

# Navigating Cultural Transformation: Migration's Impact on Family Values in Umuchu Community

**Marcel Afam Ezechukwu**

Department of English Language and Literature

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Phone: 07037866888

Email:ma.ezechukwu@unizik.edu.ng

## Abstract

This empirical study investigates the dynamic interplay between migration and family values within the Umuchu community of Anambra state, Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the researcher provides critical insights into the transformative effects of migration on traditional family structures, cultural norms and social relationships. The findings demonstrate that migration precipitates significant shifts in family dynamics, communication patterns, and role expectations, while concurrently fostering cultural resilience and identity. This study contributes immensely to the existing body of knowledge on migration's influence on family values, informing evidence-based policies and programs that support migrant families and preserve cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Migration, family values, Umuchu community, cultural transformation, social change.

## Introduction

Migration is a widespread phenomenon that has been shaping the lives of individuals, families, and communities worldwide. The movement of people from one geographical region to another has significant implications for cultural identity, social relationships, and family values. In recent years, the Umuchu

community in Anambra State of Nigeria has experienced a substantial influx of migrants, leading to concerns about the impact of migration on family values and cultural traditions.

Umuchu is a rural community in Anambra State, Nigeria, with a rich cultural heritage

and strong family values. The community is known for its close knit family structures, respect for elders, and traditional practices. However, with the increasing trend of migration, there is a growing concern that the community's family values and cultural traditions may be lost. The impact of migration on family values in Umuchu community is a pressing concern that requires attention. As migrants move away from their ancestral homes, they are exposed to new cultural practices, values, and beliefs that may conflict with their traditional ways of life. This cultural transformation can lead to changes in family values, social relationships, and cultural identity.

This study is anchored on the following research questions:

- How has migration impacted family values in Umuchu community?
- How do migrants and non-migrants perceive the changes in family values in Umuchu community?

- What are the factors influencing the transformation of family values in Imuchu community?
- What are the traditional family values in Umuchu community?

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of the impact of migration on family values in Umuchu community in Aguata Local Government Area. The findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and scholars interested in migration, cultural transformation, and family values. Ultimately, this study seeks to inform strategies that promote cultural preservation, family cohesion, and community development in the face of migration.

This study focuses on Umuchu community in Aguata Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria. It will examine the impact of migration on family values, cultural traditions, and

social relationships in the community. The researcher will also explore the factors influencing the transformation of family values and the perceptions of migrants and non-migrates on these changes.

The researcher will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. The study will involve surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with migrants and non-migrants in Umuchu community. The data will be analysed using statistical software and thematic analysis techniques.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Migration**

Migration entails changing one's place of settlement from one region or place to another. This factor helped to foster interaction and unity among the African

peoples. It took many forms. According to Nnoli, (1992) it was caused as a result of a person or groups being sold away to other places as slaves or of better economic fortunes, It could also be as a result of a people fleeing from wars or a group migrating to other places trying to impose their leadership on their hosts,(11).

The UN defines migration as “the movement of a person or group of persons either across on international border or within a state” United Nation, (1998:1). There are various types of migration: internal migration, international migration, voluntary migration, forced migration and circular migration.

Migration studies focus on movements, diaspora, memory, and the formation of migrant subjectivities- with attention on local forms of belonging that are nonetheless global at the same time,

Steiner, (2014:39) opines. A person who moves to another city or town within a nation, a refugee that crosses an international border, a citizen who moves to another country for better economic opportunities or a scholar attending a conference in some other country becomes a migrant automatically.

process of the super- exploitation of the so-called third world by imperialists monopoly capital. Just as the monopoly capital exhausts surplus profits from the semi-colonial world, there is also an appropriation of extra profits through migration. Williamson and Hatton in their own term say that;

Probsting, (2015:329) is of the opinion that “migration is part of the fundamental

....a process in which an individual or a group shift their Residence from one population to another. Apart from its spatial dimension, migration also implies the disruption of work, schooling, social life another pattern. A migrant is someone who breaks off activities and associations in one place and recognizes their daily life in another place. A movement within the same area is considered mobility, not migration, because the mover can continue day-to-day life. (2005:1173) quoted in Egbuta, (2023:2).

Migration as well be considered to be an aftermath of human trafficking. In this view, unsuspecting individuals, especially ambitious youths are subjected to modern slavery by unscrupulous and ruthless agents of irregular migration. According to

Adepoju, (2006:34) it is simply an “emigration-diaspora return continuum”. He highlights the complete cycle of the migration narrative, in that case people who migrate often maintain ties with their kinship in the diaspora and build strong network with

their families at home through constant communication and remittance because they often envisage and eventual return to their ancestral land.

### ***Types of migration***

Migration is of two types thus:

- Internal migration and
- International migration.

