

Parental Care and Sustainable Development in G7 and Some Selected Economies

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This study is on Parental care and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the G7 economies, South Africa, Nigeria and some selected economies. The work maintained that the G7 economies of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States have recorded applaudable success in their achievement of the sustainable development goal. But the same thing cannot be said of Nigeria and South Africa being emerging economies and countries of influence in Africa. The paper shows that the two African countries are lagging behind in their achievement of the SDGs. It was argued that there are sharp differences in the manner and method of children upbringing in the selected countries. Divorce, poverty and their dangerous effects on homes were intended to be parts of the factors affecting parents in their bids to raise development-oriented children. Tables, figures and indepth analysis were employed in establishing the facts and positions of this work. It was concluded that since the main target of the sustainable development goals is securing a better future that is not hindered or hampered by the present generation. Therefore, the paper recommends that parents could be given some incentives such as free health schemes. This will help to reduce their cost of living and combat poverty at the household level. There is an urgent need to include sustainable development goals into the school curriculum, this will enable the learners to be fully acquainted with all the tenets of the SDGs including the ways in which they can make meaningful contributions to achieving the goals. Stable parents can be encouraged by giving them some incentives for taking care of their children and for ensuring stability in their homes as it is obvious that this kind of parents would raise stable children while they, in turn, would make a better society and the much-anticipated greater future. Parents can be sensitized on the need to intensify efforts on maintaining gender equality among their children as this would help to achieve the sustainable development goal 5. Massive awareness on the dangers of bush burning, deforestation, carbon emission and other unhealthy practices with their inevitable consequences on the ozone layer, environment and the entire ecosystem could be embarked upon by the government. This will to a large extent reduce the cost of taking care of weather-related diseases among the parents and their children.

Key Words: Care, Development, Goals, Parental, Sustainable.

Introduction

The United Nations General Assembly, consisting of one hundred and ninety world leaders from across the globe, met on the 25th of September 2015 and adopted the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, which includes putting an end to abject poverty, crisis, inequality, injustice and to address the problems associated with climate change. It was stated that sound health, calmness, serenity, justice, welfare of the young and future generations are necessary conditions for achieving the sustainable development goals (Sachs et al., 2024). According to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IBRD Group (2019), the number of children makes up to 25 per cent of the total world population. The findings by the World Bank Group established, that of the 25%, a greater number of children are found in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), South Africa and Nigeria inclusive.

From the records, 40% of children in LMICs are vulnerable and could have their developmental indicators hampered by age 5, as a result of extreme poverty, slow growth and abnormal parent–child(ren) relationships in the formative age. (Black et al., 2024; Richter et al., 2024). This has protracted negative influence on the children's stages of development, including deficiencies in language and communication, loss of ability to perform executive functions, lack of self-control, unhealthy sibling and peer relationships, low academic performance, mental and physical disorientation in the later childhood, adolescence and in adulthood. All of these pose serious threats to the potentials of the growing children, making the achievement of the SDGs from family to the community and global terrain very difficult. Parenting is unarguably connected to the ease with which children can develop life skills, mental soundness and innate ability needed for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals later in their life. (Sanders et al., 2023).

The importance of parents in the upbringing of a strong, healthy and wholesome children cannot be overemphasized. For a child to grow well both mentally and physically and in a manner that would enable him become useful for himself and the society, he should be brought up meticulously. Supporting him in every stage of development will earn him the status of a total man molded with sound mind, ingenuity and resourcefulness. This adds impetus to his ability to make reasonable impact in life both morally and economically. In this regard, the roles of both fathers and mothers cannot be silenced or deemphasized (Cabrera & Volling, 2024). Yaffe (2023), observed that worldwide, people differentiate between fathers and mothers, yet the two parents are obviously different in their conceptions and styles of parenting. Mothers, as compared to fathers are perceived to be more accommodating, active, supportive, supervisory, demanding, and autonomy granting than fathers. However, fathers' mental agility, parenting styles and their ability to maintain a peaceful fathermother relationships have stronger positive effects on the children's rational and social development. This makes each and both of them adequately aware of their duties at home and in the life of their children. Unfortunately, it is absolutely difficult for a parent to solely carry out the roles which are meant for both parties. On many occasions, the loopholes created by the absence of either of the parents do not exist without having some lethal effects on the children. Yaffe (2023), identified the effects as including: serious social vices, poverty, violence and failing masculinity on the part of the male children. This is why the psychoanalytic theorists are in perpetual disagreement with the concept of symbolic paternity, which has proven beyond every doubt to be incoherent with the expected features of responsible biological fathers or mothers. However, children's upbringing is not without some challenges. Nelson and Coffey (2024) observed that children's upbringing can be demanding. Parents are faced with lots of daily disturbances in caring for their children. It entails cleaning messes for toddlers, resolving arguments between siblings and troublesome teenagers, especially in the aspects of home chores and school assignments. This is the major cause of parenting stress.

Fang et al., (2024) described parenting stress as the exposure to distress, discomfort, cramps, imbalances, irregularities and emergencies that result from parenting. Parenting stress is common among parents who are not from the same cultures and who, in their own upbringing, had completely different experiences from that of their spouses. It is estimated that 36–50% of parents experience some degree of parenting difficulties while carrying out the role of fatherhood or motherhood. The inability of both parents to manage the unfriendly home created by the nagging children and financial obligations has been discovered to be responsible for frequent divorce, by which the duo has been escaping the traditional roles saddled on them by the divine. These and many more are the reasons for children's failures in both academic and economic delivery. Hence, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2 and 3 as presented in table one below has been unfeasible as the society is still fraught and littered with hoodlums, mischievous urchins, odious brats and loathsome youths.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2 and 3 is highly connected with the quality of manpower available in an economy at a point in time. Of course, the definition of sustainable development will not make sense if the aspect of youth is not well taken care of. In the World Commission on Environment and Development's report of 1987, cited by Mensah (2023), titled —Our Common Future, there was a consensus reached to develop another definition that would clear the air on the conflicting misrepresentation of environment and development goals. The definition is captured in the first objective of this paper. Fortunately, both the title of the report and the formulated definition place high emphasis on the aspect of the future.

