

THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND THEIR IMPACTS ON CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The paper studied theories of social change in contemporary Nigerian society. Social change is a way of human interactions and relationships which transform cultural and social institutions. The importance of understanding social change in Nigeria stems largely from the fact that there are unresolved social problems in Nigeria which are occasioned by constant changes in social structure, social relationships and social institutions. It is against this backdrop, that this paper discussed the dimension of the changes in socio-cultural, political and economic conditions in Nigeria through a theoretical discourse. The paper also examined the impacts of social change in the social relations and survival of people in contemporary Nigerian societies. It identifies natural environment, technological innovations, demographic processes, economic processes, social movement, population, ideas and political processes as the main cause of social change. There is also a review of the agents of social change which include: technology, social institutions, modernization and environment as the main agents of social change. Other social theories of social change which includes evolution and functionalist are also discussed. e. The paper concludes with examining the effect of the theories of social change in contemporary Nigerian society.

Keywords: Social Change, Contemporary, Nigerian Society and Theories

Introduction

Social change is a feature of social reality that widely described and explained the evolution of human societies as well as the transformation in the basic components of human society right from the traditional to modern-day societies (Olagbeju, 2015). As a matter of fact, human societies have experienced constant alterations in social values, norms, institutions, relationships and stratification as a result of internal and external forces of social change. The external forces are events that occurred on a large scale, affecting an entire nation or several nations altogether such as climate change; while internal forces are events that occurred on a small scale causing internal structural re-arrangements with far-reaching influences on the social fabric of the society (Solaja, 2020)

The importance of understanding social change in Nigeria stems largely from the fact that there are unresolved social problems in Nigeria which are occasioned by constant changes in social structure, social relationships and social institutions (Solaja, 2020). And the sociological theories which are supposed to provide a theoretical and practical guide on how to resolve these problems, both in time and space, are puny and unthinkingly applied. Therefore, a study of this nature is significant in many ways in that, it will reveal the strengths and weaknesses of various theories of

change and their complementary tendencies in building a robust theoretical solution for the problems confronting sustainable social, economic, political and environmental development in Nigeria. In addition, this study would assist in improving the understanding of the dynamic nature of social change, its driving forces and inevitability in the current global integration of socio-cultural, economic and political conditions. The study will help social scientists, academicians, politicians and professional development planners to design better policy interventions and socio-political reforms. It would also help the Nigerian government, at all levels, to formulate policies that would enhance the efficacy of managing the internal and external forces of change in order to bring about desirable socio- economic development for the populace in the contemporary world. It is against this backdrop, that this paper discussed the dimension of the changes in socio-cultural, political and economic conditions in Nigeria through a theoretical discourse. The paper also examined the impacts of social change in the social relations and survival of people in contemporary Nigerian societies.

Concept of Social Change

Social change, in sociology, is the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organizations, or value systems (William 2024). According to Nico (2023), Social change is the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organizations, or value systems. Social change is defined as changes in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions. Social change is the way of human interactions and relationships which transform cultural and social institutions over time, having a profound impact on society (Theo, 2023). Social change is the alteration of the social order of a society which may include changes in social institutions, social behaviors or social relations. Sustained at a larger scale, it may lead to social transformation or societal transformation (Geoff, 2021). The researcher concurs with Theo (2023) who defined social change as way of human interactions and relationships which transform cultural and social institutions. Therefore, the causes of social change will be thoroughly discussed in this paper.

Causes of Social Change

The causes of social change are diverse, and can be identified as either short-term trends or long-term developments. Change can be either cyclical or one-directional. However, the major causes of social change include the following:

i. Natural environment

According to Arowolo (2020) turning to human ecology, we know that individuals and the environment affect each other. Changes in the natural environment may result from climatic variations, natural disasters, or the spread of disease. Changes in the natural environment may be either independent of human activities or caused by them. For example, deforestation, erosion, air

pollution, and contemporary climate change. As human populations move into more vulnerable areas, we see an increase in the number of people affected by natural disasters, and we see that human interaction with the environment increases the impact of those disasters. They in turn may have far-reaching social consequences in the society (Bachman & Schutt, 2017).

ii. **Technological innovations**

Thomas (2015) argues that technology is a driving force behind globalization. Several theories of social evolution identify technological innovations as the most important determinants of societal change. Such technological breakthroughs as the smelting of iron, the introduction of the plow in agriculture, the invention of the steam engine, and the development of computers and the Internet have had lasting social consequences.

