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By Martha Fanta Mansaray, Josephine E Juanah & John Sao Brima
Eastern Polytechnic Kenema

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Martha Fanta Mansaray [α], Josephine E Juanah [σ] & John Sao Brima [ρ]

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I. Introduction

The study of family and family life has been viewed differently by sociologists with contrasting approaches. Most of the perspectives adopted seem very contrasting to that recent research and changes in the social world. A family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections of which adult members take responsibilities for raring for the young. Family relationships are always recognized within wider kingship groups. It is believed that in all societies is found married couples and their children and close relatives living either in the same household or in a continuous relationship with one another that sociologists call extended family.

All over the globe, societies have a concept about extended family. It's relative importance, structure and functions however, vary according to the particular culture. The important thing is that extended family has been applied to the kingship network of social and economic ties composed of the nuclear family that parents and children.

Kutsoati [2012] states that in the sub Saharan Africa, the idea of a family extends beyond its conjugal members. The linage or extended family is a far larger web of relationships in which all members have a common a ancestor either a male or female.

Historically, lineages are fortifications of emotional and financial support.

Many studies have been carried out to determine the effects of the nature of family on the academic work of children and the studies have shown positive results [Oyerinde 2011]

Globerly it has been proved that the trust and support to extended family ties has been somehow responsible for the underdevelopment of most rural communities in African and Asian communities. This is as a result of the disadvantage of extended family children who do not enjoy the full capacity of family support in terms of care and resources. This is to a greater extent has not given children the opportunities to make use of their potentials to develop themselves or contribution to national development because the required capacity needed to develop their potentials are lacking. Some children from extended families have had no opportunity to go beyond primary education and some dropped out of secondary education. It is clear that development cannot take place by itself It requires educated , skilled and competent people Therefore education becomes the most important factor for development as well as for empowering people. Education provides one with knowledge and information which in turn brings about desirable changes in the way one thinks, feels and acts Education also builds a strong sense of self esteem and self confidence. It contributes effectively to the realization of individual potentials It is then proven that education is a social instrument for developing human resources and for human capital formation. This is been responsible for Sierra Leone been ranked very low on the United Nations Human Development Index. People with literacy and numeracy skills tend to produce more farm crops than others, have limited number of children and enjoy a relatively better quality of life as compared with uneducated

Author α σ: Eastern Polytechnic Kenema.
e-mail: marthafantamansaray@gmail.com
Author ρ: No 21 Yorki Street Kenema.

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families. Educated people earn more and are respected by the society. It's tangible contributions in changing the lives of the people has made education an important part of the development policy in every country.

From the discussion ,Sierra Leone has a projected population of about 7,100.000 by the provisional result of the 2015 National population and Housing Census and with a predominately extended family structure, that has the likelihood to be impacted with disadvantages associated with the family tie system.

In recent years, successes in academic pursuit in the Kailahun District and Segbewema Town in particular by children has gone .down the drain .Family heads have had to take care of their children, nephews, nieces, uncles, aunts and other siblings. The rural earning capacity is very low in the district and therefore makes it very difficult for children to get the kind of attention and resources needed to pursue standard and quality education.

This is a strong reason responsible for the low academic pursuit in the district. Statistics show that the average number of dependants in a household in Kailahun in 2004 Census was five and above and out of this ,most were extended family relations .One of the Millennium Development Goals is to ensure that children everywhere [boys and girls] alike can complete a full course of primary schooling.

Most countries have succeeded in increasing overall enrollment in school at the primary level, although there are challenges to provide secondary education opportunities for all children especially in low income countries where access to education and educational resources are limited. This case is worsened in Sierra Leone by the care, support and commitment to family ties [Trend 2013].

It is clear that education is crucial to every aspect of social and economic development [UNDP,2014]. Education is also very important for influencing social behavior. Education widens people's choices, expands their perceptions and capabilities foe leading a better quality of life. Sufficient and quality food, safe drinking, better health care services ,relevant and quality education for children and youth constitute the core element of one's life. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate and bring out the effects of extended family ties on the academic pursuit of children in Segbewema.

