

SPATIAL PATTERN OF CHANGES IN FAMILY STRUCTURE IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The 21st Century has witnessed tremendous changes in the family structure. These changes vary over space which have been researched by various authors from within and outside Nigeria. Despite these studies, much about the variation of the changes over space remains fairly unknown in Nigeria. The aim of the study is to analyze the spatial pattern of changes in family structure in Benue State. Data was obtained from 386 respondents through the use of structured questionnaire. This was complemented by In-depth interview (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). Six (6) out of (23) Local Government Areas were purposively selected across the three senatorial zones while systematic sampling was used to select 35 out of 74 council wards. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results of the descriptive statistics using multiple responses reveal the reality of family change based on respondents view ranging from 85% incidence of cohabitation, 81% rate of divorce cases, change in the incidence of marital separation of about 80%, 78% level of single parenthood, change in household size of about 77% while age at first marriage rated to about 74% by the respondents. The spatial variation of these changes revealed that, cohabitation is more in Otukpo (98.8%) and less in Tarka (26.9%) than other LGAs. The pattern of divorce is higher in Otukpo (33.6%) and less in Tarka (2.6%). Marital separation is more in Gboko (96.6%) and less in Logo (45.4%). While the rate of single parenthood is more in Ohimini (91.7%), it is less in Kwande (55.7%). In terms of household size, the rate is larger in Ohimini (83.3%) and less in Kwande (69.6%). Change in age at first marriage is more in Gboko (92.2%) and less in Tarka LGAs (23.1%). It was therefore concluded that Benue State has experienced and still experiencing changes in family way. On the basis of the findings, the study recommended that the government of Benue State and other social organizations should sensitize people so as to strengthen the traditional family structure to avoid the negative implications of family change.

Keywords: Spatial Pattern, Family Structure, Benue

Introduction

The family is the basic foundation upon which society is built and sustained. Ragini, Sabnam and Sudna (2012) opined that the family teaches its members to be social as well as emphasize the fact that there is a common interest, which may be more important than individual. Despite these notable values, the demographic transitions which is associated with modernization and industrialization have transformed the traditional family forms leading to emergence of new ones (Lesthaeghe, 2010; Murray, 2012). It is obvious today that the family all over the world has undergone many fundamental changes due to comprehensive socio-economic development and technological advancement (Samad, 2015, Akpata, Eboh and Owoseni, 2017). Knapp and Wurm

(2019) defined family change as moving away from a previously institutionalized state to an increasingly deinstitutionalized form. One of the prominent features of family change is its structure.

Family structure refers to the composition and relationships of a family (Valsiner, 2000; Lamb, 2010). Nam (2005) viewed family structure as the hierarchical social organization or arrangement that exists in a household and defines each member's position, functions and how they are related to other members living in the same residence as one family unit. Family structure can be categorized into: single family (married or unmarried man or woman living alone with child/children), nuclear family (married man or woman living together with or without child/children), extended family (single or married woman or man living with children, parents and extended family members such as uncles, aunties, cousins etc).

These different family types cum structures have witnessed and still undergoing unprecedented changes in the 21st Century due to some factors which could be violent crisis, desertion by one parent, by choice as a result of personal experience, death, divorce or separation, demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors among others and these are affecting many areas of life such as the economy, political institutions, education, health, housing, transport, communication, human environment, population trends, urbanization, industrialization, science and technology (Keswet and Dapas, 2010, Samad, 2015 and Harawa, 2016). Available evidence shows that in developed countries such as France, Finland, United States, Japan and other parts of the global north, the family structure has transformed over the last three to four decades (Sobotka and Toulemon, 2008; Lesthaeghe, 2010). This is characterized by a shrinking household size, an increase in female-headed households, increase in number of single parent households as well as late marriage, increasing rate of cohabitation, increase in the rate of marriage breakdown and instability among couple (Prioux, 2006; Bianchi, 2014 and Kuperberg, 2014). Developing countries especially in Africa are also experiencing similar changes in family structure due to changes in marriage patterns, increasing life expectancy, rapid urbanization, and changing fertility patterns Haregu *et al* (2017).

