

Mothers Employment Demands and Child Development: An Empirical Analysis of Working Mothers in Calabar Municipality

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Abstract

The study essentially examines mother's employment demands and its impact on child development in contemporary society. We took a sample of 120 respondents from Ikot Esu Community in Calabar municipality and two main hypotheses to guide the study. Data derived from the study were subjected to chi-squared statistical analyses. The findings show that there is a seeming disconnect between mothers employment demands and a child behavioural pattern and the development of child verbal and social skills as a result of the absent of parental care. Based on the findings, we recommended that there is need for government to revisit the policy or law on maternity leave, with a view to increasing the number of months granted mothers on maternity leave from the present four (4) months to nine (9) month to enable working mothers spent more quality time with their children. Also, gender sensitivity must be cultivated at both the individual and social level so that as working parent, each partner (male and female) has a responsibility in the process of child rearing.

Keywords: Child socialization, mother employment demands, Child development, behavioural pattern, and verbal skills

Introduction

There are an increasing number of mothers in paid employment whose demands at work places is increasingly harming the wellbeing of their children. A working woman's attitude is not different from that of a housewife. She has to manage her home, in addition to her work. Mothers in contemporary societies are being confronted with a choice whether to work or not to work. In other words, do the baby and family comes first or is a career and financial security of greater importance. While people may be willing to accept the idea of career women, they are not willing to excuse them from their duties as career mothers. However, the global economic recession of 2008 where a number of large industrial manufacturing companies collapsed, leading to the laying off of a number of men and or male headed households, women were left with the burden to fend for their families, necessitating a number of modern families to do a rethink.

Bianchi (2006) maintained that working mothers are ambivalent about whether full time work is the best thing for them or part time due to the task of motherhood. This situation results in most women finding themselves in situations that might be less ideal for the development of their children. The concern then is women have to rise up to the situation and to assist their families, but at the behest of their children. John (2011) argues that it is possible to be an effective and caring parent, if we are able to get our duty organized and pay adequate attention to our children.

Bianchi, 2006 also maintained that the role of a mother in child development cannot be overstressed. Mothers play vital role in the nurturing of their children for a proper and appropriate child development and up bringing; child development therefore is the positive change which occurs in the life of a child. Scholars, (Mehrotra 2013, and Rogers, 2011) maintain that it is not the quantity of time spend with children but the quality that matters. Child development refers to the biological; psychological and emotional changes that occur in human beings between birth and the end of adolescence, as the individual progresses from dependency to increasing autonomy (Wikipedia, 2013).

In today's Nigeria, about 70 per cent reject the idea of women returning to their traditional or cultural roles in the society. There is the increasing agreement among scholars specifically of the feminist bent that both husband and wife should contribute to the maintenance of the home. However, women remain conflicted about the competing roles they play at work place and at home Lussier (2002).

In the early 60s and up to the 80s, mothers were made to stay at home, cook, give birth and take care of children while the financial responsibilities of the family were left to the husbands. In the event of death, she becomes helpless, frustrated and hopeless. This scenario has led to an increasing number of women in the workforce not just to support and sustain the family, but to also have certain rights in the family and the society at large (Fair, 2011). Consequently, the decision has now left a wide gap in the well being of children.

This study examines the phenomenon of "mothers' employment demands and its impact on the development and wellbeing of children in the society. The focus is on the influence of mother's employment demands on child's interactions and developmental progress and conditions that could help reduce the negative effects caused by employment demands. For this study therefore, two hypotheses are made: (i) the demands of mothers in employment does not significantly affect a child behavioral patterns; and (ii) mothers working status has no significant relationship with a child social and verbal skills.

Material and Method

The study adopted the survey research design. This design was necessitated by the widespread variables that were to be captured for the study. A questionnaire was designed based on the variables drawn for the study. Calabar municipality which is the study area has a population of 183,681 people and made up of a number of ethnic nationalities (2006, NPC) with the Quas, Efiks, and Efuk as major ethnic grouping. Ikot Esu community in Calabar Municipality was chosen for the study, and is populated with working-class citizens, either working with the state and or federal ministries, departments and agencies and a few others engaged in one form of business or the other, that take them away from home. This situation leaves the children at the mercy of house helps and daycare centers.

A sample of 120 respondents was chosen from a population of working mothers in Calabar metropolis. The population was first divided into four strata based on different household division: Nderson's Oku household, Ntete's household, Ekpenyong household and Abasi Otu household. These households represent the four major families that make up Ikot Esu community.

From these four strata, 30 respondents were purposively selected from each stratum, making the total of 120 respondents. This sample size was regarded as appropriate for generalization to be made on "Mothers Employment Demands and Child Development".