iii. **Demographic processes**

Population growth and increasing population density represent demographic forms of social change. Population growth may lead to geographic expansion of a society, military conflicts, and the intermingling of cultures. Increasing population density may stimulate technological innovations, which in turn may increase the division of labor, social differentiation, commercialization, and urbanization. On the other hand, population growth may contribute to economic stagnation and increasing poverty, as may be witnessed in several developing countries today (Ravuru, 2023), Nigeria inclusive.

iv. **Economic processes**

These include the formation and extension of markets, modifications of property relations (such as the change from feudal lord-peasant relations to contractual proprietor-tenant relations), and changes in the organization of labor (such as the change from independent craftsmen to factories) (Dradman, 2003). Historical materialism, as developed by Marx and Engels, is one of the more prominent theories that gives priority to economic processes, but it is not the only one. Indeed, materialist theories have even been developed in opposition to Marxism. One of these theories, the “logic of industrialization” thesis by the American scholar Clark Kerr and his colleagues, states that industrialization everywhere, including in the mid-20th-century communist countries, has similar consequences (Baltasiu, 2019).

v. **Social movements**

According to Badescu (2015), a change in collective ideas is not merely an intellectual process; it is often connected to the formation of new social movements. This in itself might be regarded as a potential cause of social change. Weber called attention to this factor in conjunction with his concept of “charismatic leadership.” Charismatic leaders, by virtue of the extraordinary personal qualities attributed to them, are able to create a group of followers who are willing to break established rules. Examples include Jesus, Napoleon, and Hitler. In later social theory, however, the concept of charisma was trivialized to refer to almost any popular figure (Parsons, 1991).

vi. Political processes

Changes in the regulation of violence, in the organization of the state, and in international relations may also contribute to social change (Smith, 2022). For example, German sociologist Norbert Elias interpreted the formation of states in western Europe as a relatively autonomous process that led to increasing control of violence and, ultimately, to rising standards of self-control. According to other theories of political revolution, the nature of interstate relations are of decisive importance in the outbreak of a revolution: it is only when the state is not able to fulfill its basic functions of maintaining law and order and defending territorial integrity that revolutionary groups have any chance of success (Johnson, 2017).

vii. Ideas

Other theories have stressed the significance of ideas as causes of social change. Comte's law of three stages is such a theory. Weber regarded religious ideas as important contributors to economic development or stagnation; according to his controversial thesis, the individualistic ethic of Christianity, and in particular Calvinism, partially explains the rise of the capitalist spirit, which led to economic dynamism in the West (Thomas, 2015).

viii. Population

Population composition is changing at every level of society. Births increase in one nation and decrease in another. Some families delay childbirth while others start bringing children into their folds early. Population changes can be due to random external forces, like an epidemic, or shifts in other social institutions (Olagbaju, 2015). But regardless of why and how it happens, population trends have a tremendous interrelated impact on all other aspects of society. Globally, often the countries with the highest fertility rates are least able to absorb and attend to the needs of a growing population. Family planning is a large step in ensuring that families are not burdened with more children than they can care for. On a macro level, the increased population, particularly in the poorest parts of the globe, also leads to increased stress on the planet's resources (Johnson, 2017). This however leads us to discuss the agents of social change below.

Agents of Social Change

Agents refers to the things or people that have the ability to create change. There can be several agents of social change like population, environment, culture, technology, population, social institutions, among others. Some of them are hereby discussed:

i. Technology

Technological developments occur when humans use their scientific knowledge to build technical tools or machines and innovate them regularly. Till now technological innovations have brought many changes in the lifestyle of people which transformed society and its structures. It also induced vast cultural changes across societies and centuries (William, 2024). For example, the invention of the car and its affordability has increased its use in most nations of the world. This has increased people's speed of mobility and accessibility. This led to the building of better transport systems,

including roads. This also increased pollution, car accidents, loss of lives, health issues due to pollution. Similarly, the invention of computers have revolutionized the information and communication technology sector in the world. It has created a worldwide network of connectivity leading to unlimited flow of information. These kinds of innovations have brought people closer to each other virtually irrespective of their physical distance. It has transformed social relations, customs and traditions by making knowledge and information more accessible (Smith 2022).