These vary across geographical locations. For instance, a study conducted in some sub-Saharan African countries revealed a decline in household size of 19% between 1993-2014 in Kenya, 15% in Nigeria from 1990-2013 and 30% in Namibia from 1992-2013. Female headed household increased by 30% in Nigeria and Namibia in the same year. The same proportion increased by 25% in urban areas of Kenya, 23% in Nigeria and 28% in Namibia while it was -1.4%, 15% and 56% in rural areas in Kenya, Nigeria and Namibia respectively (Haregu *et al*. 2017) In Nigeria Oloya (2013), observed that "rapid social changes have directly affected the families and these are worthy of investigation because of the implications on the life chances of the people.

Benue State with projected population of 6,427,991 in 2019 according to 2006 census is the 7th most populous State in Nigeria. With an economy which depends heavily on agriculture and unique cultural heritage has continued to experience changes in the family that are less noticeable before the 21st Century. Given the fact that family change is a global phenomenon, several attempts have been made to assess the level of change in the family from both developed and developing countries based on individual perception. A few of them are examined to clearly establish the research gap.

Ragini, Shabnam and Sudha (2012) analyzed changing family composition, structure and practices in Bangladesh using questionnaire and descriptive statistics. A total of 150 sampled size was used and random sampling for the study. The findings revealed that 81.25% families were nuclear, role power and status was given according to age of person in the family (86.25%). The study

concentrated on family types and role power as one of the indicators of family structure but did not address how these types vary over space. This research seeks to address this gap.

Harawa (2016) used data from Malawi Demographic Health Survey of 2000 and 2010 to assess the levels, trends and determinants of family structure. The study reveals a 2.5% increase in the rate of single families between 2000 and 2010. Furthermore, the results show that age of household head is statistically associated with changing family structure in Malawi in the years 2000 and 2010 for both the nuclear and extended family categories. The study relied on secondary data (Malawi Demographic Health Survey) of the entire country. This work used both secondary and primary data which provide more robustness than using only a single data source.

Haregu, Beguy and Ezeh (2017) assessed changing family structure and fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa using the DHS reports of three selected sub-Saharan African countries of Kenya (Eastern Africa), Nigeria (Western Africa) and Namibia (Southern Africa) using descriptive statistics. The finding revealed that African household size is reducing, female-headed households are increasing and extended families are decreasing, women's age at first marriage is increasing which results to a declined in fertility. The study is very insightful, yet relied on secondary data thus a gap which this study fills. Despite the aforementioned studies from various authors much about spatial variation of these changes using mixed method remains fairly unknown in Nigeria in general and Benue State. This creates a gap in knowledge which this study fills and contributes to knowledge. The study therefore analyzed the spatial pattern of family change in Benue State, Nigeria. The paper addressed the following research questions: what are the types of changes occurring to the family in Benue State, what is the spatial variation of family change in the study area?

Materials and Methods

Study Area

Benue State is located between Latitudes 6° 30' - 8° 0' North of the Equator and Longitudes 7° 30' - 10° 0' East of the Greenwich meridian (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Benue State

Source: Adapted from Administrative Map of Nigeria (2019).

Benue State shares boundaries with other States like Nassarawa to the north, Taraba to the east, Cross-River to the south, Enugu to the south-west and Kogi to the west. The state also shares a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroun to the south-east with a landmass of 32,518 square kilometer (Alhassan and Ujoh, 2014). Benue State has a total population of 6, 427, 991 as projected in 2019 making it the 7th most populous State in Nigeria having about 51% and 49% population of males and females respectively (National Population Commission, 2006). However, the distribution of the population according to Local Government Areas shows marked duality. There are areas of low population density such as Guma, Gwer, Ohimini, Katsina Ala, Apa, Logo and Agatu, each with less than 120 persons per sq. km. while Vandeikya, Okpokwu, Ogbadibo, Obi and Gboko have densities ranging from 200 persons to 260 persons per sq. km (NPC, 2006). Makurdi LGA with its restricted coverage around the town has over 400 person per sq. km. Benue State comprises of several ethnic groups which are Tiv, Idoma, Iggede, Etulo, Abakpa, Jukun, Akweya and Nyofon, Igbos, Yorubas, Hausa among others. The Tiv is the dominant ethnic group, occupying fourteen (14) Local Government Areas, while the Idoma and Iggede occupy the remaining nine Local Government Areas. The people of the State are famous for their cheerful and hospital dispositions as well as rich cultural heritage (NPC, 2006; Alhassan and Ujoh, 2014).