Hence, it would not be an exaggeration to state clearly that the future may become extremely bleak if fathers and mothers do not rise up to the responsibility of raising a total child who will secure the much-anticipated and targeted future.

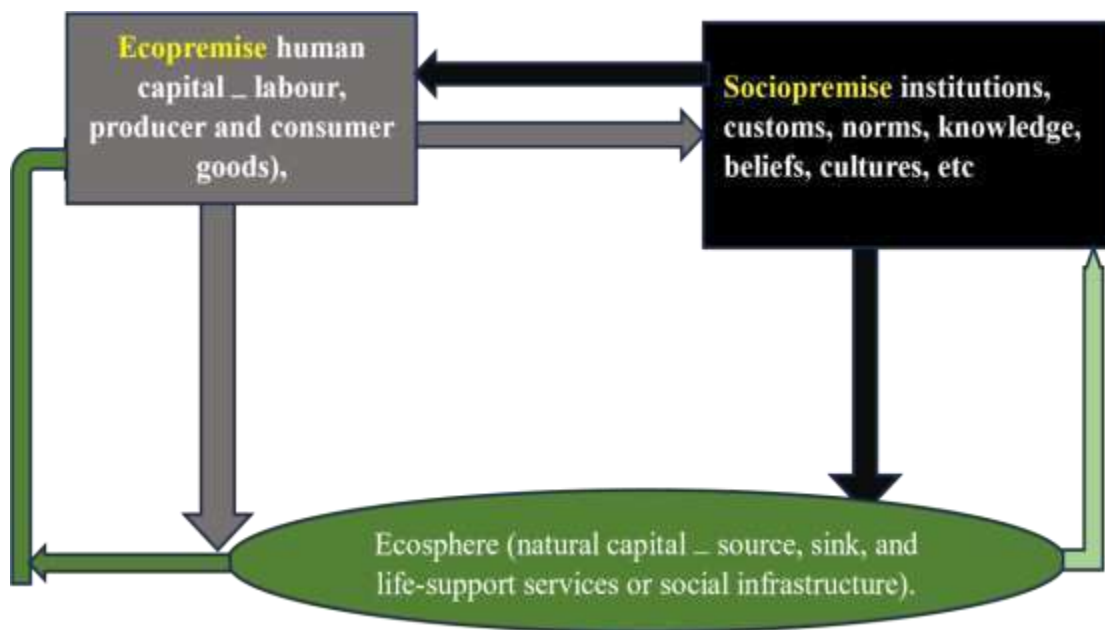
The questions to ask however are: What is sustainable development? What is the difference between fatherhood and motherhood in the selected countries; What are the interconnections between sustainable development goals and responsible parenthood; and what are the major factors militating against parents in preparing their children for the attainment of the SDGs?

The main objectives of this paper are to discover the: meaning of sustainable development, distinction between fatherhood and motherhood in G7 and the selected countries, interconnections between sustainable development goals and parental care and major factors militating against parents from raising development-oriented children. Several researchers have worked on parental care. While the likes of Bitalo (2024), De Santis et al. (2025), Fang et al. (2024), Tan and Morgan (2023) and Wade et al. (2023) worked extensively on the narratives of changing paternal roles and responsibilities, Beyazit et al., (2023) investigated the effects of fatherhood on child development, Yaffe (2023) delved into a systematic review of the differences between mothers and fathers parenting styles and practices, plus Cabrera and Volling (2024), researched into fatherhood in the twenty-first century. Also, Leal Filho et al. (2024) worked on understanding the transformative power of networking in the implementation of sustainable development goals for developed countries, Maryanti et al. (2022) researched into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in science education, and Ramutsindela and Mickler (2020) dissected Africa and the Sustainable Development Goals. These all leave a gap in the literature, which this paper is trying to address. None of these works combined the concept of SDGs and parental care. It is obvious that an academic paper of this nature is necessary in the literature as it reveals the importance of parental care in achieving the SDGs. Parental care and sustainable development will occupy a significant space in the literature

Therefore, the work will serve as an eye opener to researchers, policy makers and government institutions such as the Ministry of Women Affairs, women and children health institutions, higher institutions of learning and particularly economists who are working assiduously on the extent to which the Sustainable Development Goals have been achieved. The paper will serve as an encouragement to every responsible parent who is not relenting on their effort towards raising Godly, impact-making and complete children. Likewise, the work will form a clarion call to many parents who are not doing enough to ensure a befitting life and future for their wards. The work is carried out on parental care and sustainable development in the G7 economies and some selected countries, South Africa and Nigeria inclusive. This was informed by the observed effort being made over the attainment of the SDGs in these countries.

Literature Review the Concept of Sustainable Development

The United Nations have developed a popular definition for sustainable development as —the development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Mustafa et al., 2024; Halawa, 2024). However, the concept means different things to different people, which explains why several meanings have been attributed to it. Sustainable development refers to the ability to ensure the persistence, continuity, and uninterrupted interaction among the economic system, comprising human capital, labor, producer and consumer goods; the social system, including institutions, customs, norms, knowledge, beliefs, cultures, and relationships; and the ecosphere, consisting of natural capital and environmental services (Lu et al., 2024). This is depicted in Figure 1 below.



Source: Author, (2026) **Figure 1.** What need to be sustained in sustainable development.

Put differently, sustainable development has both social and environmental dimensions. The social dimension is concerned with the welfare of present and future generations, while the economic and environmental dimensions focus on the utilization of natural resources and the roles of entrepreneurial and industrial sectors in ensuring long-term development (Eleftheriou et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the concept of sustainable development is not devoid of vested interests, arguments, doubts, philosophical approaches, modifications, and even outright rejection.

Scholars continue to debate the practical implementation of sustainability principles and the tradeoffs involved in balancing environmental protection with economic growth (Zagonari, 2024).

Also, a number of scientists, entrepreneurs, and politicians who are not entirely convinced of the concept's feasibility have argued that the major achievement of the Brundtland Commission was popularizing the term —sustainable development— rather than providing concrete mechanisms for its implementation. (Hajian, & Kashani, 2021). However, recent scholarship suggests that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have transformed the concept into measurable policy targets, although implementation challenges remain significant across many countries (Hsieh & Yeh, 2024).

