

Original Research Report



The Influence of Mothers' Occupations on Children's Upbringing: A Survey Research

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Abstract: This study investigated the influence of mothers' occupation on children's upbringing in the Udenu Local Government Area in Enugu State. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the feeding, clothing, academic, and health practices adopted by mothers in Enugu State. The study utilized a survey research design, focusing on the Udenu Local Government Area. A sample of three hundred respondents was used, and data was collected through questionnaires. The instrument was face validated by experts from the Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. To ensure reliability, a trial testing was conducted, resulting in a Cronbach alpha reliability estimate of 0.87. Data analysis involved frequency count and percentages. The findings revealed limited mother care in terms of children's feeding, clothing, health, and academic upbringing, which was attributed to the negative influence of the mothers' occupation. Recommendations were made to enhance children's upbringing, including an increase in maternity leave to allow mothers to spend quality time with their children.

Keywords: Childbearing, Children, Mother, Occupation, Upbringing

1. Introduction

Occupation can be defined as a person's primary work or business for earning a living (Ray & Elliott, 2016). It encompasses any activity in which an individual, particularly women or mothers, is engaged. For the purposes of this study, adult women of childbearing age will be referred to as mothers. In the past, women's (mothers') lives primarily revolved around household activities, while men (fathers) were the main breadwinners and held final authority (Adebayo, 2001). However, Odunaike (2012) argues that due to economic hardship and increased exposure to Western education, more mothers are now taking up paid employment, which often takes them away from their matrimonial home and impacts the proper upbringing of their children. The upbringing of children involves promoting and supporting their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development from infancy to adulthood (National Institute of Mental Health, 2016). The emergence of new economic patterns, hardships in the country, increased opportunities for education, rising standards of living, and modernization have led to mothers moving away from their traditional role as full-time caregivers and homemakers to join the workforce. The notion that men are the sole breadwinners is no longer sustainable. In today's economic realities, an increasing number of households rely on two earners to maintain a suitable standard of living and effectively raise children (Pianta et al., 1991).

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2007), women's labor force participation has increased over the past five decades. In 2006, out of the 2.9 billion workers worldwide, 1.2 billion were women. Similarly, Nwankwo (2005) reported that 68% of all women are working. The percentage of working women may rise from 64% during their child's preschool years to over 78% in middle childhood (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2002). As the number of working women continues to increase, it is clear that the social and economic position of Nigerian women, especially in Enugu State's Udenu Local Government area, is changing. More and more women are becoming salary earners both before and during marriage, which has significant implications for the pattern of family life, particularly in children's upbringing. Some of the changes in family life have made it difficult for men alone to meet the feeding, clothing, academic, and health needs of their children. Children's feeding patterns are crucial for their growth and development, especially during the early years of life. This includes breastfeeding, weaning, food nutrients, and nutritional values essential for their upbringing. Undernutrition, which can lead to malnutrition, is more prevalent among rural women (13%) compared to urban areas (10%), as reported in previous work from Nigeria, Ghana, and Burkina Faso (Campbell & Campbell, 2008; Azid et al., 2010). Mothers' occupation outside the home can contribute to improper diets not only for children but also for other family members.

Mothers' occupation can also influence children's clothing patterns. Nwadi (2012) states that clothing care patterns include laundering, storage, and mending clothes when necessary. Due to the numerous responsibilities in the family, the strain of occupation, and a lack of skills in clothing care, many mothers neglect the care of their children's clothing. The clothing patterns adopted by mothers for their children can range from fairly used to locally made, ready-to-wear, cooperative, or decent dresses. Anugwom (2005) argues that failing to meet children's clothing needs early in life can lead to mistrust and affect emotional stability and relationships with others. Additionally, a child's education is closely related to how they are treated at home. Nwankwo (2005) asserts that mothers are the first teachers of children and play a key role in shaping their character. Balancing education at home and school is crucial for children's upbringing and learning. Mothers can serve as role models, read with their children, and visit the library together to enhance their knowledge beyond classroom lessons.