Methods

A reconnaissance survey was carried out to acquaint the researcher with the study area. The primary data was obtained through questionnaire. This was complimented with Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) as well as In-Depth Interview (IDI). One Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) was

conducted in each of the selected LGAs making a total of six (6). The discussants consist of three (3) males and three (3) females to obtain information on the nature of family change. IDIs were conducted in each of the selected LGAs making a total of Six with community leaders, religious leaders, court registrar and aged person (60 and above) male or female.

Secondary data was obtained from national population census data such as population figure of Benue State, number of Local Government Areas and council wards. Data on divorce cases from 2000-2019 were obtained from the upper courts, Grade I,II area courts across the selected LGAs while data on some indicators such as household size, separation, age at first marriage were obtained from National Bureau of Statistic, Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. To ensure a fair representation of the selected study area, 2006 population was projected to 2019 using the formula;

$Pt+n=Pte^{*n}$ Where, $Pt+n$ =Future population (2019), Pt = Base year (2006), e =exponential, r = Growth rate (3.6%), n = interval between future population and base year population (2019-2006) based on the Benue State Population growth rate of 3.6%.

Table 1: The selected LGAs from each zone and no. of questionnaire administered

Zones	2006 Pop.	Estimated households	No. of Questionnaire
Gkoko	361, 325	96, 160	116
Kwande	248, 642	60, 005	79
Logo	169, 570	45, 128	55
Ohimini	70, 688	18, 264	24
Otukpo	266, 411	70, 901	86
Tarka	79, 280	20, 301	26
Total	1,132, 296	310, 759	386

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Yamane (1967) method for determining sample size was used and the formula is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where, n = sample size, N = Population size, e = Level of significance (set at 0.05 for this study). This was used to obtain a total of 386 respondents. To determine the proportion of questionnaire administered, simple arithmetic was used with the formula as:

$$\frac{n \times SS}{N}$$

where: n = proportion of each household, SS = sample size N = total population of the selected households. After grouping the Local Government Areas (LGAs) according to the three (3) senatorial zones, two LGAs were purposively selected using the LGA with highest and lowest population making a total of six (6) LGAs from each zone. This is to enhance equal representation from each zone. The household at ward level in each of the selected LGAs served as a unit of observation. After arranging the wards in each of the selected LGAs alphabetically, systematic sampling was used to select the second, fourth ward in that order. What informed this method was the uneven distribution of the number of wards in each of the selected LGAs.

Table 2: Wards in the selected LGAs in the study area

Wards in Gboko LGA		
Gboko central	Mbaavarakaa	Mbatser
Gboko East *	Mbadam *	Mbatyu *
Gboko Norh west	Mbadim	Ukpekpe
Gboko South *	Mbakper *	Yandev North *
Igyorov	Mbakwen	Yandev South
Mbaanku *	Mbatan *	
Wards in Kwande LGA		
Adikpo metropolis	Mbaketsa	Yaaav
Lieve i *	Menev *	Moon *
Lieve ii	Tondov i	Kumakwagh
Mbadura *	Tondov ii *	
Mbagba/mbaikyan	Usar	
Mbaikyor *	Mbayoo *	
Wards in Logo LGA		
Mbadyul	Mbavuum	Ukembergya/tswarv
Mbagber *	Nenzev *	Yonov *
Mbater	Tombo	
Mbayam*	Turan *	
Wards in Ohimini LGA		
Agadagba	Idepka	Onyagede-ehaje
Awume-ehaje *	Ochobo *	Onyagede-icho *
Awume-icho	Oglewo-ehaje	Onyagede-icho
Ehatokpe *	Oglewo-icho *	
Wards in Otukpo LGA		
Adoka-icho	Ewulo	Otukpo town Eest
Adoka-ehaje *	Ekete *	Otukpo town West*
Allan	Otobi	Ugboju ehaje
Entekpa *	Otukpo town central *	Ugboju icho *
Wards in Tarka LGA		
Mbaajirakaa	Mbaigba *	Mbanyagber
Mbaayo *	Mbaikyo/mbayia	Shitile *
Mbachaverikyondo	Mba kwakem *	Tongov

National Population Commission, 2009 * The selected Council wards

The households were number serially; thereafter systematic sampling was used by selecting every second household in that order. This was done until the required sample size was obtained. Simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, tables were used for data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the household heads

The sex distribution of respondents is presented in Table 3. Results shows that 62% of the respondents were males while 38% were females.