A puzzle that must be solved is what exactly should be sustained in —sustainable development. According to a recent literature on sustainability, the utility and general welfare of future generations should be maintained and sustained without decline. Future generations should enjoy at least the same standard of living and well-being as the present generation. In this context, utility refers to the satisfaction and happiness experienced by members of a generation (McCauley et al., 2024). Furthermore, physical throughput, representing the flow of resources from nature into the economy, should remain sustainable over time. In other words, the capacity of the natural environment to provide resources and absorb waste should not be compromised. Also agricultural productivity can be sustained, if the consumption of non-renewable energy is discouraged and environmental degradation is stopped. (Adeleye et al., 2021). Natural capital, defined as the ability of ecosystems to generate natural resources and environmental services, should also be preserved. This perspective aligns with the concept of strong sustainability, which promotes natural capital independently rather than assuming it can be substituted by human-made capital. Contemporary studies continue to distinguish between strong and weak sustainability, emphasizing that natural capital performs irreplaceable ecological functions that cannot be fully replicated through technological advancement or economic growth (Yilmaz & Godin, 2024).

Keeping natural capital constant is often referred to as —strong sustainability, as opposed to —weak sustainability, where the combined stock of natural and human-made capital. Utility itself is an experience rather than a tangible asset; therefore, it cannot be directly transferred to future generations. What the present generation can transmit are resources, institutions, knowledge, and technologies that enhance future opportunities. Whether future generations use these resources to achieve happiness and well-being ultimately remains beyond the control of the present generation. Recent sustainability scholarship supports this view by emphasizing resilience, institutional capacity, innovation, and knowledge transfer as critical foundations for long-term sustainable development (McCauley et al., 2024).

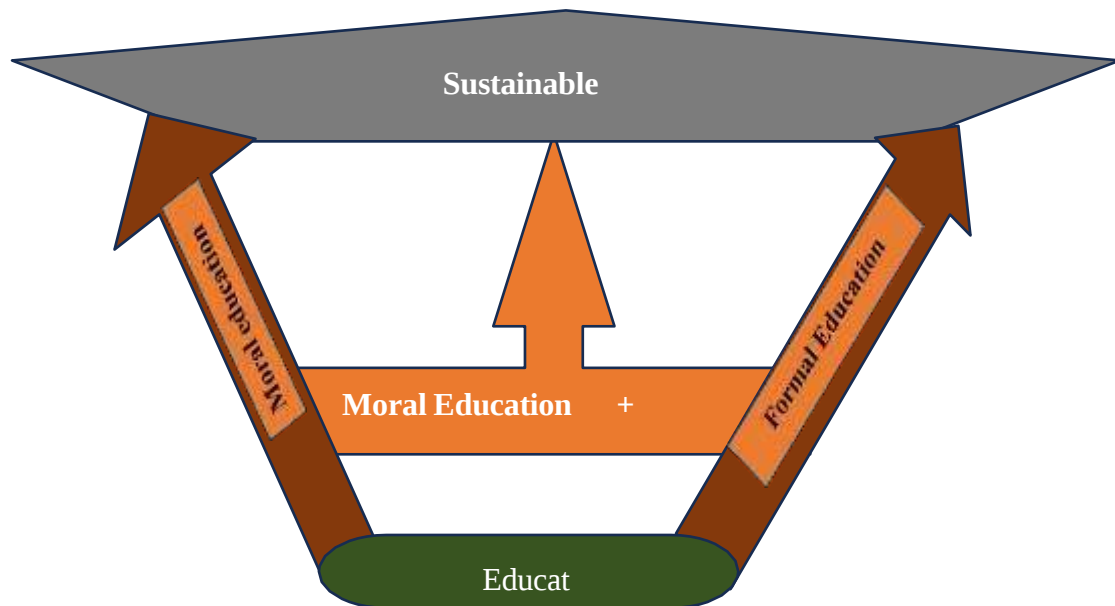
The above figure is captured in the explanation of Mensah et al. (2022), he argued that, an economically sustainable system must be able to continuously produce commodities and services that is ecologically sustainable, have a steady base of resources, refrain from overusing renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions, and only deplete non-renewable resources to the degree that sufficient replacements are invested in. This includes preserving biodiversity, maintaining atmospheric stability, and performing other ecological services that are not typically considered economic resources. Furthermore, a socially sustainable system must accomplish distributional justice, adequate provision of social services such as education and health, gender equity, political responsibility and participation.

For development to be sustainable, it must ensure that nothing hinders the link between the ecosphere, socio-premise and economic premise, which constitute the joy, pleasure and satisfaction of the present generation, while ensuring that these benefits are extended to future generations. Human capital is a condition for an economy to grow and produce the needed output, while the socio-premise involves the transmission of norms, knowledge, customs, beliefs and culture, of which the family remains the major agent.

According to Kushnir and Nunes (2022), the aim of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to enhance human welfare and promote a sustainable, progressive, peaceful, equitable and inclusive way of life for present and future generations. To achieve the SDGs, both formal and informal education play critical roles. Moreover, the SDGs were designed through a participatory process involving multiple stakeholders and are guided by the central principle of —Leave No One Behind (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2024).

In this paper, the emphasis on education is primarily on the informal type. While formal education develops competencies and intellectual abilities in children, moral and informal education impart social values, attitudes and behavioral dispositions necessary for sustainable development. Hence, individuals can reflect on their behaviors by considering their present and future social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts from childhood through adulthood. This necessitates a high level of involvement by both fathers and mothers. Inclusive and lifelong learning approaches are considered essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring that no one is left behind (Akhlagh & Rogers, 2022) and (Webb et al., 2022).

Source: Author, (2026). **Figure 2**, Influence of formal and informal education on sustainable development.



The figure above shows that the kind of education that will ensure sustainable development must be that which is all-inclusive. Formal education would produce the curriculum, the subject matter and the environment for imparting such knowledge, but it cannot produce the moral requirement for sustainability. A biblical injunction has it that —train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22: 6). This is pointing to the sustainable aspect of what the child has learnt, and that is highly important to his future. —The training up can only be done by the parent. Parents who are indeed parents and could see beyond the present state of the child. In essence, education that lacks the impact of the informal aspect is like a bird flying with one hand. The combination of both will ensure the sustainability we all yearn for. (Caldana, et al., 2023).

