

Child-Care Services adopted by Mothers in Banks (with Children Birth – 5years) in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State

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Abstract

The study investigated the childcare services adopted by mothers in the banking sector in Nsukka local government area. Specifically, the study identified the childcare services available to mothers in the banking sector, the childcare services they adopt and the children related challenges they face. Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The population comprised of 41 mothers of children (birth-five years), who were working in the 19 Banks in Nsukka L.G.A. at the time of the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. A mean level of 2.50 and above was taken as the acceptable value for agreed. Findings show that the major childcare services available to mothers were nanny (78.00%), mother's help (68.30%), relative care (78.00%), day care (85.30%) and taking a leave (82.90%). Findings also showed that the widely adopted child-care service was relative care (63.4%) followed by taking a leave (58.50%) and mother's help (53.60%). Not being able to practice exclusive breast feeding and ineffectiveness in playing their motherly role were some of the challenges faced by the mothers in the banks. It was recommended that policy makers work towards effective implementation of work-family balance initiatives in the context of the wider Nigerian working environment especially in the banking institutions.

Keywords: Child, Care, Services, Mothers, Banking, Children, Adoption

Introduction

The first five years of a child's life is viewed as a critical period during which important developmental trajectories are established (Belsky, 2011). That the early years are seen to be the formative of children's long-term prospects is one

of the most ancient, enduring and influential themes shaping early childhood policy (Woodhead, 2006). This goes to say that quality care at early years of a child's life is of great value to the child since young children are actively dependent on adults for

their care (Barnett, 2011). This is supported by Meyer and Jordan's research (2006) which emphasised that children represent the workforce of the future and their healthy early development is affected by the quality of child-care that they receive. Childcares defined by McCartney (2004) as care for young children of diverse ages by adults who are not their parents. Childcare has become an issue of public importance due to the influx of a large number of mothers into the workforce brought about by modernization and tough economic conditions (Sivard, 2009).

The idea that mothers are the "natural caregivers" of their children is rooted in the cultures of most of the present and past societies. Recently, this ideological construct has been downsized and women have been - at least partially - relieved by their irreplaceable role of caregiver within the family. Nevertheless, fathers and mothers are not appointed with the same expectations regarding their involvement and responsibilities in caring for their children, especially during the first five years. This is because, giving birth and childcare is still more female's than male's prerogatives. This happens despite the increased proportion of women - and mothers among them - participating in the paid labour force during the last decades (Luppi&Arpino, 2016).

In Africa, expanded income earning activities are requiring women to increase use of available child care options which range from sibling care to enrolment in child care centres (Huntsman, 2010; Onu,Obiozor&Agbo,

2011). Osia (2010) explained that without proper child care options, most working mothers may opt to reduce their income generating activities or make child care arrangements that may not be appealing to them in terms of their children's psychological development and health. Kumar and Sunday (2012) emphasized that with women getting engaged in both income earning activities and child care responsibilities, there is a great need to come up with child care services whereby working mothers are able to balance the two crucial roles without straining and at the same time achieving their set goals in both roles. The important role of child care for both maternal employment and human capital development gives some urgency to questions about how parents arrange child care and the role of local, state and national policies in shaping their child care options (Meyers & Jordan, 2006).

Working mothers constitute a relatively high majority of the employed in Nigeria. Given the particular nature of their positions as wives, mothers and workers, they are likely to face a very complex and demanding cluster of roles, and they consistently experience pressure from almost every sphere of their lives. There is a constant feeling of guilt that they are neglecting their families as they struggle to perform their duties at work effectively. In fact, in some cases, the women have to sacrifice success at work for peace at home, while some successful women have had to sacrifice their marital homes(Okafor &Amayo, 2006).Factors that may have contributed to this

situation include social disapproval, the breaking down of the extended family system, the lack of co-operation from spouses and children, the inefficiency of alternative childcare arrangements, as well as the lack of understanding of employers. Current statistics, however, continue to point to the fact that Nigerian women face untold hardships, while gender inequality continues to be rooted in traditional practices, values and norms, exemplified in women's reproductive and productive factors especially those which underline the gender division of labour (Okafor & Amayo, 2006).

In the beginning, women were found in fields such as nursing, teaching, hotel and catering; which were seen as extensions of their traditional and domestic responsibilities. However, women nowadays are found in virtually all fields of endeavour including engineering, politics, military and banking. Women in the banking sector have been affected by diverse policies over the years (Sahay & Čihák, 2018). According to Talmund (2003); some of the policies are paid maternity benefits and flexi-schedule; which companies are oftentimes reluctant to hand out to working mothers. As a result, the absence of a mother at the child's formative years due to her employment demands has some measure of influence on a child's development. According to Ering, Akpan and Emma-Echiegu (2014), early involvement of children in alternative care is strongly associated with less harmonious mother-child relationships. The result of this is that children grow up to exhibit various forms of nonchalant behaviors

that are highly detrimental to society (Ering, Akpan & Emma-Echiegu, 2014). This implies that the rise in the number of working mothers is not synonymous with the complete alleviation of the problems working mothers face both at home and at work. In fact, the problems of female workers, most especially bankers, remain largely unattended to in the Nigerian society. The reason for society's disapproval of mothers as bankers seems to be that a wife and mother who works long hours must be withdrawing the needed time and attention from the care of her home and children (Okafor & Osamudiamé, 2006). Against this backdrop, the study sought to investigate the child care services adopted by mothers in the banking sector and the challenges these mothers face in their work place and at home.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate issues relating to childcare services adopted by mothers of children birth-5years working in banks in Nsukka local government area. Specifically, the study;

