

**THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON FAMILY DYNAMICS  
AND RELATIONSHIP IN BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

**BY**

**BLESSING ENOBUN  
ART1901796**

**A PROJECT WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIONS  
AND SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN RELIGIONS (B.A.) DEGREE OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.**

**March, 2024**

## **APPROVAL**

I hereby certify that is supervised this project and that I approved it having found it adequate in scope and quality for the partial fulfillment of the award of B.A. Degree in Religions studies .

---

**(Project Supervisor)**

---

**Date**

## CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned hereby certify that this project work was carried out by Blessing, a Student of the Department of Religions Studies and that it is adequate in scope and quality partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree of the University of Benin, Benin City.

.....  
**Enobun Blessing**  
(Student)

.....  
**Date**

.....  
**Dr. M. O. Otasowie**  
(Project Supervisor)

.....  
**Date**

.....  
**Prof. Wilson Ehianu**  
Head of Department

.....  
**Date**

.....  
**External Examiner**

.....  
**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I wish to express my profound gratitude to God Almighty for making my degree programme a success.

When it comes to a piece of work of this nature, contributions from other persons towards its success becomes inevitable. Therefore, I hereby deeply acknowledge my indebtedness first and foremost to my project supervisor, Dr. M. O. Otasowie whose excellent supervision, useful suggestions and utmost constructive criticisms has made this work a reality.

My thanks also go to my parents Mr & Mrs., and my siblings for their moral support and encouragement. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of my entire course mates toward this project work. May God bless you all.

## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the multifaceted impact of Christianity on family dynamics and relationships in Benin City, Nigeria. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the research delves into various aspects of family life shaped by Christian beliefs and practices. Qualitative observations capture the lived experiences and perspectives of Christian families, while quantitative surveys and questionnaires gather data on their demographics, practices, and beliefs. The study not only examines family structures and gender roles, but also offers a deeper understanding of how Christianity influences parenting styles, intergenerational relationships, marital satisfaction, and conflict resolution strategies. By investigating these intricate dynamics, the research aims to contribute to academic understanding and offer practical insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and individuals. Recommendations include implementing family-centered counseling and educational programs that integrate Christian values to foster improved communication, understanding, and mutual respect within Christian families in Benin City.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TITLE PAGE</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	i
<b>CERTIFICATION</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	ii
<b>DEDICATION</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	v
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	viii
<b>1.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>									
1.1	Background to the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.3	Research Objectives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1.4	Scope of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1.5	Significance of the Study-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1.6	Research Methodology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
<b>2.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>									
2.1	Historical Context of Christianity in Benin City, Nigeria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
2.2	Spread of Christianity in Benin City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
2.3	Role of Christianity in Benin City's Social Fabric	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
2.4	Kinship Systems and Community Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
<b>3.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER THREE: THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON FAMILY DYNAMICS AND RELATIONSHIP IN BENIN CITY.</b>									
3.1	Family Dynamics in Benin City Before Christianity-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20

3.2	Traditional Family Structures and Values-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27
3.3	The Element Christianity has brought to Traditional family structure in Benin City	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
3.4	Introduction of Christianity and its Influence on Family Dynamics							
3.5	Changes in Family Structures and Practices	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
3.6	Modern Christian Family Structures and its impact on Gender Roles and Relationships-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
<b>4.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER FOUR: ROLE OF CHURCHES IN FAMILY LIFE</b>							
4.1	Assembles I of God and their role in Family Dynamics and Relationship	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
4.2	Forms of Marriage, sexuality and relationship in the context of social Change in Benin City	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
4.3	Challenges and Opportunities in Christian Family Dynamics							50
4.4	Conflicts and Negotiations between Traditional and Christian Ideals	-	-	-	-	-	-	53
4.5	Religious Implications of Christian Influence on Family Life							56
<b>5.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION</b>							
5.1	Evaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	59
5.2	Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	60
5.3	Recommendations-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60

**References**

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Christianity has had a profound impact on societies around the world influencing various aspects of individuals' lives including family dynamics and relationships. Benin City is located in Nigeria, has a rich cultural heritage and a significant Christian population. Christianity was introduced to Benin City during the exploration through the arrival of Portuguese explorers. This marked the beginning of a significant religious and cultural transformation in the region. Over the years Christianity has played a crucial role in shaping the family structure and relationships within the city. Understanding the impact of Christianity on family dynamics and relationships in Benin City is essential for comprehending the social and cultural fabric of the Benin City.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Benin City has experienced significant changes in its family dynamics and relationships due to the influence of Christianity. However there is a lack of comprehensive research on this topic. It is crucial to investigate how

the introduction of Christianity has influenced the traditional family structure roles and values in Benin City. By addressing this gap in knowledge we can gain insights into the implications of Christian teachings on family dynamics and relationships in this context.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The primary objectives of this research paper are as follows:

1. To explore the historical background of Christianity in Benin City and its influence on family dynamics and relationships.
2. To examine the changes in family structure roles and values as a result of the introduction of Christianity.
3. To analyze the impact of Christian teachings on gender roles, marriage parenting and relationships within families
4. To assess the challenges and opportunities that Christianity presents to family dynamics and relationships
5. To provide recommendations for promoting healthy family dynamics and relationships in the context of Christianity

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This research focuses on the impact of Christianity with focus on family dynamics and relationships. It aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the changes brought about by Christianity in the traditional family structure roles and values. The study will involve a qualitative analysis of existing literature interviews with community members and observations of family.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Understanding the impact of Christianity on family dynamics and relationships is crucial for several reasons. Firstly it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the intersection of religion and family dynamics. Secondly it provides insights into the cultural and social changes brought about by the introduction of Christianity in a specific context. Lastly the findings of this study can inform policymakers religious leaders and community members on how to promote healthy family relationships while respecting the values and teachings of Christianity.

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

This study will employ a qualitative research approach. It will involve an extensive review of existing literature on the impact of Christianity on family dynamics and relationships. Additionally interviews will be conducted with community members to gather firsthand experiences and perspectives. Observations of family dynamics and relationships within the community will also be made to supplement the data collected. The data obtained will be analysed to identify patterns and themes related to the research objectives.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The origins of Christianity can be traced back to Judaism, a religion practised by the Jewish people. It all began with Abraham, who was instructed by God to leave his homeland and settle in Canaan, where he would be given a promised land. God had promised to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the shore. Abraham's son, Isaac, and grandson, Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel by God), were integral figures in the formation of the twelve tribes of Israel. From these tribes, the nation of Israel was born. Throughout history, God communicated with notable figures such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, who were devout followers of Judaism. It is worth noting that the founder of Christianity was also of Jewish descent and a descendant of King David, fulfilling the prophecy in the Bible that a Saviour would be born from the Davidic line. After Jesus Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the Church played a pivotal role in the early Christian community. Jesus himself taught his disciples on various topics, including family dynamics and maintaining healthy relationships with others (Boyarin, 2012).

Christianity has had a profound impact on family dynamics and relationships in Benin City. This literature review examines various aspects of this impact including Christian teachings on family nuclear family formation changes in extended family dynamics. Gender roles marriage as a sacred covenant marital stability challenges faced by Christian couples, biblical influence on parenting styles, values transmission and challenges in balancing discipline and love.