Families

Families, as an elementary unit of the society, have an important role to play in the training of well-informed individuals for society and the world at large. It is the first place to start the socialization process of the child and where one is equipped for oneself, the society and the nation at large. Only a sustainable family can produce the true sustainable development that the society needs. (Waldfoegel et. al., 2023). Therefore, the unit not only creates a behavioral pattern for children but also impacts their developmental stages. The foundation of a consistent, healthy and civilized way of life is found in sustainable family life birthed by responsible fatherhood and motherhood. This agrees with UNICEF (2021), who submitted that although provision of basic needs such as clothes, shelter and food form the basic function of the family, cultures, educational values and ability of the children to adapt to the changing and ever-dynamic society are impacted through the family institution.

Fatherhood According to Sarkadi et al. (2022), the understanding attached to the word —father is incongruent in each culture and varies for each individual. The term father is used in terms of being a biological father and shows some superior characteristics such as being mature, understanding, knowledgeable and protecting. This agrees with Cabrera and Tamis-LeMonda (2023) who observed that perceptions of fatherhood vary across age groups and social contexts, encompassing economic support, emotional care, protection and family stability. Since the world does not live on one culture, it may be abnormal to give a single meaning to the concept. Therefore, justice is done to it by defining it from different cultural backgrounds. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2022), defines the term ‘father’ as —a male parent who contributes to the upbringing and welfare of a child. In the words of Fitzgerald and Bradley (2024), it is expressed that, with socio-cultural changes, especially with changing gender norms, fathers’ new role includes nurturing, breadwinning, protection, moral teaching and role modelling.

This is the reason for different types of fathers identified in contemporary fatherhood literature, including absent fathers, non-resident fathers and actively involved fathers. Pleck (2023), opined that fathers' direct care is more emphasized than indirect care. Involved fathers are increasingly encouraged in gender egalitarian countries, such as America, Japan, Canada, Germany, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Nigeria, China, Greece and Sweden, whose achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is of importance to this paper.

Motherhood

Christopher (2022), observed that giving birth, being a woman, emotionally reacting and forming a foundation for a child development are often associated with the concept of motherhood. However, not all women are mothers, some are unable to be mothers, some are too young or old to be mothers, some choose not to be mothers, and some chose to be. Motherhood has different characteristics depending on a variety of factors, including the woman's economic class, ethnicity identity, culture and political beliefs as well as the parent opinion towards raising children. A mother is a woman who bears kids and she is responsible for nurturing her children. Mothering is a collection of socially created tasks involving tending and feeding. The concept of motherhood is socially interwoven. Under male dominance, the position of the mother is socially formed through complex power dynamics. Women have four responsibilities which include: (i) cleaning (ii) wife and mother responsibilities (iii) commitment to the children and (iv) commitment to the husband and his relatives. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD (2023), the woman is responsible for the nutrition and care of the child, this is born out of the traditional point of view, and she performs the duties with the assistance of her husband. This work presents a challenge on the need to x-ray the family life of some countries where their levels of SDG achievement is high.

Fatherhood and Motherhood in America

Fathers in America play major roles which to a very pronounced degree exemplify those of the mothers. For this, according to Livingston and Parker (2023), American fatherhood is increasingly characterized by shared parenting responsibilities, often referred to as the "second-mother model." The table below captures most of their activities in line with the process of civilization. America and Sweden are both Western welfare nations that have vocal academics and the general public advocating for new fatherhood and gender equality. Nonetheless, there are notable distinctions between the welfare systems of Sweden and America. Swedes incorporate the American idea of father engagement into father-friendly practices due to the country's robust family assistance systems and state-sponsored dual-earner and dual-career policies (Engeman & Burman, 2023).

Fatherhood and motherhood in Japan

A father, "Daikokubashira", refers to the traditional Japanese father, who is expected to provide for and assume complete responsibility for the family. According to Ishii-Kuntz (2021), rather than supporting the traditional Japanese salaryman model, the Japanese government has increasingly promoted policies and initiatives encouraging active fatherhood through the concept of "Ikumen." Japanese fatherhood is changing, which is typical of Eastern nations like South Korea, which are transitioning from male-dominated family systems toward more egalitarian parenting arrangements. What does fatherhood look like in modern Japan? The old idea of "men working outside while women take care of children" is gradually being modified, and fathers are expected to assume greater childcare responsibilities as the Japanese government advances modern fatherhood ideals. Nonetheless, Japanese fathers are experiencing difficult phases during this transition: (i) how to better integrate into a high-welfare society, whether to choose traditional family patterns or contemporary dual-earner and dual-caregiver arrangements; (ii) how to manage work and family life; and (iii) how to resolve the conflict between the breadwinner role and the supportive father role. This is therefore referred to as the struggling father pattern (Nagase & Brinton, 2022).

Fatherhood and Motherhood in France and the United Kingdom

According to Kaufman and Almqvist (2020), fathers' and mothers' parental time allocation has undergone significant changes in Europe. National and European surveys reveal that women in both France and the United Kingdom continue to perform the majority of domestic work, although fathers' involvement in childcare has increased over time. The division of labor becomes more pronounced when families have young children and multiple dependents. Although women continue to undertake a greater share of childcare responsibilities, fathers in the United Kingdom tend to be more actively involved in childcare activities than their French counterparts. However, the disparities become less noticeable among dual-earner households where both parents participate actively in child-rearing responsibilities.

Fatherhood and Motherhood in Canada

Doucet and McKay (2020), reported that in Canada, fathers in middle-class families often prioritize career advancement to secure higher incomes and maintain family financial stability. Consequently, men are frequently expected to conform to traditional breadwinner norms. Both husbands and wives are increasingly engaged in paid employment and they concentrate substantial time to work. However, many couples consciously devote time to meet their children's developmental and emotional needs. Fathers who utilize paternity leave are often associated with more egalitarian gender-role attitudes and supportive workplace environments. However, hinderances to paternity leave remain, including preferences for extended maternal leave, persistent societal beliefs regarding fathers' caregiving competencies, negative perceptions of stay-at-home fathers, insufficient wage replacement benefits, and limited support from employers and colleagues. (Battams, 2026).