Data derived from the administration of questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentages and chi-squared statistical test. The percentages were used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in the study, while chi-squared statistical test was employed to test the hypotheses formulated for the study.

Mothers Employment Demand and Child Development: A Theoretical Exposition

Two theoretical paradigms were used to guide the study. These are the symbolic interactionist paradigm and social construction paradigm. The symbolic interactionist model is associated with the works of Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley. This paradigm sees social life as a process of interactions among individuals. Social interactionism traces its origin to Weber's assertion that individuals act according to their interpretation of the world, however, such interpretation occurs from an early stage in one's life. Therefore, the absence of a mother at a child's formative years due to her employment demands has some measure of influence on a child's development (Andersen & Taylor, 2010).

The proponents of the paradigm believed that it determines the patterns of communication, interpretation, and the adjustment of individual to society values (Griffin, 2011). Mead's influence on symbolic interactionism was nonetheless powerful. He explained that verbal and non-verbal responses of a child are determined by those around him or her which consequently affects the child's development (Wikipedia, 2013). Dewey (1902) a renowned American philosopher and Educator, maintained that children are best understood in relation to their environment which always influences their development.

Interactionist theory analyses society from the subjective meanings that people impose on subjects, events and behaviors, such subjective imposition of mothers in employment is aimed at deriving certain benefits as dictated by society, to the detriment of her child. Therefore, society is thought to be socially constructed through human interpretation of their priorities interpret one another's behavior and it is these interpretations that form the social bond. Thus, when a caregiver fills the vacuum left behind by a working mother, the child's behavior and development pattern would be determined by the caregiver based on the interpretations of the child.

However, the interactionist perspective is limited in the sense that it neglects the macro level of social interpretation. That is, the theory may miss the larger issues of society caused by working mothers or mothers in employment by focusing on the child alone. It is also limited to the influence of social forces and institutions on individual interactions which is a determinant of child development, since the family is a unit of interactive personalities, (Wikipedia, 2013).

The other theoretical paradigm is the Social Constructionism of Ian Hacking, Lev Uygotsky and Jerome Bruner (2000). As a sociological theory of knowledge and communication, significance, and meaning are developed not separately within the individual, but in coordination with other human beings. The underlying assumptions of the paradigm are (a) that human beings rationalize their experience by creating a model of the social world and how it functions and (b) that language is the most essential system through which humans construct reality. (Leeds – Hurwitz, 2009)

The contention is that the choice of women to work in the society is never by compulsion. These choices made tend to affect the child's development which is as a result of negligence. The major focus of social constructionism is the ways in which working mothers and their children participate in the construction of their perceived reality. It involves, looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, and made into tradition by humans. The import of the theory is that its effects on children are an ongoing, dynamic process that is reproduced by various factors acting on their interpretations and their knowledge.

Though this theory is limited as it claims are not clear about what is inevitable or exactly what should be done about working mothers and their employment demands the social constructionism reveals that the incidence of working mothers and child development are base on choices of these women to work or not to work for the purpose of enhancing their families. These choices and decisions may be detrimental to their child's development as many studies have revealed. The point is that, the two theories examined provide a holistic understanding of mother's employment demands and its impact on child development.

Meaning and Description of Mothers in Employment

For this study the concepts of mothers in employment and working mothers would be used interchangeably. In other words the two concepts would be used to mean the same thing, therefore whatever description by scholars will be used to refer to mothers in employment. Several scholars, Connie (1996), Kinsten (1990), Smith (2008) and Hodaes (2010), have extensively provided explanations for the concept of mothers in employment or commonly referred to as working mothers. They all see mothers in employment as women who are mothers and also work outside the home for income, this is, in addition to work performed at home in raising their children.

Kinsten (1990) added that mothers in employment are women who are gainfully employed in organizations, many of whom find it difficult to combine their working careers with the responsibility of raising children.

Dabiri (2000) described mothers in employment as young women who are engaged in vocational and acquisition of skills outside their immediate homes. This definition tends to be very restrictive as it described young women as mothers in employment or working mothers. It fails to add that these working mothers engaged in white collar jobs in order to support their families at home.

Also, Oprah (2005) described mothers in employment as young women who are gainfully employed in various organizations outside their homes. Working mothers or mothers in employment spend most of their time and energies in places where they are employed. In most cases because of their non availability, mothers in employment employ house helps or nannies to assist in taking care of their children.

Studies have shown that, working mothers, have extra challenge in tackling their careers as well as their family life. These challenges place a greater burden on working mothers as they have to work and also go back home to attend to their children and husbands. This is particularly burdensome if both the wife and husband are working in paid employment. Jagita (2009), Beecher (2007) and Smith (2008) maintain that mothers have the responsibilities of training their child from infancy to childhood, because this is when child development is at its peak or child formative period. The role of the mother in addition to her job outside is bringing up children in the norms and values of society. She is responsible for the child emotional, psychological, social, behavioural and intellectual development.

