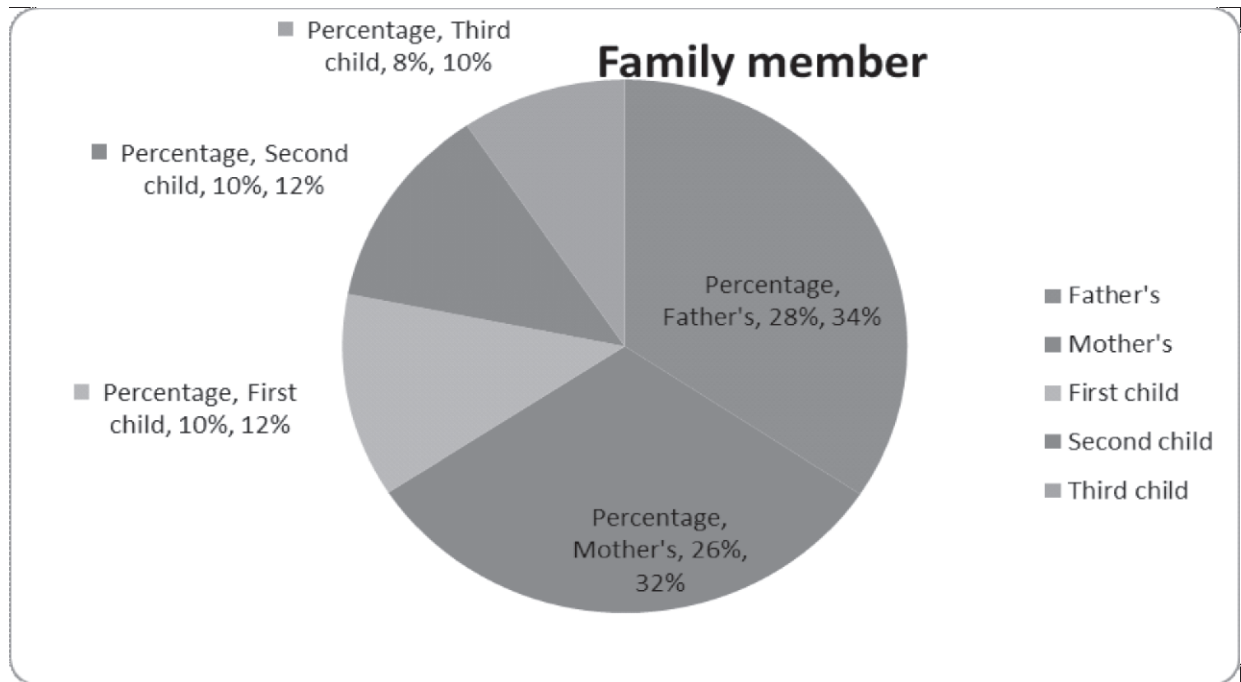


Figure 1: Frequency distribution of family members

Cohesion levels

The families that are Connected are one hundred and three (62.1%), 33 (58.9 %) exhibited low to very low levels of Enmeshed

and Disengaged dimensions, very Connected families are fifty-eight (34.9%). Table 2 gives a summary of the frequency and distribution of levels of cohesion

Table 2 :Levels of Cohesion among Families

Cohesion Dimension			Enmeshed Dimension			Disengaged Dimension		
Levels	Frequency	%	Levels	Frequency	%	Levels	Frequency	%
Very Connected	58	34.9	Very Low	13	24.4	Very Low	37	63.8
			Low	20	34.5	Low	20	34.5
			Moderate	19	32.8	Moderate	1	1.7
			High	4	6.9	High	0	0
			Very High	2	3.4	Very High	0	0
			Total	58	100	Total	58	100
Connected	103	62.1	Very Low	24	23.3	Very Low	37	35.9
			Low	51	49.5	Low	48	46.6
			Moderate	22	21.4	Moderate	12	11.7
			High	6	5.8	High	6	5.8
			Very High	0	0	Very High	0	0
			Total	103	100	Total	103	100
Somewhat Connected	5	3.0	Very Low	2	40	Very Low	3	60
			Low	3	60	Low	1	20
			Moderate	0	0	Moderate	0	0
			High	0	0	High	0	0
			Very High	0	0	Very High	1	20
			Total	5	100	Total	5	100
Total	166	100						

Flexibility levels

Families that are “Very Flexible” are 13.9% and 78.3% of them showed very low levels of Chaotic Dimension. “Flexible families” are

80.1%, 85% of these families ranged from moderate to very low on Rigid dimension; and 95.5% families ranged from low to very low on the Chaotic dimension (table 3).

