

KIU Journal of Education (KJED)

Volume 3 Issue 2
Page 166 - 172

October – November 2023
<https://www.kjed.kiu.ac.ug>

Parental socio-economic factors and child abuse tendencies in Obudu Local government area of Cross River State

Ushie Godwin Beshibeshebe (PhD)^{1*}, Olofu Paul Agbade², Ekpenyong Violet Oyo³, Ukpanukpong Fidelis A⁴, Abuokwen Augustine Akomaye⁵

¹ ORCID-0000-0002-3283-1357, ² ORCID-0000-0002-4779-5379, ³ ORCID-0000-0002-3050-5013

^{1,2,3,4,5} Department of Continuing Education and Development Studies,
University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria.

Corresponding author: godwinushie101@gmail.com

Abstract

The study's major goal was to assess the impact of parental socioeconomic factors on child abuse tendencies in Local Government Area. To fulfill the study's goal, two null hypotheses were developed to lead the investigation. The study employed an ex-post facto research approach. The study's population consisted of 1,205 SS 2 students from public secondary schools in Obudu. The study's sample consists of 176 SS 2 pupils drawn from the eight schools chosen for this study using a non-probability sampling technique. The main instruments used for data collection were a four-point rating scale questionnaire titled "Parental Socio-Economic Factors and Child Abuse Tendencies Questionnaire." The questionnaire contained 20 items. The instruments had reliability coefficients of 0.77 and 0.98 for the questionnaire. The hypotheses were tested using an independent t-test analysis. The study's findings found that family size and parental income level influence child abuse tendencies in the study area. In accordance with the results, a few suggestions were made, among other things: counselors should encourage parents and caregivers to attend family planning seminars and recognize the importance of having a small family size that they can comfortably and conveniently cater for in Obudu Local Government Area.

Keywords: Parents Socio-economic factors, family size, income level and child abuse tendencies.

Introduction

Domestic violence against children is a major topic around the world, particularly in African countries today. In Nigeria, it has grown into a hotly debated topic in the mainstream press and in the thoughts of people across the country. In comments on child abuse, Paxson and Waldfogel (2019) stated that untold stories of a variety of violence against children,

such as child genital mutilation and torture, among others, are carried out by parents and caregivers. The main variables embedded in child abuse under study include child labor, child neglect, child physical abuse, and child emotional abuse. Various authorities have defined child abuse in different ways. For example, according to the Federal Child Abuse and Treatment Act, as revised in 2010, child abuse includes any action or neglect to act by a parent or caregiver that leads in

death, harm, sexual assault, or exploitation (Gelles, 2019). As a result, child abuse is defined as any act of intentional or unintentional conduct that jeopardize or hinders a child's physical or mental health or academic achievement.

These include maltreatment such as beating, sending the child to hawk during school hours, and lots of others. Through several investigations to understand the cause of this behavior, the researchers gather that most students, especially at the junior secondary school level, are victims of child abuse by parents or caretakers. Children have been of prime importance in the family throughout history and in the societies of the world. The family typically provides for their offspring.

Yet among some families, the reverse is the issue, as such children suffer some forms of inhuman treatment. The family is the most important, prominent, and universal institution that could be mentioned in the human race.

A family may assume different dimensions in different cultural groups, but the role and function of every family remain the same across cultures. The family is supposed to be the home of love, full attachment, encouragement, and warmth. The family can equally be full of hatred, anger, enmity, conflict, and crisis.

Heald (2012) maintained that the family is not invulnerable to conflict since it is a natural aspect of life brought on by differences in the beliefs, values, and experiences of each member of the family. Conflict between the child and the parents may be generated by some psychosocial factors, which may result in the abuse of the child. Although conflicts in the family can be functional, they often result in harmful relationships if not carefully handled.

A child is a family's crowning glory. He is the link between the father and the mother, as well as the present and the future. He is the natural extension of the family, a projection of himself into the future. He

is one who receives the baton from his father and mother depending on the sex and country's life's relay race on behalf of them. How well they run that race depends on the training they receive from their parents.

However, children today are seen as having a serious economic role to play in the family. Enlightened families decide how many children they want since they seem to see children as an economic burden to them. There is a shift from social order and value for children to economic order and the use of children to achieve economic stability.

The proliferation of conflicts and tribal wars today has increased children's suffering since, in most cases, they are either used as the army or as human shields on warfronts.

