

Prevalent Types of Child Neglect among Working Mothers in Abeokuta, Ogun State

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Abstract

This study focused on the association between socio-economic factors and child neglect among working mothers in Abeokuta, Ogun state. A sample of 120 working mothers were purposively selected. Questionnaires was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using percentages and Chi square at 0.05 alpha level. Findings indicate that there was significant association between the social and economic status of working women and child neglect; for education (X^2 cal. was 52.381 > than X^2 tab 32.71, $P < 0.05$). However, there was no significant association between occupation and child neglect (X^2 cal. was 10.284 < X^2 tab 23.685). Medical neglect was found to be the most prevalent type of child neglect, closely followed by emotional neglect, with physical neglect being the least. Divorce and separation was found to be the most serious cause of child neglect. Also, socio-economic status of working women predicts neglect of children but occupation (type) did not have a significant association with child neglect. Governments were called upon to make medical facility more readily available so as to discourage homemade remedies that are easily embarked upon by parents and guardians. Also, there should be an enforcement of child rights law by the governments while working mothers were implored to strike a balance between social and economic status and care of their children.

Keywords: Child, Neglect, Rights, Education, Family.

Introduction

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child defines a "child" as a human being below the age of 18 years. It recognizes the child's unique and privileged place in African society and that African children need protection and special care. It also acknowledges that children are

entitled to the enjoyment of freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, thought, religion, and conscience. It aims to protect the private life of the child and safeguard the child against all forms of economic exploitation and against work that is hazardous, interferes with the child's education, or compromises his or her

health or physical, social, mental, spiritual, and moral development. It calls for protection against abuse and bad treatment, negative social and cultural practices, all forms of exploitation or sexual abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation, and illegal drug use. It aims to prevent the sale and trafficking of children, kidnapping, and begging of children. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (also called the ACRWC or Children's Charter) was adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1990 (in 2001, the OAU legally became the African Union) and was entered into force in 1999. Like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Children's Charter is a comprehensive instrument that sets out rights and defines universal principles and norms for the status of children. The ACRWC and the CRC are the only international and regional human rights treaties that cover the whole spectrum of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The Children's Charter originated because the member states of the AU believed that the CRC missed important socio-cultural and economic realities particular to Africa. It emphasizes the need to include African cultural values and experiences when dealing with the rights of the child in such as: Challenging traditional African views which often conflict with children's rights such as child marriage, parental rights and obligations towards their children, and children born out of

wedlock; Expressly saying that the Children's Charter is higher than any custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice that doesn't fit with the rights, duties and obligations in the Charter; The Children's Charter has a clearer definition of the child as a person aged under 18 years old; amongst others. In 2003, Nigeria adopted the Child Rights Act to domesticate the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although this law was passed at the Federal level, it is only effective if State Assemblies also enact it. To date, only 16 of the country's 36 States have passed the Act. Intense advocacy continues for the other 20 States to pass it. This explains that this landmark legislative achievement has not yet translated into improved legal protection throughout the Federation. Nigeria has been unable to deal with several issues hindering the protection of rights of children such as children living on the streets, children affected by communal conflict, drug abuse, human trafficking and the weaknesses of the juvenile justice system amongst others. The basic Principles of Children's Rights includes: Every child has the right to life and be allowed to survive and develop; Every child is entitled to name, family and nationality; Every child is free to belong to association or assembly according to law; Every child has the right to express opinions and freely communicate them on any issue subject to restrictions under the law; Every child is entitled to protection from any act that interferes with his or her privacy, honour and reputation;

Every child is entitled to adequate rest; recreation, leisure and play according to his or her age and culture; Every child (male or female) is entitled to receive compulsory basic education depending on individual ability; Every child is entitled to good health, protection from illness and proper medical attention for survival, personal growth and development; No child should suffer any discrimination irrespective of origin, birth, colour, sex, language, religion, political and social beliefs, status or disability; Every child must be protected from indecent and inhuman treatment through sexual exploitation, drug abuse, child labour, torture, maltreatment and neglect. Children are the leaders of tomorrow, their wellbeing is a matter of concern to any nation. Nigeria as a country is not yet able to properly deal with issues of neglect in terms of physical need for food, need for education, need for medical health and sustainability of its children in the face of many challenges, this also explains why issues like Child neglect is yet to be eradicated.