Fatherhood and Motherhood in Germany

In Germany, the conventional breadwinner model has historically been reinforced by labor market and family policies. However, recent family policy reforms have encouraged greater paternal involvement in childcare. According to Walper and Kreyenfeld (2022), German fathers are becoming increasingly engaged in childcare, although mothers still perform a larger share of caregiving tasks. Similarly, Lansford et al. (2021) observed that cultural norms have continued to shape parents-children relationships across European societies. The concept of "parenting intensification" manifests through increased parental investments in caregiving, education, emotional support, and child development. This demonstrates that German parents are increasingly sharing responsibilities for raising their children.

Fatherhood and Motherhood in Italy

Del Boca et al., (2020) found that Italian mothers generally maintain closer daily relationships with their children than fathers, allowing them to respond more effectively to children's emotional and developmental needs. Both parents increasingly participate in paid employment and contribute to household income. Fathers who work longer hours and serve as primary earners may be less involved in daily childcare activities. Conversely, fathers whose spouses remain employed while they experience reduced employment commitments tend to participate more actively in childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, Bornstein (2022) submitted that mothers possessing extensive knowledge of child development often demonstrate more effective parenting practices and develop healthier relationships with their children, whereas limited parenting knowledge may contribute to conflict and inconsistent disciplinary approaches.

Fatherhood and motherhood in South Africa

In the words of Bitalo, et al., (2024), in South Africa, fatherhood has, in primitive times, basically been characterized by provision and breadwinning roles. In their communities, the view of fathers as the principal agents for meeting the material needs has been impeding the need to develop alternative fatherhood responsibilities. Fathers' involvement in their families has long-lasting benefits for themselves, their children, and future generations. In South Africa, the concept of 'Social fathers' is used to capture the belief that fatherly practices are not limited to paternal fathers. Fatherhood is a collective responsibility; child-rearing is facilitated through community socialization, cultural education, and even shared financial provision.

Fatherhood and Motherhood in Nigeria

Father-parenting families are households whereby the father lives and cares for the upbringing of his children alone. Father-parenting families were not a common practice and were very rare in the country. However, today, the situation has changed considerably, and the phenomenon is steadily increasing. The increasing rate of untimely death of spouses, marital conflicts, divorce, economic hardship, and infidelity is mainly responsible for this emerging family structure. (Akanle, & Ogundele, 2024). This cannot be separated from the fact that Nigeria is facing serious economic difficulties that are affecting family wellbeing. The consequences of this occurrence are that children brought up in such households maintained by a single father or single mother may experience behavioral disorders, psychosocial challenges, financial problems, and the absence of maternal tenderness.

Ohazulike, (2023), maintained that these children may be more unfriendly, aggressive, and less focused compared to those from stable families where both parents live together. However, with improved parental adjustment, many single parents and their children can resolve conflicts depending on the level of initial damage done to the relationship. The Nigerian cultural influence on child upbringing, which places most family responsibilities on fathers, remains evident in some regions of the country. However, due to specialization and worsening economic conditions, this practice is gradually declining, as occupations and trades previously dominated by men are increasingly undertaken by women to support family welfare and foster healthy child upbringing.

Fatherhood and Motherhood in Greece

The submissions by Armao and Anagnostaki (2024), revealed that the involvement of Greek fathers in family affairs and childcare responsibilities before the birth of a child and during the first year of life is closely associated with community characteristics in both urban and rural settings. Greek fathers, regardless of regional background, view fatherhood as a rewarding experience despite the psychological pressures associated with additional responsibilities following childbirth. Evidence suggests that fathers from rural areas with lower educational attainment and occupational status are less likely to participate in childcare practices than fathers in urban areas with higher educational and occupational status. An important issue is that societal differences in fathering roles do not necessarily determine the quality of care provided. Thus, the involvement of urban fathers in family matters does not automatically guarantee outcomes equal to those of mothers. Many men in cities participate in play activities and routine childcare tasks; however, their responsibilities often remain secondary, as women continue to bear the larger share of domestic chores and childcare responsibilities.

Fatherhood and Motherhood in Sweden

According to Duvander and Fahlén (2025), Swedish fathers continue to benefit from one of the most generous parental leave systems in the world. These benefits have significantly increased fathers' involvement in direct childcare and household responsibilities. The willingness of fathers to actively participate in the moral, academic, and intellectual development of their children has also increased. Consequently, children tend to develop greater responsibility and resourcefulness, qualities that contribute to intellectual and social development. The Swedish parental leave reforms have progressively strengthened fathers' participation in childcare, with fathers accounting for a growing share of total parental leave days, significantly above international averages (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2024).

Fatherhood and motherhood in China

According to Wang and Keizer (2024), the traditional Chinese father role is a combination of different cultures, which include Han, Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist cultures, plus 56 ethnic minorities' cultures. The ideal father would be a —responsible, disciplinarian and a setter of good example. He is supposed to be the instructor, the knowledgeable parent to whom the child would resort for help in doing homework, answering questions and solving academic and social challenges. In the modern Chinese father role, men are seen as —New good men (—Pa er‘duo) who believe in one very popular maxim: good men listen to their wives. The husband tends to call their wives —tang kel or —nei ren, which connotes women should remain at home. On the other hand, nowadays, women prefer to be called —ling dao or —lao ban, which means that women are the leader or the master of the family. Zhou, et al., (2019) revealed that the transition to fatherhood has been seen as facilitating changes in

personality where fathers felt more ‘caring’ and ‘sensitive’ to the needs of their partners and their children. The Chinese modernization and urbanization result in two main changes in family patterns, which are; increase in number of nuclear families and of neglected children and women becoming the boss at home, while fathers’ participation is becoming less.

Difference between Father and mother parenting style

Yaffe (2023), opined that mothers and fathers play different roles in the family, parenting methods and practices over the children in childhood and to the adolescence may differ depending on the parents’ and the children’s gender. Nelson-Coffey et al., (2019), submitted that gender differences in parenting experiences extend beyond directly caring for the children. For example, working mothers may present an evidence (the work) which suggests that mothers may have a more difficult transition to full parenthood, suffering decreases in self-esteem and steeper declines in relationship satisfaction over the first few years of parenthood. Accordingly, in the studies comparing parents on the constructs of overall parenting styles, mothers were predominantly more authoritative than fathers, and fathers were mostly more authoritarian than mothers (based on both parent and descendant reports).