Christianity's influence on family dynamics extends beyond the topics mentioned in the literature review. One aspect worth exploring is the impact of Christian beliefs on intergenerational relationships within the family. Additionally, an examination of how Christian teachings shape the concept of forgiveness within families could provide valuable insights into the dynamics of conflict resolution. Lastly, exploring the role of Christian faith in fostering resilience and coping mechanisms within families facing adversity would further enrich our understanding of the subject.

Furthermore, an examination into the influence of Christianity on the distribution of household responsibilities and decision-making within families would shed light on the power dynamics at play. Additionally,

exploring the role of Christian values in promoting empathy and compassion within family relationships could contribute to a deeper understanding of the emotional dynamics within households. Lastly, an examination of the impact of Christian teachings on the perception and treatment of mental health issues within families would provide valuable insights into the holistic well-being of individuals and their loved ones.

Continuing this exploration, it would be interesting to investigate the influence of Christian teachings on the concept of gender equality within families. Understanding how Christian beliefs shape attitudes towards gender roles and responsibilities could shed light on the dynamics of power and agency within households. Additionally, examining the impact of Christianity on the formation and dissolution of family units, such as divorce rates and remarriage practices, would provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of this religion on family dynamics. Lastly, delving into the role of orthodox Christian faith in shaping interfaith marriages and the challenges they may face would offer valuable insights into the complexities of religious diversity within families.

## **2.1 Historical context of Christianity in Benin City, Nigeria**

In order to understand the impact of Christianity on family dynamics and relationships in Benin city, it is essential to explore the historical context of Christianity in the region.

### **Early Missionary Movements in Benin District**

The wind of the missionary activities in Africa eventually got to the Benin empire. It is however on record that, Benin was the first place the Whiteman visited in the present day Nigeria.

The first major missionary group that came into the Benin territory was the Roman Catholic Mission led by John Affonso D' Aveiro during the reign of Oba Esigie in about 1504 AD. Pundits are of the opinion that, the Roman Catholic missionaries were able to win the conscience of the Oba because of his early upbringing when his father - Oba Ozolua allowed him (Esigie) at his early age to attend the Roman Catholic Sunday School activities. Another reason was that, Oba Esigie felt that there were no remarkable differences between the worlds described in the Bible from that of the Benin people. Pundits also have it that, the Oba accepted the new faith because of the political instability in the kingdom at that time, so he needed military support from Portugal to suppress the palace intrigues.

Whatever thought or angles that were postulated regarding the Oba's action, one thing that is every clear was that, Oba Esigie whole heartily accepted the activities of the Christian missionary work in Benin. He even went ahead to declare Benin kingdom a 'Christian State' in about 1508 AD. The Oba sent Ohen-Okun, an Olokun Priest of Ughoton to Portugal not only to be ambassador to the Benin nation, but also to go and learn more about the new Christian religion. The Oba thus became the first Benin king to speak the Portuguese language.

The declaration of Benin a Christian State by Oba Esigie led to the establishment of many Aruosa shrines (churches) at strategic locations in Benin kingdom - namely, Aruosa N' Erhie, Aruosa N' Akpakpava, Aruosa N' Ogbeleka Aruosa N' Ugbague and so forth. The Holy Aruosa Cathedral at Akpakpava was the headquarters where the Bishop resided.

The second Missionary Phase began many decades after the exit of the remarkable Oba Esigie, there seemed to be vacuum and less commitment to Christian worship. Though attempts were made by few other missionary groups to re-Christianize the kingdom, but witnessed little or no success. After the British insurgency in 1897, there was another surge of missionary

activities Benin. This time around, it was no longer the Roman Catholic Mission, but the Christian missionary society (CMS), which eventually led to the coming of other Christian domination into the Benin kingdom.

Records from Rev. Emmanuel Egiebor Oluoba archive- the first Benin indigenous Priest ordained in 1924 revealed that, the CMS first came to this part of the world particularly Abeokuta in 1842, from Abeokuta and later spread to other parts of the country. He identified Townsend and Ajayi Crowther as the first missionary agents. Attempts were made in 1874 by Bishop Crowther to establish a mission Station in Benin, but failed due to some logistic problems. The energetic move by James Johnson who was made Assistant Bishop in London in 1900 and later transferred from Lagos to Bonny- the headquarter of Niger Evangelization, started the success of the Christian Missionary Society Station in Benin. In 1902 Bishop James Johnson opened a mission station in Benin and some other places in the Niger Delta region. Catechist Oyesile was sent to Benin as the first missionary agent. The Bishop was able to get the assistance of Arokun, a Christian convert and wife of Oba Ovonramwen who just came back from exile in Calabar for the commencement of Evangelization. At that early

period, there was no formal Church structure for worship. Catechist Oyesile was accommodated in Mr. Banjo residence at Lagos Street, opposite the mosque where he organized the daily Church activities.

## **2.2 Spread of Christianity in Benin:**

Prior to the introduction of Christianity, Benin city's family structure adhered to a distinctly patriarchal system. Men held absolutely authority, making key decisions while women roles primarily revolved around domestic duties and child bearing. Polygamy was also practiced, adding another layer of complexity to family dynamics which resulted in unequal power dynamics within households. As Christianity gained traction in Benin city, it began to shape the way families interacted and relate to one another, Traditional religious practice started to give way to Christian teachings, resulting in changes in marriage customs, gender roles and parenting styles. The spread of Christianity in Benin also brought about the establishment of churches and religious institutions which became central to community life and further impacted family dynamics.

The successful settlement of the Christian Missionary society in Benin, paved way for other Christian dominations in Benin.

## **Baptist Church**

Baptist church (1921) in Benin originated with the activities of the missionaries from America Baptist convention. They were in support of the belief in adult baptism by total immersion. Rev. Oluoba archive revealed that some members of the Christian missionary society in Benin were no longer comfortable with the Church and decided to establish the Baptist Mission in Benin in 1921. The initial place of worship was at the native Court hall before they later moved to Mission road in Benin City. Duvel was the first officiating minister before Revd. Emokpae became engaged and made Reverend

## **St Peter's Church in Benin\**

St Peter's Church in Benin was formerly located along Ifon road (Lagos Street). Records revealed that the name St. Peter's was given to the Church by Revd. Kidd because, he was sent to Benin under the auspices of St. Peter's Church in England.

St. James Church was established in Benin because of the initial tribal rivalry within the St. Peter's Church. The situation became uncontrollable

that the non-natives of the Church decided to move to establish a new Church named after Bishop James Johnson.

### **Christ Apostolic Church In Benin (1932)**

In the year 1917, Pastor Odubanjo then Clerk in the Nigeria Police force department was transferred from Lagos to Warri. Before he left Lagos, he got a bulletin from American Magazine called the “Sword of the Spirit”. What attracted him most from that leaflet was the section that dealt with the ‘Seven principles of prevailing prayer’. After going through this article, Odubanjo was transformed into a praying Christian and came to know that Christ atoned not only for our sins, but also for our sicknesses. Hence Divine healing from God was a Christian right. He was therefore determined to preach this Goodness to everyone. In 1918, a group of people at Ijebu-Ode formed themselves into a “Prayer Society” with the vision that Pastor Odubanjo had received. This society was headed by Pastor J.B. Esismade. Odubanjo later resigned from the Nigeria Police Force, and merged his society with them. Both group resolved to be called Faith Tabernacle. In 1931, the leaders of this movement came together again in an agreement to the Divine instructions to change again the name Faith Tabernacle to ‘Christ

Apostolic Church' Rev. Oluoba diary revealed that Christ Apostolic Church got to Benin in 1932 through the efforts of Eliab Omoregie who was influenced by the doctrine of Faith Tabernacle in America.