1. identified child care services available to mothers of children (birth-5years) who work in banks
2. identified those child care services adopted by mothers of children (birth-5years) who work in banks
3. determined childcare related challenges faced by mothers in banks (with children birth-5years)

Methodology

Design of the Study: The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design.

A cross-sectional study analyses data from a population, or a representative subset, at a specific point in time (Schmidt & Kohlmann, 2008).

Area of the Study: The study was carried out in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. Nsukka L.G.A, has an area of 1,810km² and a population of 306,633 at the 2006 census (Federal Republic of Nigeria official gazette, 2007). It is made up of 37 autonomous communities which is home for 19 commercial banks. These banks are majorly located in Nsukka town of the local government and the University of Nigeria community.

Population for the Study: The population consisted of all the female bankers who had children between birth and five years of age, and worked in the 19 banks in Nsukka L.G.A.

Sample for the study: There was no sampling. All the 41 mothers with children between (birth to five years) who work in the banks were used for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was used to elicit information on the type of child care practices available to mothers with children, birth to 5 years of age, challenges faced by the mothers and the child care services adopted by the mothers in the banking sectors. The instrument was validated by three experts in the area of family and child

studies to establish contents, structure, language used and the relevance of the items to the study. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument at 0.83 coefficients.

Data Collection Methods:

Questionnaires were administered to the mothers with children (birth to 5 years) who worked in the banks in Nsukka L.G.A. All the 41 questionnaires administered were retrieved for analysis, this implies a 100% return rate.

Data Analysis Techniques: Data were analysed using means and standard deviation. Means that are 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed while means below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed.

Findings of the Study:

The demographic data of the respondents showed that about 41.40% were aged between 31-35 years, 26.80% were aged between 26-30 years, while 7.30% were aged between 41-45 years. Majority of the respondents (56.10%) had B.Sc/B.Ed/B.A as their highest educational qualification, 31.70% had M.Sc/M.Ed/M.A as their highest educational qualification, while 7.30% had OND/NCE as their highest educational qualification. About 61.00% of the respondents earned between ₦80,000 - ₦120,000 as their monthly income, while 14.60% earned less than ₦80,000.

Table 1: Mean Responses on Child-Care services available to Mothers in the Banking Sector

S/N	Child-Care Services	Available F (%)	Not Available F (%)
1	Nanny Services	32 (78.00)	9 (22.00)
2	Mother's Help	28 (68.30)	13 (31.70)
3	Baby Sitting	26 (48.80)	15 (36.60)
4	Relative Care	32 (78.00)	9 (22.00)
5	Child-Care Swap	9 (22.00)	32 (78.00)
6	Play Groups	13 (31.70)	28 (68.30)
7	Work Place Crèches	9 (22.00)	32 (78.00)
8	Au Pair (foreign nanny)	2 (04.90)	39 (95.10)
9	Day-Care Centres	35 (85.30)	6 (14.60)
10	Leave	34 (82.90)	7 (17.10)
11	Part-timing	13 (31.70)	28 (68.30)

F = frequency, % = percentage

Table 1 shows that 86% of the respondents had day care available to them, 82.90% had the option of taking a leave available to them, 78.00% had nanny and relative care available to them. About 95.00% of the respondents

do not have Au pair (foreign nanny) available to them, 78.00% do not have play groups available to them, 68.30% do not have child-care swap and part-timing available to them.

Table 2: Child-Care services Adopted by Mothers in the Banking Sector in Nsukka LGA

S/N	Child-Care Services	Adopted F (%)	Not Adopted F (%)
1	Nanny Services	19 (46.30)	28(46.30)
2	Mother's Help	25(53.60)	16(39.00)
3	Baby Sitting	14(34.10)	27(65.80)
4	Relative Care	26(63.40)	15(36.60)
5	Child-Care Swap	2(04.90)	39(95.10)
6	Play Groups	10(24.40)	31(75.60)
7	Work Place Crèches	4(09.80)	37(90.20)
8	Au Pair (foreign nanny)	0 (00.00)	41(100.0)
9	Day-Care Centres	16(39.00)	25(60.90)
10	Leave	24(58.50)	17(41.50)
11	Part-timing	11(26.80)	30(73.10)

F = frequency, % = percentage

Table 2 shows that 63.40% of the respondents adopted relative care, 58.50% of the respondents took leave, 53.60% adopted mother's helper, and 46.30% adopted the services of a nanny.