Child neglect is where the responsible adult does not provide adequately for the various needs of the child, the common ones includes physical (not providing adequate food, clothing or hygiene), emotional (not providing nurture or affection), educational (not enrolling a child in school), or medical (not medicating the child or taking him or her to the doctor). Neglect could also take the form of financial abuse by not buying

the child adequate materials for survival (American Humane Association, 2011). Other forms of child neglect includes allowing the child to witness violence or severe abuse between parents or adult, ignoring, insulting, or threatening the child with violence, not providing the child with a safe environment and adult emotional support, and showing reckless disregard for the child's well-being (Daniel, 2005). Child neglect also refers to the failure of a person responsible for a child's care and upbringing to safeguard the child's emotional and physical health and general well-being" It is acts of commission; harm to a child may or may not be the intended consequence. Thus the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs resulting in serious impairment of health and/or development is referred to as child neglect (Turney and Tanner, 2005).

There are various types of child neglect. These include: Physical neglect which refers to the failure to provide a child with basic necessities of life such as food and clothing; Medical neglect which is when caregivers do not meet children's basic health care needs; Emotional neglect which is failing to provide emotional support such as emotional security and encouragement; Educational/developmental neglect is the failure to provide a child with experiences for necessary growth and development, such as not sending a child to school or giving him or her an education (Barnett, 2011).

Depending on the laws and child protective policies in an area, leaving a young child unsupervised may be considered neglect, especially if doing so places the child in danger. Although the causes of neglect are varied, studies suggest that, among other things, parental mental health problems, substance use, domestic violence, unemployment and poverty are factors which increase the likelihood of neglect. Children that result from unintended pregnancies are more likely to suffer from abuse and neglect, they are also more likely to live in poverty (Monea, 2011). The discussion around neglectful parent's characteristics often focuses on mothers, reflecting traditional notions of women as primary caregivers for children (Turney & Tanner, 2005) "Neglectful attributes" have included an inability to plan, lack of confidence about the future, difficulty with managing money, emotional immaturity, lack of knowledge of children's needs, a large number of children, being a teenage mother, high levels of stress and poor socioeconomic circumstances.

In terms of who is reported for neglectful behavior, it is most often women. The higher proportion of females reported for neglect may reflect the social attitude that mothers are responsible for meeting the needs of their children. Relatively young, poor women with no partner kill their offspring non-violently, either directly or through abandonment, and they attempt to conceal the body (Camperio & Fontanesi, 2012).

In recent years, latent issues for child development and for the culture and political economy that are associated with paternal neglect have received more attention, however. Neglecting parents interact less with their children, engage in less verbal instruction and play behavior, show less affection and are involved in more negative interactions with their children, for example verbal aggression. Often, parents who neglect their children are single parents or disabled mothers who already have to care for themselves, and therefore the child is an additional stress. This additional stress is often neglected. US studies have shown that less affluent families are more likely to be found to maltreat their children, particularly in the form of neglect and physical abuse, than affluent families (Hester, Pearson, Harwin, Abrahams, 2006). Some argue that many forms of physical neglect, such as inadequate clothing, exposure to environmental hazards and poor hygiene may be directly attributed to poverty, whereas others are more cautious in making a direct link. While poverty is believed to increase the likelihood of neglect, poverty does not predetermine neglect.

In one study done in 2011, results showed that one in four mothers were neglectful, and neglect was four times as likely with a maternal history of physical abuse in childhood than with no history of maltreatment (Brooks, 2011). There are some other factors like single parents, disabled mothers, family size and family history that

could determine child neglect but for the sake of precision, illiteracy. Government policy, divorce/separation, culture and poverty would be the focus of this study. Also, this study would critically consider physical, emotional, educational and health/medical type of neglect.

Nigeria as a signatory to child rights law, still have to battle with cases where parents especially mothers finds it difficult to sit down at home doing only household chores, but women needs to support their husbands financially to make ends meets, this has led to the neglect of their primary duties at home, especially care of the children. This study therefore purports to find out the most prevalent type of neglect among working mothers and causes of child neglect using Abeokuta metropolis as a case study.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to investigate issues relating to child neglect among working mothers in Ogun State. Specifically the study:

1. Identified the most prevalent types of child neglect in the study area.
2. Determined the causes of child neglect by mothers in the study area.