Internal migration is a type of migration that takes place when there is a change of residence within national boundary. It is the movement from one part of a country to another part. Internal migration has social effects. It affects the social set-up of rural communities, weakens the joint family system, moreso, if the migrant settles permanently in the city. With mingling and intermingling of migrants of different cultures, religions, new values are injected as well as attitudes, perspectives and world views that gradually distill, infiltrate and change old forms of values and customs.

International migration on the other hand involves a change of residence across national boundaries. It also means the movement across borders that has a demographic effect and pattern of life. An international migrant needs to meet the legal criteria for the permission to travel and reside in a desired country. The process is always documented properly together with the bidding if it is genuine entry, Egbuta, (2023: 7) says.

### **Family Values**

Value is defined as the worth, usefulness or importance of a thing, the worth of a thing as measured by the amount of other things for which it can be exchanged. So group of people- family may pick and choose what they have and call their values perhaps as a result of self-consciousness. Family cultural values go much deeper than values because they are transmitted and acquired, not freely chosen. They come with the cultural “turf” as

it were with the unsolicited grace of being born into that family.

Africa as a continent has the family and its name, sacredness of human life, chastity especially among the women folk, respect for parents and elderly, marriage, human sexuality and hospitality as cultural values-family values.

Family is the basic unit of every society, which is a group composed of a mother, her dependent children and at least one adult male- father joined together through marriage or blood relationship. Africans attach much importance to family as well as family name-value because for them, family is the natural environment where man is born and nurtured, acts and finds the necessary protection and security.

Family values are the moral principles, beliefs, and attitudes that guide behavior and decision-making within families. These values may vary across cultures, individuals, and continent; often it include:

- Respect: Family value involve valuing and show in respect for each member's feelings, opinions, and maintain boundaries.
- Interaction: Honest, open, and effective discourse are encouraged among family members that share same values.
- Love and affection: Family members show and demonstrate love, care, and affection. It is aberration in Umuchu to see a family that has the opposite.
- Traditional and heritage preservation as well as honouring cultural traditions, customs, and values are respected, kept and maintained in the family as their value.

***How to promote family values:***

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century family values are facing great challenge with globalization the following measures will help in promoting unique family values as their heritage:

- Lead by example: Elders in the family are to demonstrate values and behaviours that represent family values which is needed to adopt.
- There should be a known practices, rituals, and customs that must be created and maintain meaningfully.
- Elders should encourage their children for regular bonding through activities that foster connection and the like.

### **Umuchu Community**

Umuchu is a community in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. It is situated in the southeastern part of Nigeria, within the tropical region. Umuchu community is bordered by several towns and communities like Amesi, Achina, Uga, Akokwa and Umunze.

Umuchu community is predominantly Igbo with a rich cultural heritage. The community is known for its vibrant traditional festivals

like New Yam festival, Igba mmuonwu, Igba nkwu etc. These festivals showcase the community's dance and art. The primary language spoken in Umuchu is Igbo-Umuchu dialect though many residents also speak English, Nigerian pidgin and other Nigerian languages.

The Umuchu community is primarily agrarian, with residents engaging in farming, livestock production, and trading. The community is known for its production of crops such as yam, cassava, maize and cocoyam. The community has several primary and secondary schools. Education is highly valued in the community with many pursuing higher education. Several healthcare facilities including hospitals, clinics, and traditional medicine centres are in the community. The community has also produced many professionals like doctors, nurses, lawyer, Educators, Engineers and midwives both retired and active civil servants.

The community is a vibrant and culturally rich community in Anambra State, Nigeria. It faces several challenges like other communities yet has many strengths which include its strong cultural heritage, vibrant traditional festivals, and resilient residents.

### **Migration and Cultural Transformation**

Migration has been a significant factor in the cultural transformation of many communities in the world as posits Castles, (2013:12). Umuchu community in Nigeria is no exception. The movement of people from Umuchu to urban cities or foreign countries has led to changes in family values and cultural practices as observe Afolayan, (2015:25).

#### ***Changes in Family Values***

One significant impact of migration on Umuchu community is the change in family values. Traditionally, the Umuchu people places a high value on extended family ties as well as communal living, Uchendu,

(1965:45) says. However, with migration, many family members are scattered across different locations, leading to a shift from extended to nuclear family system says Afolayan, (2015:30).

Furthermore, migration has led to changes in cultural practices I Umuchu community for example, the traditional marriage ceremony in Umuchu which involves elaborate rituals and ceremonies has been simplified as a result of western culture influence, Okerek, (2017:56) asserts. In addition, the Umuchu community/ people's traditional dress code has been also influenced by western fashion which leads to a decline in the use of traditional attires, as seen by Ezeanya, (2013: 78).

Migration has also impacted social norms in Umuchu community. The traditional respect for elders for instance has been abolished as a result to know western

#### **Social Change**



This refers to the significant alteration that occur in the social structure, institutions, and values of a society over time, Giddens, (2006:15) says. This concept is essential in understanding the impact of migration on the social fabric of Umuchu community.

