

**WORKING (NURSING) MOTHERS AND CRECHE FACILITIES
IN AKURE SOUTHWEST NIGERIA.**

BY

**OMOTOSHO, BABATUNDE JOSHUA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF ADO EKITI,
EKITI STATE, NIGERIA**

E-Mail: tuntoy20032003@yahoo.com
TEL.: +234-08034916034

**BEING A POSTER PRESENTATION AT THE 5TH AFRICAN
POPULATION CONFERENCE 10-14 2007
ARUSHA, TANZANIA**

ABSTRACT

The need to ensure that children are well catered for in order to reduce child mortality arising from malnutrition necessitated the formulation of exclusive breastfeeding policy in Nigeria for all mothers. This study therefore considered the availability of these facilities; knowledge, attitude and practise of working (nursing) mothers to these facilities, and factors affecting the patronage or otherwise of the facilities in Ondo state secretariat, Akure, Ondo State Nigeria. The study adopted quantitative (one hundred and twenty questionnaires) and qualitative methods (twenty IDI).

Findings revealed that a crèche centre was available in the organisation and most respondents (83.0%) were aware of the centre. The attitude of the mothers to this centre was low, as patronage was equally low (40.0%). Chi-square result showed that significant relationship existed between variables tested. The study recommends ways by which the aim of the facility will be achieved in the country.

Introduction and statement of problem

The purpose of the family as a social institution in all societies whether simple or complex is to perpetuate the society by providing it with new members, to protect the child until he is able to take care of himself and to train him in socially acceptable behaviour. In African societies the duty of taking care of infants usually rests on women. Thus women in the traditional system were by social and physiological make-up responsible for child rearing and home keeping (Palmer, 2001). However with the dawn of modernisation, it became difficult or almost impossible for some mothers to fully cater for their babies as it used to be. Several women became engaged in paid employment either because of economic reason or the need to improve their status (United Nations, 1995). Findings further show that mothers' work load in paid employment has significant relationship with the early initiation of complementary feeding (Nerlove, 1974, Winnikof, Castle and Laukaran 1988; United Nations, 1995 and Oppong, 2001). This has implications for the long-held traditional structure of the family more especially the physiological and psychological wellness of the baby. Children suffering from malnutrition became increased, leading to child mortality as a result of inadequate breast milk and mothers' attention and care. (Haddad, Ruel and Garrett, 1999; and Haggerly and Rutslein, 1999).

One of the problems working mothers face is where to leave their children when they are away at work. The implications of this for the psychological and sociological wellbeing of the mother in the work place cannot be overemphasised. (Mbilinyi, 1990 and UNO, 1995). Reports have indicated that women generally work longer hours than men in all regions (sub Sahara Africa inclusive) and the number of hours outside the home is increasing (Anker 1994 and UNO, 1995). This without doubt makes it important for them to have access to day care centre close to their work place. It appears that reverse is the case as they are still not able to get crèche centres of their choice within the work environment. United Nations has affirmed the importance of breastfeeding to infants at large in three key document provided by ILO (2005). These documents recognise the right of working mothers to breastfeeding their infants (ILO, 2005). Government in different countries have also taken a cue from these initiatives thereby stating the rights of infants and mothers to adequate and consistent information and support in child health and nutrition (UNO, 1995). In Nigeria several steps have been taken in this direction also especially with the promulgation of policy regarding work place crèche in 2001 (National Child Policy,

2006). But in practise, women employed in various workplaces face many different obstacles to breastfeeding one of which is due to lack of information and access to well established and equipped crèche centre within the work environment (Oppong, 2001; Lashmi and Holla, 2004). Some managers within some organisations make the matter worse with their attitude regarding nursing mothers. For instance, many employees don't allow mothers to be hampered with family responsibilities and most mothers don't usually have access to day care facilities due to distance barrier and this may of course hinder exclusive breastfeeding. (Adepoju and Oppong 1998).