On the other hand, Au pair (foreign nanny) services were not adopted by any of the respondents (100.00%), 95.10% of the respondents never adopted child-care swap. Up to 90.20%

do not adopt the services of work place crèches and play groups were not adopted by 75.60% of the respondents.

Table 3: Mean Responses on Childcare Related Challenges Faced by Mothers Working in the Banking Sector in Nsukka LGA

S/N	Challenges	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Inability to meet up with exclusive breast feeding	3.56	0.74	Agreed
2	Psychological distractions while thinking about their children	2.42	0.81	Disagreed
3	Tension with superiors in the bank because of children	2.42	0.77	Disagreed
4	Inability to feed children well as a result of the job	2.31	0.72	Disagreed
5	Lateness to work due to child care	2.63	0.92	Agreed
6	A lot of money being spent on transportation while shuttling between child care centre and work place.	2.76	0.92	Agreed
7	Long hours at work is a source of worry for children (aged birth-5 years).	2.71	0.93	Agreed
8	Possible delay in promotion	2.22	0.96	Disagreed
9	Inability to nurse infants properly	2.51	0.84	Agreed
10	Inadequate time to be there for children even when they are sick.	2.81	0.84	Agreed
11	Not opportune to provide adequate motherly care for children due to time constraint	3.00	0.14	Agreed

SD = standard deviation

Table 3 shows that the respondents agreed that childcare related challenges they face include not being able to meet up with exclusive breast feeding; lateness to work; long hours of work; not being able to nurse their infants properly; and time constraint among others. The respondents disagreed to the following items as challenges: psychological distractions at; tension with their superiors; delayed promotion and not feeding their children properly.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that a greater percentage of the female bankers were aged 31-35 years, while a few others were below 25 years. According to Olu-Olu (2011), these age brackets are the real targets of management for canvassing for money

for investors. This reflected in their educational qualification as most of them had a post-secondary education certificates. Findings also showed that most banks in Nsukka L.G.A. offers paid maternity leave for their female staff which is a welcome development as it creates work and family balance. Similarly, Gregory and Milner (2009), posits that work-family balance, work-life balance policies and practices among female bankers are beneficial to both employees and organizations as they assist employees in balancing work and non-work roles, thereby improving the individual's health and overall wellbeing.

The most available child care services to mothers in the banking sector as shown in the findings were nanny, mothers' help, relative care, day-

care, baby sitting and taking a leave. These services were also adopted by some of the bankers. This might be because of the environmental and social nature of the location of the study which made the providers readily available to offer the services. Similarly, study by Luppi and Arpino (2016) identified external help from family and friends, child care centres and part-timing as some of the coping strategies of working mothers. Supporting this, Okafor and Amayo (2006), reported live-in house helps/nannies, child minders/baby sitters, family members, friends and neighbours, as alternative care options that employed mothers make use of. According to Bayless (2019), the different types of child care services available and can be adopted by employed mothers include mother's helper, babysitter, nanny, au pair, day-care centre, family day care, relative care and child-care swap. Additionally, Halsall (2019) explained traditional day-care centre, in-home day-care, nanny, shared nanny, au pair, babysitter, relative care and preschool as the most common types of child care services available for working mothers.

Findings also showed that mothers working in the banks face some challenges which include not practicing exclusive breast feeding, lateness to work due to child care, huge cost on transportation and inability to play motherly roles in their homes. This is in line with the result of a study by Okafor and Amayo (2006), which reported distance, high cost of crèches and role-strain as some of the challenges employed mothers face. According to Victor & Tharakumar (2010), women

employees feel guilty that they were not able to fulfill traditional maternal role. This is the ideal gender role across Nigerian culture, that is, a great importance is placed on the family roles over the non-family roles. Similarly, Zhu, Khan and Ilyas (2012) reported inflexible timings, lack of maternity leaves and social limits among other things as some of the problems faced by female employees. In addition, a study by Abdul, Abdul, Ambreen, Naveed and Javed (2013), showed numerous problems faced by mothers in the banking sector which included neglect of their children, unsupportive behaviour of husbands, transportation problems and weak promotion and scaling system due to favouritism. According to Schochet (2019), child care challenges have become a barrier to work, especially for mothers, who disproportionately take on unpaid care giving responsibilities when their family cannot find or afford child care.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the mothers who have children aged birth to five years who work in banks in Nsukka L.G.A adopted only a few number of the child care services available to them such as relative care, mothers' help and taking leave. They also identified some challenges they encounter which include inability in practice exclusive breast feeding and ineffectiveness in playing their motherly role.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. In order to meet up with their job and child care demand, working mothers should make use of child care services available to them.
2. When adopting the services, they should ensure that they choose the ones that are of high quality in order to ensure the holistic development of the child.
3. It is also recommended that key players such as employers and policy makers move swiftly beyond paper policies towards effective implementation of work-family balance initiatives in the context of the wider Nigerian working environment and particularly in the banking institutions.

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