

After - School care arrangements of School-age Children of female Bank workers in Uyo metropolis of Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

This study investigated after-school care arrangements of school-age children (3-13years) of female bank workers in Uyo metropolis of Akwa Ibom State. Two objectives guided the study. The population comprised 500 female bank workers in the 48 commercial Banks in Uyo metropolis. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 50 respondents. Instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. Data were analysed using percentages and means. Findings revealed care arrangements including among others, homecare by house help (6%); homecare by grandmother (8%); homecare by adult relative (18%); alone at home without adult care (42%). Also 88% of the children remained in these care arrangements for 2-4 hour. It is recommendation *inter alia* that the state government should establish free structured after-school care programmes to provide alternative after-school care for children of employed mothers especially in dual-income families.

Key Words: Female, Bankers, After - school, Care, Children, Behaviours

Introduction

Family life is changing, and one of the areas of change which makes care giving responsibilities very challenging is the increase in dual income families. Many women take up paid employment, others engage in various income generating activities to improve the economic conditions of their families, thus affecting their care giving responsibilities traditionally ascribed to women. The U.S Bureau of Census in 1999 revealed that over 70 percent of those with school age children are employed (Berk, 2001). School-age children are children between the ages of 6-12 in elementary school which coincides with the middle childhood period (Feldman, 2000); pre-school children

(3-6years) in nursery schools also belong to this group.

Researchers observe that although women have become integrated into the labour market, they still remain the main caregivers, and division of housework between husbands and wives remain disproportionate with the wife doing a greater part of the work even when the husband is unemployed, thus making them experience a double workload (Lutz, 2002; Finch, 2003). As a result of economic involvement, women can no longer provide full time care hence the need for help or alternative care arrangements for their children.

Outside the usual maternity leave period, some female workers continue to work into late hours and sometimes

including weekends, and the impact appears to be even more when mothers work long hours such as in the banks and oil companies. It has been revealed that when employment places heavy demands on the mother's schedule, children are at risk of ineffective parenting (Berk, 2001). According to Parke and Buriel (1998), the impact of a mother's work depends on many factors, such as the child's age, sex, temperament and personality, whether mother works full time or part time; why she is working; and how she feels about her work; whether she has a supportive mate, or none; the family socio economic status; and the kind of care the child receives before and/or after school.

Parents especially mothers are more likely to be in work and be more productive and happy if they are confident that their children are being looked after properly (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2011). Berk (2001) confirms that high quality childcare is vital for parents' peace of mind and children's wellbeing, even during middle childhood. Unfortunately, many female workers have no adequate care arrangements made for their children in their absence as a result of certain prevailing familial and social changes in the state, coupled with the scares and most often unaffordable day care services.

Hitherto, women relied on house helps for assistance in childcare and household work while pursuing economic gains, but in recent times, their services are very hard to obtain as a result of the present government's free and compulsory education. In traditional African society, where extended family and intergenerational support system was encouraged, grand mothers played a significant role in the care of their grand

children, but modernisation is fast eroding this practice. Wehner and Abrahamson (2003) observe that the most common form of care by households is informal care and in the majority of cases, by grand mothers. Papalia, Olds, and Feldman (2004) asserted that some children of employed mothers are supervised after school by their fathers, grandparents, other relatives or baby sitters, while some go to structured programmes.

In some dual-income families, children look after themselves while parents are at work after school hours. Due in part to the high cost of child care, working mothers may be unable to afford sufficient child care for their children (Aizer, 2004). Berk (2001) observes that in the United States, 2.4 million children 5 to 13 year olds regularly look after themselves after school hours. Santrock (2006) asserts that this subset of children do not typically see their parents from the time they leave in the morning until 6 or 7pm. He explained that these children are sometimes called Latchkey children because they are given the key to their homes to school and then use it to let themselves into their home while their parents are still at work; that these children are largely unsupervised for two to four hours a day during each school week, and may be unsupervised for entire five days a week during summer months. The U.S. Census data indicate that self care arrangement has become more common for American families in recent decades (Johnson, 2005; Mahoney, Parente, and Zigler 2009).

Self-care can be a positive and rewarding experience for children who are prepared and ready for it, as it can help them develop independence, learn responsibility, and develop confidence in their own abilities; but if a child is not

mature enough, self-care can be an anxiety-producing and dangerous situation (Ferrer and Fugate, 2013). Family and neighbourhood characteristics are also related to whether self care is problematic for children (Shumow, 2004).