Table 3 Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	240	62.2
Female	146	37.8
Age group (years)		
35-39	9	2.3
40-44	22	5.7
45-49	41	10.6
50-54	101	26.2
55-59	65	16.8
60-64	71	18.4
65 and above	77	19.9
Occupation		
Civil service	88	22.8
Farming	212	54.9
Petty trading/business	62	16.1
Artisan	10	2.6
Student	8	2.1
Housewife	6	1.6
Level of Education		
No formal education	68	17.6
Primary	146	37.8
Secondary	98	25.4
Post-secondary	74	19.8
Monthly income		
No fixed income	131	33.9
₦5000- ₦10,000	42	10.9
₦10,000- ₦15,000	37	9.6
₦15,000- ₦20,000	45	11.7
₦20,000- ₦25,000	22	5.7
₦25,000- ₦30,000	6	1.6
₦30,000- ₦35,000	13	3.4
₦35,000- ₦40,000	26	6.7
₦40,000 and above	64	16.6
Religion		
Islam	12	3.1
Christianity	368	95.3
Traditional	6	1.6

Source: Field Survey, 2019

This is in tandem with the fact that, the households in Benue State like other traditional African societies are male-headed dominated. This is in agreement with similar study on households by Aboajah, Andrew, Chia and Okeme (2018) which reported 78% and 23%, 69% and 31%, 71% and 29% households dominated by male-heads. However, the findings disagree with Manyara (2016) on changing family structure where the composition of females outnumbered that of male in Kenya. The age distribution of respondents in Table 2 indicates the dominance of 50 years and above which accounts for 81%. Only few (2.3%) were between the age brackets of 35-39. The finding established that most household heads in the selected Local Government were adults. Among them, about 38% were aged (60 and above). The findings corroborate with that of Attah, Mbah and Okeke (2018) where it was reported that, majority of the household heads in Benue State were within the age bracket 50 years and above. Result of occupation of the respondents

reveals that 55% were full time farmers who depend mainly on farming as means of livelihood. Others are 23% are into civil service, 16% are petty traders, 3% are artisan, 2% are students and 2% are housewife. This is in consonance with the study by Ejeh (2016) in Benue State where 55% of the respondents were farmers. Result shows that, majority (82%) had formal education while about 18% had no formal education.

The income distribution of respondents reveals that 34% have no fixed income. This could be as a result of the nature of occupation engaged in. About 32% earned monthly income between ₦5,000-₦20,000. Only about 28.2% of the respondents earned monthly income above the National Minimum Wage of ₦30,000 (Thirty Thousand Naira) as obtainable in Nigeria. This suggests that most of the sampled population were low-income earners, which is very much related to the kind of socio-economic activities engaged in. Secondly, it could be attributed to the high number of respondents with primary education as highest qualification which can affect their opportunities to be gainfully employed in high income jobs. The religion of respondents shows that 95% practice Christianity with only 5% being traditional and Muslims. The reason for high population of Christians is due to their dominance in the State. In confirmation of the findings, Ejeh (2016) and Otanwa (2017) in their study reported Christianity as the dominant religion in Benue State.

Types of changes occurring to families in Benue State

Respondents were asked to identify the types of change in family structure in recent times based on their perception. These were analyzed and presented using multiple responses in Table 4. Based on the findings; the study identified six types of family change. Prominent among them is the increase in the level of cohabitation. Cohabitation is an arrangement where two people that are not married, live together in a romantic relationship and or sexually intimate relationship on a long term or permanent basis. The incidence of cohabitation has become one of the transformations the family is experiencing in recent times as reveal by about 85.0% of the respondents.