In Nigeria presently, crèche facilities appear to be blossoming all over the place while at the same time genuine child care facilities in these centres may be few. Most centres available are owned by private organisations and most of them appear to be motivated by profit (Lashmi and Holla, 2004). In the work place environment across Nigeria, crèche centre appears scanty. The attitude of the government as regards the provision of crèche facilities and its regulations is not encouraging. It therefore becomes important in this study to understand whether mothers within the workplace are aware of these facilities; their perception and patronage of these centres. Based on the issues raised above, the following questions become imperative in this study:

Research Questions

- a. Are working mothers aware of crèche facilities in their organisation?
- b. What is their attitude towards this organisation?
- c. What is their behavioural disposition towards these centres?
- d. What are the reasons for their behavioural disposition towards available crèche facilities?

Objectives of study

The general objective of this study is working (nursing) mothers and crèche facilities state secretariat Ondo state. The specific objectives are to:

- a. Establish the level and sources of awareness of working mothers to crèche facilities in their organisation
- b. Understand the perception of working mothers towards crèche facilities in the selected organisation
- c. Examine the number of working mothers patronising crèche facilities in the selected organisation

- d. Investigate factors responsible for the patronage or otherwise of the facilities within the selected organisation.

The method

The study focused on working (nursing) mothers in state government secretariat, Ondo state south West Nigeria. A total of one hundred and twenty respondents were selected through purposive sampling techniques over five major ministries across the secretariat. The reason for this sampling procedure was because of the nature of the research which had to look for nursing mothers. In eliciting data from the respondent, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. On quantitative method of data collection, questionnaires containing open ended and closed-ended questions were used. Qualitative data involved the use of in-depth interview to capture deeper meanings and insights into the research. A total number of twenty respondents were selected for the in-depth interview. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed accordingly. The questionnaires were analyzed through statistical package for social science (SPSS) software while the in-depth interview was analyzed and quoted where necessary to support the data from questionnaire.

Table1: Socio-Economic Background of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
22-25	19	16.0
26-30	46	38.0
31-35	37	31.0
36-40	18	15.0
Total	120	100.0
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	106	88.0
Divorced	7	6.0
Single	7	6.0
Total	120	100.0
Educational attainment	Frequency	Percentage
B.SC	54	45.0
HND	41	34.0
N.C.E	16	13.0

OND	9	8.0
Total	120	100.0
Ministries/Department	Frequency	Percentage
Education	21	17.5
Finance	36	30.0
Commerce and Industry	28	23.3
Justice	17	14.2
Environment	18	15.0
Total	120	100.0
Monthly income	Frequency	Percentage
Below 7, 500	14	11.7
N7, 501- N17, 500	34	28.3
N17, 501- N27, 500	48	40.0
N27, 501-N37, 500	16	13.3
N37, 501 and above	8	6.7
Total	120	100.0

The table above describes the socio-economic and background of working mothers in State Secretariat Ondo state. Majority of the respondents were between ages 28 and 30 years (38.0 percent). This was followed by age 31 to 35 years (31.0 percent). The rest on the table were ages 22-25 years (16.0 percent) and 36- 40 years (15.0 percent) respectively.

On the marital status, most respondents (88.0 percent) claimed they were married while others were single (6.0 percent), divorced (6.0 percent) and single mothers (6.0 percent) respectively. On educational status of the respondents, data above showed that most respondent interviewed had formal education. Majority of the respondents interviewed claimed that they had university Bachelors' degree (45.0 percent) while the least on the table had Ordinary Diploma Certificate (8.0 percent). This may not be surprising considering the academic antecedents of the state. The state is known for its interest in academic pursuits and it is often regarded as one of the most educated state in the country.

Data on ministry or departments of the respondents showed that 17. 5 percent were from the Ministry of Education, 30.0 percent of the total respondents also came

from Ministry of Finance, while 23.3 percent were from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Further, 14.2 percent of the distribution came from the Ministry of Justice and the rest (15.0 percent) were from Ministry of Environment. As regards the monthly income of the respondents, data revealed that majority of the respondents earned between N17, 501 and N27, 500 monthly while 6.7 percent earned the highest income N37, 501 and above. This may be as a result of the fact that most respondents were below 40 years and were in early stages of their career.