The Link between the SDG and Parental Care

According to Sanders (2022), parental modelling of social and self-acquired skills, emotional influence which involve positive parent-child and positive husband and wife relationships, effective, non-violent and constructive discipline and limit setting are key mechanisms by which parenting influence child development, adult well-being and societal functions. Following parents’ example, reinforcement and emergency management strategies, children learn language, social, emotional, and problem-solving skills, and control of unbalanced emotions such as frustration and anger. The same measures can be employed to promote adult well-being meant to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, such as developing better emotional balance, anger management and reducing family conflict and gender-based violence. This applies to parents and children of all ages.

Michelson et al., (2022), opined that children are at greater risk of developing serious mental and physical health problems when growing up in harsh, unfriendly or unstable homes characterized by frequent family conflict, violence, abuse and neglect. Low levels of positive interaction, unprotected attachment, inconsistent discipline, and lack of clear boundaries and limitations. Adverse childhood conditions, particularly when they are congested in an enclosure, cause continuous or intolerable levels of strain, described as ‘toxic stress’. It is toxic in that it impacts not only the digestive system resulting in higher levels of sugar and inflammation, increasing the chance of sustaining diabetes and heart disease in adulthood. This also affects the brain development significantly, targeting particularly the parts of the brain which are responsible for learning and decision making. This in turn impacts on the ability of a child exposed to such stresses to achieve their academic and social potential.

With the above, Zeng et al., (2022), submitted that if the future must be protected and ensured for the generations to come, protective measures such as security, safety means, provision of more spacious accommodation and other societal, environmental and structural factors must be put in place. Policies such as maternity and paternity leave, clean housing and healthy environments. We also know that proximal protective factors within families can buffer adverse social determinants. These protective measures also include a stable environment and the nurturing and active care from a responsible caregiver who would not only safeguard a child from dangers and negative influence but that would indeed inculcate and promote important behaviors and skills in the child for resilience and self-reliance.

According to Tripon (2024), parenting styles can affect children’s socio-emotional development, which, later, impact their future socioeconomic status. children raised in democratic households tend to exhibit better self-reliance and interpersonal skills, which are key for socio-economic breakthrough. By promoting democratic parenting practices that nourishes children’s emotional intelligence and resilience, societies can contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and advancing the possibility of achieving SDG 1. The social– emotional well-being of children is fundamental to achieving SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages. Again, children raised in democratic parenting environments tend to exhibit better emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and mental health outcomes compared to those in authoritarian or permissive environments. By fostering a nurturing and supportive atmosphere, democratic parenting contributes to the holistic well-

being of their children, this aligns with SDG 3. Democratic parent encourages their children to express and control their emotions in a supportive environment and atmosphere. When children learn to understand and manage their emotions effectively, they are better equipped to cope with stress and challenges of life, leading to improved mental well-being and overall health outcomes. This aligns with the objective of SDG 3 which is promoting emotional well-being as an important component of healthy lives.

Table 1. Level of father's and mother's involvement in children upbringing on country basis (selected countries).

SN	Country	Sdg Score %	Index	Level of fathers' involvement in children upbringing	Level of mothers' involvement in children upbringing
1	France	82 – 83		High	High
2	Germany	82 – 83		High	High
3	United Kingdom	80 – 82		High	High
4	Japan	80 – 81		High	Not too high or low
5	Italy	79 - 80		High	Low
6	Canada	78 - 79		High	High
7	America	77 - 78		Low (divorce issue)	Low (divorce issue)
8	Sweden	85 - 86		High	Low
9	Greece	74 - 76		High	High
10	South Africa	63 – 65		High	Low
11	Nigeria	54 – 56		High	Low

Source: World Bank, Compiled by Researcher, (2026). Table of parental participation in children upbringing on country basis

From the table it is evident that the pattern of parenting has far-reaching effects on the attainment of the SDGs. The level of father's involvement and mother's readiness are very crucial in the hunt for the SDGs. In France, the percentage of SDGs achievement is 82 – 83, while the level of parent's involvement is also high at both sides. Germany, 82 – 83 plus high parents' involvement in the children upbringing, United Kingdom, 80-82 including high parents' concentration on children upbringing Japan has 80-81 sustainable development achievement, including high father's involvement but with not too high or too low mother's involvement in their children upbringing. Italy has 79-80 percent SDG achievement with high father's involvement in children upbringing but low mother's participation. Canada scored 78-79 percent in the sdg achievement, plus high parents' involvement in their children upbringing at both sides. While this record is palpable in Canada, the relatively low sdg achievement might not be without the challenge of consumption and production pattern and climate change issue. United State of America has 77- 78 percentage of sdg achievement plus low parents' participation in children upbringing at both sides. This, according to research has been due to high case of divorce among the American parents and inequality gap and climate issue. Sweden has the highest percentage of sdg achievement among the selected countries with 85-86 percentage, although with low mother participation in their children upbringing but with high father's involvement. Greece scored 74-76 percentage of sdg achievement with high parents' participation in children upbringing. This record, though relatively low might be lower than this if there has not been the influence of both parents in the upbringing of their children. South Africa recorded 63 – 65 percent of the sdg achievement and with high father's involvement but low mother's involvement in

their children upbringing. The level of sdg achievement is however only a little above average in Nigeria with 54-56 per cent of the sdg achievement, with low father but high level of mother's involvement in their children upbringing.

Parental care, home economics, health care and sustainable development.

Nurmila, et al., (2021), argued that one of the reasons for heat in homes is economic problem. At times, both the father and the mother are financially incapable to support the family as expected. However, there are times when it is only the wife that is gainfully employed while the husband is on the look-out for job opportunities. Unfortunately, the latter still expect the wife to take care of the children and do the house chores. With this situation, families become vulnerable to divorce. Boys in this kind of a home often grow with the consciousness that they are the masters at home, leaving the home chores for the girls only. Engaging the boys in the home activities may soften the difficulties often faced while trying to strike the balance between the genders in their adulthood. This is equal to achieving the sustainable development goal 5 of promoting gender equality.