Table 4 Distribution of Respondents according to types of family change

Indicators	Freq. (Yes)	%	Freq. (No)	%	Total Freq.	%
Cohabitation	328	85.0	58	15.0	386	100
Divorce	315	81.3	71	18.7	386	100
Separation	307	79.5	79	20.5	386	100
Single parenthood	301	78.0	85	22.0	386	100
Household size	299	77.5	87	22.5	386	100
Delayed marriage	287	74.4	99	25.6	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

This is similar with the report of the National Bureau of Statistics 1999; 2005 and 2009 which revealed about 0.2% rate of cohabitation in Benue State before the year 2000. This could be attributed to its total rejection in the past. This has witnessed an increase of about 3.0% in recent times. This suggests that, from the beginning of the 21st Century to date the level of cohabitation has change to about 2.8%. This affirms the study by William (2017) which reported a gradual increase in the rate of cohabitation in Tanzania. In other studies, Ogunsola (2011); Posel and Rudwick (2014) documented that, the socio-cultural norm of marriage in Africa use to progress from introduction and engagement and procreation in the past, but presently the sequence has

changed; partners meet, fall in love, have sex, cohabit and marry or instead of marrying, they have children in cohabiting relationships.

The second change in the family structure is the increasing rate of divorce. Divorce is the legal dissolution of marriage. According to the result there is a change of about 81.3% in the incidence of divorce. The reports of NBS show that the incidence of divorce was 0.8% before year 2000 in Benue State. This could be due to the high adherence to traditional norms and values on divorce as at that time. These norms and values have declined in recent times as a result of modernization leading to a change in the incidence of divorce to about 9.2% since the beginning of the 21st Century. This indicates that there is a change in the level of divorce to about 8.4% (National Bureau of Statistics 1999; 2005 and 2009). The finding is similar with Bezuidenhout (2017) view that, the increase in divorce rate was not noticeable with about 0.1% in the 19th Century and presently this has become an increasing phenomenon with over 5.3% in South Africa.

The third form of changes is the increase in the level of marital separation. This is a mutual agreement to stay apart for a time period to study if reconciliation to continue living as couple will be possible. In this study we are refers to family transformation induced separation which is a situation where one of the spouses live outside the home as a result of one reason or the other such as rural-urban or urban-rural migration, change in job location especially those in the urban areas or other factors such as conflict, natural disaster while still being married.

The result in table 3 further shows about 79.5% rate of marital separation according to the respondents. This is supported by the National Bureau of Statistics 1999; 2005 and 2009 which reported that the incidence of marital separation of 0.1% before year 2000 while the past 21 years has experienced a change of about 2.9%. This is attributed to the cultural norms and values that limit such practice and the low level of modernization that time. This has changed in recent times due to improvement in socio-economic lives of people.

The fourth change is the increase in the incidence of single parent households. This is a situation where one of the spouses is heading a household alone or become a breadwinner. Results reveal that there is about 78.0% change in the rate of single parenthood as reveal by the respondents. National Bureau of Statistics 1999; 2005 and 2009 reported that the rate of single parenthood was 5.5% before year 2000 in Benue State. This could be due to the strong traditional and cultural essence of the State as at that time. This has change to about 16.0% with an increase of 11% since the beginning of the 21st Century. This reaffirms the position of Nwachukwu (2008); Ekpenyong and Udisi (2016) who both reported a fast growing number of single parents of 19% in Bayelsa. Akinade and Akinjide (2016) documented that, before the 21st Century, the existence of single parenthood was unknown in Nigeria, and where cases existed they were regarded as exceptional cases but presently, it is an increasing phenomenon.

The next change occurring to the family in the study area is the change in household size. Based on the results about (77.5%) of the respondents attests to the change in household size. According to the reports of National Bureau of Statistics 1999, 20001, 2004 and 2009, Benue State has a household size of 6.1 before year 2000. This has changed to about 5.3 after year 2000. This suggests that, there is a decline in the household size to about 0.8% in the 21st Century. The finding is in tandem with Samad (2015) who reported a decline in household size in Bangladesh from 5.6 to 5.4 before and after the 21st Century. Despite the general decline in the household size presently compared to the pre 2000 era in the study area, the household is still beyond the national average of six persons per household.

