

## THE IMPLICATION OF WORKING MOTHERS ON THE WELLBEING OF THE CHILDREN

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### Abstract

*The paper is an empirical study on the implication of working mothers on children's wellbeing. The study shows how mother's employment as an environmental force enhances or inhibits the children's wellbeing. In many ways, the positive and negative working conditions that mothers experience on the job are reflected in the home environments they create for their children. The researchers also consider disadvantages faced by welfare recipients that may make their entry into employment problematic for their children's wellbeing. The study adopted cross-sectional survey design conducted among 200 sampled family including males and females using self administered questionnaire. This enabled the researchers obtain information on the influence of working mothers on the children's wellbeing. The findings of the study show that mother's employment status affects the child's wellbeing; that working mothers tend to experience more role conflict than non-working mothers; that women who engage in paid employment experience more difficulties in taking care of their children than those not in paid employment. The study therefore, recommends that mothers should plan their schedules in a way that the children are not deprived of parental care and love which are important for their development at the early stage of their lives. Mothers also should make effort to be close to their children so as to facilitate the socio-emotional wellbeing by utilizing their days in the weeks and weekends properly. Finally, government should look expressly into day care centres, primary schools and secondary schools to ensure they render quality services at affordable prices.*

**Key words:** Children's wellbeing, Day care centres, Family, Working mothers

### Introduction

The role and place of women previously was found to be the home. That is to say that traditionally employment and socialization process in Nigeria as far as women were concerned the occupational pattern were largely restricted to the home but as time goes on there has been a gradual shift of this traditional occupations usually offering a better package of income and working conditions than that of the traditional occupations which have little or nothing to offer as income (Attah, 1981).

In African traditional society, the father is out most of the day while mothers stay at home with the children and monitor how well they are doing, but now mothers are also out most of the day which has resulted in the complete disregard of the traditional mother-child relationship in recent Nigeria (Dibiah, 1996).

A number of studies in the 1990 explored the effects of maternal employment on child outcomes but yielded inconsistent results. Vandell and Ramanan (1992) reported that in the United States, maternal employment has a negative influence on child's well-being which includes both psychological, academic, social development while Harvey (1998) reported that neither early maternal employment status nor the timing and continuity of maternal employment were consistently related to children's intellectual development or outcome which is part of children's wellbeing. During the recent waves of research on maternal employment, there have been some shifts in employers' perspectives about work family issues which are experienced by mothers. It is important to note that more often or often at times when a child's well-being is being negative, the mother's work is being affected negatively.

Diverse reasons are given to explain why mothers are involved in paid employment and these include the value attached to achievement, recognition outside the home as a means of self-fulfillment and desire to use special skills (Uche, 2011). Also, mothers prefer to involve themselves in paid employment in an attempt to solve their family life problems rather than being dependent on a breadwinner (Taiwo & Ajayi, 2013). Mothers and their husbands work to make ends meet because the income from one parent is no longer sufficient hence more mothers are being engaged in paid employment (Uche, 2011).

### **The Problem So Far**

Mother's primary responsibility is her children and husband. Attending to the wellbeing of the children is one of the most basic needs a mother must attend to. This is because the children and the fathers are the major responsibilities of a mother.

Recently in Nigeria a lot of emphasis is being laid on the contributions of women to growth and development in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) through their involvement on the labour force (Orji, 2007). However, these contributions will not be well appreciated if the effects of the increasingly involvement of women in the labour force and the wellbeing of children are not properly addressed. Okeke (2000) observed that most mothers in paid employment come back from work already too tired to attend to any household work. She also noted that these mothers might even become irritable and impatient with every member of the family. When this happens, neither the children nor the husband is given attention. In other words, the family is totally neglected or is inadequately taken care of. This may have serious implications for the entire family and may give rise to communication gap.

In view of the above discussion, this research work is an attempt to examine the implication of working mother's on the wellbeing of children. In order to ascertain the significance of this implication on children's wellbeing and also to checkmate if this implication was negative or positive effect on the children's wellbeing.

### **Literature Review**

A lot of research has been carried out on family related issues such as maternal employment, maternal mortality, gender roles, childcare services (Watson, 2008). Therefore, it is relevant, necessary and of use to review some of these researches that are related to the issue of maternal

employment and child's wellbeing. The dramatic increase in maternal employment rates is a noticeable socio-cultural developmental tendency especially in the last century. The cause of the increase is a common complex component of economic, demographic and family structural change which are connected with the new definition of the society and changes in the traditional roles of sexes (Giddens, 2006).