Table 2: Respondents' Awareness of Crèche Facilities

Level of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Aware	100	83.0
Not aware	20	17
Total	120	100.0
Sources of knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Friends	24	24.0
Advertisement	11	11.0
Colleagues	65	65.0
Total	100	100.0
Whether they believe the information was adequate	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	54	45.0
No	66	55.0
Total	120	100.0

Table 2 above describes awareness of the respondents as regards crèche centre in their organization and how they became aware. Data above reveals that most respondents (83.0 percent) were aware of the existence of crèche facilities within their secretariat complex while 17.0 percent of the nursing mothers claimed they were not aware of the existence of such facility. Those respondents that claimed they were aware attributed their source of awareness to colleagues in the workplace (65.0 percent); advertisement through fliers or notices on the boards (11.0 percent); and through friends within and outside the workplace (24.0 percent). In the In depth interview conducted, one of the respondents further opined thus:

Well, when you get to a workplace as a working mother nursing a baby, definitely you must have friends that you associate with in your department or elsewhere... My friends, I mean my colleagues were the ones that informed me of the existence of a day care centre. They said that is where they normally drop their children... (IDI: Female, 2006)

Further, data showed that 45.0 percent of the respondents believed that the information as regard the existence of the facility was adequate. The remaining respondents 55.0 percent felt the information was inadequate. In the in depth interview conducted a number of reasons were attributed to the inadequacy of the information. One of the IDI respondents gave his remarks on why she felt the information regarding the centre was inadequate. Her remarks:

If you are a first timer in the organization, you may not easily locate it except you are very familiar with the place. I think nothing stops them from having their signpost at the entrance of the complex so that it will be easy to locate where their organization is without anybody describing the place for you... (IDI: Female, 2006)

Table 3: Perception and Patronage of This Centre by Nursing Mothers

Assessment of their services	Frequency	Percentage
Impressed	62	52.0
Not impressed	58	48.0
Total	120	100.0
Reasons for being impressed	Frequency	Percentage
My child receives adequate treatment	19	30.6
I am able to focus on my work	43	69.4
Total	62	100.0
Reasons for not being impressed	Frequency	Percentage
My child is not well taken care of	29	50.0
I don't like the environment	21	36.2
They are incompetent	8	13.8
Total	58	100.0
Whether they have alternatives apart from	Frequency	Percentage

the one on ground		
Yes	65	54.0
No	55	46.0
Total	120	100.0
Assessment of the activities of crèche centres	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	44	34.0
Good	74	62.0
Poor	2	2.0
Total	120	100.0
Whether they patronized it or not	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	48	40.0
No	72	60.0
Total	120	100.0
Whether they will continue to patronise the centre	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	45.8
No	26	54.2
Total	48	100.0
If yes why	Frequency	Percentage
Effectiveness in work performance	7	14.6
My child always look neat and healthy	11	22.9
Closing time fits with my personal arrangement	24	50.0
Just feel so	6	12.5
Total	48	100.0

The table above examines how working (nursing) mothers perceives the crèche organisation, whether they patronise the place and whether or not they would do so in future. From the data above, respondents' assessment of the centre showed that 52.0 percent felt that the place has benefited working mothers while 48.0 percent did not believe so. For those who felt it has benefited them, they were asked to give reasons why it has benefited them and some of the responses given

were that their children received adequate attention in the centre (30.6 percent) and that they were able to focus more on their work schedule when their children are away with care givers (69.4 percent). The in depth interview (IDI) best captures the argument put forward by the working mothers. One of the statements of the respondents during the IDI is stated below:

I think the place is okay as far as am concerned. I think the major reason for the establishment of crèche centre in the work vicinity is for you as a mother to go and see your baby any time you want. I am able to do that; I can go to the place anytime and nurse my baby. That is all I want as far as day care is concerned. (IDI: Female, 2006)