Werdofo, et al., (2022), observed that a feasible measure which parents in both developed and the third world economies are using to control this situation is diversification of their source of income. This is practicable in both formal and informal sector. During maternity, paternity and parental leave plus breastfeeding period, parents who have been engaging in additional work would have the ability to bring more income into the family by which they reduce poverty and achieving the Sustainable development goal 1.

In addition, most of the health issues children are having stem from unhygienic water and dirty environment. Mustafa, et al. (2024), argued that sources of most household water are highly infested with so many waste products which is the main reason for infectious diseases such as diarrhea, typhoid fever, cholera and dysentery and so many others which often affect children in high magnitude and with high mortality if not contained on time. In addition to this, the level of initial infections in terms of microbiological level is another very serious issue plus the fact that impure water is often prone to pathogens and microorganisms which can only be seen with very powerful microscope especially while on transit due to unhygienic practices and handlings. Increasing individual, parental and societal awareness of the importance of purified and clean water consumption is key in curtailing some diseases provided parents are well carried along. purification and the advantages to be gotten from it. Involvement of parents in preparation and consumption of clean water at the household level, especially with the children active participation will lead to a better understanding of the concept of water sanitation and thereby leading to the achievement of the sustainable development goal 6.

Factors militating against parents from contributing to quick achievement of the SDGs

Cowan et. al., (2024), identified some factors affecting the family to include differences in temperament within the family, different family background, difference in degree of commitment and responsibilities and difference in assessment and level of exposure. These distinctions in attribute of the father and the mother could result into some unimaginable effects in the family and also have the tendency to affect the children in a number of ways. Prominent among these are divorce and poverty. (Karimli et al., 2024).

Divorce

Divorce simply put is the legal end of marital union as a result of different causes. Divorce is a multifaceted experience with its peculiarity and has serious effects on individual children and the society. An important reason for this, is changes in the family pattern which has made divorce to be more frequent a solution to ending unwanted unions. The concept is summarized to be —a traumatic life crisis and —a stressful process especially on the children. It leads to removal or rearrangement of the constitutional duties and responsibilities of marriage, thus dissolving the bonds of marriage between a married couple in line with the constitutional provision of a country or state. On the effects of divorce, Caksen, (2022), revealed that it creates many dramatic pains and stress for children; involvement in their parents' misunderstanding, reduced relationships with one parent, unpleasant relationships with the other parent, and economic problems.

Coping with these significant changes can sap children's emotional resources, leaving them with

memories of hurt, resentment and yearning for a parental reconciliation. (Bell et al.,2022). Adding to this, Frimmel et al., (2024) submitted that divorce can affects children's heart, brain, souls and health. He however, maintained that the effect does not apply to every child in equal magnitude. The repercussions of divorce on children and the collective impact on the society generally can be predicted, but it is impossible to foresee how or to what extent a particular child will be affected. The consequences are severe, extensive and varied. Divorce has negative effects on people and society in a variety of ways, some of which, according to Douglas (2020), include:

Effect on Devotion and Faith: Devotion to God and praying to Him on the part of the children could be influenced and affected badly as a result of divorce.

Effect on Learning and Concentration: Children's learning ability and educational privileges are reduced by divorce. Children trying to understand the changing situation in the family may become disturbed and confused. The more distracted children are, the more they become less concentrated on their school work

Effect on Government Spending: Divorce dramatically raises government spending especially on the downtrodden, discouraged and on the need to curb drug abuse on the part of those who took refuge in addiction as well as the price of paying for public services.

Effect on Welfare and health: Children's longevity and health are negatively impacted by divorce. It also raises the risk of behavioral, emotional, and mental disorder, including even suicide.

Disinterestedness in Social Activity: Divorce can also affect children socially. Children whose family is going through divorce may find it difficult to relate with others, and tend to have less social contacts. At times the children feel insecure and perplexed if their family is the only family that has experienced divorce. Lack of interest social activity makes it difficult for children to adapt to both physical and social changes more often than ever.

Aggression /Irritability: In some cases, where children feel dispirited and do not know how to react to the effects and the trauma caused by divorce, they may become angry at their parents or their friends or get irritable.

Self- Acclaimed Guilt: Children often wonder and feel confused as to why divorce is happening in their home. They will look for reason(s), wondering if their parents no longer have affections for each other, or if they, (the children) have done something wrong that warrant it. Guilt increases pressure, it leads to depression, stress, and other health problems.

Increased rate of Health challenges: The process of divorce and its effects on children can be stressful. Dealing with these issues can take its toll, on the children's being Children who have experienced divorce have a higher susceptibility to sickness, which can stem from many factors, such as difficulty to sleep, high body temperature, tensions of various magnitude. Also, signs of depression can appear, worsening these states of malady and degenerating health symptoms.

Lack of interest in Marriage and Family system: Although they desire good and stable relationships children who have experienced divorce are more likely to divorce in their own relationships. It is found that this keenness to divorce may be twice or thrice as high as children who come from stable families. Children who are experiencing these abnormalities cannot make any meaningful contribution to the development of his own family let alone that of his nation or make any impact in achieving the sustainable development goals.

