

COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IN DAYCARE: A CASE STUDY OF WORKING MOTHERS IN ADO-EKITI

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to find out the perception of working mothers on the cognitive and social development of children in daycare in Ado-Ekiti. The study employed the descriptive research of the survey type. The population was all working mothers in all day care centers in Ado-Ekiti while the sample consisted of 200 working mothers purposively selected from 10 day daycare centers. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Two research questions were raised and the data generated were analysed using simple percentages and chi-square. Findings from the study showed that working mothers agreed there are cognitive and social development of children who attend daycare, although few mothers indicated that their children exhibit negative behaviour. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that government, working establishments and private companies should establish daycare centers for staff, which are likely to produce high quality environment in which children can thrive. Also, good daycare centers should be provided for a child to enhance good behavior both at home and in school.

Keywords: cognitive, social, daycare, working mothers, non-profit daycare centers, for-profit daycare centers.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings undergo processes of development from the moment of conception and this development is subjected to both qualitative and quantitative change. Quantitative change is a change in number or amount such as growth in height; weight, vocabularly, aggressive behavior or frequency of communication while qualitative change is a change in kind, structure or organization. Among domains of development are physical, cognitive which is change or stability in mental abilities such as learning, attention, memory, language, thinking, reasoning and creativity and psycho-social development which is change and stability in emotions, personality and social relationships. (Papilla, olds and Feldman, 2003)

There are three approaches to child development as stated papilla, olds and Feldman (2003). These are the behaviourist approach, psychometric approach and Piagetian approach. According, to them, the behaviourist believes that babies are born with the ability to learn from what they see, hear, smell, taste and touch, and that they have some ability to remember what they learn. Piagetian approach is on cognitive stage theory. He described cognitive development as occurring in four qualitatively different stages which represent universal patterns of development. He viewed cognitive development as the product of children's efforts to understand and act on their world.

Psychometric approach is the approach to the study of cognitive development that seeks to measure the quantity of intelligence a person possesses and among the submission was that socio-economic status, parenting practices and the home environment may affect intelligence (Neisseria, Boodoo, Bouchard, Boykin, Brody, Ceci, Halpern, Loehlin, perloff, Sternberg and Urbina, (1996), Caldwell & Bradley, (1984).

Over the years, patterns of family life are shifting. With the economic situation in the nation, mothers now leave home to hustle for continuous existence, both in rural and urban centers. According to Bureau of Labour Statistics (2002), more than half (50.6 percent) of mothers of infants in their first year of life and 56 percent of women with children under 3 were in the labour force in 2001. Complementing this, Osanyin (2004) observed that approximately about 80% of Nigerian families are in the labour force of one sort or another. This means working mothers today spend much time each work day away from their homes and children which could definitely take a toll on the children especially on their intelligence as submitted by Nersseria et al (1996).

Child care is provided in Nurseries or Creche or by a nanny or family childcare provider, caring for children in their own homes. It can also take on a more formal structure, with education, child development, discipline and even pre-school education falling into the fold of services. According to Wikipedia (2006), the service is known as child care in the United Kingdom and Australia and childcare or day care in North America.

Researches have shown that day cares are of two types; namely; non-profit daycare and profit-oriented daycare centers (Friendly and McCain, 2008). According to them, non-profit daycare centers are much more likely to produce the high quality environments in which children thrive. They believe they may receive preferential treatment in rents, especially if they are affiliated with a church that is otherwise unoccupied during the week, or with a school that has surplus space. Friendly and McCain (2008) are of the opinion that location within a school may further bring the advantage of coordinated programmes with the school and the advantage of a single location for parents who have older school-age children as well. However, non-profits are typically limited in size to a single location as the parents-owners have no motivation to manage other locations where their children are not present and since they are the legal owners, they provide consulting services for free. For profit-oriented daycares, they are operated by a single individual out of their home. This can be a stay-at-home parent, who seeks supplemental income while caring for their own child. As stated by them, non-profit based daycares have an advantage in fund-raising as most people will not donate to a profit-oriented organization.