In advanced countries, formal after-school care programmes are available, where children can participate and are cared for till parents close from work, but these are not available in Akwa Ibom state. When mothers lack adequate alternative care arrangements in their long absence, the children suffer various consequences. Moorehouse (1991 as cited in Berk, 2001) reveals that working long hours and spending little time with school - age children are associated with less favourable adjustment. Research suggests that in middle class families, sons of working mothers tend to do less well in school than sons of homemakers, whereas daughters do as well or better when mothers work and this may have to do with boys' greater need for supervision and guidance (Goldberg *et al*, 1996 as cited in Papalia *et al.*, 2004).

Several studies reveal that children in informal care spend more time watching television or just hanging out, and some studies report that self care children suffer from low self esteem, anti-social behaviour, poor academic achievement and fearfulness (Padila and Landreth, 1989 as cited in Berk, 2001). Santrock (2005) confirms that many children spend more time in front of the television set than they do with their parents, and that many 9 year olds in the U.S watch television more than five hours a day.

Also Santrock (2006) observe that without limits and parental supervision, self-care children find their way into trouble more easily; possibly stealing,

vandalizing or abusing a sibling; and 90% of the juvenile delinquents are Latchkey children. Moreover children who start self-care in the early elementary years are vulnerable to older self-care children in their neighbourhoods who may hurt or even sexually abuse them; they are more poorly adjusted in terms of peer relationships and school performance; and tend to be less socially skilled and to have behavioural problems (Bee and Boyd, 2007). However, many parents' particularly single mothers enlist the services of neighbours and other relatives to keep an eye on their self-care children (Brandon and Hoffreth, 2003), while others at times monitor their children through phones. The study therefore became necessary to investigate after- school child care arrangements by female bank workers, in view of the long hours involved in bank jobs, and the present government's free and compulsory education, which has caused a near total lack of house helps.

Purpose of the study

The main objective of the study therefore was to investigate the after- school care arrangements for school-age children (3-13years), of female bank workers in Uyo, metropolis of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically this study;

- identified who takes care of school-age children of female bank workers after school hours in Uyo, metropolis of Akwa Ibom State;
- determined length of time the children remain in such care arrangements before they are picked up by their parents;
- determined how satisfied female bank workers are with the care arrangements, and the quality of care

- given to their children after school hours;
- determined the consequences suffered by children of female bank workers due to long parental absence after school hours.

Methodology

Research Design: The survey research design was adopted for the study.

Study Area: The study area was Uyo metropolis. Uyo metropolis is the capital city of Akwa Ibom state, one of the 36 states in Nigeria, with a population of 3.9million people, and a major oil producing state (Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria Information Guide). Majority of the banks are located in Uyo the state capital hence the choice of Uyo for the study.

Population for the Study: The population for the study comprised about 500 female bank workers in all the 48 commercial banks that operated in Uyo metropolis as at the time of the study.

Sample for the study: The sample size was fifty (50). Multi-stage sampling method was used for selecting the sample. Firstly, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 out of the 48 commercial banks. Thereafter, 5 female respondents with children of varying ages were purposively selected from each of the 10 commercial banks to give a total of fifty (50) representing 10% of the population.

Instrument for Data Collection: A structured questionnaire tagged 'After -

School care arrangements of School-age Children questionnaire' (ASCASCQ) containing 3 sections and 16 items was developed and used for the data collection. Sections A and B consisted of multiple choice questions, while section C consisted of 4points scale questions with Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was subjected to face validation by experts in the field. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha procedure, and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained, which was high enough to guarantee the instrument fit for use in the study.

Data Collection Technique: Fifty copies of the questionnaire were purposively distributed to the fifty (50) respondents by hand in their offices. Only those who agreed to participate in the study were required to complete the questionnaire. The copies questionnaire were completed and returned on the spot with 100% retrieval rate.

Data Analysis Technique: Data collected were analysed using percentages and Mean scores. A Mean score of 2.00 and above was accepted, while a mean score of below 2.0 was rejected and considered as unacceptable response by the respondents.