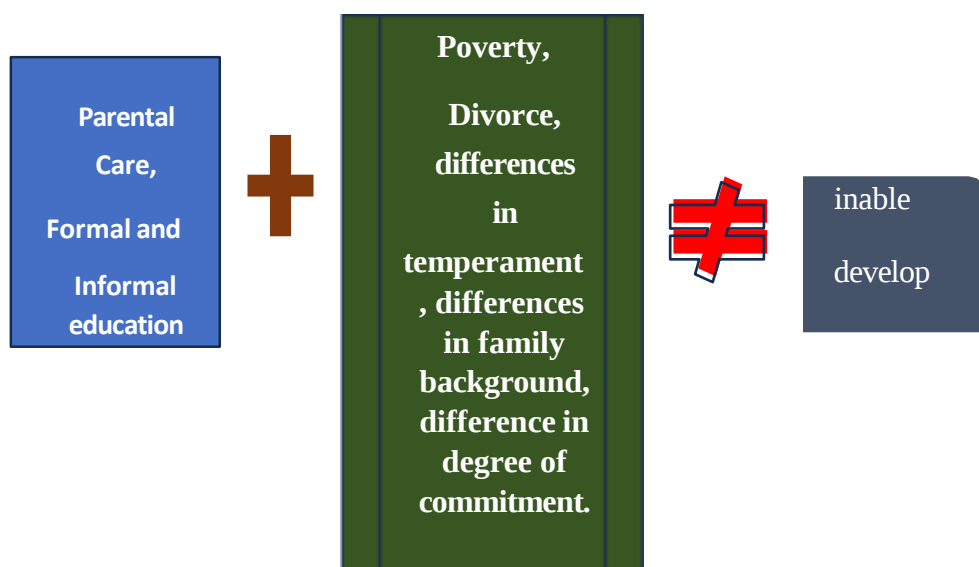
Poverty

Poverty has traditionally been defined and measured primarily in monetary terms, this approach remains important because it emphasizes the economic resources required to maintain a reasonable standard of living. However, there is growing recognition of the multidimensional nature of poverty, which encompasses factors such as health, education, and social relationships. These dimensions possess both intrinsic and practical significance in shaping individuals' wellbeing. (Zulkifli, et al., 2023). Consequently, this broader understanding of poverty has transformed the way poverty is assessed and has provided deeper insights into the various forms of deprivation experienced by individuals and communities. It is not only the lacking material assets, possessions and health but also lack of capabilities, such as information, education, respect, dignity, social identity, capability denial and cultural belonging. (Wagle, 2023).

Globally, poverty exposes families and children to achy stress which often influence their pursuit of success and developmental tasks in both academic and life. Children brought up in low-income families are vulnerable to poor academic performance, social, and poor health, which can later weaken educational accomplishment. (United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP), 2023). World Bank (2022), defined poverty as a condition which led to a lack of freedom to choose, emanating from a lack of ability to function excellently in the society. These multivariate definitions differ widely from the view of poverty as being only connected to a lack of financial resources. In fact, the UNDP (2024), maintained that inadequate education could, in itself, be described as poverty in another dimension and in many societies.

However, World Bank (2022), added that both absolute and relative poverty are important issues in education, and they both affect children in different regions of the world differently. Inadequate financial resources often reduce school attendance among the absolutely poor people in developing countries. The relatively poor in developed countries, however, often feel excluded from the school community, and to some extent, the whole school community itself may feel isolated from the wider society. Such feelings often affect their ability to access the full opportunities from education or to translate the benefits of education into rewarding and lucrative employment. But the reverse can encourage learners to participate or to do well in education. Hence, both absolute and relative poverty have separate and joint effects on education.

On the other hand, in developing countries there is absolute poverty, in which people have very few resources and their most usual needs are not met. This is more rampant in rural areas and it results in poor home conditions for learning manifesting in lack of books, inadequate lighting, or comfortable space to do homework. This serves as a big blow to children's physical wellbeing and ability to learn, which is not unconnected with low parental educational status and meagre resources for investing in education. The figure below shows the negativities that exist among parental care, poverty, divorce and sustainable development. Parental care, formal and informal education plus poverty cannot yield sustainable development.



Regardless of the magnitude or extent of concentration, parental care, formal and informal education cannot combine with poverty, divorce and hot temperament to achieve any of the SDGs. They, combined together, cannot in any way aid the achievement of the SDGs. Parental care in families where there is peace, love and stability can be result oriented both in the life of the children and in the achievement of the SDGs.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Parental care has been discovered to be very relevant to achieving most of the sustainable development goals, its functionality and influence are much more than mere hallucination, but the conditions that must be met if the present development must be improved upon or sustained. The happy, fulfilled, glorious and informed future is only possible with well-equipped and wellgrounded individuals who would value both the kindness of delivering or transferring fortunes to them plus what is actually handed over to them. This would go a long way in ensuring that the future is not jeopardized. Till today, it has been a serious issue and regrets seeing the labor of the past heroes being messed up and squandered by unscrupulous and socially deformed individuals who are only drunk with the satisfaction of the present with little or no plan for the future. At the family, societal, National level and even worldwide, both neophyte and matured development can be forgotten in a twinkle of an eye if the heirs of such development are socially and psychologically derailed. Parental care remains the only refuge for the present development to thrive and a sure haven for securing future bliss. It is obvious that countries where both parents are committed to raising their children properly have made a headway in their achievement of the SDGs. While it is quite indisputable that the beautiful economic situations in these countries are product of advancement in technology, increase in Gross Domestic Products (GDP), and so on, the aspect of families who produce the workforce in achieving these cannot be erased.

It is therefore important for the government, policy makers, parents, teachers and higher institutions of learning to take the following recommendations: Sustainable development in general, requires strong institutions, active governance and intentional state intervention into all spheres of the society including the aspect of family lives, (Nwozor, et al., 2021). There is an urgent need to include sustainable development goals into the school curriculum, this will enable the learners to be fully acquainted with all the tenets of the SDGs including the ways in which they can make meaningful contribution to achieving the goals. Stable parents can be encouraged by giving them some incentives for taking care of their children and for ensuring stability in their homes as it is obvious that stable parents would produce stable children while stable children would make a better society and the much anticipated future.

Parents can be sensitized on the need to intensify efforts on maintaining gender equality among their children as this would help to achieve the sustainable development goal 5. Opening the eyes of the parents and the children to the opportunities around them by which they can diversify their sources of income would be an added means of reducing the level of poverty in the society. Parents and children health scheme can be embarked upon by the government in order to reduce the home expenditure on health issues, thereby reducing the bite of diseases and emergencies at homes. Above all, parental care and attention remain indisputable prerequisite for actualizing the sustainable development goals. It has a direct influence on children's well-beings, education, protection and health. On the other hand, parental care enhances economic development, poverty alleviation, economic and social inclusiveness, gender balance and peaceful co-existence. Parental care can be consolidated by formulating and implementing policies aimed at supporting. Parents such as training for parenting, special holiday for parents, children health services and social security are essential measures for achieving the 2030 development agenda.

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