II. Research Objectives

1) Assess the general profile of respondent and prevalence of extended family in Segbewema
2) Examine the causes of the strong extended family ties in Segbewema
3) Determine how extended family ties have impacted academic performance of children.
4) Identify challenges in addressing extended family problems.
5) Suggest ways of dealing with the problems of extended families.

III. Methodology

The study was carried out in Segbewema, Njaluahun Chiefdom of the Kailahun District in the Eastern Region of Sierra Leone. Segbewema is the Administrative Center of the Njaluahun Chiefdom where vegetable gardening is done on an appreciable scale especially by women both in the dry and the rainy seasons. Segbewema is one of the largest towns in the Kailahun District. According to the Kailahun District Cluster Survey [KDC 2013], it had a population of 15,681.Segbewema was the hub of the Eastern Region in the late 1960s and the 70s.

The study adopted a case study to explore the impact of extended family ties on the academic performance of children in Segbewema. The study sample comprised of 60 respondents made up of 30 teachers, 5 traders, 5 commercial motor bike riders, 5 NGO workers and 15 pupils.

The major instruments used collect data for this study were questionnaire, interview and personal observation. Questionnaires were divided into six sections to reflect each objective. The questions were pretested to ascertain the uniformity of items.

The data collected from the questionnaires, interviews and observation were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data was analyzed in tables and percentages and qualitative data was analyzed in narrative form.

IV. Result and Discussion

Table 1 shows the marital status of respondents

The marital status of the adult members of a family is vital for the socio-economic life of the members of that family. The data in table I shows that 45% only of the respondents were married 37.5% were single, 15.8% divorced and 1.7% widowed. These figures have significant implications on an extended family. Women cater in many homes. In a household where there is no woman, the lot fails on the children especially girls. A situation like this affects the schooling of both boys and girls. In the absence of a woman, girls are required to cook.

They are kept busy such that they have little or no time for academic work. Boys too are affected because they may not have food on time since girls would have to cook after school. In most instances, they (children) are made to go to bed soon after meal and therefore may not be able to study. This dampens their academic performance. Besides, children normally have problems (quarrel) when girls cook and dish. They are likely to complain about the equality of shares.

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a) Age of Respondents

Except in some rare cases, age is crucial in determining ones social, economic and political status. The older one becomes the more responsible society expects him to be. Table II shows the age brackets of the respondents reached during the course of this research.

Table I: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Married	43
Single	37.5
Divorced	15.8
Widowed	1.7
Total	100

Source: Data Collected, 2017

Figure I: Shows the Marital Status of the Respondents

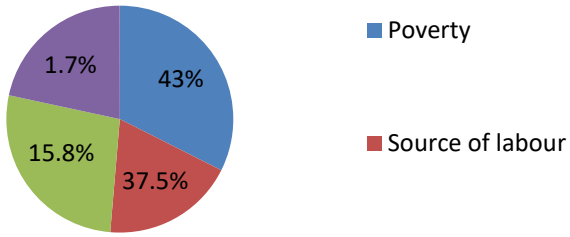


Table II: Age Bracket of Respondents

Age Range	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
0 - 29	20	33
30 - 34	8	13.3
35 - 39	10	17
40 - 44	20	33
45+	2	3.3
Total	**60**	**100**

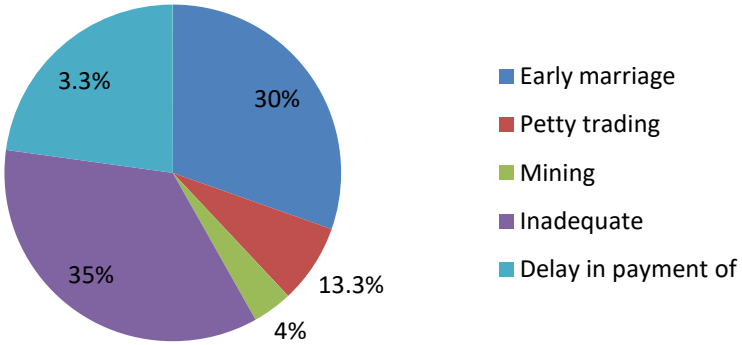
Source: Data Collected, 2017

The table above shows the age bracket of respondents. The bulk of the respondents were fairly advanced in age. In many societies, people are considered to be more responsible as hey advance in age. From the questionnaires administered and the interviews conducted, it was realized that respondents in the higher age brackets had more dependents to cater for than those in the lower ones.