In the era of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), most men prefer to have sex with younger children, knowing that they will not have contracted the virus. With improved health care, most families have more children than they can care for. In spite of the declaration of the right of every child to education, most families cannot afford even school uniforms for their children or wards.

Experience has also shown that the world today is almost imbibing capitalism as an economic system. This makes for an overaccumulation of wealth by a few individuals, who may use their money to get whatever they want, including trafficking in children. Children, therefore, are abused. As a corollary to the above, the uneven distribution of wealth has left the very poor ones with no attention other than either sending their children to hawk or outright giving away those children for whatever would bring money to the family.

The whole picture of the child today looks gloomy in light of the world's efforts to promote the practical implementation of children's rights in every country.

Brassard, Stuart, and Hardy (2012) posited that child abuse is child maltreatment, which is punitive in nature. It is the betrayal of children by those to whom they are entrusted for protection.

Abuse of children is defined as the component of child injury caused by prohibited, nearest, and avoidable human action as well as inactivity. It is the reckless failure of parents to provide the necessary support required by law for the child's well-being, such as food, clothing, shelter, and sufficient training for life.

The behavior of parents toward children in terms of abuse has lasting effects on the children. Abused children are most likely to go into prostitution, steal, act aggressively, become truants, and become drug abusers. Abused children can turn into dishonest, resentful, fearful, and distrustful adults with an inherent desire to be aggressive, retaliating, and hating family members, especially the parents. The surge of children's behavior in a way far from their parents and society's expectations can be likened to the fact that they are abused (Ekpo, 2010).

In Nigeria, child abuse constitutes a major problem for the health, safety, and effective functioning of society. For instance, it renders abused children vulnerable to marital discord in adulthood, and victims tend to have less positive self-concept, less emotional stability, are more likely to become introverts, and are more likely to be externally controlled. It also produces withdrawal syndrome in children and reduces their ability toward pro-social behavior. Moreover, it impacts negatively on the child's academic performance.

In addition, it produces fearful attachment to parents, leading to homelessness and related vices such as substance abuse, participation in sex work, involvement in criminal activities, being out of school, and the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the dreaded HIV/AIDS (Augustine, 2014).

Consequently, various government agencies, including international communities, have taken steps to eradicate child abuse. Globally, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed tremendous concern about the child. This is exemplified by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the subsequent specification and particularization of a child's rights in 2009 addressing members of the United Nations General Assembly.

In the 2000 World Summit for Children held at the United Nations headquarters, the heads of state and governments signed the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child and pledged their commitment to putting a program of action in place towards the proper development of the child.

In Nigeria, the Child Rights Act of 2003 was passed by the National Assembly and referred to by the president and commander in chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The educational system of the country has also been tailored towards reducing the incidence of abuse with the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE), a situation whereby parents are not supposed to pay school fees for their children or wards. The constitution of Nigeria has provisions for the protection of the rights of the Nigerian child.

Programmes such as the Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement (PAP), and People Empowerment Power Initiative (PEPI) were all deliberate efforts by the Nigerian government to tackle the problem of child abuse. Hospitals and schools have all been built, and occasional awareness seminars have also been organized for willing parents on methods of child care and prevention of child abuse. The formation of a children's parliament is another step taken by the Nigerian government to reduce child abuse in the country.

Others are Child Care Trust, Women Trafficking, and Child Labour Education Foundation (WOTCLEF).

Despite widespread concern about the role of parents and other adults in the child abuse problem, there is still much work to have been accomplished in the field of child abuse research.

Purpose of the study

The aim of the investigation was to ascertain socio-economic factors of parents and child abuse tendencies in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the influence of:

1. Family size on child abuse tendency.
2. Parental income level on child abuse tendency.

Hypotheses:

To guide the study, two hypotheses were developed and tested at .05 level of significance.

H₀₁: Family size has no effect on the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

H₀₂: The level of parental income has no effect on the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Method

This study's research design was an ex-post facto research design. This research was conducted in Cross River State's Obudu Local Government Area. The study's population included 1,205 SS 2 students from public secondary schools in Obudu Local Government Area. (According to the Cross River State Ministry of Education, 2022). Non-probability sampling was used for this investigation, which included deliberate, proportional, and accidental sampling.