Findings of the Study: The following findings were made:

(a) After- school care arrangements

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Responses on after school care arrangements for school-age children of female bank workers in Uyo

S/N	Care Arrangements	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Children stay with the house help	3	6
2.	Children stay with the grandmother in our home	4	8
3.	Children stay alone in the house	21	42

4.	Children are usually dropped at the home of grand parents or other relatives till parents close from work	2	4
5.	Children are left in the house with a grown up relative	9	18
6.	Children are left in the school till father closes from work or father picks the children to his office until his closing time	11	22
7.	Children are cared for in a structured after-school programme in a childcare setting	-	-
	Total	50	100

Table 1 shows the various care arrangements for school age children put in place by female bank workers in the study area. The distribution shows that 6% of the children stay with house helps, 8% stay in their respective homes with their grandmothers, 42% of the school-age children stay alone at home after school without adult supervision, 4% of the children are usually dropped at the home of grand parents or other relatives till

parents close from work, 18% of the children are usually left in the house with grown up relatives, 22% of the children are left in the school till their fathers close from work or they are picked by their fathers to their offices until closing time, while none of the children was cared for in a structured after-school programme in a childcare setting.

(b) Length of time children remain in care arrangement

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Responses on length of time the children remain in the care arrangements before either parent picks them

S/N	Length of time	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	One hour	6	12
2.	Two hours	9	18
3.	Three hours	22	44
4.	Four hours	13	26
5.	Five hours	-	-
	Total	50	100

Table 2 shows that 12% of the children stay in the different care arrangements for one hour before parents return home, 18% stay for two hours, 44% stay for three hours, while 26% of the school-age children stay

for four hours before either parent returns home or picks them up.

(c) Level of satisfaction on the care arrangements and the quality of care given to children

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Responses on their level of satisfaction on the care arrangements and the quality of care given to their children.

S/N	Levels of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Very Satisfied	2	4
2.	Satisfied	9	18
3.	Not Satisfied	27	54
4.	Very dissatisfied	12	24
	Total	50	100

Table 3 shows that only 4% of female bank workers were very satisfied with their care arrangements and the quality of care offered to their children after school hours, 18% were satisfied, 54% were dissatisfied,

while 24% reported that they were very dissatisfied with their care arrangements and the quality of care offered to their children after school hours.

(d) Consequences suffered by children

Table 4: Mean ratings of respondents on the consequences suffered by children of female bank workers due to long parental absence

S/N	Consequences suffered by children	Mean	Decision
1	Children in families of female bankers due to long parental absence, usually form anti-social behaviours such as stealing money to buy things, etc.	2.54	Agreed
2	Children of female bankers due to parents' long absence from home children usually engage in long hours of television viewing.	3.02	Agreed
3	Long absence of parents from home causes siblings' fighting.	2.58	Agreed
4	Sexual abuse of siblings is common due to long parental absence.	1.54	Disagreed
5	Children of female bankers have poor academic achievements because their mothers don't have time to help them with their home work.	1.94	Disagreed
6	Children from families of female bankers suffer from fearfulness due to long parental absence, e.g. fear of kidnappers and robbers.	2.74	Agreed
7	Lack of after school parental care exposes children to drug or alcohol abuse	1.46	Disagreed
8	Due to mothers' long absence from home, children of female bankers generally suffer from low self esteem	2.66	Agreed
9	When mothers close late from work, boys and girls are more responsible and independent than others	2.56	Agreed
10	Children in families where the mothers close late do not suffer detrimental effects because they are effectively monitored through phone.	1.82	Disagreed

Table 4 revealed that the respondents agreed to six out of the ten items listed as consequences suffered by children of female bankers with mean scores of 2.00 and above. The items agreed to were 1(2.54), 2(3.02), 3(2.58), 6(2.74), 8(2.66), 9(2.56); and the disagreed items were 4(1.54), 5(1.94), 7(1.46), 10(1.82).