Furthermore, good health is essential for proper growth and development in children, while poor health can hinder their progress. The child's health significantly depends on the care and guidance provided during the early years of life. The childhood period is a peak time for illnesses such as respiratory and gastrointestinal upsets. These minor illnesses, which are often handled by mothers within the family, provide opportunities for children to learn about health, illness, and empathy (Peterson, 2005). Mothers have the responsibility to provide optimal conditions, including a hygienic environment, clean water, adequate diet, and medical care, to maximize children's healthcare (Overseas Development Institute, 2016). Therefore, mothers have multidimensional contributions within a family that affect the happiness of all family members.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Although Anugwom (2009) argues that mothers' employment can be detrimental to child nutrition and well-being, financial assistance from mothers is often essential for the minimum survival of a family. On the other hand, the additional income from mothers' employment can benefit children's tuition fees, the purchase of academic accessories, and more, potentially compensating for any reductions in the quantity or quality of care and leading to improved academic outcomes (Eze et al., 2017; Usaini et al., 2015). Unfortunately, working mothers in Enugu State, especially in Udenu Local Government Area, often rely on other household members such as house helps, older siblings, extended family members, and neighbors to provide childcare. However, the quality of care provided by these substitutes may be inadequate. Considering this lack of proper mother care, there is cause for concern. The concern is heightened when considering the failure of mothers to properly raise their children. The influence of mothers' occupation on children's well-being can be both positive and negative (Anowai et al., 2022; Chopra, 1967; Pianta et al., 1991). Many children in Enugu State, particularly in Udenu Local Government Area, are not receiving the comprehensive development they need to become functional citizens in the face of global changes and challenges. This may be partly due to the negative influence of mothers' occupation. Therefore, it is important to determine the effect of mothers' occupation on children's upbringing in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of mothers' occupation on the upbringing of children in the Udenu Local Government Area. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the following:

- (a) The feeding patterns of children in the Udenu Local Government Area.
- (b) The clothing care patterns for children in the Udenu Local Government Area.
- (c) The effects of mothers' occupation on academic performances of children in the Udenu Local Government Area.
- (d) The health care practices for children in the Udenu Local Government Area.
- (e) The effects of mothers' occupation on children's upbringing in Udenu Local Government Area.
- (f) The solutions to the problems caused by mothers' occupation on children's upbringing.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- (a) What are the feeding patterns of children in Udenu Local Government Area adopted by their mothers?
- (b) What are the clothing care patterns for children in Udenu Local Government Area?
- (c) What are the effects of mothers' occupation on academic performance of children in Udenu Local Government Area?
- (d) What are the healthcare practices for children in Udenu Local Government Area?
- (e) What are the effects of mothers' occupation on children's upbringing in Udenu Local Government Area?
- (f) What are the solutions to the problems caused by mothers' occupation on children's upbringing?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design for the Study

The study utilized a survey research design.

2.1.1. Ethics Statement

In addition to receiving ethics approval from the Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education, University of Nigeria, the authors also distributed and collected informed consent forms from all respondents.

2.2. Area of the Study

The study focused on Udenu Local Government Area in Enugu State, Nigeria. Udenu L.G.A. was chosen due to its sufficient population of working mothers engaged in various occupations, which allowed for effective data collection. The study specifically focused on the rural areas of Udenu local government, where the majority of mothers are non-literate. Udenu local government area in Enugu state is comprised of several towns, including Orba, Obollo-Afor, Obollo, Imilike, Amala, Obollo-Eke, Ezimo, Igugu, Umundu, and others.

2.3. Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of 131,421 mothers residing in the rural areas of Enugu State. According to the Federal Office of Statistics, the total population of women in Enugu State in 2006 was 1,633,096. The population of women in Enugu North or Nsukka zone, according to the 2006 census, was 123,227, while Enugu East and West had populations of 146,273 and 10,462 respectively (Nwadi, 2012). The population of mothers in the 162 rural communities in Enugu State was 1,311,121 (Federal Office of Statistics). The sample for the study consisted of 300 mothers residing in Udenu Local Government Area. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select respondents for the study. In the first stage, one local government area (Udenu) was chosen from Enugu North (Igbo eze, Igbo etiti, Isiuzo, Uzouwani, Nsukka, and Udenu). The second stage involved the selection of rural communities or areas. Out of the 30 communities in Udenu local government area, ten were purposively selected. From each selected rural community, 30 mothers were purposively selected. Overall, the total sample size for the study was 300 women residing in the rural areas of Udenu local government area, including Imilike elu, Ajuona, Ogboduaba, Igugu, Amala, Imilike ala, Ezimo, Orba, Obollo Eke, and Obollo Afor. The mothers were approached at their farms, offices, markets, and business areas.

2.4. Instrument for Data Collection and Study Procedure

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire developed based on the research questions. The questionnaire was face-validated by three Home Economics lecturers. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, 30 copies were administered to mothers living in rural areas of Ebonyi State. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient index was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, yielding a coefficient of 0.87.

2.5. Data Collection Technique

Three hundred copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. For illiterate respondents, the questionnaire served as an interview schedule, and their responses were recorded.

