

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