Table 3: Levels of Flexibility among Families

Flexibility Dimension			Rigid Dimension			Chaotic Dimension		
Levels	Frequency	%	Levels	Frequency	%	Levels	Frequency	%
Very Flexible	23	13.9	Very Low	1	4.3	Very Low	18	78.3
			Low	3	13.0	Low	2	8.7
			Moderate	11	47.8	Moderate	3	13
			High	7	30.4	High	0	0
			Very High	1	4.3	Very High	-	-
			Total	23	100	Total	23	100
Flexible	133	80.1	Very Low	15	11.3	Very Low	98	73.7
			Low	37	27.8	Low	29	21.8
			Moderate	61	45.9	Moderate	5	3.8
			High	15	11.3	High	1	.8
			Very High	5	3.8	Very High	-	-
			Total	133	100	Total	133	100
Somewhat Flexible	10	6	Very Low	4	40	Very Low	6	60
			Low	3	30	Low	3	30
			Moderate	2	20	Moderate	0	0
			High	1	10	High	1	10
			Very High	0	0	Very High	-	-
			Total	10	100	Total	10	100
Total	166	100						

Family Communication and satisfaction Scale: twenty-four of the respondents (14.46%) rated moderately on communication scale. Eighty of the respondents (48.19%) rated high on the scale and thirty-eight (22.89%) rated very high. Cumulatively over 85% of respondents reported moderate to very high levels of family communication.

Forty six of the respondents (27.1%) rated moderately on family satisfaction scale. Thirty-seven of the respondents (27.72%) rated high on the scale and ten respondents (6.02%) rated very high. Cumulatively over 56.02% of respondents reported moderate to very high levels of family satisfaction (Figure 2).

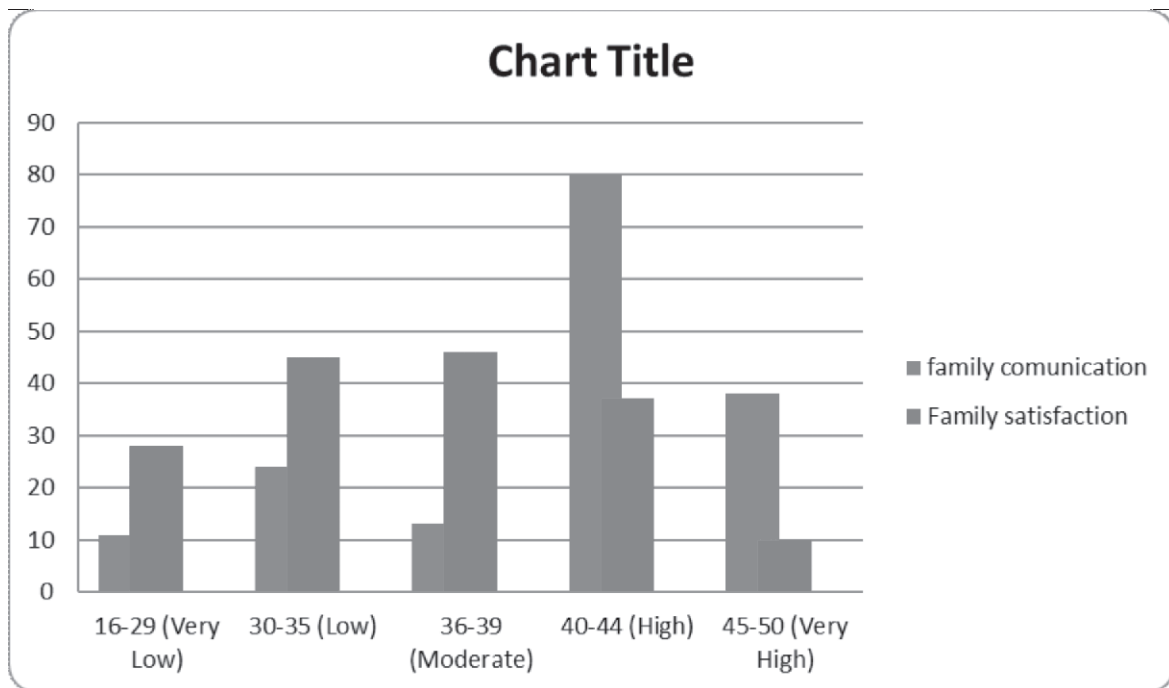


Figure 2: Frequency Distribution of participants Scores on Family Communication and Satisfaction Scale

There was a significant correlation between family communication and family satisfaction ($r= 0.676, p<.01$). This indicates that, as family communication increases, family satisfaction also increases.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Family functioning is a relational process concerned by how a family attains its various functions (Openshaw, 2011). Few studies have assessed the major concepts of this variable. This study is unique in that it does not only assess the family level of cohesion, flexibility and communication but also consider the relationship between family communication and satisfaction. Overall outcome of family functioning is family satisfaction.