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

To accurately analyze the collected data, frequency and simple percentage were used to answer all research questions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Research Question 1: What are the feeding patterns of children in Udeno Local Government Area adopted by their mothers?

Table 1: Mean scores of responses results on the children's feeding patterns

Options	Frequency	Percentage %	Decision
Gives breast to the child first after birth	224	74.5	Agree
Exclusive breastfeeding is appropriate for a child in the first six months	196	65.3	Agree
Feeds their children with home grown foods e.g. maize, yam, beans, rice, etc.	232	77.3	Agree
Feeds their children with finished/fast food such as custard, golden morn, cornflakes, etc	218	72.3	Disagree
Provides in-between meal for children within the ages of 2 to 7years	208	69.3	Agree

The data in Table 1 indicates that all five items, except one, have been accepted as the feeding pattern for children by mothers in Enugu State. The percentages for each item are as follows: 74.5%, 65.3%, 77.3%, 72.3%, and 69.3%.

3.2. Research Question 2: What are the clothing care patterns for children in Udeno Local Government Area?

Table 2. Mean scores of responses results on children's clothing patterns

Options	Frequency	Percentage %	Decision
Buying fairly used clothes	270	90	Agree
Putting on locally made wears	222	77.3	Agree
Ready to wear fabrics during festivities.	174	58.3	Disagree
Corporate dresses made of locally sourced fabrics	238	79.3	Disagree
Decent dresses during religious exercises	182	60.3	Disagree

Table 2 shows that only items 1 and 2 were accepted as the clothing patterns for children by mothers in the area. The percentages for these items are 90% and 77.3%, respectively. Items 3, 4, and 5 were not accepted as the clothing patterns, with percentages of 58.3%, 79.3%, and 60.3%, respectively.

3.3. **Research Question 3:** What are the effects of mothers' occupation on academic performance of children in Udeno Local Government Area? Page | 192

Table 3: Mean scores of responses on effects of mothers' occupation on the academic performance of children

Options	Frequency	Percentage %	Decision
Mothers' occupation risks children academic performance	200	66.6	Agree
Lack of attention by mothers encourages lateness to school	242	80.6	Agree
Moving out of home early in the morning to return late from work/office threaten mothers on educating the children at home	232	77.3	Agree
Children of a working mothers do not perform better than the children of a non-working mother academically	244	80.1	Agree
Working mothers do not have time to assist her children in doing assignments	180	60	Agree

In Table 3, all five items were accepted as the effects of a mother's occupation on the education/academic performance of children in Udeno. The percentages for each item are 66.6%, 80.6%, 77.6%, 80.1%, and 60%.

3.4. **Research Question 4:** What are the healthcare practices for children in Udeno Local Government Area?

Table 4: Mean scores of responses on children's health care practices

Options	Frequency	Percentage %	Decision
Mothers give their children adequate diet	238	79.3	Disagree
Mothers keep hygienic environment	176	58.6	Disagree
The mothers administer correct drugs	232	77.3	Disagree
The mothers keep adequate medical care	284	95.3	Disagree
The mothers provide clean water for children's consumption	208	69.3	Disagree

Table 4 shows that all five items were rejected as the children's healthcare practices by mothers. The percentages for each item are 79.3%, 58.6%, 77.3%, 95.3%, and 69.3%.

3.5. Research Question 5: What are the effects of mothers' occupation on children's upbringing in Udeno Local Government Area?

Table 5: Mean scores of responses on effects of mothers' occupation on children's upbringing

Options	Frequency	Percentage %	Decision
Child abuse	214	71.3	Agree
Low academic performance	198	66	Agree
High rate of immoral behavior	222	77.3	Agree
Inadequate feeding or underfeeding	256	85.3	Agree
Children with low self-esteem	266	88.7	Agree
Inadequate parenting skills	290	96.6	Agree

In Table 5, all six items were accepted as the problems of a mother's occupation on children's upbringing in the local government areas. The percentages for each item are 71.3%, 66%, 77.3%, 85.3%, 88.7%, and 96.7%.

3.6. Research Question 6: What are the solutions to the problems caused by mothers' occupation on children's upbringing?

Table 6: Mean scores of responses on solutions to the problems of mothers' occupation

Options	Frequency	Percentage %	Decision
Government should increase the maternity leave for childbearing mothers in order to enable them have a quality time to raise their children	238	79.3	Agree
Mother should be allowed to close work earlier than normal in order to take care of their wards the first six months	266	88.6	Agree
Government should provide childcare centers and healthcare centers for working-class mothers.	210	70	Agree
Mothers should minimize the transfer of maternal care to nanny and older siblings	280	93.3	Agree
Government should organize a workshop/Home Economics Extension program to educate mothers on children's upbringing and career	254	84.3	Agree

The data in Table 6 above indicates that all five items were accepted as solutions to the problems of a mother's occupation on children's upbringing in the areas of feeding, clothing, health, and education. The percentages for each item are as follows: 238 (79.3%), 266 (88.6%), 210 (70%), 280 (93.3%), and 254 (84.3%).