ii. Social Institutions

According to Smith (2022) change in one social institution creates change in some social institutions. For example, industrialization and technological development introduced the growth of private companies which impacted the functions of the government sector. It also reduced the quantity of manual labor in the agricultural sector. Massive changes can also be seen in educational institutions where skill-based courses have been introduced besides digital learning and examination. In the case of medical institutions, technical equipment is now readily available, medicines and other necessities are largely produced which has led to the improvement of the overall human race. Thus, such changes in different sectors have increased literacy, well-being and knowledge of people which have brought significant changes in their social and cultural structure (Geoff, 2021).

iii. Modernization

The idea of modernization is different for different people. In India, it is a form of social change and this idea originated from the Indian sociologist (Cohen, 2013). Modernization can be seen in the political, agricultural, economic, social and cultural sector. It creates a shift from traditional knowledge or activities to modern ideas and actions, through knowledge formation, implementation and innovation. It has the ability to create modern societies, urban spaces but may also wipe out the small traditional communities. Transfer of knowledge makes life and work smooth but also increases the threat of digital surveillance and cybercrime (Smith 2022).

iv. Environment

According to Smith (2022) industrialization and globalization has caused an increase in migration and population. This increase in human population means simultaneous increase in consumption and discharge of waste. It also means building more industries, homes, and other institutions leading to deforestation. This is also the reason behind more and more natural disasters which are occurring due to extreme changes in the climate. Some of these changes include soil erosion, excessive rainfall or drought, landslides, extreme heat waves or cold waves. Due to improvised infrastructure facilities, nowadays people are able to travel to their desired locations

which may also include vulnerable areas where they face natural disasters, consequent death and several kinds of losses (Cohen, 2013). Thus, we would turn to look at some theories of social change.

Theories of Social Change

There are many theories of social change; however, the researcher considered three main theories which include: evolutionary, functionalist, and conflict theories of social change.

The Evolutionary Theory

This theory implies that societies evolved from the simple and primitive to the more complex and advanced form. Herbert Spencer believed that as a society grows, the functions of the members become more specialized and better coordinated with the bigger system (Ravuru, 2023). Among the Evolutionary theorists the more prominent are Auguste Comte, and Herbert Spencer.

Evolutionary theory is based on the assumption that societies change gradually from simple to complex forms. According to them social change meant progress toward something better. They saw change as positive and beneficial. To them the evolutionary process implied that societies would necessarily reach new and higher levels of civilization. Evolutionary theories assume that there is a consistent direction of social change carrying all societies through a similar sequence of stages from the original to the final stage of development. Also, the evolutionary theories imply that when the final stage is reached, evolutionary theories will end (Chiribuca, 2014).

August Comte believed that human societies evolved in a uniplanar fashion; that is, in one line of development. He identified three stages of social evolution/change: the age of theological, the age of metaphysical and the age of positive (Ravuru, 2023).

a. Theological Stage:

This is the first stage in the Law of Three Stages and continued until 1300 A.D. Theology means study of religion. In this stage, man believed that all the phenomena of nature are the creation of the divine or supernatural powers. Man failed to discover the natural causes of various phenomena and hence attributed them to supernatural or divine power. For example, if an earthquake happens, people believe that it is because of god is angry with people. A spark is produced when two stones strike each other. The Theological Stage is divided into 3 sub stages. They are: Fetishism (animism), Polytheism and Monotheism (Ravuru, 2023).

Fetishism: (Animism). It is primary stage of the theological stage of thinking. "Fetish" means inanimate and "ism" means philosophy. Throughout this stage, the primitive people had a belief that inanimate object had living spirit in it, also known as animism. The example of fetishistic thinking can be seen from the widespread belief among rural people in India that some deity resides

in inanimate objects like stones. They are, therefore, seen engaged in the worshipping of stones (Bradhan, 2003).

Polytheism: "Poly" means many. At this stage people believed in many Gods. Primitive people believe that each natural forces were controlled by different Gods; A few examples would be: God of water, God of light, God of fire, God of air, Goddess of earth among others (Cohen, 2013).

