
MOTHERS' WORKING STATUS AS CORRELATE OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates mothers' occupational status as correlate of children's social adjustment in Lagos, Nigeria. Four hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. A self-designed instrument using 4-point Likert-type rating scale was used for collection of data. Descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. The sample for the study comprised 160 SS2 students selected from four secondary schools from two local educational districts of Lagos State, Nigeria. The statistical technique employed for the analysis of data was the t-test. Analysis of data and results led to the rejection of all the hypotheses. Recommendations were made that efforts must be made to help children to develop positive social adjustment, while there should be standard day-care centres for the children of working mothers to serve as substitute care givers. The society must also be ready and willing to give each individual an opportunity to function in accordance with his capabilities.

INTRODUCTION

In the pre-colonial Nigeria, men were the workers and women, the homemakers. Men at that time were the hunters, the farmers, the fishermen, the blacksmith and the bulk of the merchants. Women were then the home makers and home keepers. They were much more concerned with child rearing and socializing. However, with the coming of the white man and his culture, things began to change. The weapon of change that magically changed the status quo was education, which equally brought along civilization.

The white-men completely changed Africans' orientation and perception with their education. They believed what could be done by a man, could as well be done by a woman. Thus, the women acquired the white man's wisdom (education) and with it, she was liberalized. The education acquired by women must be put into use and more functional, thus she sought employment and got it. The pace has therefore been set. More and more women enrolled at schools and many more began to work. The pattern of work also changed.

Women involvement in career jobs has brought with it many changes especially, the attitude to child rearing and family. Many women spent long time in acquiring certifications, which qualify them for more career prospects. The effect of this is that such women marry late or find it difficult to get suitable husbands.

There are some women whose jobs demand much attention or even take them away from home a long period. Children of such mothers are left at the mercies of caretakers and caregivers (Makinde, 2006). Most fathers are usually away at work and may not return home

until night, if simultaneously the mother is also away at work, then the child suffers emotionally and socially. He begins to copy bad behaviour and attitude with no one to actually monitor whom he moves or associates with. The main contention of the debate centres on whether the mother's time with the child is more valuable than the income she earns in the labour market.

A mother's time spent interacting and reading to her child is to promote better outcomes in her children. On the other hand incomes provide the child with the necessities of living and a good education. Researchers are however yet to agree on whether mother's commitment to the labour force will have some negative effects on how much time she spends with her children.

After birth, the child interacts first with the mother. As observed by Ajuzie (2005), during the course of this primary interaction, the mother understands and attends to the needs of the child. Thereafter the child develops much confidence in the mother and he is therefore able to learn other prevalent practices within the family such as how to eat, the childhood habits as well as the morals and values for which the particular family is known.

Ajuzie, citing Bilton (1981) says the burden of parenting falls disproportionately on the mother on whom it is usually believed possess the natural predisposition to provide in most parts the activities involving affectionate interactions, socialization, security towards moral, physical, emotional and intellectual development of a human child.

The above scenario depicts the traditional roles of mothers. Today many women are engaged in different types of occupations.

The rate at which maternal employments have increased to this point however is so rapid that it's prevalence in our society as well as its impacts or effects on the lives of our children are not easily recognized.

All attempts to understand the effects these maternal employments have on the social adjustments of the children have tended to ignore the fact that the changes are part of a whole complex of social changes. Both employed mothers and non-employed mothers of today live in a very different environment from their counterparts thirty years ago.

According to Hoffman (1998) many mothers are more engaged today due to many changes that have taken place in family life. The resultant effects on the children are equally enormous. The number of hours today's mothers dedicate to their children is quite small to the extent some mothers hardly breast feed their babies for up to three months!

With the dawn of the industrial era, the production role, which used to be the responsibility of the family, came to be removed from it. Members of the family including mothers were rather being hired for their labour to work in industries.