On the other hand, those who disagreed and felt that they were not impressed attributed it to a number of factors. Some of their reasons were that the centre could not take good care of their children (50.0 percent); others argued that the operators are incompetent (13.8 percent) while the rest of the respondents were not comfortable with the environment (36.2 percent). A respondent who disagreed gave her opinion during the IDI. Her remarks:

I don't like the place at all. The place is not well managed. If you go there you will discover that they are not operating in a good environment and it is even too small for the children. Apart from that, they are not equipped with facilities that your children can play with. Your baby will just contract diseases due to unhygienic condition of the place because there are pests, flies everywhere. (IDI: Female, 2006)

Data on the table above examines whether the respondents had other alternatives apart from the centre within their work place. From the table, 54.0 percent claimed they had alternatives while 46.0 percent responded that they had no alternatives. Respondents gave several alternatives apart from the centre and it is summed up in the IDI report below:

It is not compulsory that my baby must be there (crèche centre). I have house help and I bring her to my office so that she can take care of my child and at the same time, I can attend to my baby if my attention is needed.... I am a native of this place, I can take the baby to my mother... but I prefer the house help... (IDI: Female, 2006)

As regards the assessment of their activities, 62.0 percent of the total respondents gave a good pass mark to the centre while 34.0 percent and 2.0 percent of the respondent gave excellent and poor pass marks respectively. On whether the nursing mothers patronised the place, 40.0 percent claimed they did while the rest

(60.0 percent) argued that they put their children elsewhere. They were further asked whether they would continue to patronise the place in future; 45.8 percent felt they would while 54.0 percent did not think so. Some of the reasons given by those who felt they would patronise the place in future were that their children looked neat and healthy 22.9 percent; staff of the centre were effective in discharging their duties 14.6 percent; other respondents argued that the closing time of the centre fitted with their work schedule (50.0 percent) and the rest of the distribution (12.5 percent) could not give any reason why they would continue to patronise the place. Responses of the nursing mothers during the in depth interview on whether they would continue to patronise the centre or not and reasons for doing so are stated below:

That place has really helped me in discharging my duty effectively. My job is very demanding. Once he (baby) is there with them I find it easy to concentrate during the working hours. If there is any problem, they can come to my office or if I am less busy and I feel like seeing him during the working hours, I can walk there without any stress. (IDI: Female, 2006).

Another respondent who was not satisfied with the services rendered gave her reasons. Her remarks:

I feel the people in charge of the organisation may not be able to perform effectively until the government is up and doing as far as the centre is concerned. The state government must come to their aid. It is not a business that should be given to private hands to manage solely. If the government can step into the management of the organisation, I believe they will be able to render better services. (IDI: Female, 2006)

Test of Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were formulated for the study. They were tested using Pearson chi-square statistical method of analysis. The hypotheses are stated below:

Hypothesis I: Income of working (nursing) mothers has a significant relationship with their attitude to crèche facilities. The result showed that significant relationship existed between the variables tested ($X^2 = 200.3$, d f = 4). Findings from the data reveal that the higher the income of the nursing mothers, the lower the patronage of the crèche facility within the organisation. Respondents appeared to consider their social status with the choice of crèche centre.

Hypothesis II: The opinion of friends and colleagues has significant relationship with the patronage of crèche facility within the organisation. Based on the statistical result ($X^2=195.1$, d f = 4), a significant relationship existed between the opinions of friends and colleagues and the patronage of crèche facility within the organisation. Respondents may patronise this centre if they are duly informed and persuaded by their colleagues and friends especially if such friend or colleague also patronises the centre.

Hypothesis III: The level of education of the respondent determines the patronage of crèche centre within the organisation. Finding from the chi-square analysis revealed that a significant relationship existed between education level and patronage of crèche centre ($X^2 = 8.25$, d f = 9). Respondents with university degrees and Higher National Diplomas (HND) tend to be more concerned about the choice of day care centres. This finding may complement the statistical result presented above on income and patronage of crèche centres.