To some people nothing can substitute, even partially for the care by parents especially mothers when children are still young. This is reflected in statements like this "the quality of day care in which the child is placed is irrelevant because from the perspective, it is the first and foremost place where he is abandoned by the person he desperately wants to be with" (Waldfogel, Han, and Brooks-Gunn, 2002). This is to say that on the part of the children they feel they are been abandoned and this goes a long way to affect them psychologically. This also brings their socio-emotional feelings down and by so doing, the child wellbeing is not been taken care of. And work is seen here to be for mothers who are under paid employment.

Therefore, other "vacuums" between maternal employment and school also exist, making childcare even more complicated. For example, schools have frequent vacations, professional and national holidays which require parents and mothers particularly to use out of school day-care arrangements. The issue of leaving children unsupervised is even more complicated because some schools of thought believe that it has no negative influences on the emotional and intellectual development of children while others believe that self care can be an important step towards developing a sense of independence in children (Ogunleye, 1999 & Nwobi, 1995).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Conflict and role conflict theory was adopted as the theoretical framework of the study. The chief proponent of this theory is Karl Marx (1818-1883) who saw class conflict and class exploitation as the prime moving forces in history. The role conflict theory describes an incongruity between the expectations of one role and those of another and this conflict role often leads to difficulties in performing expected roles maximally. The relevance of this theory to this research cannot be overemphasized because it will help in understanding and explaining the difficulties that women experience in playing their roles as a mother to their children, a wife and also a worker in the labour market. As women struggle over these roles they inevitably experience role conflict (Okeke, 1994). When a woman becomes a mother, she can continue to perform the role of a wife, daughter, daughter-in-law and employee and each of this position are associated with its own roles or set of roles, which is the individual's range of relationship that accompanies any social status. This various roles can cause various physical and psychological problems. Therefore, levels of conflict vary across cultures as a result of different perceptions of gender roles and responsibilities (Moore, 1995). All this expectations are what leads to role conflict.

### **Methodology**

The study area of this research is Enugu Urban which is a state in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey research design was applied in the study. In other words, it describes the situation of things at a given point in time, using interview, questionnaire and other related methods (Obikeze, 1990; Stark,

2004). This type of research design is the most appropriate for this study because it will be geared towards establishing if an implication of working mothers has positive or negative effect on the wellbeing of children in Enugu Urban.

The researchers utilized a sample size of 200 respondents comprising of 100 fathers and 100 mothers. The mothers will be further be divided into 36 who work in the informal setting, 32 who work in the formal setting and also 32 who are non-employed for a near equal representation. The total number of 200 respondents will be shared into 50 for each of the respective study focus areas and will comprise of 25 fathers and 25 mothers. The father will be selected with the use of cluster sampling method while the mothers will be selected with the use of stratified sampling method which will enable the researcher to assign quotas to the 3 categories of women needed. Therefore, 25 mothers for the 4 different study focus areas will finally be divided into 9 women who work in the formal setting, 8 who work in the informal setting and 8 who are non-employed. .

## Findings

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	100	50
Female	100	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows the percentage distribution of respondents according to sex. Out of 200 respondents, 100(50%) are males while 100(50%) are females. This clearly shows that there is an equal representation of males and females in the sample size.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 – 28	31	15.5
29 – 38	62	31
39 – 48	43	21.5
49 – 58	46	23
59 & above	18	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows the distribution of respondents by age. 15.5% fall into the age category of 18-28, 31% fall into the category of 29-38, 21.5% fall into the category of 39-48, 23% fall into the category of 49-58 and finally 9% fall into the category of 59 and above.

**Table 3:** Distribution of respondents by marital status

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Married	184	92
Divorced /separated	4	2
Widow	9	4.5
widower	3	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows the distribution of respondents by marital status. 184(92%) of the respondents are married, 4(2%) respondents are divorced/separated, 9(4.5%) respondents are widows while 3(1.5%) respondents are widowers.

**Table 4:** Distribution of respondents by educational qualification

<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No formal education	13	6.5
First School Leaving Certificate	60	30
GCE/WAEC/SSCE	66	33
First degree	26	13
Other degrees	35	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows the distribution of respondents by educational qualification. 13(6.5%) respondents had no formal education, 60(30%) had FSLC, 66(33%) had GCE/WAEC/SSCE, 26(13%) had First degree while 35 (17.5%) had other degrees.