Studies have shown that good daycare for non-infants is not harmful while some advocate that day care is inherently inferior to parental care (Erel, Oberman and Yirimiya, 2000). Anderson (1998) states that children provided with daycare are more sociable, more popular and deal with peers better than those raised at home. In some cases, good daycare can provide different experiences than parental care does. In a study by National Institute of Health released in 2007, after following children through early childhood to the 6th grade, it was found that the children who received a higher quality of child care scored higher on 5th grade vocabulary tests than the children who had attended child care of a lower quality. The study also reported that teachers found children from childcare to be disobedient, fight more frequently and more argumentative. Although, few mothers indicated that their children exhibit negative behavior after attending daycare, this may be due to the fact that research also indicated that teachers found children from childcare to be disobedient.

Additional study has shown that bad daycare puts the child at physical, emotional and attachment risk. Higher quality care was associated with better outcomes. Children in higher quality child care had somewhat better language and cognitive development during the first four and half years of life than those in lower quality care (Wikipedia, 2006). Supporting this, Belsky (1992) observed that the effect of daycare appears to depend on the quality of the care provided. Poorly trained

child-care workers and large child-caregiver ratios do not promote positive development in children. In contrast, negative effects seem minimal and may even be outweighed by positive effects in spacious, well-equipped, adequately staffed facilities that provide lots of individual attention and carefully planned activities.

The absence of the mother at home often, particularly during the formative years of the child according to Jumai (1995) creates a lot of problem for the proper developments of the child physically, socially and emotionally. More so, when children are below school age, the effects are found to be more negative on the health of the child. Awosika (2001) found close relationship between maternal employment and low level of academic achievement of the children. The longer the hours of mothers at work according to her, the shorter the length and quality of interaction of the child. A longitudinal data on 900 European American Children from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development study of early child care by Brooks-Gunne, Han and Waldfogel (2002) showed negative effects on cognitive development at 15 months to 3 years when mothers go to work 30 or more hours a week by a child's ninth month. How do working mothers perceive cognitive and social development of children in daycare? The above question calls for the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out the perception of working mothers on the cognitive and social development of children in daycare.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. Would working mothers perceive daycare centres as being able to improve childrens' cognitive development?
2. Would working mothers perceive daycare centres as being able to improve childrens' social development?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

Hypothesis one:

Working mothers do not perceive daycare centers as being able to improve childrens' cognitive development

Hypothesis two:

Working mothers do not perceive daycare centers as being able to improve children's cognitive development

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed descriptive research of the survey type.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population is all working mothers in all the day care centers in Ado-Ekiti. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 daycare centers used for the study. The working mothers selected are parents of those children who are between 6 months to 3 years in ages.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for the study was a self-structured questionnaire. It contained 2 sections; A and B. section "A" sought information such as age and occupations of the working mothers while section 'B' reflects items on cognitive and social development of children in daycare centers. The questions were framed to fit into agree and disagree responses.

The instrument was given to experts in the field of psychology for face and content validities to determine the reliability of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were administered on 20 working mothers that were not part of the samples used within a space of two weeks. The data

obtained were analysed using Pearson Product moment Correlation Formula and a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained, which was considered reliable for the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed descriptively using simple percentages and chi-square to explain information gathered.

Results and discussion

Hypothesis One:

Working mothers do not perceive daycare centers as being able to improve childrens' cognitive development

Table 1: Chi-square analysis of working mothers' perception in favour of daycare centers.

s/n	Items	Agree		Disagree		Df	χ^2 Calc	χ^2 Tab
		N	%	N	%			
1	My child learns more and performs better in Daycare	124	62	76	38	1	15.680	3.84
2.	Talking ability of my child improved in daycare	180	90	20	10	1	42.320	3.84
3	My child is more alert and eagerly watches people	170	85	30	15	1	32.000	3.84
4	My child now sings nursery rhymes very well	160	80	40	20	1	13.520	3.84
5	My child's mental abilities improved	144	72	56	28	1	20.480	3.84

Table 1 shows that 124(62%) of the respondents (working mothers) agreed to the fact that children learn and perform better in daycare centers. Also, a larger percentage of the respondents, (90%) affirm that the talking ability of their wards improve while in daycare, while 170 respondents, representing 85% of the respondents agreed that their children are more alert and watch people. Furthermore, the result presented above, reveals that 80% and 72% of the respondents believed that courtesy to the day care centers, their wards now sing nursery rhymes very well and their wards' mental abilities improved respectively.