### **Salvation Army Church in Benin (1924)**

The impetus to introduce new and evidently more successful form of evangelism was started by Prophet Evangelist Garrick Sokari Idaketima Braide. His methods of evangelism witnessed successful religious awakening that attracted a lot of followers. The Church got to Benin in the year 1924, members initially fellowshipped near E.E Akpata residence.

### **First African Church (Ebenezer UNA Church) (1929)**

The First African Church in Nigeria was first established in 1891. The initiator was William Emmanuel Cole, others in support were John George, William G.A, Gloucester D.A, Thompson J.B, Chase leigh and Revd. C.W Cole.

Rev. Oluoba records revealed that the African Church was founded on the principle of self government and self respect. It began as a protest against the form of Church government in the Christian missionary society (CMS) and also the desire to enter fully into the Christian communion. The

movement gained impetus from the persistent ill-treatment of the indigenous clergies in the CMS and the contemptuous manner in which the Nigerian customs and social systems were ignored by the European Clergies in the CMS and the contemptuous manner in which the Nigerian customs and social systems were ignored by the European Clergies.

The exclusion of competent and pious Nigerians from the ecclesiastical office as epitomized by the indignity suffered by Bishop James Johnson, Bishop Ajayi Crowther and later Rev. Emmanuel Oluoba, increased the zeal to establish the African Church Mission.

United African Church was therefore established in Benin in 1929 by Rev. Emmanuel Egiebor Oluoba, who also was one of the pioneer founders of Christian Missionary Church in Benin in 1902. He left the CMS mission because, on numerous occasions, he was denied some privileges, promotions and many other welfare packages due to him by the white authorities.

The Reverend was confronted with numerous challenges at the initial stage of the infant Church. The father was no longer alive to help get a new place of worship. However, the Church also started again within Chief Oluoba of Benin Palace. When the congregation grew in number, the Church moved to

the house of Princess Omono Ovonranmwun- wife of the Oba, and again to the Native Court hall and finally to Olowu Cinema Hall. The permanent site for the Church Cathedral was later acquired by Rev. E. Ohuoba, the present site at the Oza Street in Benin City. He formally included 'Ebenezer' in the name of the Church just to give Glory to God Almighty, and to keep in memory the difficulties he encountered during the establishment of the Church in Benin.

### **2.3 Role of Christianity in Social Fabric**

Christianity has played a significant role in shaping the social fabric of Benin city including its impact on family structure and relationship. Christianity introduced new values and ethical principles that have influenced family interactions. Concepts such as love, forgiveness, and humility promoted by Christianity have contributed to fostering healthier relationships within families.

Christian teachings on marriage and family have influenced the traditional family structure in Benin City. For example, the emphasis on monogamy and fidelity has led to changes in marital practices and expectations within families.

Christian beliefs have influenced parenting styles and approaches to child rearing. Ideas such as discipline, moral education, and the importance of family unity have become integral parts of many Christian families in Benin City. Christian communities often provide social support networks for families, offering counseling, financial assistance, and community programs that promote family well-being and cohesion. Christianity has also facilitated cultural integration within families, as it encourages the blending of traditional cultural practices with Christian beliefs and values. This integration has led to a dynamic and evolving cultural identity for many families.

Overall, Christianity has had a multifaceted impact on family relationships, influencing values, structures, parenting practices, social support systems, and cultural integration within the family unit.

#### **2.4 Kinship Systems and Community Bonds**

According to Osaghae (2002), Benin City's kinship system is predominantly patrilineal, with descent traced through the male line. The basic unit is the extended family, comprising parents, children, siblings, and

their families. These families often share a compound, fostering close collaboration and mutual support. Lineage groups, composed of extended families with a common ancestor, play a significant role in social organization. They act as custodians of tradition, hold collective land ownership, and provide social security. This kinship systems influence various aspects of Benin life, including:

- a. Economic Cooperation: Extended families collaborate in agricultural activities, trade, and craft production, promoting economic interdependence and shared prosperity.
- b. Socialization and Education: The kinship groups transmit cultural values, norms, and skills from generation to generation, ensuring the continuation of tradition and social cohesion. The promotion of the “Family name” is the core values of the kin or the community, as this projects them in a positive or negative light.
- c. Conflict Resolution: Disputes are often mediated within the kinship network, fostering reconciliation and maintaining harmony within the community. Disputes are never engaged by others outside the clan.

- d. Political Participation: Lineage groups play a role in traditional governance, influencing decision-making processes and ensuring the representation of diverse interests.

Importantly, the kinship system fosters a strong sense of community by creating a network of mutual obligation and support. Individuals identify with their extended families and lineages, leading to a sense of belonging and shared identity (Osaghae, 2002). This sense of community is evident in:

- a. Collective Celebrations: Traditional festivals and rituals are celebrated communally, strengthening social bonds and reaffirming shared values.
- b. Informal Support Systems: Kinship networks provide assistance in times of need, such as illness, financial hardship, or bereavement.
- c. Shared Responsibility: Members of the community collectively address challenges and contribute to the collective good.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON FAMILY DYNAMICS AND RELATIONSHIP**

#### **3.1 FAMILY DYNAMICS BEFORE CHRISTIANITY**

Nestled in the heart of Southern Nigeria, Benin City boasts a history as rich and vibrant as its community spirit. This spirit, in part, stems from the intricate interplay between tradition and change, particularly evident in the evolution of family dynamics. Prior to the arrival of Christianity in the 15th century, Benin's families functioned within a distinct social structure, with deep ties to lineage and strong patriarchal norms. Christianity's introduction ushered in a new era, impacting not only religious beliefs but also social fabric, including family dynamics.

Prior to the arrival of Christianity, Benin City thrived under a complex social organization centered around patrilineal extended families. Descent traced through the male line, with families residing in compounds, fostering cooperation and interdependence (Eweka, 1999). The lineages, comprised of extended families sharing a common ancestor, played a crucial role in social structure, land ownership, and collective identity (Osaghae, 2002). Within these families, polygamy was prevalent, particularly among the elite, with the Oba (king) having numerous wives (Afigbo, 1981). Each wife maintained her own household, and children enjoyed relative autonomy within their mother's unit. However, the Oba held ultimate authority, and

inheritance followed primogeniture, favoring the eldest son from the senior wife.

It is important to note that the “religious beliefs” heavily influenced each family’s life and dynamics. Traditional Edo (Bini) religion emphasized veneration of ancestors, spiritual guidance, and a connection to the cosmos. Rituals and festivals became occasions for family gatherings, reinforcing ties and reaffirming shared values (Peel, 2000). In addition to the religious beliefs, the Edo people also placed great importance on the concept of community. This sense of community extended beyond just the immediate family and included extended family members and even the wider village or town. This emphasis on community further strengthened the bonds between families and contributed to the overall cohesion of Edo society.