The socio-demographic characteristics showed that the modal age group was 31-40 years which implies that they were in their prime age in civil service and have ability to work. Most of the

respondents were females, married, lived with partner and children with income ranging from fifty-one thousand naira (\$141) to one hundred thousand naira (\$280) monthly. This is not surprising as over the decades there has been a shift from an industrial to a service economy bringing about increase in female employment. The finding of the study is in line with Mandel & Stier (2009); Harkness (2010), submissions that wage differences and desires to meet family demands are major reasons why dual-wage earners in the family have become more common as there is growing need for women to financially support the family.

The past norm in Nigerian society in relation to family is extended family system whereby blood-related kin or relationships lives together with husband and wives and their children. However, in recent time the nuclear family is gradually becoming the dominant family type as it is evidenced in this study wherein majority of the respondents belong to the nuclear family system. A possible reason for this is a result of

urbanization and migration and associated economic factors (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2017).

Findings in the study showed that majority of the family have a balanced family system has reflected in their score of level of connection. Connection or separateness that members have toward one another is the major parameter used in measuring cohesion in family. High level of connection observed among the study participants may be expected as majority of participants were from two parents biological family type (Ngale, 2009). This implies that individuals that live in high cohesion family will demonstrate warmth, autonomy and close emotional bonding (Choi, 2012).

Furthermore, findings in this recent study indicated that majority of the respondents had high score in level of flexibility with moderate scores and low scores in levels of rigidity and chaotic. As with cohesion, flexibility has a curvilinear relationship with family functioning (Walsh, 2012). This indicates that in majority of the families there is equalitarian leadership with a democratic approach to decision-making, negotiations are open and actively include the children. While the family works to avoid stressful situations, they likewise come together to solve problems amicably without necessarily blaming and criticizing each other. This contradict atypical Africa culture where men are the decision makers and the woman's main role is child bearing, child raising and domestic activities (Ijadunola, Abiona, Ijadunola, et al. 2010)

The findings of this study may be showing a trend of departure from what was considered as the norm.

This present study shows that most of the respondents reported moderate to very high levels of family communication. The significance of effective communication cannot be over emphasized, Adebayo and Ogunleye (2010) indicated that a crucial

element in a healthy relationship is effective communication which helps in moulding well desired behaviour for a healthy relationship.

Majority of the participant reported moderate level of satisfaction in their families which indicates that family members are somewhat satisfied and enjoy some aspects of their family life. Family system works when its members feel good about the family, their needs are being met, and the development of relationships flows smoothly (Olson, 2000). Marital satisfaction and other dimensions of family functioning co-vary. Spouses/individuals who are satisfied with their family function maintain intimacy and good relationship with other members in the family and society at large (Roest, 2016). It has been reported that proximity and strong family ties has a strong relationship with individual happiness and satisfaction. Individuals living in balanced family types are more satisfied with life and happiness compared to those living in moderately dysfunctional families. Greater levels of cohesion, flexibility and communication are positively related to happiness and life satisfaction (Botha & Booysen, 2013).

The Pearson correlation analyses indicated that as family communication improves so also family satisfaction. Communication is of paramount importance in any relationship; therefore, effective communication is the foundation and facilitator upon which a stable and functioning family is built ultimately indicating family satisfaction (Wiley, 2007).

Assessment of family functioning helps the community health Nurse to understand the nature of relationships within the family. Family problem areas are identified and family strengths are emphasized as the building blocks for interventions. This will enable the family health nurse to offer guidance, provide information, and assist in the planning process in maintain family health and resolving any existing conflicts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The family is the basic unit of the society one of whose major role is the inculcation of positive values. Healthy families promote the emotional, physical and social welfare of individual family members. A family system works when its members feel good about the family, their needs are being met, and everyone are satisfied with all the family functions (Olson, 2000). A healthy, happy family also benefits the whole society (Ngale, 2009). Hence, it is essential that nurses use their knowledge and competencies to take the lead role in assessing assets and needs of communities and populations and to propose solutions in partnership with other stakeholders. In addition, there is need for further research studies that will involve more population addressing family functions in a different Nigerian society.

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