Hypotheses of the Study

H0₁ Child neglect is not significantly influenced by economic status of working women

H0₂ Child neglect is not significantly influenced by social status of working mothers

Methodology

Area of the Study: The area of study was Abeokuta. Abeokuta metropolis is characterized by hosts of commercial, manufacturing, merchandising and industrial activities. It is the capital city of Ogun State and has an urbanized economy. The design adopted for this study was Survey, the descriptive type.

Population for the study: Working mothers who participated in this study includes Artisan and traders (64%), Civil servants and white collar job mothers were (36%). Their age range was between 20-50yrs, this implies the respondents are of youthful age. A total of 160 households with working mothers of childbearing age with at least a child of age 0 to 18 years who were available at the period of the study as occupants during the time of study were used for the study. The study was conducted on weekends in order to meet as many working mothers as possible at home. The number of Bungalows in the study area was estimated to 50 while storey buildings were estimated to 60.

Sample for the study: The sampling technique made use of in this study was multi-stage random sampling technique, this was because, Ogun state was purposively selected for the sake of convenience, then Abeokuta township was selected, the whole township cannot be studied for precision sake, therefore Abeokuta

North and Abeokuta South Local government area were selected at random. The households in Abeokuta North and Abeokuta South Local Government Areas of the State constituted the sampling frame. A total of 80 households were selected from each of the Local Government Areas. The targeted households are the households that have working mothers of child bearing age with young children of age 0 to 18years. A household with at least a mother and a child was located and given structured questionnaires (the literates) while the same questionnaires was used as interview for the illiterates in the locality that met the 'at least a mother and a child' criteria. This was done continuously until the required eighty (80) respondents were interviewed from each of the Local Government Areas out of which one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were properly filled.

Instrument for data collection: Questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. The questionnaire has three sections A - C; Section A solicited for demographic information, Section B on social status, while Section C solicited for information on indicators of child neglect physically, emotionally,

education wise and health wise. Its validity and reliability was ascertained.

Data collection and analysis methods: The primary data was collected through the administration of structured questionnaires on the literates, while the same question was used as interview for the illiterates. One hundred and sixty copies of questionnaire (160) were administered on both literates and the illiterate working mothers in Abeokuta metropolis of Ogun State. Only 120 copies of questionnaire were properly filled and returned. Parents that have Children are the ones who could choose to neglect or not to neglect their child or children, hence the reason for a mother with at least a child.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution tables, percentages, measures of central tendency were employed in analyzing the data for this study. Chi-square test was used in testing the hypotheses of the study.

Findings of the study:

Most Prevalent types of Child Neglect in the study area:

Table I: Percentage Responses on the Most Prevalent Types of Child Neglect in Ogun State

S/No	Types of Neglect	Variables	Percentage (%)	Freq.
1.	Physical neglect	No adequate feeding	10.4	10
		Family living in one room apartment	7.1	
2.	Emotional neglect	Speaks harsh words to the child	15.4	

		Mother not always there to give moral support	10.4	20
3.	Educational neglect	Child not in school at all	15.0	
		Child as dropouts of school	10.0	20
4.	Health neglect	Always treat the child at home when he or she is sick	20.1	
		Child does not go for medical check up	39.1	50