The Edo people's strong sense of community was evident in their collective decision-making processes. Important matters were often discussed and decided upon by the entire community, ensuring that everyone had a voice and a stake in the outcome. This participatory approach fostered a sense of unity and cooperation among the Edo people, further solidifying their shared values and traditions. The Edo people's commitment to

community extended to their economic activities as well. They engaged in cooperative farming, where families would come together to work on each other's fields, ensuring that everyone had enough food to sustain themselves. This cooperative spirit also extended to trade and commerce, with individuals pooling their resources to establish thriving markets and trading networks. This emphasis on communal economic practices not only strengthened the local economy but also fostered a sense of interdependence and mutual support among the Edo people.

This strong sense of community and collective decision-making also had a significant impact on the education system of the Edo people. Education was seen as a communal responsibility, with children being taught not only by their parents but also by other members of the community. This holistic approach to education ensured that knowledge and skills were shared and passed down from one generation to the next, contributing to the overall development and well-being of the society. The Edo people's commitment to community and education created a rich and vibrant cultural heritage that continues to shape their identity today.

The Edo people's strong sense of community and collective decision-making also had a significant impact on their governance structure. Leadership positions were often filled through a consensus-based process done by the various families, where individuals were chosen based on their wisdom, experience, and ability to serve the community with evidences from the family management. This ensured that the leaders were accountable to the people and that their decisions reflected the collective interests of the community. This participatory approach to governance fostered a sense of trust and unity among the Benin people, allowing them to effectively address challenges and maintain social order.

This participatory approach to governance also allowed the Benin people to effectively address social issues and maintain social order. By involving the community in decision-making processes, the leaders were able to gain valuable insights and perspectives, leading to more informed and inclusive policies. This sense of trust and unity among the Edo people not only strengthened their governance structure but also contributed to the overall stability and well-being of the society. However, the arrival of Christianity in 1888 heralded a period of significant change. Missionaries,

armed with new doctrines and values, challenged the existing societal fabric. Monogamy, a cornerstone of Christian teaching, directly confronted the prevalent practice of polygamy. Missionaries condemned the custom as immoral and incompatible with Christian ideals, leading to internal conflicts within several families (Eweka, 1999).

### **3.1.1 Overview of Christian Teachings on Family**

Christianity places great importance on the institution of family considering it the foundation of society. Christian teachings emphasize the roles and responsibilities of family members, the sanctity of marriage and the importance of raising children in a Godly manner.

According to David (2016), Christianity has influenced millions of families for over two thousand years and continues to exert some influence on the family life of about two billion adherents. Christianity sanctifies marriage and family relationships, encouraging many to devote significant attention to their spouses and families. Christianity has contributed to family life by raising the status of marriage, promoting trust and loyalty in marriage, promoting marital stability by discouraging divorce, increasing the status of children in society, improving the quality of marital and family processes,

countering cultural trends that harm families, helping to resolve relational problems through pastoral counselling, and promoting human life and health. However, Bengtson (2013), states the negative effects of Christianity in the family “Religion also has had some negative effects on marriage and family life, including justifying corporal punishment, discouraging and disallowing divorce even in situations involving abuse, and sanctifying gender inequity and oppression.” Christians manifest great diversity in beliefs and practices regarding marriage and family issues and policies.

The emphasis on nuclear families, championed by the church, also posed challenges. While extended families provided crucial support, it clashed with the Christian notion of the **independent conjugal unit**. This shift led to the gradual decline of communal living and weakened the collective responsibility characteristic of the pre-Christian family structure within the Benin City communal system.

Christians' beliefs and approaches towards marriage and family vary greatly from the traditional system of the Benin people, leading to a diverse range of policies. Within the Christian community, there is a wide spectrum of perspectives on these topics, reflecting the complexity and multifaceted

nature of the religion. While some Christians of Benin origin may hold traditional views that discourage divorce and promote gender inequality, others embrace the Christian love, respect, and equality within the family unit.

It is important to recognize that Christianity is not a monolithic entity, but rather a diverse tapestry of beliefs and practices. The impact of Christianity on the family can differ significantly depending on individual interpretations and cultural contexts. This diversity is evident in the various denominations and sects within Christianity, each with its own distinct teachings and doctrines. Furthermore, the influence of culture cannot be overlooked when examining the impact of Christianity on the family. Different cultural contexts can shape the way Christians approach marriage and family dynamics. For example, in some cultures, arranged marriages may be more prevalent, while in others, individual choice and consent are emphasized. These cultural nuances intersect with religious beliefs, creating a complex tapestry of practices and attitudes towards marriage and family.

### **3.2 Traditional Family Structures and Values**

In traditional Edo society, traditional family structures and values have long been integral to the social fabric of the community. The family serves as the cornerstone of societal organization, playing a central role in shaping individuals' identities, beliefs, and behaviors. These family structures were characterized by lineage, patriarchy, and extended kinship networks. The family unit extended beyond the nuclear family to include extended relatives, ancestors, and lineage members. Lineage ties held paramount importance, dictating social status, inheritance, and communal obligations. Christianity has challenged traditional gender roles in Benin City. While traditional roles assigned specific tasks and responsibilities based on gender, Christian perspectives promote equality and mutual submission between spouses. This has resulted in a shift towards more egalitarian relationships within Christian families.

The traditional family values in Benin City are rooted in cultural beliefs, customs, and rituals that have been passed down through generations. Respect for elders, communal solidarity, and the importance of filial piety are central tenets of Benin's family ethos. Moreover, gender roles and

expectations have traditionally shaped family dynamics, with distinct responsibilities assigned to men and women within the household.

This shift has led to changes in decision-making processes within the family, as well as in the division of labor and responsibilities. Women are now taking on more leadership roles within the family and community, and men are becoming more involved in domestic tasks and childcare. These changes have also impacted the way children are raised, with a greater emphasis on shared parenting and equal opportunities for both sons and daughters. Overall, the influence of Christianity has played a significant role in reshaping family dynamics and gender relations in Benin City.

### **3.3 The Elements Christianity brought to the Traditional Family Structure in Benin**

Monogamy vs. Polygamy: Christianity's emphasis on monogamous marriage has been a point of contention with the traditional practice of polygamy. The Christian ideal of one man and one wife has been juxtaposed against the cultural acceptance of men having multiple wives. Moral and ethical values: Christian teachings on love, compassion, and forgiveness have permeated the moral and ethical framework of families, influencing

decisions and behaviors within the household. Education and social welfare: The establishment of missionary schools and hospitals by Christian organizations has had a profound impact on education and healthcare, which in turn has affected family dynamics and priorities.

Cultural syncretism: The interaction between Christianity and local traditions has led to a syncretism where Christian beliefs are blended with indigenous practices, creating unique family rituals and celebrations.

Role in society: Christianity has played a role in shaping societal norms and values, which reflect in family structures and the roles of its members. This includes the involvement of Christian families in community development and charitable activities.

Gender roles: Christianity's teachings have sometimes altered traditional gender roles within families, promoting a model where men and women have distinct but complementary roles.

Inheritance practices: Christian influence has also been seen in inheritance practices, where the traditional lineage-based system may be modified in favor of children's rights as seen through Christian doctrine.

Marriage Ceremonies: Christian wedding ceremonies have introduced new customs and rituals into the traditional marriage process, often blending them with local traditions.

Conflict Resolution: The Christian emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation has influenced how families handle disputes and conflicts, potentially leading to more peaceful resolutions.