67% of the respondents within the age bracket of 30-45 years and above explained the problems they face with the education of their children and other dependents. In some instances; they faced difficult challenges because of extended family ties. Such problems they said had serious negative impacts on the academic performance of the children in one way or the other.

In one of the questionnaires, an NGO worker had stated that the number of dependents he had made it impossible for him to pay for extra classes for the children. As such, his children and other relatives who were with him barely managed to pass their exams.

Figure II: Shows the Age Barrack of Respondents



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b) Level of Education of Respondents

Education is a tool for human socio-economic and national development. Education influences many if not all aspects of human life.

All things being equal, the type and level of education one acquires to a greater extent determine the type of job they do, their economic and social status in society.

Table III shows the level of education attained by the respondents in the study.

Table III: Level of Education of Respondents

Level of Education Attained	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Primary	12	20
JSS	8	13.3
SSS	14	23.3
Tertiary	23	38.3
No formal education	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Data Collected, 2017

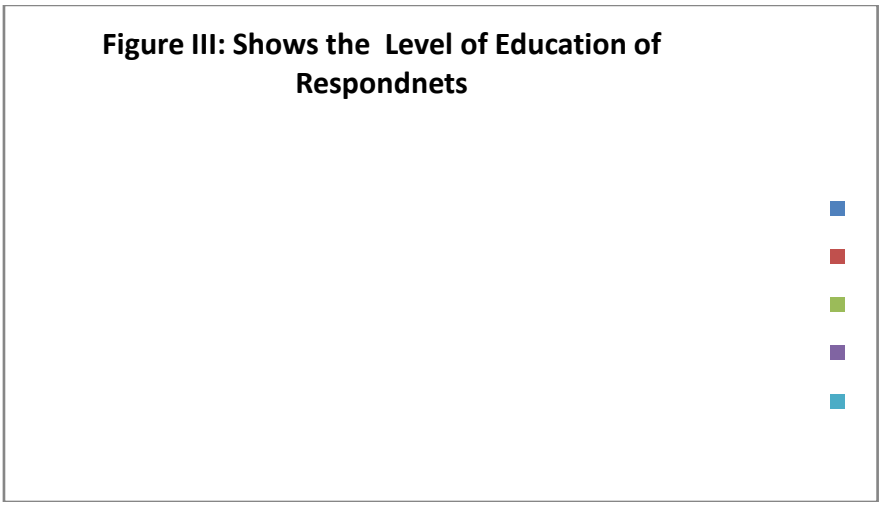
It could be unfortunate for one to imagine that extended family ties only have negative impacts on academic performance of students. In the actual sense, it has both positive and negative influences though such impacts in contemporary societies may be tilted towards the negative end. According to the table above, 38% of the respondents in the study area attained tertiary education.

A good number of the respondents in that cadre gave "cudos" to the extended families for the level of education they attained. Some of the respondents explained how their uncles, aunts and other extended family members had helped in raising their fees, providing them lunch, buying books and other school materials for them when they were in school. Others stated that they stayed with extended family members throughout the course of their schooling. However, other respondents blamed their lack of access to educational opportunities or low level of attainment on the odds of the extended family system.

In an interview with one of the bike riders, the researcher was made to know that he (bike rider) had no option but no to leave school because his father could not afford to pay his Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) fees because he had to pay his (father) nephew's final year university fees.

Among the students drawn in the sample, some grumbled about low grades in school because of inadequate facilities at home-food, study facilities, textbooks arising from the evils of extended family ties.