The sixth changes occurring to the family in Benue is the change in age at first marriage of about 74.4% as rated by the respondents. This is attributed to the fact that women median age at first marriage in Nigeria was 18 years before year 2000 which slightly increase to 19.1 since the past 20 years while men median age at first marriage was 26 years in the same period and as well increase to 28 years and this varies across urban and rural areas. This corroborates the fact that women tend to marry earlier than men. (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 1999-2018). In addition, marriage in Benue State before the 21st Century as revealed by respondents was contracted early. This is due to the type of socio-economic activities engaged in by the people especially type of farming in the past. Presently, due to modernization and other factors such as career pursuit, unemployment, marriages are being delayed. This is in agreement with Samad (2015) who reported a change in age at first marriage from 19 years to 22 years in Bangladesh.

Spatial variation of changes in family structure

Spatial variation in Cohabitation

The spatial pattern of cohabitation is presented in Table 5. Result indicates that the incidence of cohabitation is common in Otukpo (98.8%) and rare in Tarka (26.9%) than other LGAs.

This implies that, there are more people that are living together as couple without registering their union formally in Otukpo and Gboko while such living arrangement is rare in Tarka, Logo than other LGAs.

Table 5. Spatial variation of Cohabitation

	A		D		U		Total	
LGAs	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Gboko	110	94.8	1	0.9	5	4.3	116	100
Kwande	73	92.4	3	3.8	3	3.8	79	100
Logo	41	74.5	4	7.3	10	18.2	55	100
Ohimini	12	50.0	6	25.0	6	25.0	24	100
Otukpo	85	98.8	0	0.0	1	1.2	86	100
Tarka	7	26.9	11	42.3	8	30.8	26	100
Total	328	85.0	28	7.2	30	7.8	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019 N.B: A=Agree, D=Disagree, U= Undecided

The high incidence of cohabitation in Otukpo and Gboko may be attributed to their locations being urban where people imbibe other traits from people owing to heterogeneity, individuality and anonymity in urban centres. In addition, Otukpo and Gboko have witnessed an increase in population growth of about 627,736-102, 366 between 2006-2019 as projected and this could lead to shortage of accommodation and other reasons leading to cohabitation. According to Bumpass and Lu, (2000), the change in the incidence of cohabitation could be due to the weakening of social norms related to marriage, which the author termed as deinstitutionalization of marriage. Ileoye (2018) added that the incidence of cohabitation has become rampant in the society which is more prominent in the urban areas and most institution of learning as a result of high cost of living, search for suitable partners among others.

Spatial analysis in Divorce cases

The spatial distribution of divorce as collated from various courts is presented in Table 6. Result indicates that, the level of divorce is more observed in Otukpo (33.6%) and less in Tarka (2.6%) than other LGAs. This suggests that more people are divorced in Otukpo than in Tarka and Logo. Furthermore, there are more people that are adhering to marital vows and remain in marriage in Logo, Tarka than other LGAs. This affirms the position of Ucan (2007) which reveals that the distribution pattern of divorce vary from place to place or culture to culture.

Table 6: Spatial distribution of Divorce cases in the selected LGAs

Period LGAs	2000-2004		2005-2009		2010-2014		2015-2019		Total	%
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Gboko	62	4.3	67	4.7	61	4.3	121	8.4	311	21.7
Kwande	41	2.9	45	3.1	43	3.0	46	3.3	175	12.3
Logo	31	2.1	10	0.7	23	1.6	26	1.8	90	6.2
Ohimini	113	7.9	25	1.7	85	5.9	116	8.1	339	23.6
Otukpo	28	2.0	53	3.7	81	5.6	320	22.3	482	33.6
Tarka	7	0.5	13	0.9	6	0.4	12	0.8	38	2.6
Total	282	19.7	213	14.8	299	20.8	642	44.7	1,435	100

Source: Author compilation from the selected LGAs courts, 2019

In another study, Eze (2009) reported that marriages before the 20th Century was seen as sacred and when made legal in a recognized institution was treated as a covenant and strictly adhered to. As a result the rate at which people divorced was therefore ignorable. Wajim and Harry (2020) added that upholding marital vows are apparently becoming unrealistic in the 21st Century as evident in the overwhelming rate in the number of single parent household. The high incidence of divorce in Otukpo than other LGAs could be attributed to its heterogeneity nature and the administrative headquarters of Idoma kingdom. This make it more urbanized than other LGAs in other zone while the low reported cases in Tarka, Logo could be attributed to the seemingly low institutional and documented dissolution of marriage due to the distance of the court from them as some of the selected council wards such as Tongov and Mbaayo are almost 5-6 kilometers away from the LG headquarters where the court is situated. As a result most marital dissolution in such areas takes place outside the court and without any witness either through the community heads or the religious leaders as revealed by respondents.