(Ajuzie, 2005). The behaviour of our youths today has been a source of worries to well meaning adults especially in a developing country as Nigeria. According to Omoegun (2002) "it is not uncommon to hear people talk about the alarming increase of moral decadence

such as dishonesty, examination malpractices, prostitution, fraud, drug abuse, armed robbery and other vices among the youths even in higher institutions of learning”.

She posits however that all the blames for youths’ misdemeanor should not be laid at the youth’s doorsteps. Family orientations and values have been sacrificed for economic definition. It is therefore pertinent, to investigate how children adapt to social environment with or without their mothers around them due to women engagement in labour force.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The debate as to whether wives should work or not work has been going on for a long time, especially among the Nigerian men. Many men believe that full-time housewives were better in child-rearing and domestic work than others in employment. However, children need to be socialized and brought up in the right direction. The enormous task of bringing up the children, though a family affair, rest majorly on the mothers. It is as a result of this that this study was construed to examine the effects of mothers’ engagement in labour force on children’s social adjustment in Lagos Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there any difference between the social adjustment of children of working mothers and those of non-working mothers?
2. Is there any difference in the positive social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and that of non-working mothers?
3. Is there any difference between negative social adjustment developed by children of working mothers and that of non working mothers?

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference between the social adjustment of children of working mothers and that of the children of non-working mothers.
2. There is no significant difference in the positive social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and that of children of non-working mothers.
3. There will be no significant difference in the negative social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and non working mothers.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was the survey research design. The target population comprised of both male and female students from Secondary Schools in Lagos metropolis. A total of one hundred and sixty (160) students were randomly selected from SS2 students’ population from four randomly selected secondary schools. Two schools were randomly selected from each of two randomly selected Local Educational Districts. Forty (40) participants were randomly selected as samples from each school. These include twenty (20) males and twenty (20) female students.

A Self – designed instrument, called Social Adjustment Scale – Self Report (SAS – SR). was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was modified, vetted and corrected by

expertise in the field of test measurement and psychology. This was meant to ascertain the face validity of the instrument. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was trial tested in 2 different schools. The researchers used Split Half method by adopting Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (R) to determine the reliability of the measuring instrument. The result of the reliability shows a correlated coefficient of 0.75. Thus, the instrument is valid and also reliable

DATA ANALYSIS

All data generated were systematically arranged based on the hypotheses formulated for testing in this study. The principal statistical procedure used was t-test to test for acceptance or rejection of all the hypotheses, at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULT

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the social adjustment of children of working mothers and children of non-working mothers.

Table 1:

Difference between social adjustment of children of working mothers and children of non-working mothers.

Variable	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Social Adjustment of children of working mothers	142	34.5	14.84				
Social Adjustment of children of non-working mothers	18	4.5	1.73	158	4.15	1.96	Significant

From table 1 above, the t-cal (4.15) is greater than the t-critical (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. It is also observed that the children of working mothers have a higher mean score than the children of non-working mothers hence there is significant difference in the social adjustment of children of working mothers and the children of non-working mothers. This null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the positive social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and that of the children of non-working mothers.

Table 2 : Positive social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and children of non-working mothers.

Variable	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Positive social adjustment of children of working mothers	142	35.5	11.85	158	4.95	1.96	Significant
Positive social adjustment of children of non-working mothers	18	4.5	1.73				

The result in table two shows that the t-cal (4.95) is greater than the t-critical (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. It is equally observed that the children of working mothers have a higher mean score than the children of non-working mothers. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant difference in the mean scores between the positive social adjustments developed by the children of working mothers and the children of non-working mothers.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference in the negative social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and the children of non-working mothers.

Table 3: Negative social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and children of non-working mothers.