23% of those who had completed SSS III said that they had had to engage in pupil teaching and not further their education because they had some family responsibilities (some extended) to shoulder. One of them explained that he had no choice, but takes his uncles two children after his demise. The added responsibilities had made it difficult for him to raise the resources needed to pursue further studies.



c) Occupation, Income Level and Average Number of Dependents

The job a person influences his life chances. All things being equal, a person with a better paid job is more likely to do well for self and for relatives. Table 4 shows the jobs, the income range and the average number of dependents per category of respondents of 75% of the respondents reached in this research work.

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Table IV: Occupation, Income Level and Average Number of Dependents:

OCCUPATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	INCOME LEVEL (LE)	AVERAGE NO. OF DEPENDENTS
Motor bike riding	5	1,200,000 – 1,500,000	3
Social work (NGO)	5	3,000,000 – 4,500,000	5
Teaching	30	700,000 – 1,200,000	7
Trading	5	1,000,000 – 2,000,000	4
Total	**45**	-	-

Source: Data Collected, 2017

The table shows that teachers though the least income earning group had the higher average number of dependents among all the category of respondents identified for this research exercise. They had a family size above the average national family size of 5-6 (Final National Population and Housing Census Result, 2015.

This could possibly be one of the reasons why teacher are often described as poor teachers in that the number of mouths they usually feed outweighs their earning capacity. Little wonder therefore why corruption is gradually griping the school system. When a person's income is too small compared to public expectation no matter how odd sometimes there is every tendency to go the extra mile to meet those expectations. Most of the teachers in this research were Teachers Certificate and Higher Teachers Certificate holders.

Very few were graduates though each of them had a minimum of seven dependents at home to cater for including their spouses, children and extended family members. People normally let their children stay with teachers for schooling because they consider them as role models, ignoring their economic status.

The second group of respondents who had the highest number of dependents was NGO workers. The NGO workers are most of the time thought to be "chopping free money" and so relatives would want to stay with them, mainly for the purpose of schooling.

The problem however, could be that considering the nature of their jobs in that NGOs normally sap the energy of their employees, they have little or no attention to pay to their children.

Those who are field staff, spend the bulk of their time in the field while office based staff may have enough to do in the office that they as well take home to complete work left over at the end of the day to get ready for the following day, thereby having limited time with their wards and children.

d) Prevalence of Extended Family Ties in Segbwema

An extended family has to or more adults from different generations of a family, who share a household. It consists of more than parents and children. The extended family may live together for many reasons help raise children, provide for an ill relative, or help with financial problems.

Sometimes children are raised by their grandparents when their biological parents have died or lack the means to take care of them. Many grandparents take some primary responsibility for child care, particularly when both parents work. Extended families can be found all over the world. The number of these families has increased by 40% in the past decades. It is more likely for a nuclear family to become an extended family than any other family type.

The value of mankind is the respect for his culture, which dictates every aspect for their life. Some cultural aspects have been adulterated by westernization; the extended family system is entrenched in many Sierra Leonean cultures and societies; Segbwema being no exception to this. Table IV below shows the prevalence rate of extended families in various sections of Segbwema.

Table V: Prevalence of Extended Family Ties in Segbwema

Section	Prevalence		
	High	Moderate	Low
Kono Town	-	✓	-
Soso Town	✓	-	-
Tiayama	✓	-	-
Pendembu Lowoi	✓	-	-
Largo Squire	-	✓	-
Kabalahun	✓	-	-
Manina	✓	-	-
Yengema	✓	-	-
Nyekehun	✓	-	-
Total	**17**	**2**	**0**

Source: Data Collected, 2017

The table above shows that the prevalence rate of extended family ties is Segbwema, 78% high and 22% moderate. This stands to reason that it is difficult if not impossible to find a home in the communities reached during this research that does not have an extended family member.

In fact, it was revealed during the interviews and focus group discussions that the number of extended family members in some households outweighed the nuclear family members. Such a situation has adverse implication for the academic performance of the household head, their children and the extended family members.