Summary of Findings

This study has attempted to understand working mothers and crèche facilities in state secretariat Ondo state southwest Nigeria. The following are the major findings from the study:

Majority of the respondents were aware of the existence of crèche facility within their organisation. They claimed that they became aware through their colleagues and friends in the workplace.

Less than half of the respondents sampled for the study patronised the centre. Majority of them claimed that they had alternatives which are better than the services provided by the crèche centre in their workplace. Respondents patronising the centre claimed they did so based on the fact that it enabled them concentrate on their work while performing their official duties in the workplace. Over half of the respondents further argued that they might not patronise the centre in future.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The work has shown that respondents are aware of the existence of crèche facilities in their work vicinity but their perception and patronage do not commensurate their awareness of the facility. Majority of the respondents did not

want to patronise the centre based on the fact that the environment is up to the standard expected of the nursing mothers. Majority of the respondents that were well educated and receiving a higher income did not want to patronise the place due to the fact that the place did not measure up to their socio-economic status.

In line with the above, the study hereby makes the following suggestions with the hope that it will encourage nursing mothers within the organisation to patronise the centre.

There is need to improve the standard of the place. Majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the environment and the facilities provided by the centre. The government seems to be unconcerned about the running of the centre. Based on observation on the existing centres in other government institutions across the south west Nigeria, crèche centres are mostly operated by private bodies. Government needs to be involved in the running of the centre. A committee might need to be set up under the ministry of women affairs to see to the monitoring and regulation of the centre in order to ensure that it measures up to standard. Government can also assist the private bodies operating the centre to improve the standard of the place. This could be by providing equipment necessary for smooth running of a standard crèche centre as applicable elsewhere. Private bodies operating within the secretariat may not be able to provide such services considering the fees they charge their 'civil servant' clients. This is because their clients (nursing mothers) may not be able to afford such fees considering their economic status as civil servants. When this is done it would be a form of assistance to working mothers within the organisation and this may bring about more commitment and productivity.

References

- Anker, R. (1994). "Measuring Women's Participation in the African Labour Force." In Adepoju and Oppong eds. Gender, Work and Population.
- Haddad, P.A., Ruel, M.T., and Garrett, J.L (1999). Are Urban Poverty and Undernutrition Growing? Some Newly assembled Evidence. World Development vol 27. 11. 1891-1904.
- Haggerly, P.A and Rustlein, S.O. (1999). breastfeeding and Complementary Infant feeding and the Post partum Effects of Breastfeeding, Demographic and Health Surveys Comparative Studies. No. 30 Calverton Maryland: Macro International Inc.
- International Labour Organisation, (2005). Recommendation Related to Breastfeeding and Employed Mothers. Findings from the ILO Condition of Work and Employment Database. www.mch.dhs.ca.gov/document.
- Lashmi, M. and Holla, (2004). Towards Healthy Mothers and Children. A Gender and Right Approach to Breastfeeding Promotion. Paper Presented for Discussion at WABA's Gender Strategy Meeting in Penang Malaysia. 2-3 dec.
- Mbilinyi, M.L., (1990). Structural Adjustment, Agribusiness and Rural Women. In Bernstein et al eds. The Food Question, Eaiihscan.
- National Child Policy (3rd draft)(2006). www.fmwa.gov.ng/3RD_DRAFT.pdf.
- Nerlove, S.P., (1974). Women's Workload and Infant Feeding Practises: A Relationship with Demographic Implication. Ethnology, 13: 2.
- Oppong, C. (2001). Globalisation and the Distruption of Mother Care. Research Review W S 17.1.
- Palmer, M., (2001). Dilemmas of Political Development: An Introduction to the Politics of the Developing areas. Florida, P.E Peacock.
- United Nations Organisations, (1985). Socio-Economic Differentials in Child Mortality in Developing Countries. New York.
- Winikoff, B. Castle, M.A and Laukaran V.H. (1988). Feeding Infants in Four Societies: Causes and Consequences of Mothers' Choices. Westport CT.