



Family Crisis in the Cameroonian Society

Kijem Joseph Yuh

ARTICLE INFO

Article No.:061822064

Type: Short comm.

Full Text: [PDF](#), [HTML](#), [PHP](#), [EPUB](#)

Accepted: 27/06/2022

Published: 04/08/2022

*Corresponding Author

Kijem Joseph

E-mail: yuh750@gmail.com

Keywords: Family, crisis, Cameroon.

ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to show that Cameroonian families are experiencing a serious form of crisis. This crisis is discernible at the level of the various forms of authority existing in families; sexual morality; the responsibilities of children; succession issues; children's rights; etc. The article makes an appeal to all stakeholders in the domain of family life in Cameroon (government institutions in charge of family affairs; non-governmental organizations in charge of family life; educational institutions which lay emphasis on family issues; traditional and cultural authorities and groups; religious institutions; families; etc) to diligently work together so as to overcome the aforementioned crisis.

The family is the most fundamental or basic social unit in any given society. This truism emerges in so many domains of societal life. If the family is not well shepherded in its activities, a good number of its members would go astray and the society shall bear the brunt of this situation in various ways. This principle obtains in the case of families in Cameroon. In this country, parental and marital authority is in shambles; sexual morality is rudderless; children's irresponsibility is frightful; succession problems are dehumanizing; children's rights are undermined; etc. In a nutshell, the Cameroonian family is unable to comply with Joseph Nsom's description of what could be rightly referred to

as the Ideal Community Pact.¹ It is, as we shall see in the subsequent paragraphs, in a quasi-chaotic situation.

Parental authority in Cameroon is experiencing a lot of problems within family circles. Some illustrations of this fact as are follows:

- Some husbands are not able to exercise enough authority over their wives due to the fact that they have lost their jobs or are

¹ Joseph Nsom, *The Modern Kom Society (Culture, Customs and Tradition)*, Yaounde, Nyaa Publishers, 2015, p.3

Joseph Nsom highlights the fact that when people live or intend to live together, they need a set of rules or social norms that help everyone to know what to do in various circumstances...

- unemployed. In a good number of such cases, employed wives or wives with salaries as well as wives who are self-employed automatically become family or household heads, thereby relegating their husbands to the background;
- Some wives from rich homes do not respect their husbands, especially in the case of husbands who are from poor family backgrounds;
- Some wives who are more educated than their husbands display an inordinate level of superiority complex when dealing with their husbands;
- Some wives who are richer than their husbands or who have jobs with better salaries treat their husbands with a lot of contempt;
- A good number of parents find it very difficult to assert their parental authority over their kids due to the nefarious external or societal influences which are now destroying African children;
- A good number of polygamous husbands experience a lot of difficulties trying to maintain harmony or stability in their respective polygamous homes;
- Etc.

Sexual morality in a good number of Cameroonian families is undergoing a period of crisis. This is due to the fact that some parents do not strictly supervise the relationships of their children with the external world. In this connection, some of their girl children become prematurely pregnant while some of their boy children get some of their female friends prematurely pregnant. Furthermore, some family members indulge in incest while a good number of married men and women do not hesitate to get involved in adultery. Prostitution is the order of the day in some poor Cameroonian homes; in these homes, girl children are allowed to feed family members through prostitution. This activity is in total violation of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.²

In some Cameroonian families, some children display a very high sense of irresponsibility. They indulge in the following:

- Consuming drugs excessively and frequently, thereby destroying their future;
- Listening and dancing to the tune of immoral music at home and elsewhere;
- Watching all sorts of pornographic films with friends,

² Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states as follows:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...

- Drinking excessively with friends in bars and at very ungodly hours;
- Putting on sexy clothes, clothes which could easily lead to the raping of poorly-dressed girls;
- Insulting elders without any regrets;
- Misusing ITCs and mobile telephones;
- Etc.

This unfortunate situation is partially due to a substantial non-implementation of Article 27(2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.³

In many Cameroonian families (especially polygamous ones), succession problems are increasingly numerous. These families are experiencing a series of tribulations owing to the fact that the succession mechanisms of their respective family heads (in most cases, fathers, husbands and patriarchs) were not well defined or are highly contested. Some of the succession wills produced by these heads are contested or considered doubtful by some family members, thereby engendering cases of family turmoil or feuds, cases which, sometimes, lead to bloodshed, poisoning, murder, etc. Succession clashes in many Cameroonian families have undermined or conspicuously damaged the unity or solidarity of these families.

Children's rights are trampled upon in a lot of families in Cameroon. Some of the cases of this violation are as follows:

- Some Cameroonian parents and families allow their children to indulge in child labour, thereby contravening these children's right to physical, psychological and social welfare;
- A good number of Cameroonian parents and families do not substantially uphold their kids' right to education;
- A good number of Cameroonian parents and families tamper with their children's right to proper health care (These parents and families sometimes rely on roadside drugs in the treatment of their children);
- Some Cameroonian children (especially some girl children) are exposed to prostitution by the irresponsible behaviour of their parents;
- Some Cameroonian children (especially some girl children) are exposed to rape because their dress code is not strictly controlled by their parents;

³ Article 27(2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) stipulates as follows:

The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.

- The rights to economic and social welfare (the right to be well fed; the right to be well brought up socially; the right for children to acquire their local cultures and languages; etc) are abused by many families in Cameroon when their parents (especially the family heads) indulge in adultery, irresponsible polygamy, drunkenness, etc;
- Etc.

4) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Cite this Article: Kijem, JY (2022). Family Crisis in the Cameroonian Society. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(1): 9-11.

This worrisome situation is worsened by the fact that some Cameroonian children, together with other members in their families, are experiencing extreme cases of poverty, which, as Aristotle says, "is the parent of revolution and crime".⁴

In conclusion, this dismal depiction of the Cameroonian family (which is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of family tribulations in Cameroon⁵) is a cause for concern. It is an appeal to all stakeholders in the domain of family life in Cameroon (government institutions in charge of family affairs; non-governmental organizations in charge of family life; educational institutions which lay emphasis on family issues; traditional and cultural authorities and groups; religious institutions; families; etc) to diligently work together so as to overcome the aforementioned family problems.

Bibliography

- 1) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)
- 2) Notable Quotes, "Poverty Quotes", Available at: www.notable-quotes.com/p/poverty_quotes.html
Consulted on: 22/03/19
- 3) Nsom, J., *The Modern Kom Society (Culture, Customs and Tradition)*, Yaounde, Nyaa Publishers, 2015

⁴ Notable Quotes, "Poverty Quotes", Available at: www.notable-quotes.com/p/poverty_quotes.html
Consulted on: 22/03/19

In "Notable Quotes", Aristotle rightly states that poverty is the parent of revolutionary and criminal activities.

⁵ One of such tribulations which have not been mentioned in this work is the destructive role of secrecy in many Cameroonian families. For instance, some exposed secrets dealing with:

- love affairs involving some married persons ;
- the fact their some men have children out of wedlock;
- the fact that all children in a given family are not the biological children of the male family head).

Such secrets have gone a long way to destroy many families in Cameroon.