A respondent at Tiayama section who is a student pursuing the Higher Teachers Certificate

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Primary Programme at the eastern Polytechnic through the Distance Education Programme nearly failed his last modular examination because he had little or no time to study since he had to teach extra lessons in the midst of many other activities in order to meet the food and other needs of the home which had some extended family members. Three other respondents who are teachers also confessed that managing an extended family is a burden which affects the quality of their work.

One of them said that he has to go an extra mile to provide for the home leaving little or no time to prepare for the lessons he taught. The other two stated that their homes were crammed and almost always noisy that they and the children had inadequate time to prepare for school. These affected their delivery as teachers and the performance of the pupils they taught.

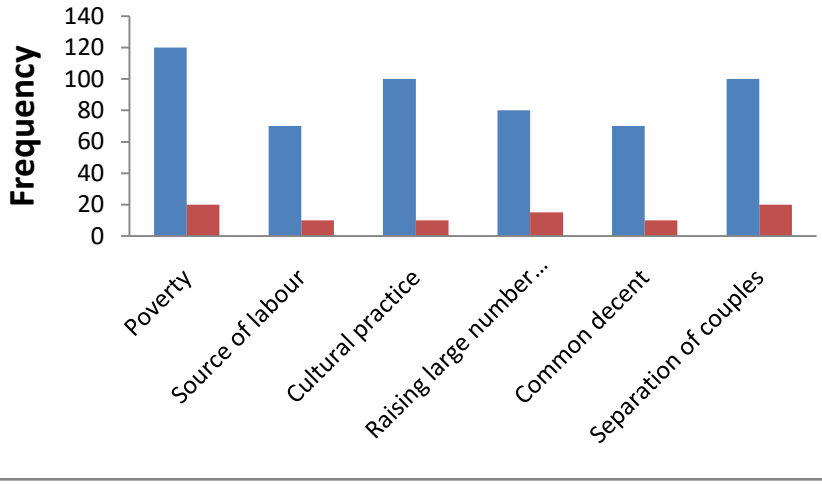
One may not be wrong to partly blame the present poor quality of education in the country on the evils of extended family ties. One can also guess that it is to meet some extended family responsibilities that some trenches and pupils exchange grades for money.

All these practices leave no good thing to be said about education in the country.

a) Causes of Extended Family Ties in Segbwema

Every human action is prompted by a cause. Nothing happens without an ultimate cause. The causes of extended family ties in the study area are identified in figure one below:

Figure IV: Shows the Causes of Extended Family Ties in Segbwema



Source: Data Collected, 2017

Figure 4 shows various reasons for the prevalence of extended families in Segbwema. Some of the causes are interrelated. Prominent among them is poverty. When a poor couple bears children whose needs they cannot adequately cater, for, they are limited to giving them to be reared by relatives whose socio-economic status could be better than theirs hoping that things may be well with the children when they stay with the relatives.

Another causes of extended family ties identified in the figure is separation of couples. This could be due to death or divorce. It is said that "on the divorce battle field, children are the forgotten victims". When a couple divorces, the children are most times prone to suffering because if they stay with one of the parents, he/she may not be able to provide their needs as they would be provided if the two parents were together. A similar case could be possible if one or both parents die (s). In an event of such, the children may be made to stay with extended family members as a way of relieving their suffering.

Another factor that causes extended family ties is cultural practices. In many Sierra Leonean cultures especially among the Mendes, a child is not only owned by his or her biological parents, but by every family member of the parents. As such, every family member would be required to contribute to that child's welfare in one way or the other. However, it could be noted that such a practice is a banking system because the child in question would be equally required to contribute to others welfare when he or she succeeds in life. This is how the extended family system is sustained from generation to generation and is very difficult to break away from.

Anyone who dares to break away from it stand the risk of being blamed for not being caring for other's welfare.

Some people also maintain the extended family system because it is a source of labour. One thing one should not lose sight of is that Sierra Leone is an Agrarian nation where the bulk of the people earn their

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livelihood by engaging in one or more agricultural practices.