The chi-square in the table above reveals a high chi-square calculated relative to the table values, which therefore implies the non-acceptance of the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance, thus implying that day care centers have the potential to improve and enhance childrens' cognitive development based on the perception of working mothers.

Hypothesis two:

Working mothers do not perceive daycare centers as being able to improve children's social development.

Table 2: Simple Percentage Distribution and Chi-square result on working mothers' perception in favour of daycare centers.

s/n	Items	Agree		Disagree		Df	χ^2 Calc	χ^2 Tab
		N	%	N	%			
1	My child interacts well with his/her mates better in daycare	128	64	72	36	1	11.520	3.84
2.	My child learns to play with toys better after joining daycare	146	73	54	27	1	128.000	3.84
3	My child reacts happily to familiar situation	140	70	60	30	1	98.000	3.84
4	I noticed negative behavior in	74	37	126	63	1	72.000	3.84

	my child after attending day care							
5	My child enjoys clinging to familiar adult and unfriendly to strangers	132	66	68	34	1	38.720	3.84

Table 2 above reveals that 128(64%) of the respondents attested to the fact that their children interact well with their mates in daycare centers. Also, seen in the result is the fact that a larger percentage of the respondents 73% agreed that their children now play with toys better after joining the daycare center, while 140 respondents, representing 70% of the respondents agreed that they react happily to familiar situations. Additionally, the result above reveals that only 37% noticed negative behavior in their children after joining day care center, while 63%, representing a larger portion agreed that negative behavior is not noticed in their children after joining daycare center. Finally, the result shows that 66% of the respondents believed that their children enjoy clinging to familiar adult and act unfriendly to strangers, as against 34%, who believed otherwise. The chi-square in the table above reveals a high chi-square calculated for all items relative to the table values, which therefore implies the non-acceptance of the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance, thus implying that day care centers have the potential to improve and enhance children's social development based on the perception of nursing mothers.

DISCUSSION

The result obtained in table 1 showed that working mothers agreed that there is cognitive development of children who attend daycare. Several studies negate this findings; Awosika (2001) found close relationship between maternal employment and low level of academic achievement of the children. The longer the hours of mothers at work according to her, the shorter the length and quality of interaction of child. Also, a longitudinal data on 900 European American children from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development study of early child care by Brooks, Gunne, Han and Waldfogel (2002), showed negative effects on cognitive development at 15 months to 3 years when mothers go to work 30 or more hours a week in a child's ninth month. From all indications, working mothers have few times to spend with their wards, especially during working hours. This period is supposed to be their formative years and cognitive development is essential at this period. Belsky (1992) is of different opinion. He observed that the effect of daycare appears to depend on the quality of the care provided.

In table 2, it was found that children also develop socially in daycare. Different studies are also in support of this. Anderson (1998) states that children provided with daycare are more sociable, more popular and deal with peers better than those raised at home, moreso when children are below school age. Jumai (1995) is of different opinion. He believed that the absence of the mother at home often, particularly during the formative years of the child creates a lot of problem for the proper developments of the child physically, socially and emotionally.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it could be concluded that good day cares can enhance cognitive and social development of children, especially during working hours of the mothers while bad daycares have a negative effect on the children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Since working mothers today spend much time in work, it is recommended that government, working establishments and private companies should establish day care centers for staff, which are likely to produce high quality environments in which children can thrive.

2. Maternity leave of working mothers should be extended from three months to six months to enable working mothers to take good and proper care of their babies. Also, working hours after resumption from leave should be reduced. This will enable working mothers to complement the activities of daycare.
3. Good daycare should be provided for a child to enhance good behavior at home and in school.

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