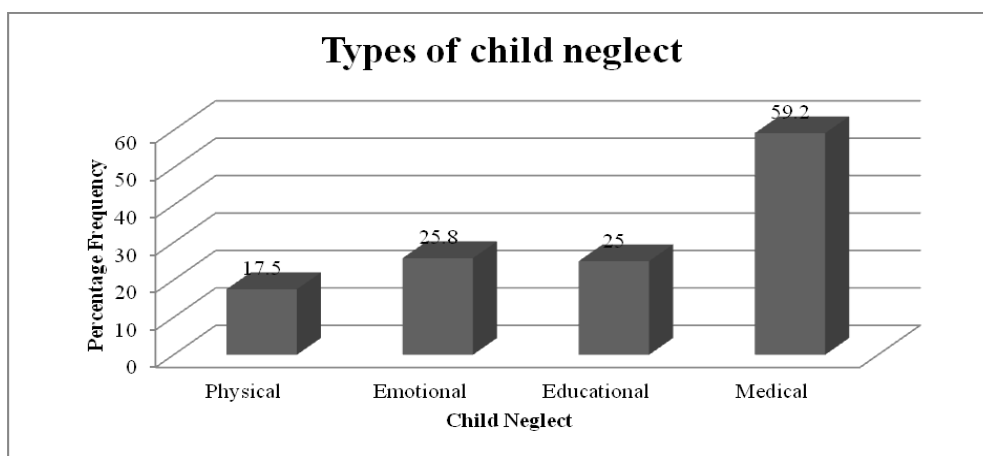


Figure 1: Prevalence of Child Neglect in the study area

Figure 1, shows medical neglect (59.2%) is the most prevalent followed by emotional neglect (25.8%) in the study area while the least prevalent type of child neglect in the study area is physical neglect (17.5%). The high prevalence of medical child neglect in the study might be as a result of declining primary health care services in the study area.

Causes of child neglect by mothers in the study area.

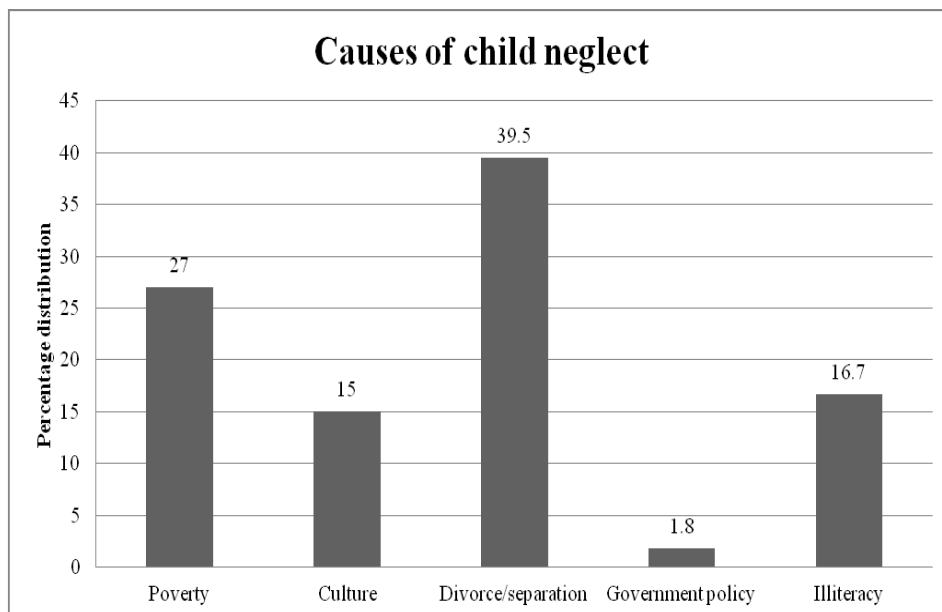


Figure 2: Causes of Child Neglect

Figure 2 presents the causes of child neglect in the study area. The results revealed that the highest cause of child neglect in the study area is divorce/separation (39.5%) of couples while the least cause of child neglect was government policy (1.8%). Other causes of child neglect that ranked next to divorce is poverty (27.0%), this findings reveals that although most of

the respondents (106) were married with children, it is likely that majority of them are living separately or divorced and this is eating up on their financial status which would have been supported or boosted by the other spouse.

H₀₁:

Table 2: Chi-square Analysis of relationship between economic status of working women and child neglect

S/N	Economic status	Df	χ^2_{tab} (0.05)	χ^2_{cal} (0.05)	Decision
1	Occupation	14	23.685	10.284	Accept H ₀
2	Education	21	32.71	52.381	Reject H ₀
3	Household size	28	41.337	57.644	Reject H ₀
4	Income	35	43.77	71.544	Reject H ₀

Decision Rule: Reject H₀ if $\chi^2_{cal} > \chi^2_{tab}$,
Otherwise: Accept H₀, $\chi^2_{cal} =$ Chi-square value calculated or computed.