Migration has been identified as a significant factor in social change according to Castle, (2013:17). The movement of people from one society to another leads to cultural exchange, adaptation, and transformation which in turn bring about changes in social structures, institutions, and values, Afolayan, (2015:29) asserts.

### ***Features of social change***

Social change has the following features according to Idrani, (1998) and Anel, (1999):

- Ubiquitous: Social change is present in every human society. There is no society that is static and unchanging. All societies are susceptible to social change. In other words, social change

is a universal phenomenon. It is spread both over time and space.

- Rate: Social change has a rate; it can be rapid or slow, (revolutionary and evolutionary).
- Inevitable: Social change is inevitable and unavoidable as it occurs all the time. Its process may be imperceptible and can be cumulative – one may not easily perceive the processes of social change, although it is always taking place.
- Multi-leveled: Change occurs both at micro-level and macro-level. The point here is that while social change often refers to noticeable changes in social phenomena, we must not lose sight of the fact that small changes in minor relationships and smaller groups can also be significant especially in a pluralistic society.
- Contagious: Social change is contagious like infectious diseases.

The influence of change in one area or aspect of any society can cause change in the economy, family etc.

- Detectable and Measurable: Social change is detectable and measurable, Anele, (1999:18-21) provides following detection and measurement parameters : scale(involving the size of the society and decree or magnitude of alteration); brevity (involving length of changes like short term changes are easily observable and measured unlike long term changes that are usually measured retrospectively); repetition (changes that repeated frequently are most likely to be identified and measured unlike those occurring sparingly).

### ***Factors promotion social change***

Several factors have been identified to engender and stimulate social change and cultural change according to scientists,

involving the complex interaction of environment, technology, culture, personality, political, economic, ideology etc. No single factor explain or can account for changes in human society. This position has supported by Pearson (1996 cited in Ekpenyong, 1993:191) when he asserts that, “no claim that social change is ‘determined’ by economic interests, ideas, personalities of particular individuals, geographical conditions etc is acceptable. All such signal factor theories belong to kindergarten stage of social science development. Any single factor is always inter-dependent with several others”. This means that social change may originate in any institutional area, bringing about changes in other areas which in turn make for further adaptations in the initial sphere of change. Factors are being viewed as potentially independent variables that influence each other as well as the course

of society. These are the factors that causes social change and cultural changes in society:

- Technology: This is used in exploitation of the natural environment, shapes culture, and society.
- Peoples' needs: Alacking need in society may cause uprising of the masses in demand for the provision of such needs. This could be used for social amenities, equality, social justice etc.
- Environmental Resources: Exploitation of natural resources from the physical environment like crude oil exploitation and associated socio-cultural changes in Niger Delta region of Nigeria.
- Population: Changes in population as a result of interplay of birth, death and migration forces engender social and cultural changes in society.

### *Types of social change*

Social change has variety of categories, thus: evolutionary, revolutionary, and incremental change as posits Gidden, (2006:17). The study of the impact of migration on family values in Umuchu community reveals that the changes witnessed by the community are evolutionary, resulting from the gradual influence of western culture on traditional values and practices.

Several factors can influence social change including technological advancements, cultural diffusion, and migration, Castle, (2013:20) asserts. In the context of this study, migration has been identified as a significant factor influencing social change. The movement of people from Umuchu to urban cities has led to cultural exchange, adaptation, and transformation.

### ***Impact of social change on family values and social institutions***

Social change can have a significant impact on family values, leading to changes in traditional practices and norms as viewed by Afolayan, (2015:32). This study reveals that the traditional extended family system has given way to nuclear family structure as a result of western custom, that lay more emphasis on individualism and nuclear family structure.

Furthermore, it has impacted on social institutions leading to changes in traditional practices and norms according to Ezeanya, (2013:82). On the other hand, this study reveals that the traditional marriage ceremony has been simplified as a result of this influence of westerners.

### **Methodology**

The methodology was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of migration on family values and social

change in Umuchu community. The researcher made use of a mixed-method approach which allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a nuanced understanding of the research questions.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

This research has provided empirical evidence on the impact of migration on family values and social change in Umuchu community. The findings unequivocally demonstrate that migration has led to significant changes on family values, cultural practices, and social norm in the community.

The results underscore the critical role of migration in shaping cultural identity, social institution, and family values. The changes experienced by the community are characteristic of the evolutionary nature of social change, resulting from the gradual influence of western culture on traditional values and practices. The study equally

contributed to the existing body of knowledge on the impact of migration on social change and cultural identity. Finally it has demonstrated that migration is a significant driver of social change and cultural transformation in Umuchu community. As the world becomes increasingly inter –connected, it is essential to recognize the agency of migrant communities in shaping their cultural identity and social institutions.

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