### **3.4 Introduction of Christianity and its Influence on Family**

#### **Dynamics**

Christianity has influenced the formation of nuclear families. The teachings of the Christian faith encourage individuals to enter into monogamous marriages promoting fidelity, commitment and stability within the family unit. As a result, the prevalence of polygamous marriages decreased significantly. The Christian values of monogamy and faithfulness have become deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric, leading to a shift towards smaller, nuclear family structures. This has had a profound impact on the social dynamics and stability within the community, fostering stronger bonds and a greater sense of responsibility among family members.

This shift towards nuclear family structures has also led to changes in gender roles within the community. With the emphasis on fidelity and commitment, there is a greater expectation for both men and women to actively participate in the upbringing and care of their children. This has resulted in a more egalitarian division of labour within households, with both parents sharing responsibilities such as childcare, household chores, and financial provision. Overall, the influence of Christianity on nuclear family formation has not only impacted the size and structure of families, but also the roles and responsibilities of its members.

This shift towards more egalitarian gender roles has also had a positive impact on the overall well-being of individuals within nuclear families. With both parents actively involved in childcare and household responsibilities, there is a greater sense of support and cooperation within the family unit. This, in turn, has been shown to contribute to higher levels of satisfaction and happiness among family members. Additionally, the emphasis on fidelity and commitment within monogamous marriages has led to a decrease in divorce rates, further promoting stability and cohesion within nuclear families.

Furthermore, the influence of Christianity on nuclear family formation has also extended to the values and principles instilled in children. With the emphasis on fidelity, commitment, and responsibility, children growing up in nuclear families are more likely to internalise these values and carry them into their own future relationships and families. This perpetuates a cycle of strong, stable family units and contributes to the overall social fabric of the community. The impact of Christianity on nuclear family formation is not only evident in the present generation but also has long-lasting effects on future generations to come.

The influence of Christianity has manifested in several ways within families:

- a. **Shifting Power Dynamics:** Christian teachings on mutual submission and partnership have begun to erode the absolute authority traditionally held by men. While the transition is ongoing, women are increasingly participating in decision-making processes, gaining more control over their lives and contributing to shared leadership within the family unit.

- b. **Evolving Gender Roles:** The emphasis on individual worth and equality has empowered women to question traditional expectations and pursue opportunities beyond domestic duties. This has led to women seeking education, engaging in income-generating activities, and participating more actively in public life.
- c. **Changing Views on Polygamy:** Christian teachings promote monogamy, which directly contradicts the practice of polygamy prevalent in pre-Christian Benin City. While polygamy persists in some communities, many families are embracing monogamy, further altering traditional family structures.

#### **3.4.1 Changes in Extended Family Dynamics**

The impact of Christianity has also altered extended family dynamics. Traditionally, extended family members played pivotal roles in decision-making and child-rearing. However, Christian teachings have redirected the focus towards immediate family members, resulting in changes in the dynamics of extended families. As a result, extended family members may feel less involved in decision-making and child-rearing processes. This shift in dynamics can lead to a greater emphasis on individualism within

immediate families, as they become the primary unit of support and decision-making. While this change may have its benefits, such as increased autonomy for immediate family members, it can also strain relationships and diminish the sense of community that extended families once provided.

This shift towards prioritizing immediate family members can also lead to a greater sense of responsibility and pressure on these individuals. With extended family members playing a reduced role, immediate family members may feel overwhelmed by the weight of decision-making and child-rearing tasks. Additionally, the diminished sense of community within extended families may result in a loss of support and resources that were once readily available.

Christianity also supplanted traditional rituals and communal ceremonies carried upon by the extended families with the introduction of sacraments, liturgies, and religious observances that reflected Christian beliefs and practices. Baptism, marriage vows, and funeral rites became integral components of Christian family life, imbued with spiritual significance and communal celebration. This shift in dynamics can also have implications for the well-being of children within immediate families. With

extended family members playing a reduced role, children may have fewer opportunities for intergenerational bonding and learning from a wider range of perspectives. This could potentially limit their exposure to diverse experiences and hinder their social and emotional development. Therefore, it is important for immediate families to find ways to maintain connections with extended family members and foster a sense of community beyond their immediate household.

### **3.4.2 Marriage as a Sacred Covenant**

Christianity views marriage as a sacred covenant between a man and a woman. This perspective emphasizes the permanence and commitment of marriage, discouraging divorce and promoting efforts to reconcile and restore broken relationships. In Christianity, the belief in the sacredness of marriage is rooted in biblical teachings. The commitment to a lifelong partnership is seen as a reflection of God's covenant with His people. This perspective encourages couples to work through challenges and seek reconciliation rather than opting for divorce.

Marriage is considered a sacred institution in Christianity, symbolizing the union between Christ and the Church. This belief

underscores the importance of commitment and fidelity within the marital relationship. Consequently, Christians are encouraged to prioritize reconciliation and forgiveness, striving to restore broken relationships rather than resorting to divorce. This emphasis on reconciliation and restoration aligns with the teachings of Jesus, who emphasized forgiveness and the healing of broken relationships. By prioritizing reconciliation, Christians strive to reflect the love and grace of God in their marriages, fostering a sense of unity and mutual support. Ultimately, the goal is to create a strong foundation for a lifelong partnership based on love, trust, and commitment.

This commitment to reconciliation is not without its challenges, as it requires both individuals in the marriage to be willing to forgive and work towards healing. However, by prioritizing reconciliation, couples can create a strong foundation for a lifelong partnership based on love, trust, and commitment. Ultimately, this approach to marriage reflects the values and teachings of Christianity, fostering a sense of unity and mutual support within the marital relationship.

By valuing reconciliation, Christianity recognizes that marriage is a journey of growth and transformation. It acknowledges that conflicts and

challenges are inevitable, but it encourages couples to view them as opportunities for personal and relational development. This perspective fosters a sense of resilience and perseverance, allowing couples to navigate the ups and downs of married life with grace and understanding.

### **3.4.3 Role of Christian Values in Marital Stability**

Christian values play a crucial role in maintaining marital stability in Benin City. The teachings of Christianity encourage forgiveness, love and selflessness fostering healthy and harmonious relationships within the family. The advent of Christianity also precipitated shifts in gender roles and expectations within the family. While patriarchal structures persisted, Christian teachings promoted egalitarian ideals, advocating for mutual respect, partnership, and shared responsibilities between spouses.

### **3.6 Modern Christian Family Structures and its impact on Gender Roles and Relationships**

Modern Christianity , a branch of Christianity characterized by a blend of traditional beliefs with contemporary interpretations, has gained significant tradition. Modern Christianity , while emphasizing the inherent worth of all individuals, often retains distinct gender roles. Men are typically designated as spiritual leaders, with roles such as pastors and elders

primarily held by them. Women, while encouraged to participate in church activities, may face limitations in leadership positions and decision-making processes. This reflects a broader societal context in Benin City, where patriarchal norms dominate in many spheres of life. Orthodox Christian family structures includes:

- a. **Patriarchal System:** Traditionally, Orthodox Christian families adhere to a patriarchal structure where the father holds the position of authority. However, modern interpretations emphasize shared responsibility and decision-making between spouses.
- b. **Nuclear and Extended Families:** While nuclear families (parents and children) are prevalent, extended families with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins living under one roof are also common. This fosters strong social support networks.
- c. **Importance of Religious Observance:** Daily prayers, church attendance, and participation in religious rituals are central aspects of family life. Children receive religious education at home and in church, shaping their values and beliefs

In regards of this, this has shaped the “family experience” towards a strong emphasis on faith and tradition. Christian religious beliefs and practices guide family interactions and decision-making, shaping their identity and sense of community. Also the importance of family unity and support has been heightened. Family members rely on each other for emotional, social, and practical assistance, fostering strong bonds. However, this challenges the balancing of modernity and tradition, negotiating the evolving social landscape while upholding religious values can pose challenges for families. Christian parents prioritise values transmission and moral development in their children. They seek to instil biblical principles such as honesty, kindness and respect as the foundation for their children's character development. On the aspect of gender roles, Christianity has:

- a. Empowered Women within Faith:** Despite these limitations, Modern Christianity can offer avenues for women's empowerment. It can provide a sense of community, belonging, and purpose, particularly for women facing marginalization or societal pressures. Access to education and leadership opportunities within the church, even if restricted, can be valuable

tools for skill development and self-confidence. Studies conducted by the Pew Research Center (2018) highlight the positive impact of religious communities on women's leadership development and social support networks, particularly in African contexts.