Monotheism: This is the final stage in the theological stage. "Mono" means one. Monotheism means believing in one God or God in one; attributing all to a single, supreme deity. At this stage, people believed that there is only one God and he is controlling every natural phenomena in this world (Durowade 2022).

b. Metaphysical Stage: This stage started around the middle Ages in Europe, around the 1300s. In the metaphysical stage of society, people viewed the world and events as natural reflections of human tendencies. People in this stage still believed in divine powers or gods, but they believed that these beings are more abstract and less directly involved in what happens on a daily basis. Rationalism started growing instead of imagination. Rationalism states that God does not stand directly behind every phenomenon. Metaphysical thinking discards belief in concrete god (Ravuru, 2023).

c. Positivist Stage: It is also known as the scientific stage. It refers to scientific explanation based on observation, experiment, and comparison. Today people attempt to establish cause and effect relationships; that is, purely intellectual way of looking at the world. For example, people believe that sickness is caused by germs and that medicine is the appropriate cure. If an earthquake happens, most people believe that is because of movement in the tectonic plates, not because a god is upset (Ravuru, 2023).

Herbert Spencer linked his theory of social change with organism. He utilized the principles of physical and biological evolution in order to elaborate and explain his theory of Social evolution. In biological evolution only those creatures survive in the struggle for existence who are able to make effective adjustment with changing circumstances. Herbert Spencer utilized these two principles, physical and biological evolution in order to explain social evolution (Cohen, 2013).

Charles Darwin developed the 'Concept of Evolution' in his "Origin of Species" in 1859. Spencer believed in the doctrine of the "Survival of the fittest" as expounded by Darwin. According to him animal has to struggle to preserve its existence. The struggle for existence is not confined to any one aspects of life but pervades whole of life. Spencer says, only strong creatures survive and evolve; only the strong makes progress, while the weak is gradually eliminated. A strong creature is one who has the ability to adjust. With the ever - changing conditions of environment.

"Spencer's Social Evolution Theory" involves two essential but interrelated trends or strands of thought: Change from simple to complex societies and change from military society to industrial society (Ravuru, 2023).

Change from simple to complex societies: This is seen in four types of societies in terms of evolutionary levels.

Simple society: This is the most primitive society. These societies were predominantly small, nomadic, and lacking in stable relationship structure. They had low degrees of differentiation, specialization, and integration. Examples are the Eskimos, Guiana tribes and the Pueblo Indians (Ravuru, 2023).

Compound society: Compound societies were presented as having generally come about through either a peaceful or a violent merger of two or more simple societies. They tended to be predominantly settled agricultural societies. Examples: Teutonic peoples in the fifth century, Homeric Greeks and Ashanti Empire (Ravuru, 2023).

Double compound society: Doubly compound societies were completely settled, were more integrated and a larger and more definite political structure, a religious hierarchy, a more or less rigid caste system and more complex division of labour. Examples: 13th Century France and 11th Century England (Ravuru, 2023).

Treble Compound Societies: It includes "the great civilized nations" such as the modern Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia. Spencer does not outline their traits in detail but points to their increased overall size, complexity, division of labour, popular density, integration and general cultural complexity (Ravuru, 2023).

Change from militant society to industrial society: According to him a society was initially a militant society which necessitated struggle for existence. Each one struggled to exist. This militant society then passed to industrialism in which there is differentiation and then comes to the next stage in which we pass from differentiation to integration (Ravuru, 2023).

The Functionalist Theory

The functionalist perspective, also called functionalism, is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology. It has its origins in the works of Emile Durkheim, who was especially interested in how social order is possible or how society remains relatively stable. Functionalism posits that society is more than the sum of its parts; rather, each aspect of it works for the stability of the whole. Durkheim envisioned society as an organism since each component plays a necessary role but cannot function alone. When one part experiences a crisis, others must adapt to fill the

void in some way. Robert K. Merton divided human functions into two types: manifest functions, which are intentional and obvious, and latent functions, which are unintentional and not obvious (Durkheim, 1904).

In functionalist theory, the different parts of society are primarily composed of social institutions, each designed to fill different needs. Family, government, economy, media, education, and religion are important to understanding this theory and the core institutions that define sociology. According to functionalism, an institution only exists because it serves a vital role in the functioning of society. If it no longer serves a role, an institution will die away. When new needs evolve or emerge, new institutions will be created to meet those (Parsons, 1991).

In many societies, the government provides education for the children of the family, which in turn pays taxes to the state depends on to keep running. The family relies on the school to help children grow up to have good jobs so they can raise and support their own families. In the process, the children become law-abiding, taxpaying citizens who support the state. From the functionalist perspective, if all goes well, the parts of society produce order, stability, and productivity. If all does not go well, the parts of society must adapt to produce new forms of order, stability, and productivity.