Since the technology of the country is yet at the indigenous stage, the agricultural practices are labour intensive. The size of the farm cultivated depends on the labour available. Since many families live under the grinding stress of poverty, they cannot afford to hire labour. Rather, they depend on family labour. It is not therefore strange for people to accommodate extended family members for the sole purpose of their labour. Mention was made by respondents that even adult extended family members are accommodated to take care of children and to render other services. The adult extended family members once accepted may bring along one or two other dependents (sometimes grand-children); thereby increasing the burden of these who accommodate them.

It is said that "what is meant for one is starvation for two". When those host extended family members are seen to be chewing more than they can swallow, it affects what they may be expected to do for their dependents including providing food for the home, paying fees and other school charges, buying books, pens and a host of other things. These are bound to have negative impacts on students' performance in school. They may be asked out of class for late payment of fees, other charges and the like.

b) Impact of Extended Family Ties on the Academic Performance of Students In Segwema

Extended family ties have tremendous impact on the academic performance of students in the study area which are specified in the bar chart below:

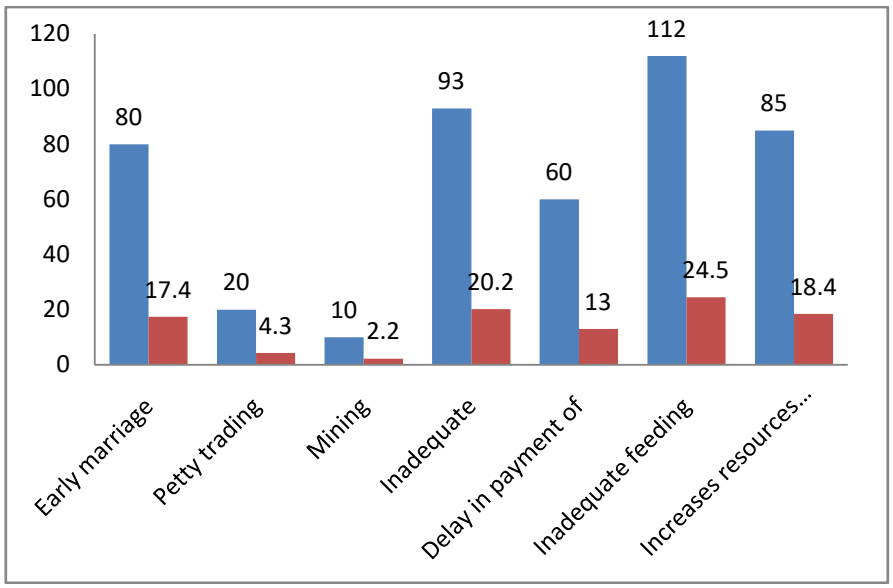

Figure V, shows the various impacts of extended families on the academic performance of children in Segbwema. The chief effect according to the bar chart is inadequate feeding. Food is required for life sustenance. Where its availability is threatened, shock waves can be sent to many other related areas.

Children and even adults cannot help going to school on empty stomach. Their intellectual performance may dwindle.

No matter how well/loud a teacher talks if the learner is hungry, learning is impeded. Another impact of extended family ties on the academic performance of children is inadequate accommodation.

Extended family ties sometimes lead to overcrowding. People who are overcrowded do not normally sleep well. In an interview conducted, a student explained how they rushed to go to bed early to have a place to lay their heads.

According to the students, six of them in an extended family at some point in time shared one small room with a "4 x 6" bed. They slept on the bed on first come, first served basis. They were compelled to go to bed when they were to be to be studying or doing assignment. They had one table and two chairs and so they also studied in turns. They were underfed, hadn't enough sleep and hadn't adequate time to study and do assignments 18% of the respondents highlighted early marriage, mining and street/petty trading as impacts of extended family ties.

These impacts are significant as they constitute elements of child trafficking, child labour and child abuse. In some extended family homes, non-biological children are reduced to domestic servants who do many odd jobs including but not limited to laundering, scrubbing, washing utensils, sweeping and so on. Such children are usually the first to get up and the last to go to bed. They are barely fed to keep them alive for their labour. Some work in the mines and or sell in the streets. Girls may engage in commercial sex working for basic sustenance.