**Table 5:** Distribution of respondents by occupation

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Civil servants	68	34
Farmers	10	5
Trading/Self employed	70	35
Others	52	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows the distribution of respondents by occupation. 68(34%) respondents are civil servants, 10(5%) respondents are farmers, 70(35%) respondents are engaged in Trading/self employed while 52(26%) respondents are involved in other types of occupation.

**Table 6:** A lot of Mothers are Now Taking up Jobs Outside their Homes in Enugu Urban. Do You Think So?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	184	92
No	16	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table indicates that 184 (92%) are of the view that a lot of mothers are now taking up jobs outside their homes in Enugu urban while 16 (8%) do not think that a lot of mothers are now taking up jobs outside their homes.

**Table 7:** What are the Factors Responsible for the Decision of Mothers to Seek Employment Outside the Homes?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To contribute to family income	115	57.5
To avoid being idle at home	32	16
To increase feelings of self worth	17	8.5
All the three options	36	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, 115 (57.5%) respondents are of the view that mother's decision to seek employment outside the home is to contribute to family income, 32 (16%) respondents is of the view that mothers engage in employment to avoid being idle at home, 17 (8.5%) respondents believe that it is to increase feelings of self worth while 36 (18%) respondents chose all the three options identified.

**Table 8:** Does Mother's Employment Status Affects the Child's Wellbeing Negatively?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	116	58
Disagree	84	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows the responses of respondents as to whether mother's employment status affects the wellbeing of a child negatively. 116 (58%) respondents agreed to it while 84 (42%) respondents disagreed.

**Table 9: Working Mothers Have Little or no Time for Their Children**

<b>Response</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Working mothers have little or no time for their children	72	36
Working mothers leave early in the morning and return late in the day/night	45	22.5
Working mothers come home too tired to attend to their children's need	40	20
All the three options	43	21.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, 72 (36%) respondents believe that working mothers have little or no time for their children, 45 (22.5%) assert that working mothers leave early in the morning and return late in the day/night, 40 (20%) opined that working mothers come home too tired to attend to their children's need while 43 (21.5%) believe in all the three options given.

**Table 10: Are There Positive Effects of Mother's Employment on Their Children's Wellbeing?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	174	87
No	26	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table above, 174 (87%) respondents are of the view that there are positive effects of mother's employment on their children's wellbeing while 26 (13%) respondents say that there are no positive effects of mother's employment on their children's wellbeing.

**Table 11: If "Yes" to Question 12 What are the Positive Effects?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Working mothers can provide for all the children's needs	124	62
Working mothers can afford to pay caregivers	22	11
Working mothers encourage their children to be	17	8.5

independent	37	18.5
All the three options		
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, 124 (62%) respondents believe that working mothers can provide for all the children's needs, 22 (11%) respondents are of the view that working mothers can afford to pay caregivers, 17 (8.5%) respondents said that working mothers encourage their children to be independent while 37 (18.5%) respondents believe in all the three options given.

**Table 12:** Do You Feel that Working Mothers Tend to Experience Role Conflict More than Non-Working Mothers?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	133	66.5
No	67	33.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table indicates that 133 (66.5%) respondents are of the view that working mothers tend to experience role conflict more than non-working mothers while 67 (33.5%) respondents did not feel that working mothers experience role conflict more than non-working mothers.

**Table 13:** Women Who Engage in Paid Employment are Believed to Experience More Difficulties in Taking Care of Their Children Than Those not in Paid Employment.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	140	70
Disagree	60	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, 140 (70%) respondents agree that women who engage in paid employment experience more difficulties in taking care of their children than those not in paid employment while 60 (30%) respondents disagree that women in paid employment experience more difficulties in taking care of their children than those not in paid employment.



**Table 14:** What Strategies Should be Employed to Reduce the Problems Associated with Mother's Employment Outside their Home and Child's Wellbeing?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
It will be better for mothers to stay at home to focus on domestic responsibilities and childcare	36	18
Fathers should equally be involved in taking care of children	89	44.5
Government should put mothers on a welfare package	41	20.5
Parents should employ the services of a good caregiver	30	15
Other opinions	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows that 36 (18%) respondents said that it will be better for mothers to stay at home to focus on domestic responsibilities and childcare, 89 (44.5%) respondents is of the view that fathers should equally be involved in taking care of children, 41 (20.5%) respondents solicited for government to put mothers on a welfare package, 30 (15%) respondents are of the view that parents should employ the services of a good caregiver while 4 (2%) respondents believe that there are other opinions that are not mentioned.

### Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one, two and three will be tested using one way chi-square.

**Rules:** If the calculated chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value is greater than tabulated chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value, we reject the null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ). If the calculated chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value is less than the tabulated chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value, we accept the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ).

$H_1$ - Mothers' employment status affects the child's wellbeing negatively?

$H_0$ - Children of non-working mothers are more being cared for.

Child's wellbeing and non-working mothers	O	e	O - e	(O - e) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O - e)^2}{ef}$
Agree	116	100	16	256	25.6
Disagree	84	100	-16	256	25.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>				<b>51.2</b>

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(O - e)^2}{ef} \quad df = (n - 1)P = 0.05$$

$$\chi^2 = 51.2$$

$$df = n - 1, 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$\text{Table value} = 3.84$$

### Decision

Looking at the fact that the calculated value of 51.2 is greater than the table value 3.84 we reject the null hypothesis of children of non-working mothers being less cared for and accept the null hypothesis of mother's employment status to have negative effect of the child's wellbeing. We therefore conclude that the mother's employment status affects the child's wellbeing. In other words children of employed mothers are not being well cared for.

$H_2$  – Working mothers tend to experience more role conflict than non-working mothers.

$H_0$  – There is no significant implication of working mothers and child's wellbeing.

Response	O	e	O - e	(O - e) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O - e)^2}{ef}$
Yes	133	100	33	1089	10.9
No	67	100	33	1089	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>				<b>21.8</b>

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(O - e)^2}{ef} \quad df = (n - 1)P = 0.05$$

$$\chi^2 = 22$$

$$df = n - 1, 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$\text{Table value} = 3.84$$

### Decision

Since the calculated value of 21.8 is greater than the table value 3.84 we reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between working mothers and child's wellbeing then we accept that working mothers tend to experience more role conflict than non-working mothers.

$H_3$  – Women who engage in paid employment are believed to experience more difficulties in taking care of their children than those not in paid employment.

$H_0$  – There is no significant relationship between women's employment status and difficulties faced in taking care of their children.

Response	O	e	O - e	(O - e) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O - e)^2}{ef}$
Agree	140	100	40	1600	16
Disagree	60	100	- 40	1600	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>				<b>32</b>

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(O - e)^2}{ef} \quad df = (n - 1)P = 0.05$$

$$\chi^2 = 32$$

$$df = n - 1, 2 - 1 = 1$$

Table value = 3.84

**Decision**

The calculated value of  $\chi^2$  which is 32 is greater than the table value 3.84, the null hypothesis of no relationship is rejected while it is accepted that women who engage in paid employment experience more difficulties in taking care of their children than those not in paid employment.

**Summary/Conclusion**

From the findings, working mothers experience more role conflict and have a lot of challenges in taking care of their child. However, in the opinion of the respondents, the implication of working mothers on the child's wellbeing is more of negative than positive.

Aside from the financial support the child get from his/her working mother, the psychological and social needs of the child suffers. Looking at the fact that the mother barely have time for him/her and this goes a long way to affect the child's life decisions when him/her is not been corrected or properly advised on do's/don't it affects the child's behaviour. That's as a result of poor up-bringing or training. Even the child's academic perform also suffers which is part of the mechanism that makes up the child's wellbeing.

Child wellbeing can also be promoted if efforts to strengthen children's home environments are built into welfare-to-work programmes for mothers, which often involve job training, childcare assistance, and other related support.

**Recommendations**

There is little in the data collected in this research which suggest that mothers working or maternal employment is a social problem. However, it is glaring that working mothers experiences a lot of difficulties in taking care of their children which goes a long way to affect the child in other/several adverse ways.

Therefore it is recommended that mothers should plan their schedules in a way that the children will not suffer attention and lack of care. Mothers should make effort to be close to their children so as to facilitate the socio-emotional wellbeing by utilizing their days in the weeks and weekends properly.

With regards to the strategies to reduce the implication of working mothers of the children's wellbeing, we solicit that policy makers (government) think seriously again on the issue of setting up daycare centres (or crèche) to help the small but increasing number of mothers who have problem with getting/keeping house helps. Although there are daycare centres run by individuals, a number of them are ill-equipped and high standards are not maintained. As such, children are prone to mishaps in these centres. Therefore, government should carry out spot checks on these centres with a view to closing the substandard ones.

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