Discussion of Findings

Results in Table 1 revealed the care arrangements by the female bank workers in the study to include in order of importance children staying alone and taking care of themselves in the house,

children being left in the school till fathers close from work or fathers picking the children to their offices until their closing time, home care by grown up relative, home care by grand mother, home care by house help, leaving the children in the house of grandparents or others till parents' pick them up; while none of the respondents employed the services of structured after-school care programmes. These findings are in deviance to the revelation by Papalia et al. (2004) that some children of employed mothers are supervised after school by their fathers, grandparents, other relatives or baby

sitters, while some go to structured programmes. The finding that 42% of the children stay alone in the house corroborates Berk (2001), that in the United States, 2.4 million children 5 to 13 year olds regularly look after themselves after school hours. Ekot (2012) in a study of Latchkey experience of school-age children in low income families in Akwa Ibom State also found that 48% of the children stay alone without adult supervision after school hours. The finding also reveals that none of the respondents employed the services of structured after-school care programmes since such services are not available in the state. The revelation that only 6% of the children are cared for by house helps explains the extent to which the introduction of free education is affecting care giving responsibilities of working mothers.

Result in Table 2 shows that over 88% of the school-age children remain in various care arrangements for two to five hours before either parent returns home or picks them up, this being in tandem with Santrock (2006), who maintained that some school-age children are largely unsupervised for two to four hours a day during each school week, and may be unsupervised for entire five days a week during summer months.

Table 3 revealed that over 78% of the female bank workers were not satisfied with the care arrangements and the quality of care offered to their children after school hours before either parent returns home. This is in deviance to the views that parents especially mothers are more likely to be in work and be more productive and happy if they are confident that their children are being looked after properly (OECD, 2011), and that high quality

childcare is vital for parents' peace of mind and children's wellbeing (Berk 2001).

The finding revealed that the respondents agreed to six out of the ten listed as consequences suffered by children of female bank workers in with mean scores of 2.00 and above with long hours of television viewing having the highest rating as shown in Table 4. This is in agreement with Santrock (2005) who posited that many children spend more time in front of the television set than they do with their parents, and that many 9 year olds in the U.S watch television more than five hours a day. This does not seem to auger well for the school-age children as studies have shown that television can have negative influence by taking children away from home work, making them passive learners and providing them with violent models of aggression (Huesman *et al.*, 2003 as cited in Santrock, 2005).

The fact that children from these families suffer from fearfulness, such as fear of kidnappers and robbers was also rated highly by the respondents. This is not surprising as cases of kidnapping are rampant in Akwa Ibom State. The respondents also agreed to the fact that due to mothers' long absence from home, children from these families generally suffer from low self esteem, and some forms of anti-social behaviours such as stealing money to buy things, while others are also involved in siblings' rivalry and fighting. These findings are in consonant with some studies which reported that self care children suffer from low self esteem, anti-social behaviour, and fearfulness (Padila & Landreth, 1989 as cited in Berk, 2001).

The respondents rejected the observation that children from of female bank workers have poor academic

achievement because their mothers do not have time to help them in their home work. This implies that their work do not affect their children's academic attainment. This might be due to their financial capacity to pay for extra lessons for the children at home, or in their schools. This contrasts research finding by Padila and Landreth (1989) as cited in Berk (2001) who reported that self care children suffer from poor academic achievement. The respondents also disagreed to the observation that lack of after -school parental care exposes children to drug or alcohol abuse, and that sexual abuse of siblings is common in these families. This also disagrees with Santrock (2006) who observed that without limits and parental supervision, children find their way into trouble more easily; possibly stealing, vandalizing or abusing a sibling. This finding may however be due to the ages of children involved in the present study which includes younger children as young as three years of age.

Conclusion

One of the major challenges faced by women in paid employment who work late such as female bank workers is that of childcare. This study investigated the after-school care arrangements for school-age children (3-13years) adopted by female bank workers in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. Majority of female bank workers in Uyo metropolis allow their children to stay alone at home after school despite the negative consequences suffered by some children because of lack of house helps occasioned by the free and compulsory education policy of the state government, and other career care givers; and the absence of structured after-school programmes for children in the area.

Recommendation: Based on the finding of the study, it is recommended that:

- Female bank workers should make mindful decisions to balance work and family, as the ability to balance work and family is a learning process; and they should be able to revise plans in inevitable circumstances.
- Employers of labour should adopt flexible work policies to help working women reconcile family and work life.
- Fathers should be more involved in child care giving and domestic work to reduce the double load of women in who are also paid employment.
- Young school leavers and unemployed graduates should venture into the care giving career to provide alternative to working mothers.
- The state government should consolidate its free and compulsory education policy with the establishment of free structured after-school care programmes to provide alternative after-school care for children of employed mothers especially in dual-income families.

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