χ^2_{tab} = Chi-square value tabulated and
H₀ = Null hypotheses

Table 2 presents the Chi-square analysis of the relationship between economic status of respondents and the probability of neglecting a child. Chi-square scores calculated for education ($\chi^2 = 52.381$, $p < 0.05$), household size ($\chi^2 = 57.644$, $p < 0.05$), and income ($\chi^2 = 71.544$, $p < 0.05$), are more than their respective tabulated Chi-square scores, therefore their null hypotheses are rejected. The results revealed that there is significant relationship between economic factors

(education, household size, income) and the probability of neglecting a child. However, no significant relationship exist between occupation ($\chi^2 = 10.284$, $p < 0.05$), and the probability of neglecting a child because the Chi-square calculated score is less than the tabulated score. In this case, we accept the null hypothesis (H_0).

H_{02} :

Table 3: Chi-square analysis of relationship between social status and the probability of neglecting a child

S/N	Social Status	Df	χ^2_{tab} (0.05)	χ^2_{cal} (0.05)	Decision
1	Age	28	41.337	45.888	Reject H_0
2	Marital status	21	32.71	197.138	Reject H_0

Table 3 shows that the Chi-square scores calculated for Age ($\chi^2 = 45.888$, $p < 0.05$) and marital status ($\chi^2 = 197.138$, $p < 0.05$), are more than their respective tabulated Chi-square scores (χ^2_{tab}), therefore their null hypotheses are rejected. In other words, the results revealed that there are significant relationships between social status of the respondents such as age, marital status and the probability of child neglect.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 revealed medical neglect as the most prevalent type of neglect while the least prevalent type of child neglect in the study area was physical neglect. Medical neglect is a condition where caregivers do not meet Children's basic health care needs this

was as identified by American Humane Association (2011) as one of the common types of child neglect. Children has as part of their rights, the right to sound medical attention to protect them from illness and disease, this is yet to be ascertained according to the findings of this study.

Figure 2 presents divorce/separation as the highest cause of child neglect in the area, this was closely followed by poverty while government policy was ranked the least cause of child neglect in the area. This indicates that divorce/separation is the major cause of distraction for working mothers in Abeokuta metropolis in neglecting their children. This finding agrees with Monea (2011) who discovered that domestic violence which leads to divorce and separation

is one of the common cause of child neglect.

Table 2 presents the Chi Square analysis between economic factors and child neglect and it reveals there was significant relationship between economic factors and the probability of neglecting a child. This implies education, household size and income could predict child neglect while the result also implied occupation could not predict child neglect. This finding agrees with Turney and Tarnner (2005) that discovered poor social circumstances as one of the attributes of neglect.

Table 3 also shows Chi Square relationship between social factors and child neglect and it reveals there was significant difference between social status of working mothers such as age and marital status and the probability of neglecting a child. This finding agrees with Turney and Tanner (2005) who discovered poor socioeconomic circumstances as one of the attributes of child neglect. It implies working women multiple roles or function could be a predisposing factor to working mothers' neglect of their children.

Conclusions

Women are traditionally regarded as child care providers whose activities were generally limited to the home. With great changes in the economy and family patterns over several decades ago, there is an increase in the number of women working to support their husbands so as to make ends meet. With the many challenges

mothers have to face at home and work place, working mothers' attention becomes divided which results in having to neglect their primary functions at home especially, care of the children. There is a paramount need for working mothers to ensure they strike a balance between their duties at home and all activities that tends towards financial support to their husband, this is because there was a significant relationship between the socioeconomic factors and child neglect of working mothers in Abeokuta metropolis.

Recommendations

1. Government needs to revisit the provision of sound Primary Health Care services, this would help to ensure that medical facilities is accessible to many homes, also there can be provision of mobile health care services, this would ensure medical facilities is being brought to doorsteps of various homes.
2. Counselling Psychologists should come to the aid of families especially in this study areas and to the aid of Nigerian communities as a whole to ensure there is cordiality between couples, assist couples to resolve their differences amicably instead of seeing divorce/separation as the only way out of their family problems. Nigerian governments should also see the need to ensure stability of Nigerian economy because this is

having negative effects on family affairs.

3. Parents also needs to be dedicated in ensuring their marriage works. Parents especially the mothers needs to ensure they cut down on their social and economic roles so that they could have the chance to perform their primary as well as Celestial roles. Children are the leaders of tomorrow, they need the attention of their parents and communities and their beloved country now, when they can be reshaped.

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