The findings in Table 1 show that mothers living in the Udeno Local Government Area in Enugu state adopted most of the children's feeding patterns but were deficient in others. This is in

agreement with Yauarnistira et al. (2019), who studied the factors influencing the feeding patterns of under-five children in coastal areas. Their results showed a significant correlation between the efficacy of fulfilling nutrition ($p=0.039$) and lifestyle ($p=0.000$), with lifestyle being the most influential factor. Cultural values, particularly the efficacy of fulfillment, nutrition, and lifestyle, were found to have a significant correlation with feeding patterns, while the level of education, knowledge, and norms showed no significant results. Mothers need to adopt exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and feed their children with finished foods such as custard, Golden Morn, confluence, and so on. The findings in Table 2 show the children's clothing patterns by mothers in the Udeno Local Government area. Respondents agreed that mothers in Udeno adopted fairly used clothes, and that children wore locally made wears. However, they disagreed on ready-to-wear fabrics during festivities, cooperative dresses made of locally sourced fabrics, and decent dresses during religious exercises. This is in conformity with Oluah (2005), who appraised the clothing management practices of mothers in Enugu State and concluded that mothers in Enugu state do not recycle old clothes, buy washing machines to help with clothing maintenance, or dress their children decently. Findings in Table 3 show that all respondents agreed that mothers' occupation risks children's academic performance. Lack of attention from mothers encourages lateness to school, and the early morning departure and late return from work/office threaten mothers' attention to educating their children at home. Additionally, children of working mothers do not perform better academically than children of non-working mothers, and mothers have insufficient time to assist their children with assignments. Domenico and Jones (2006), Dubey and Tiwari (2014), and Van der Horst et al. (2014) believe that factors such as family demands, number of kids, and time constraints prevent many mothers from entering or staying in the workforce. This is in line with Barling et al. (1999), who examined how parental job insecurities affected children's school success and found that it resulted to learning problems at school. The findings in Table 4 show that respondents agreed that mothers providing their children with an adequate diet, maintaining a hygienic environment, administering proper drugs or adequate medical care, and providing clean water for children's consumption enhance children's healthcare practices. This is in line with Akhtar et al. (2012), who believe that the feeding pattern and nutritional status of children under two should be enhanced to aid their healthcare practices. Findings in Table 5 also reveal that respondents agreed that a mother's occupation leads to child abuse, low self-esteem, low academic performance, high rates of immoral behavior, inadequate or underfeeding, and inadequate parenting skills. This is in line with Kalmijn (1994), who states that children with low self-esteem are direct products of working mothers. The findings in Table 6 identify solutions to the problems associated with a mother's occupation on children's upbringing in the areas of feeding, clothing, health, and education. Respondents accepted that the government should increase maternity leave for childbearing mothers to enable them to have quality time to raise their children. This is in line with Weller and Duncombe (1974), who state that a woman's occupation affects her behavior, attitude, and practices towards healthcare.

4. Conclusion

Mothers' occupation has a negative influence on children's feeding, clothing, health, and academic upbringing. It was observed that one of the reasons mothers introduce cereals early to their infants is because the longer the length of mothers' working hours, the less likely they are to breastfeed or take care of the children. Hence, there is a relationship between mothers' occupation, childcare experiences, and various outcomes in children's upbringing. The study also revealed that early maternal

employment was found to be associated with beneficial outcomes when families were at risk due to financial challenges, especially in families where children of working mothers showed high levels of achievement and low levels of internalizing. The dual roles of women can be stressful and challenging; therefore, mothers' occupation should not hinder the proper management of the home, and the traditional roles of women should not hinder the pursuit of one's occupation. Adequate maternity leave should be granted to childbearing mothers in Udenu. The organization of workshops and home economics extension programs to educate mothers on children's upbringing will be helpful. The government should provide child and healthcare centers for working-class mothers in villages to enlighten women on healthy child upbringing.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

The study's conceptualization, methodology, writing, data collection, analysis and revision were equally performed by CLN, MNE and GMN.

Data Availability Statement

The dataset used for this study is available on request. For further inquiries can consult the authors.

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