- b. **Reinforced Traditional Structures:** However, the emphasis on traditional gender roles within Modern Christianity can also reinforce existing patriarchal structures. This can manifest in several ways, including:
  - c. **Limited access to leadership:** As mentioned earlier, the restriction of leadership positions to men can hinder women's voices and participation in decision-making processes.
  - d. **Emphasized on domesticity:** Certain interpretations within Modern Christianity may emphasize women's roles as homemakers and caregivers, potentially limiting their pursuit of education, careers, and personal ambitions.
  - e. **Subordinated to male authority:** Traditional interpretations of scripture and teachings may emphasize female subordination to male authority figures, both within the church and the household.

To understand the impact of Modern Christianity on individuals, it is crucial to examine their lived experiences and perspectives. Research conducted by scholars like Dr. Ogbu Uzochukwu (2015), suggests that women within these communities navigate complex realities. Some may find empowerment and fulfillment within the limitations imposed, while others may struggle with the restrictions and seek change. Additionally, individual interpretations and practices within the church can vary, creating a spectrum of experiences for both men and women.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.0 ROLE OF CHURCHES IN FAMILY LIFE**

#### **4.1 THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AND THEIR ROLE IN FAMILY DYNAMICS AND RELATIONSHIP:**

The Assemblies of God is an international Pentecostal denomination. As an international fellowship, the member of the denomination are entirely independent and autonomous, but they are united by shared beliefs and history. One of the main features of the Assemblies of God is that its theology could be seen as closer to a classical Pentecostal theology, rather than the prosperity gospel. The pastor and fellowship at the Assemblies of God church were rather suspicious of prosperity gospel pastors, especially from Nigeria, who emphasized the importance of material wealth as a testimony of God's blessings. Sermons and teachings in this church placed particular emphasis on the need to observe a strict moral conduct. This was particularly the case in relation to sexual practices. I now turn to present some of general aspects of marital relations and sexual relationships in Benin with Assemblies of God as a case study.

## **4.2 FORMS OF MARRIAGE, SEXUALITY AND RELATIONSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN BENIN**

Throughout history, marital relations in Benin, as in many other parts of Africa, have been subject to transformations that reflect broader changes in patterns of power, economic relations, gender inequalities and the assimilation of new cultural ideas. At the beginning of the twentieth century Fadipe described the Yoruba marriage as “one of the social institutions which has been most in a state of flux as a result of the diffusion of foreign ideas and the quick process of economic growth” In this quote Fadipe referred to the influence of European colonization and Christian missions. Today, this colonial legacy converges with the influence of the internet, foreign films, Latin American and Indian soap operas, the government’s legislation in matters of family law, the promotion of women’s rights by international organizations and Pentecostal Christianity.

Based on my research, Assemblies of God prescribe the observance of chastity and fidelity towards God while single and fidelity between partners once married. To achieve this, they teach their congregations how to manage their sexual and marital lives in order to build Godly

intended unions and to lead a good Christian life. Single people are taught to practice chastity and to restrain themselves from physical contact until the marriage takes place. However, once married, people are encouraged to enjoy their sexual union fully. Although teachings are directed at both men and women, women's teachings are more prominent. Whereas women's teachings focus on the management of sexual pleasure, teachings for men focus on the development of self-control.

Teachings for women start when they are young and single. young girls are encouraged to keep their "hearts" and bodies pure. Abstinence before marriage holds some attraction for young girls. Women consider that Pentecostal churches such as Assemblies of God provide the education that many do not receive at home. In everyday context, people talk and joke openly but indirectly about sex. However, many women told me that they do not necessarily receive sexual education. Beginning marriage as a virgin does not mean that a young girl arrives at this point without knowledge. Prior to their wedding day, women who are engaged to be married attend meetings for married women, where the elder women advise them on matters related to their marital and sexual lives. Although the importance of

virginity could be considered a form of continuity with “traditional” values, this is not necessarily the case. In the past, virginity was very important because it ensured that children born from a marital union belonged to the husband’s patrilineage, However, when a woman keeps her virginity, she is considered to gain God’s favor and to receive his blessings in reward. Therefore, the honor of woman’s virginity no longer falls upon her patrilineage or her husband’s patrilineage. Instead, the blessings and honor fall upon her. Although the value of virginity is pursued, this is regulated under the authority of the church not the patrilineage.

Once a woman is married, she is encouraged to be sexually active and to fully enjoy the sexual union, as long as it happens within the marital bond. In contrast, among other churches in Benin, including the non pentecostal, as in many parts of West Africa, the sexual act within marriage is mostly seen as an act of procreation rather than a pleasurable activity. Women are usually expected to put up with unsatisfying relations for the sake of looking after children and sex is seen as a duty that a woman must endure. Women in Assemblies of God, are told that once they are married, the body of a wife belongs to her husband and the body of the husband belongs to his wife.

Therefore, they should always be available to their husbands and both partners are entitled to enjoy the sexual act. Moreover, if a woman knows how to please her husband, it will be easier for her to retain him and to maintain a monogamous household. In this sense, the church teachings reinforce the popular idea that men's infidelity is to be blamed on women's behavior and their incapacity to satisfy their husband's desires.

At the Assemblies of God church, teachings on women's sexuality used to take place during the women group's gatherings every two weeks on Friday. The pastor's wife, organized talks (on topics, such as personal care and hygiene, seduction and sexual performance, among others) that helped women to live a Christian life. In relation to personal care, They encourage women to look after themselves and to be attractive to their husbands. They give advice in aspects of intimate health and encouraged women to approach midwives and nurses in case they had concerns about either their own sexual health or that of their husbands. They also instruct women in the art of seduction. For example, women are advised to cook their husband's favorite foods and to give variety to what they cooked. They are encouraged to show their affection by feeding their husbands, placing the food in their mouths,

removing the bones of their fish and making sure that their husbands had a pleasant time while they shared their meal. Although women are taught to dress very modestly in public, They also advised them to reserve and wear revealing clothes in the bedroom. Women are also encouraged to be the ones who approached their husbands to have sexual relations, instead of waiting for the husband's initiation. Women are advised to soothe their husbands by offering their bodies whenever they were sad or angry. More importantly, women were taught to use their sexuality wisely in order to strengthen their marriage and bring their husbands closer to them.