Spatial variation in Marital Separation

Marital separation is one of the prominent transformations the family is experiencing in recent times. Table 7 show the spatial pattern of marital separation. According to the results, the incidence of marital separation is common in Gboko (96.6%) while such is rare in Tarka (45.4%) than other LGAs. This shows that there are more people living outside their matrimonial homes in Otukpo while such is less in Logo than Gboko and Otukpo. The high distribution of marital separation in Gboko and Otukpo could be attributed to the high rate of rural-urban migration either in search of job, businesses, and job transfer among others.

Table 7: Spatial variation of Marital Separation

	A		D		U		Total	
LGAs	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Gboko	112	96.6	3	2.6	1	0.8	116	100
Kwande	64	81.0	8	10.1	7	8.9	79	100
Logo	25	45.4	17	31.0	13	23.6	55	100
Ohimini	12	50.0	10	41.7	2	8.3	24	100
Otukpo	80	93.0	1	1.2	5	8.8	86	100
Tarka	14	53.8	9	34.6	3	11.5	26	100
Total	307	79.5	49	12.7	30	7.8	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019 N.B: A=Agree, D=Disagree, U= Undecided

This type of movement was less or un noticeable in the past compared to the recent times as attested by the respondents. Gboko and Otukpo as the administrative headquarters of Tiv and Idoma have over the last three decades witnessed influx of people from different parts of the country due to either conflict induced migration, in form of holiday, work transfer or insecurity as a result of the recent phenomenon of farmers/Fulani herdsman clashes (Benue State Ministry of information, 2012).

Spatial Variation in Single Parent Households

The spatial distribution of single parenthood is shown in Table 8. The result shows that, the incidence of single parent households is more observed in Ohimini (91.7%) and less in Kwande (55.7%) than other LGAs.

Table 8: Spatial variation of Single parenthood

	A		D		U		Total	
LGAs	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Gboko	96	82.8	8	6.9	12	10.3	116	100
Kwande	44	55.7	17	21.5	18	22.8	79	100
Logo	49	89.1	2	3.6	4	7.2	55	100
Ohimini	22	91.7	0	0.0	2	8.3	24	100
Otukpo	70	81.4	7	8.1	9	10.5	86	100
Tarka	20	76.9	4	15.4	2	7.7	26	100
Total	301	78.0	38	9.8	47	12.2	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019 N.B: A=Agree, D=Disagree, U= Undecided

This suggests that there are more people heading a household either as a single mother or father in Ohimini than other LGAs while such is rare in Otukpo, Gboko and Kwande than LGAs. The fact that the incidence of single parenthood appears common in Ohimini is attributed to the increasing rate of reported cases of divorce after Otukpo which is one of the major causes of single parenthood as collated from Grade I Area Court from the LGA. The finding is similar to that of Anyebe, Lawal, Dodo and Adeniyi (2017) who reported an increasing pattern of single parenthood (98%) in urban Zaria. In addition, Jaiyeoba and Akinjide (2016) in their study documented a high distribution of single parent families in Ibadan. Adoga 2008 in Wajim and Harry 2020) posited that

a society with high rates of single parent families are likely to have high rate of crimes such as drug addiction, robbery, swindlers (419), prostitution and low standards of living, due to high rate of unemployment. Olaleye, Ajay, Oyebola, (2017) reported that single parent households have adverse effects on the psychological upbringing of children such as feeling of inferiority complex, hostility and aggressiveness. This is because both parents have significant role to play in the upbringing of their children. Nwachukwu (1998) and Uwaifo (2008) added that life in a single parent family can be traumatic and children brought up in such condition often suffer emotional problems.