Variable	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Negative social adjustment of children of working mothers	142	23.67	16.99	158	2.94	1.96	Significant
Negative social adjustment of children of non-working mothers	18	3	2.76				

The result in table 3 indicates that the children of working mothers obtained a higher mean score of 23.67 than the means score of 3 obtained by the children of non-working mothers. Since the calculated value of 2.94 is greater than t-critical of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis which says there is no significant difference between negative social adjustment of working mothers’ and non-working mothers’ children is therefore rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the social adjustment of children of working mothers and that of the children of non-working mothers was rejected. This points to the fact that there is a significant difference between the social adjustments of children of working mothers and the children of non-working mothers. This result is in agreement with Erickson who asserts that young children should possess an exclusive mother-child relationship so as to be able to establish the types of "Mutual trust" required for the infant or the young adult to establish successful future social relationship.

This finding also supports the claim of Durojaiye (1994) that a great emphasis has been placed on mother's warmth to the infant. The relaxation, comfort satisfaction she shows, the security, acceptance and peace, which she conveys, go a long way towards satisfying the need for affection, belonging and create emotional security for the child throughout his school days.

Mothers need to give more attention to their children in order to be able to adjust socially within the environment. However, as observed by Campbell (1997) modern living has done a great harm to the family fabric. This is because as parents become physically, emotionally and spiritually drained, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to nurture their children. He concludes that it is the child who bears the brunt of these difficult times whereas the child is the neediest person whose greatest need is love. Drapper (1992) also feels that working mothers are usually too busy or too much in a hurry to listen to their children's complaints thereby blocking the much-needed communication within the few hours they have with the children. This indicates that most of the studies that have been carried out found a significant difference in the social adjustment of children of non-working mothers and the children of working mothers.

Hypothesis two shows that there is significant difference in the positive social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and the children of non-working mothers. The result is in agreement with the findings of previous researches. Myrdal and Klen (1998) dismiss the evidence that mothers who go out to work leads to neglect of children, thereby increase the risk of their children's delinquency has never been supported empirically. Crow (1990) found out that the children of non-working mothers participated in more positive interactions with their mothers, vocalized more and performed better on standardized developmental tests than did the children of working mothers.

Jersild (1999) is also of the opinion that a child's upbringing is influenced more by the qualities of the mother's character structure than the child rearing practices and technique. She argues that children of working mothers develop in much same fashion as children whose mothers remain at home. This result is in contrary to the finding of Coleman (1988) who feels that parents' work experience will positively affect socialization process of children. The implication of this is that mothers should be around to guide their children to be able to develop positive social adjustment.

Hypothesis three shows that there is significant difference in the negative social adjustment developed by the children of working mothers and the children of non-working mothers. The children of working mothers tend to show more negative social adjustment than the children of non-working mothers. This is so because as observed by Hoffman (1998) children of working mothers are more involved in the domestic work than the children of non-working mothers. Connolly (1989) in his study carried out at the elementary school level however showed that children's adjustment is not negatively affected by the mother's employment. Cohen (1978) also found out that the children of non-working mothers participated in more positive interactions with their mothers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, certain conclusions were arrived at: one, there is significant relationship between maternal working status and children's social adjustment. Two, that there is also a significant relationship between mothers' working status and the children's positive and negative social adjustment development.

With regards to the findings of the study, the researchers hereby recommend as follows: All mothers must ensure that they give enough attention and care to their children, most especially at the formative years of their lives. In spite of the economic down turn all over the world and not just in Nigeria, mothers are expected to work to support themselves and their husbands. However, such mothers must provide quality and adequate mother substitute or care giver when they are away at work.

Many modern business organizations now know the importance of mother-child attachment and have made provision for crèche such crèche must however be monitored and supervised adequately. In addition to the above, the government must ensure that all day-care centres and caregivers have minimum standards and must be approved.

Fathers and husbands must not compel their wives to remain at home as full homemakers or full housewives against their wishes, rather wives opinions should be sought and mutual agreement reached. This is to forestall the venting of annoyance and grief on the innocent children by unwilling supposed homemakers. The schools and the community must work together to improve the children achievement. Teachers must help the children to develop socially approved patterns of adjustment.

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