On the demands of working mothers and its impact on child development, Nezhad (2013) maintain that it is enormous and tasking. Working mothers are forced to reduce their income activities or make child care arrangements, these they argued is unsatisfactory in terms of their children health, affection and psycho-social development. Mothers have a lot to do in the area of proper child care and development. Geoffrey L. B. et al (2011) is of the view that early enrolment of a child in day-care centers is strongly associated with less harmonious mother-child relationships. The result of this is that children grow up to exhibit various forms of non-challant behaviors that are highly detrimental to society.

Scholars like Harper (2010) and Bianchi (2006) argue that the attitudes of working mothers towards their jobs and decision about child care are shaped by a range of social and economic factors. These will include among others, marital status and family structure, type of work, income level, number of children, age and special needs of children. More so, Parcel and Menaghan (2003) maintained that social class also plays a significance role in the demands of working mothers and child development. Studies have shown that there is more consistent advantages of maternal employment for children in lower classes than in the middle class. This they argue is true particularly for the boys.

Findings

For this study, a total of 120 questionnaires were distributed and returned. The analysis was therefore based on 120 questionnaires retrieved from the field and at 0.05 level of significant. We would first examine the socio-demographic statistics of respondents before testing the hypotheses drawn for the study.

(a) Socio-demographic data of Respondents

(i) Sex distribution of respondents

Sex	Respondent Responses	
	No.	%
Male	38	31.63
Female	82	68.33
Total	120	100.00

(ii) Age distribution of respondents

Age	Respondent Responses	
	No.	%
20 – 30	58	48.33
31 – 40	36	30
41 – 50	19	15.83
51 +	7	5.83
Total	120	100.00

(iii) Education Distribution of Respondents

Education	Respondent Responses	
	No.	%
Secondary Education	22	18.33
NCE/OND	28	23.33
HND/B.Sc	50	41.67
M.Sc/Ph.D	12	10.00
Others	8	6.67
Total	120	100.00

(iv) Marital Status Distribution of Respondents

Marital Status	Respondent Responses	
	No.	%
Single	12	10.00
Married	83	69.17
Separated	10	8.33
Widow/widower	15	12.50
Total	120	100.00

(v) Income Distribution of Respondents

Income	Respondent Responses	
	No.	%
11,000 – 30000	10	8.33
31,000 – 50,000	11	9.17
51,000 – 70,000	19	15.83
71,000 – 90,000	16	13.33
91,000 – 120,000	20	16.67
120,000 and above	24	20.00
Total	120	100.00

Data from the study show that more female (68.33%) took part in the research than their male counterpart with 31.67%. This is however deliberate and purposive because the study intended to find out more about mothers in employment, therefore making women the target population of study. Also, we had more of the respondents from the age bracket of 20 – 30 (48.33%) and 31 – 40 (30%) for this study. It shows that working mothers or mothers in employment are persons who are still very active and of productive age and contributing maximally to the development of the Cross River State economy and society.

Educationally, respondents in the study were majorly persons with degree certificates and its equivalent, this make up 41.67%. Others were NCE/OND holders with 23.33% and secondary education 18.33%. Only 10% of respondents were working mothers with either Master (M.sc) or doctoral degrees holders.

The study also shows that most of the working mothers are married with 69.17%. Only 10%, 8.33% and 12.5% are single, separated and either widow/widower respectively. Annual incomes were varied and this to a large extent depends on the place of employment that is either as a local government employee, state or federal and private organization.

The incomes of respondents exhibited the following distribution. 8.33% for N10,000; 9.17% earn between 11,000 to 30,000; 15.83% for 31,000 to 50,000; 13.33% for 51,000-70,000; 16.67% - 71,000 – 90,000; 20% - 91,000 to 120,000 and 16.67% for mothers who earned well above N120,000.

b. Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis: The demands of mothers in employment have no significant effect on a child behavioural pattern.

H₀: The demands of mothers in employment have no significant effect on a child behavioural pattern.

H₁: The demands of mothers in employment have significant effect on a child behavioural pattern.