Functionalism emphasizes the consensus and order that exist in society, focusing on social stability and shared public values. From this perspective, disorganization in the system, such as deviant behavior, leads to change because societal components must adjust to achieve stability. When one part of the system is dysfunctional, it affects all other parts and creates social problems, prompting social change (Durkheim, 1984).

The Conflict Theory

The historical development of conflict theory can be traced back to the mid-19th century with the contributions of German philosopher Karl Marx and sociologist Max Weber. Both Marx and Weber laid the foundation for understanding the dynamics of social conflict and power struggles within society (Cohen, 2013).

Marx's work was centered on the class struggle in capitalist societies. He argued that social structures and relationships are largely shaped by the distribution of economic resources. Marx emphasized that in capitalist societies, there exists a conflict between the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class that owns the means of production, and the proletariat, the working class that sells their labor. This class struggle forms the basis of societal change, as the proletariat seeks to overthrow the bourgeoisie and create a more equitable society (Marx, 1848).

Weber, on the other hand, expanded conflict theory to include power struggles that extend beyond economic class. He looked at how power dynamics are influenced by various social identities such as race, gender, and social status. Weber emphasized the significance of social institutions and their role in maintaining or challenging power structures. In summary, the historical development of conflict theory emerged through the contributions of Marx and Weber (Marx, 1964).

Conflict theory is a sociological perspective that views society as a system characterized by power dynamics and the inevitable presence of conflict. The theory emphasizes the role of social inequality, competition for resources, and class struggle in shaping the social order. At its core, conflict theory posits that society is composed of different groups with competing interests. These groups are defined by their access to and control over resources, such as wealth, power, and social status. Social inequality arises from the unequal distribution of these resources, leading to the formation of social classes (Johnson 2017).

Competition for limited resources is seen as a driving force behind social conflict. Those in positions of power use their influence to maintain their advantages, while those with fewer resources strive for greater access to societal benefits (Marx, 1848). As a result, conflict arises between the dominant class and the subordinate classes. Class struggle is considered a central aspect of conflict theory. It refers to the ongoing battle between social classes for control over resources and the pursuit of their interests.

Conflict theory provides insights into the structural inequalities and power dynamics that shape society. By highlighting the competition for resources and class struggle, it helps us understand the social conflicts that exist within a capitalist society and offers a critical perspective on social arrangements and systems (Cohen, 2013).

Additionally, social inequality and injustices can further fuel conflict as marginalized groups seek to challenge and change the status quo. Conflict theorists identify various causes of conflict, including social structures, power dynamics, class struggle, and social inequality, all of which contribute to conflicts within societies (Cohen, 2013).

Modern Day Examples of Conflict Theory

Modern day examples of conflict theory can be seen in various social issues that plague the society.

- i. **Economic Inequality:** The Occupy Wall Street movement exemplifies conflict theory through its protest against the disproportionate wealth and power held by the top 1% of the population. This movement highlighted the stark economic disparities and limited opportunities available to the majority, showcasing the class struggle and power dynamics central to conflict theory (Smith, 2022).

- ii. **Racial Inequality:** The Black Lives Matter movement provides a modern context for conflict theory, as it addresses the systemic racism, police brutality, and social disadvantages faced by African American communities. The movement demands equal rights and opportunities, challenging the existing power imbalances and advocating for societal change (Smith, 2022).
- iii. **Gender Inequality:** The movement illustrates conflict theory in its challenge against entrenched patriarchal power structures and the fight for gender equality. Women from various walks of life have come forward to share their experiences of sexual harassment and assault, highlighting the gender-based power imbalances and demanding accountability and change (Smith, 2022).
- iv. **Political Conflict:** The recent Capitol riot in the United States serves as an example of political conflict from a conflict theory perspective. Different social groups, fueled by divisive rhetoric and the competition for political power, clashed in a violent confrontation, showcasing the intense power struggles and social unrest characteristic of political conflict (Smith, 2022). Having discussed the theories of social change above, it is now appropriate to highlight the effects of theories of social change in contemporary Nigerian society.