Horrible stories hovering around such experiences were told during the interviews. A female

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respondents narrated how a JSS I girl became pregnant because she was not properly cared for in an extended family home. The girl lived with her aunt and her husband. According to the woman, the husband sometimes harassed the girl for se when she (the aunt) was away. The girl initially accepted, but after one or two encounters, she refused to give in to the uncle's demand. Facilities were withheld and she began going out with other men. She later because pregnant within the course and had no alternative but to drop out from school. Also, a trader who was one of the interviewees explained that the son of her first cousin who stayed with her and attended school was knocked down by a motor bike while helping to sell his wares.

The boy had one of his legs broken. The rider was not found because he fled for fear of being apprehended. According to the woman the incident happened two days to the commencement of the end of year examinations.

The boy did not show up for any of the exams as he was in severe pain and therefore had to repeat the year. It is however, worth mentioning that nothing is ever bad in its entirely.

Though a good number of the responses highlight the negative impacts of extended family ties on academic performance, 18% show its positive impact of increased resources for schooling. Some of the respondents of the questionnaires categorically stated that but for the support provided by their uncles, aunts and other extended family members they would not have had any appreciable level of education.

V. Conclusion

Every society has entrenched cultural practices by which it is identified. Being a nation overturn with poverty, the survival of individuals to a greater extent hinges on a strong network among families. The extended family system therefore is one that is difficult to break away from. Regardless of its negatives impacts on the academic performance of students, it has something good to inherent it, that somehow facilitates academic advancement.

When poor families bear more children, it becomes inevitable for them to allow some of the children to be brought up in other homes.

VI. Recommendations

Government of Sierra Leone should maintain programs like the Girl Child Education (GCE), and continue to help to pay part of the school.

- Fees for girls which can also help to reduce poverty which is one reason why parents allow their children to live with their relatives.
- NGOs that are working with women based programes should embark on awareness raising activities for families to sensitize them on the implications of bearing many children.
- The Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police should help to make parents understand that they should take the responsibilities of their children. Parents should help caregivers with some of the needs of their children in extended homes rather than leave everything to them. This can reduce the burden of the caregivers and can then do more for their dependents which can go a long way to boost their academic performance
- One should cut his or her coat according to his/her size. In that vein, caregivers in extended families should consider their potential to adequately provide the needs of their dependents before going ahead to accommodate them. Many people encourage large extended families in the name of sympathy and love for relatives. These thoughts should not override the ability to provide the needs of the individuals.
- The extended family system was characteristics of rural communities. The tide however seems to be changing. This is so because of the mass drift of rural populace into urban centers mainly in pursuit of educational facilities.

The government and its development partners should therefore do more in their power to improve conditions in rural areas especially in the education sector to cut down on the number of rural people who move to urban centers. This can be done by improving on the road network in rural areas, improving health facilities in the communities putting up more classroom blocks and furnishing them, recruiting and sending trained and qualified teachers to rural areas and giving them the encouragement to stay in rural areas. Such encouragement can be in the form of payment of remote area allowances, putting up staff quarters for teachers in rural schools, giving them micro-credit facilities, granting them study leave with pay to improve their training awarding their children scholarships to pursue studies and the like.

- Government should do more to improve on teachers' conditions of service to reduce the embarrassment and shame they face from high public expectations and ridicule.
- Parents who let their children stay in foster homes should not give their back. They should be in contact to monitor and help the foster parents in managing the affairs of their children.
- Teachers, NGO workers and other people who accept the children of relatives to stay with them for schooling must consider their income status and let the parents be made aware of such so that they do not just throw away their children and forget about them.

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- Every parent must be ready to work hard to be able to take care of their children's responsibilities other than just leaving it to others who may equally have their own responsibilities.
- Government and its donor partners should put in place all the mechanisms to achieve the agenda for prosperity and reduce the grinding stress of poverty that rocks the country.

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