Table 1: Chi-Squared Test of Independence on the Demands of Working Mothers and a Child Behavioural Pattern

Frequency observed (FO)	Frequency Expected (FE)	(FO – FE)	(FO – FE) ²	$\frac{(FO - FE)^2}{FE}$
38	29.7	8.3	68.9	2.32
19	23	-4	16	0.7
32	36.3	-4.3	18.5	0.51
2	10.3	-8.3	68.9	6.7
12	8.01	3.99	15.9	1.98
17	12.7	4.3	18.5	1.5
120				13.7

Result:

Level of significance	=	0.05
Degree of freedom	=	2
Calculated value	=	13.7
Table value	=	5.99

Decision Rule:

Since the calculated value at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom 2 is 13.7 and is greater than the table value of 5.99, we reject the Null hypothesis of no relationship and accept the alternate hypothesis which shows that there is a significant relationship between “the demands of working mothers and a child behavioural pattern.

Hypothesis 2: Mothers in employment have no significant relationship with a child social skill.

H₀: Mothers in employments working status have no significant relationship with a child social skill.

H₁: Mothers in employments working status have a significant relationship with a child social skill.

Table 2: Chi-Squared Table Value (X²) on Mothers in Employment Social Status and a Child Social Skills

Frequency observed (FO)	Frequency Expected (FE)	(FO – FE)	(FO – FE) ²	$\frac{(FO - FE)^2}{FE}$
39	42.2	-3.2	10.24	1.2
19	15.4	3.6	12.96	1.8
31	19.2	11.8	139.24	7.2
3	9.6	-6.6	43.56	4.5
12	16	-4	16	1
16	17.6	-1.6	2.56	1.2
120				16.9

Result:

Level of significance	=	0.05
Degree of freedom	=	2
Calculated value	=	5.99
Table value	=	16.9

Decision Rule

The result of the test shows that the calculated x^2 value of 16.9 is greater than the critical value of 5.99 at degree of freedom 2 and level of significance 0.05. We therefore reject the null hypotheses of no relationship and accept the alternative hypothesis. This indicates that there is a strong relationship between mothers in employment status and child social skills.

Discussion of Findings

The results of hypothesis I show that the demands of mothers in employment have a strong negative relationship with a child behavioural pattern. In other words, the absence of a mother because of the demands of employment leaves the child vulnerable to negative behavioural patterns that may be exhibited by the care giver. The contention here is that most working mothers employ nannies to take care or help in taking care of their children at home, therefore, the continuous interactions between the care giver and the child leaves the child with unrestricted and unmonitored interactions. These play on the child sub-consciousness and tend to have over bearing influence on the child.

Similarly, the findings also show that the working mothers' status impede on the verbal skills of the child. Most children have a very strong affinity for their mothers and they tend to communicate with her most of the time. Therefore, the absence of a mother at home makes it difficult for the child to cope during communication and interaction with care givers which they see as strangers. In situations of adjustment of the child, sometimes hinders the child's development of good and acceptable verbal skills in society. The findings of this study are in agreement with the works of Jagita (2009); Beecher (2007); and Smith (2007) all of whom maintained that mothers have responsibilities of taking charge of their children upbringing from infancy to childhood, because this period is their formative period. The findings is also in consonance with the works of Mead (1978) and Hacking (2000) and Kim (2001) all of whom see social life as a product of social interactions.

The results of hypothesis II also show that mothers in employment significantly affect the child social skills. Social skill is any skill that helps in facilitating interactions and communication with others. Social rules and relations are created, communicated and changed in verbal and nonverbal ways. All of these are learned through socialization process. The absence of the mother because of her employment places a greater burden on the social skills of a child that is learned from childhood.

Most working mothers abdicate or relinquish their God-given parental roles to care givers or house helps. This has a significant effect on the child social skills development and consequently a child behavioural development. This finding is in agreement with Leeds-Hurwitz (2009), Hacking (2000) and Mead (1978) all of whom argued that language is the most essential system through which humans construct reality. This is learned and through social interactions too.

Recommendations

The findings of the study have provided us the basis to make the following recommendations.

1. Government should as a matter of urgency amend the existing law or policy on maternity leave by increasing the number of months given to working mothers from 4 to at least 9 months to take care of their new born children. This would enable working mothers spend more quality time with their children particularly at this formative period. It is our contention that these would afford the mother the opportunity of having a close emotional, social and psychological relationship with the child and imbued in it the necessary socialization needed for proper child development and upbringing.
2. In addition, fathers should also be considered for paternity leave of 6 months to assist their spouse in the area of child-care and provision. The concern is that the burden of child rearing must be equally shared by both spouses.
3. Gender sensitivity must also be cultivated at both the individual and social levels. Working parents (male and female) have an equal responsibility towards the children and not merely by the ability to earn income but by the inclination and commitment to be involved in the process of child rearing.

Conclusion

The study of mother in employment has been a very sensitive and emotional one as well as an interesting one. We have examined carefully the issues involved in the study and on the basis of our findings made recommendations above. We believe that the recommendations if carefully studied and implemented will go a long way to assist working mothers in their role and process of child rearing.

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