Effects of Theories of Social Change in Contemporary Nigerian Society

Nigerian social settings can be situated between the two consortiums of social change perspectives: classical and contemporary perspectives. Going by the classical view, it can be said that modern Nigerian society emerged having passed through the multi-linear process of social change. By moving from simpler forms based on similar segments (like villages) to more complex forms characterized by specialization and division of labour (Durowade, 2022). This is partly true as noted by Olagbaju (2015) who reported that Nigeria has experienced a shift from regions to states, from farms to cities, from agriculture to organization, and now political-power shift from the north to the south. However, this is not just by a naturalistic and universalistic foundation but also by struggle (social movement). This fact tallies with the evolutionary and conflict perspectives that successive stages of change are higher than the preceding stage; that is, evolution is progressive and non-reversible. The shift from an agriculture-based economy to the organizational-based economy in Nigeria depicts a progressive direction of change from simple to complex, from homogeneity to heterogeneity, from undifferentiated to differentiated, in form and function (Parsons, 1991). Yet, functional theorists affirmed that when society becomes more differentiated, new institutions are produced. Hence, they must be integrated and incorporated into the other institutions as a part of a whole in order to maintain the equilibrium, stability and social order in society (Parsons, 1991). From a Functionalist perspective, Nigerian society is composed of interdependent components working together to keep up the balance of the whole. Thus, social evolution occurs alongside major changes in social institutions such as political, social, cultural,

economic and religious. These further affects the family system, trade formation, value system, dress code, hairstyle, religion and other mundane acts. It also affects everything from education, population, law and administration to the environment and international affairs (Solaja, 2020). Unfortunately, all these changes in social institutions are yet to be properly integrated and incorporated in order to ensure desirable socio-economic development and social order. For instance, a majority of Nigerians still practice the culture of pollute-now and clean-up later, which continues to create environmental imbalances and socio- economic challenges in which proactive efforts are now being made to communicate to the coming generation.

This theory perfectly describes modern Nigerian social evolution where many states still struggle to catch up with changing business environment due to lack of adequate energy, water supply, good roads, health care centers and other social amenities, to bring about a better social structure in the society. It can be argued that the lack of basic amenities and ineffective government policies implementation to properly integrate the fragmented cultural elements into a whole according to their logical significance will continue to hinder the process of desirable socio-economic development. The greatest implication of this is the upsurge in social problems like corruption, declining quality of education, environmental pollution/degradation, family problems (increased, divorce and family abuse/struggle) (Parons, 1991).

In Nigeria, studies have shown that the proportion of people living below a dollar per day stands above a hundred million (Afolayan, and Abejide, 2018) with a significant number of these people losing their children to illness. Nigerian governments are fraught with corruption, they are strategically weak in ensuring tax compliance, and the majority of Nigerians are involved in tax avoidance and evasion. This phenomenon portrays the individualistic thinking, serving of selfish interests and corruption that exists between the government and the people.

The current Nigerian social settings can also be pictured from a modernization perspective in the sense that, the recurrent contact between relatively modernized societies and the relatively non-modernized societies acts as a trigger of social change towards a single direction, shaped by the model of the modernized society. Nigerian social structure has been moving from time to time toward foreign and non-African ways (Olagbaju, 2015). The acceptance of a democratic system of government in Nigeria which arose from the need to maintain mutual economic, social and political relationships with the developed countries, has brought about the double tragedy of change (social progress and social problems) in modern Nigerian society. The social progress is the notch of enlightenment (which appears in terms of the introduction of democracy, self-freedom, material growth, security among others.). Thus, the social problems are the accompanied social milieu (such as poverty, marginalization, political corruption, cultural devaluation, insurgency, environmental pollution, unemployment, homosexuality, dependency and many other

social issues) with varying degrees of consequences for Nigeria's development pursuit (Solaja, 2020).

Conclusion

Nigerian society has witnessed a sequential progression from a traditional society to a modern society with a certain level of advancement in the institutions that make up the social system. To be sure, social, political, economic, religious, educational and family institutions have undergone a series of stages of development and change. For example, the Nigerian economy has moved from agriculture-based to crude-oil based which has helped to increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), purchasing power propensity and national income generation. However, social-economic improvement is yet to be felt by the majority. More so, tertiary education has taken a new dimension from 'free education for all' to 'money education for few' through deregulation policies like privatization and commercialization. The religion practiced by Nigerians was formerly traditional religion but it has changed to include Christianity and Islam, and now people with no religion or post modernization. In addition, the family pattern is getting more nuclear and less extended in Nigeria. This is due to the growing rate of the neo-local mentality among the majority of newly married couples in Nigeria. The culture of carrying money around as well as spraying money at occasions has equally changed in the era of the cashless economy. All these evidence-based issues buttress the primary assumption of evolution theories that social change is an inevitable, natural and irreversible phenomenon. Hence, the modern Nigeria social setting is not an exception.

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