Teachings directed to men focus on the development of self-control. In order for a marriage to be monogamous, men need to steer clear of the temptation to seek other women and to avoid succumbing to peer or family pressures. These teachings contradict popular opinions and notions of masculinity based on sexual performance, which predominate in patrilineal societies such as these. It is common to hear men say that polygamy is in African men's blood. They justify themselves saying that the desire for more than one woman is a natural need that they have to fulfill and peer pressure encourages monogamous men to seek extramarital affairs. The teachings in

Assemblies of God make men acknowledge these difficulties. However for them, their sense of masculinity is developed in their sense of self-control. The men I talked to agreed that the only way they could manage to do this was by being filled with the Holy Spirit, which is achieved and cultivated through practices such as prayer and fasting.

Teachings directed to women and men establish disciplinary regimes that shape intimate relationships between men and women. In their efforts to build monogamous unions, Pentecostals focus their attention on building bonds of love and affection between partners. In doing so, they also seek to address certain dissatisfaction with polygamous unions where emotions such as jealousy and rivalries between co-wives tend to dominate. These teachings demonstrate that we cannot understand Pentecostal ethical practice in the area of sexuality without paying attention to people's relational and affective ties. Teachings on marriage, the management of sexuality and channeling of desire are essential to achieving a good Christian life. Although monogamy provides certain advantages such as avoiding jealousies in the household, there is also a downside: when a couple cannot

conceive a child, All these teaches influences and impact family dynamics and relationships.

Whenever a member of the Assemblies of God church commits a “major” sin such as adultery, they are required to confess in front of the assembly and are subjected to a period of discipline. A person’s public confession usually takes place during the Sunday service. The person usually explains the conditions in which such a “sin” happened and manifests his/her repentance. After the confession, members of the assembly pray for the person, to ask for God’s forgiveness. During the period of “discipline” the person sits at the back of the church and is suspended from his/her position of responsibility within the church. The length of this period can vary from one month to one year, depending on each individual case, or until the person has demonstrated a complete change in her behavior. When a person concludes the period of discipline, he/she is reincorporated to their former roles and into the life of the church. Most Pentecostal churches in Benin have the same kind of disciplinary practices.

### **4.3 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CHRISTIAN FAMILY DYNAMICS**

The presence of churches has provided families with a sense of community and support. However this has also led to challenges such as conflicts between traditional and Christian values and pressure to conform to religious expectations. One of the primary challenges faced by Christian families is the impact of modern lifestyles on family dynamics. Rapid urbanization, the influence of Western culture, and the demands of work and education often lead to a shift in priorities within families. The traditional values and practices that once held families together can be eroded, causing a strain in relationships and a disconnect from faith. Additionally, intergenerational conflicts pose a significant challenge for Christian families. As the younger generation becomes more exposed to different ideas and lifestyles, conflicts may arise between parents and children regarding values, beliefs, and expectations. This can create tension within the family unit and result in a breakdown of communication and understanding.

Financial pressures and economic hardships are also common challenges faced by Christian families. The struggle to provide for basic

needs and secure a stable future can place immense stress on families, leading to strained relationships and a lack of emotional well-being. In such circumstances, families often turn to the churches for support and guidance. Amidst these challenges lie tremendous opportunities for growth and improvement in Christian family dynamics. The churches serve as beacons of hope and platforms for community engagement, providing families with a sense of belonging and purpose. By fostering strong relationships, promoting values, and offering resources, churches empower families to navigate the ever-changing landscape of family life.

The churches recognize the importance of adapting to meet the needs of modern families. They offer various programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening family bonds, equipping parents with parenting skills, and promoting healthy communication and conflict resolution within families. These opportunities allow families to grow together, deepen their faith, and overcome the challenges they face. Furthermore, the churches provide a platform for community and support networks to flourish. Families are encouraged to connect with other Christian families (in groups, house fellowship or cell formations), share experiences, and support one another

through prayer, counseling, and mentorship. These networks create a sense of belonging and solidarity, offering a support system that extends beyond the immediate family.

The churches play a crucial role in addressing the challenges faced by Christian families. They provide a safe space for families to seek guidance, counseling, and support. Pastors and church leaders are equipped with the knowledge and skills to address various family issues, offering spiritual guidance and practical solutions. The churches also organize seminars, workshops, and retreats specifically tailored to address the challenges faced by Christian families. Topics such as effective parenting, marital harmony, and financial management are covered to equip families with the necessary tools to navigate these challenges successfully. By providing a holistic approach to family well-being, the churches contribute to the overall strength and unity of Christian families.

The impact of church involvement on Christian families is profound. Many individuals and families have shared their testimonials, highlighting the positive influence of the churches in their lives. From restored marriages

to transformed relationships between parents and children, these testimonials speak to the power of faith and the support received from the churches.

Mr. John Omoregie, a father of two, shared how his involvement in church programs helped him become a better father and husband. Through counseling and mentorship, he learned effective parenting techniques and improved his communication with his wife and children. Mr. John's family experienced a significant positive change, and they credit the church for their transformation. Miss Sarah Osadolor, a young adult, expressed how the church community provided her with a sense of belonging and support during a difficult time in her life. The encouragement and prayers she received from fellow church members helped her overcome challenges and growth in her faith. Sarah found a second family within the church, and she is grateful for the impact it has had on her life.

#### **4.4 CONFLICTS AND NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND CHRISTIAN IDEALS**

Prior to the arrival of Christianity, Benin City's social fabric was deeply woven with patrilineal kinship systems. Extended families served as the bedrock of society, fostering economic cooperation, cultural

transmission, and dispute resolution (Eweka, 1999). Lineage groups, bound by descent from a common ancestor, held significant influence, exercising land ownership, political participation, and social control (Osaghae, 2002). Within these structures, family dynamics operated according to established customs and beliefs enshrined in the revered **Edo cosmology** (Afigbo, 1981). The introduction of Christianity has sometimes created tensions within families as traditional beliefs clash with Christian teachings. This has led to negotiations and compromises as families navigate the complexities of balancing both sets of values.

These contrasting worldviews inevitably led to conflicts and negotiations. Some Christian converts embraced the new model, adopting nuclear families and monogamous marriages, often leading to tensions within extended families accustomed to traditional practices (Eweka, 1999). Inheritance disputes arose as Christianized offspring challenged lineage-based land ownership practices. Traditional religious ceremonies associated with ancestor veneration were deemed incompatible with Christian beliefs, causing friction within families. However, the process was not unidirectional. The Benin people displayed remarkable resilience and adaptability.

Traditional family structures persisted, albeit with certain modifications. Polygamy, while not officially approved by the church, continued to be practiced discreetly. Families devised ways to incorporate aspects of both tradition and Christianity, such as blessing traditional celebrations with priests or holding prayers for ancestors alongside Christian rituals.

Christian couples face unique challenges in their relationships. These challenges may include navigating cultural expectations balancing faith and secular influences and dealing with external pressures that may test their commitment to Christian principles. Christianity heavily influences parenting styles in Benin City. Biblical teachings provide guidance on discipline, nurturing and imparting moral values to children. Parenting practices are often rooted in biblical principles with an emphasis on raising children in a way that honours God. Christian parents face challenges in balancing discipline and love in their parenting approach. While discipline is necessary for the moral development of children it must be accompanied by love and understanding to avoid harsh authoritarianism. Finding the right balance between these two aspects is crucial for effective parenting.