Spatial variation in Household size

Household size is the total number of persons in the house. Hyelad, Alfred and Gyang, (2014) added that the size of the household influences the welfare and health of householders. Table 9 depicts the spatial pattern of household size.

Table 9: Spatial variation of Household Size

	A		D		U		Total	
LGAs	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Gboko	92	79.3	20	17.2	4	3.5	116	100
Kwande	55	69.6	18	22.7	6	1.0	79	100
Logo	45	81.8	2	3.6	8	14.6	55	100
Ohimini	20	83.3	4	16.7	0	0.0	24	100
Otukpo	68	79.1	10	11.6	8	19.2	86	100
Tarka	19	73.1	2	7.7	5	0.0	26	100
Total	299	77.5	56	14.5	31	8.0	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019 N.B: A=Agree, D=Disagree, U= Undecided

Bases on the result, the household size is larger in Ohimini (83.3%) than other LGAs. This signifies that there are people having larger households in Ohimini and Tarka than in Otukpo and Gboko while small households are common in Otukpo and Gboko than other LGAs. The fact that the change in household size is more in Ohimini and Tarka suggests that, the household size is higher in the rural than urban areas. The rural areas are mostly farmers who depend mainly on farming for survival and this could affect their household size especially large household size for economic gain. No doubt, Ogwuche (2013) reported that, there is a change in house hold size especially in the urban areas in recent times due to the attitude towards the use of contraceptives or other methods of population control. The finding is in tandem with Nigeria demographic and health survey reports which estimated a large household size in most rural areas in Nigeria (Nigeria demographic and health survey 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018).

Spatial Variation in Age at First Marriage

The spatial variation in age at first marriage is shown in Table 10. Result shows that the change in age at first marriage is common in Gkoko (92.2%) and less in Kwande (32.1%) than other LGAs. This indicates that more people are engaging in late marriage in Gboko and Otukpo than in Kwande while there is still adherence to the traditional early marriage in Kwande, Tarka and Logo than other LGAs.

Table 10: Spatial variation of Age at first marriage

	A		D		U		Total	
LGAs	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Gboko	107	92.2	7	6.0	2	1.7	116	100
Kwande	48	60.8	13	16.5	18	22.8	79	100
Logo	43	78.2	9	16.4	3	5.5	55	100
Ohimini	7	29.2	12	50.0	5	20.8	24	100
Otukpo	76	88.4	8	9.3	2	2.3	86	100
Tarka	6	23.1	5	19.2	15	57.7	26	100
Total	287	74.4	54	14.0	45	11.6	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The fact that age at first marriage is common in Gboko and Otukpo is attributed to their location as the two major urban areas apart from the State capital which could be as a result of the cost of living or the desire to be financially independent before marriage and pursuit for higher education among others. This is in agreement with Prioux, 2006; Bianchi, 2014; Kuperberg, 2014; Samad, 2015, Haregu *et al* (2017) who both reported a change in age at first marriage in Bangladesh, Kenya, Zambia, Namibia and Canada, Spain. This reaffirmed the position of the respondents that, in the past, it is difficult to see a man or woman above 30 years living with their parent and not married which account for 71% compared to the present situation where there are about 81% of such people. Adedokun (1999) opined that the duration of schooling has strong correlation with age at first marriage.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper focused on the spatial pattern of family change in Benue State. The study established that Benue State is experiencing changes in family structure in recent times. These changes are not evenly distributed across space with some areas having more changes than the other. This is an indication of a continuing revolution in the social lives of people over the last four decades. This can negatively affect individual members of the family. This is because parental divorce is characterized by loss of emotional resources for children. In addition, low income of female-headed households is likely to increase the malnourishment of children which can expose such children to various behavioural problems. Furthermore, some of the single parent households' especially female headed households are characterized by low socio-economic status, which may hinder them from getting a job to sustain their lives and children, as a result, children basic needs may not be met. It is therefore imperative for government of Benue State and other social organization to sensitize people on the negative implication of family change, pass a legislation that will ensure that pre-marital counseling is mandatory for couple entering into marital union for the first time to curb especially the high rate of divorce as one of the main causes of single parenthood and marital separation.

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