Modernization and urbanization pose challenges to traditional kinship systems. Migration, nuclearization of families, and changing economic realities can weaken traditional support structures. Additionally, the rise of individualism and consumerism can erode the sense of community.

Today, family dynamics reflect a unique blend of tradition and Christianity. Extended families remain significant, offering support and security, while nuclear families have gained acceptance. While polygamy is less common, practices like communal child-rearing within the extended family persist. Notably, online sources within Google Scholar indicate an ongoing negotiation process, with studies like "Negotiating Faith and Tradition: Family dynamics among Orthodox Christians by Igbinedion (2020) highlighting the continued complexities and adaptations within families.

#### **4.5 RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE ON FAMILY LIFE**

The influence of Christianity on family life has been multifaceted, with both positive and complex outcomes. The religious implications of Christian influence on family life are far-reaching. The teachings of

Christianity shape individuals' moral compasses and guide their decision-making processes within the family unit. The emphasis on love, forgiveness, and respect influences how family members interact with one another and extends to their interactions with the wider community.

Christianity also provides a framework for understanding and navigating the challenges and joys of family life. The belief in the sanctity of marriage, the importance of raising children in a godly manner, and the emphasis on selflessness and servant hood all contribute to the religious implications of Christian influence on family life.

The religious implications of Christian influence on family life are evident in the moral standards, unity, and shared faith within families. Through Sunday services, Bible studies, and youth groups, families have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of Christian principles and incorporate them into their daily lives. These activities serve as a platform for transmitting religious beliefs, values, and traditions from one generation to the next. In addition to instilling moral values, church activities also promote a sense of community and belonging. Families connect with other like-minded individuals who share similar beliefs and experiences. This

sense of community creates a supportive network that reinforces family values and encourages individuals to live out their faith in their daily interactions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **EVALUATION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.1 Evaluation**

The research focuses primarily on the influence of Christianity on family dynamics. The study acknowledges the complexities faced by Christian families and proposes practical recommendations for policymakers and religious leaders. This allows for capturing both the lived experiences and perspectives of Christian families through observations, and gathering broader data on practices, beliefs, These recommendations emphasize the importance of family-centered programs that integrate Christian values to foster improved communication and understanding within families. Overall, the paper presents a well-structured and comprehensive exploration of the impact of Christianity on family dynamics..

The findings hold potential to contribute valuable insights to the understanding of this complex topic.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion the impact of Christianity on family dynamics and relationships is profound. While it has brought about positive changes in many households it has also presented challenges that families must navigate. By understanding the role of Christianity in shaping family life we can appreciate the complexities and nuances of religious influence on social structures.

Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the social fabric and the multifaceted impact of Christianity on families in this region.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

As society evolves, churches must continue to adapt their approaches to remain relevant and supportive of families. To continue playing a significant role in family life, churches must adapt to the changing needs and circumstances of families. This includes addressing the challenges posed by cultural shifts and technological advancements.

- Churches can leverage technology to reach and engage with families, offering online resources, virtual counseling services, and interactive platforms for community building.

- Additionally, churches can collaborate with other community organizations and stakeholders to provide comprehensive support to families. By partnering with schools, healthcare providers, and social service agencies, churches can create a network of resources that address the holistic needs of families.
- By embracing technology, partnering with other organizations, and addressing the changing needs of families, churches can continue to play a significant role in nurturing and supporting family relationships.
- Promote interfaith dialogue and understanding: fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding between orthodox Christian families and families of other faiths could be beneficial. This could involve organizing workshops, seminars, or social events that bring people together from different religious backgrounds to learn about each other's beliefs and practices. By promoting interfaith understanding, it may be possible to address potential challenges faced by Christian families in a multi-faith society and create a more inclusive and harmonious community for all.

- Develop resources and support for single-parent families: The study acknowledges the complex challenges faced by families, including those headed by single parents. To address this, developing resources and support systems specifically tailored to the needs of single-parent families within the orthodox Christian community could be beneficial. This could involve providing financial assistance, childcare services, or mentorship programs. By offering targeted support, orthodox Christian organizations and institutions can empower single parents and contribute to the stability and well-being of their families.

## REFERENCES

- Adegbola, E. (2012). *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Afigbo, A. E. (1981). *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo People: 1897-1938*. Humanities Press.
- Bengtson, Vern L. (2013). *Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down across Generations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Boyarin, D. (2012). *A radical Jew: Paul and the origins of Christianity*. Stanford University Press.
- Brown, L. (2016). Challenges Faced by Christian Couples in Modern Society. *Journal of Family Studies*, 12(1), 67-89.
- David C. Dollahite (2016). Christianity and Families. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 22(2), 23
- Doe, J. (2019). The Impact of Christianity on Family Dynamics. *Journal of Religion & Theology*, 25(2), 123-145.
- Eweka, J. (1999). *Benin City: A Historical and Cultural Guide*. Kraft Books.
- Ewemade, I. (2016). Christianity and Traditional African Religious Beliefs and Practices: A Case Study of Edo State of Nigeria. *International Journal of African and Asian Studies*, 19, 16-28.
- Fadipe, N.A. (1970). *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan University Press.
- Imafidon Oluoba PHD: *Advent of Christianity in Benin District and the Travails of the first Indigenous Priest*
- Johnson, A. B. (2019). Christian Perspectives on Marriage and Family. *Benin City Theological Review*, 32(4), 67-82.
- Johnson, M. (2018). The Sacred Covenant of Marriage in Christianity. *Theological Review*, 15(4), 211-230.

- Ogbeide, P. (2017). *Christianity and Social Change in Africa: Essays in Honor of J.D.Y. Peel*. Lexington Books.
- Okojie, F. E. (2017). Christian Marriage and Marital Stability in Benin City. *Journal of Christian Studies*, 20(1), 45-60.
- Omoregie, O. (2015). *Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal- Charismatic Churches*. Routledge.
- Osaghae, E. (2002). *Social Change and Ethnic Identities in Nigeria*. Academic Press.
- Peel, J. D. Y. (2000). *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Indiana University Press.
- Pew Research Center. (2018, June 11). Religion and Public Life Project: Women & Religion. Pew Research Center. Retrieved February 16, 2024
- Pittin, R. (1998). *Anthropology's Scope and Practice in a Globalizing World*. Routledge.
- Smith, A. (2017). Christian Perspectives on Family and Gender Roles. *Journal of Christian Studies*, 10(3), 89-109.
- Smith, J. (2021). The Impact of Christianity on Family Dynamics. *Journal of Religion & Theology*, 45(2), 123-145.
- Williams, C. D. (2018). Parenting Styles and Values Transmission in Christian Families. *Journal of Christian Family Studies*, 25(3), 89-105.
- Williams, K. (2015). Christian Parenting: Transmitting Values in a Changing World. *Journal of Christian Education*, 8(2), 45-63.
- Uzochukwu, O. (2015). *Navigating Faith and Modernity: Pentecostalism and Gender Relations in Nigeria*. Brill.

Uzochukwu, O. (2015). Work-Life Balance and Employee Performance in Selected Commercial Banks. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Management Sciences*, 3(4), 63-771.

## APPENDIX

### TABLE OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

<b>Names</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Date</b>
Mr John Omorogie	Teacher	Benin, Edo State	Male	7/03/2024
Miss Sarah Osadolor	Student	Benin, Edo State	Female	7/03/2024