The data was gathered using a questionnaire titled "Socio-economic Factors of Parents and Child Abuse Tendency Questionnaire." The questionnaire was divided into two portions, A and B. Section A was created to collect demographic information. Section B contains 20 items.

Section B was subdivided into two parts; Part 1 contains questions on how socio-economic factors influence child abuse tendencies in the study area. Part 2 was used to collect information on the indices of child abuse tendency. Each item on the questionnaire required the respondents to express their opinion under Very Often (VO), Often (O), Sometimes (S), or Not Often (NO).

The instruments were validated by three experts. The reliability of the instruments was established using the test-retest method. The reliability coefficients were determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis.

The instruments had reliability coefficients of 0.77 and 0.98 for the questionnaire. The researchers personally visited the schools, and with the help of four research assistants personally selected and trained by the researchers, they administered the instruments to the students. The data obtained from the administered instruments were analyzed using an independent t-test. The hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

The decision rule for the test of hypotheses was to reject the hypothesis when the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value; otherwise, the hypotheses should be retained.

Result

H₀₁: The size of the family has little effect on then child abuse tendency.

Table 1: Overview of independent t-test analysis on the influence of family size (N=176)

Variables (Family size)	N	X	SD	t-cal	Remark
Small (1-3 children)	106	29.83	2.671		
				2.002	Sig.
Large (4 children and above)	70	30.17	2.571		

NS= Not significant, Sig = significant at .05 level, df = 174, crit t = 1.968

The estimated t-value of 2.002 is much higher than the crucial t-value of 1.968 at the .05 level of significance with 174 degrees of freedom, as shown in Table 1. The null assumption was rejected because the estimated t-value was higher than the crucial t-value. This implies that family size has a considerable impact on the likelihood of child tendency.

H₀₂: there is no significant influence of parental income level on child abuse tendency.

Table 2: Summary of independent t-test statistics on the influence of parental income level (N=176)

Variables (Parental income level)	N	X	SD	t-cal	Remark
Low (Below N30,000 per month)	43	29.77	2.810		
				2.082	Sig.
High (Above N30,000 Per month)	133	30.03	2.576		

NS= Not significant, Sig = significant at .05 level, df = 174, crit t = 1.968

The findings displayed in Table 2 shows a sum t-value of 2.082 that is higher than the critical value of 1.968 at .05 level of significant with 174 degrees of freedom. Since the sum t-value is greater than the critical t-value, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that parental income level has significant influence on child abuse tendency.

Discussion of findings

Influence of family size on child abuse tendency.

The result of the first hypothesis tested revealed that there is a significant influence of family size on child abuse tendency. The outcome of this study is consistent alongside Gandu's (2018) observation that big family sizes impair parental responsibility for children within the family. Once more, in an extended family, especially if children are not evenly spread in

grow older, parents may not devote enough attention and affection to their children. This lack of attention frequently leads to free of guidance development, which eventually gives rise to a favorable attitude regarding sexual activity prior to marriage.

The finding is relevant to what Chasnoff (2018) proposed: that the odds of healthy attitudes deteriorate as the number of households increases. He observes that, under the identical conditions, only families with four or more members exhibit depressive consequences. He goes on to say that the size of the family has an effect on children's and teenagers' attitudes, which can be favorable or negative concerning events, things, or activities. According to him, as the size of the family grows, the level of independent involvement provided to children through parents decreases.

This may cause youngsters to rely on and copy their peers along with other adults surrounding them, who may have antisocial views. Furthermore, as children grow in stature, their attitudes toward accepted social conventions are likely to decline rather than strengthen.

This finding is also supported by the views of Bugental, Lewis, Lin, Lyon, and Kopeikin (2019), who, in their study on family factors that contribute to the verbal behavior development of children, found that birth order contributed significantly to adolescents and students' deviant behavior. They also observed that the firstborn tends to have a more desirable attitude than later-born children.

Specialized assessments of family variables have been found to be more closely linked to academic achievement than broader indicators of background from the family.

Influence of parental income level on child abuse tendency

The result of the second hypothesis tested revealed that parental income level has a significant influence on child abuse tendencies. The result is supported by the view of Anyanwu (2017), who observed that a parent's income has long been isolated and documented as having a significant association with child abuse.

The income of a parent depends on its inputs into the economy and the economy's response in terms of output. In Nigeria and in most cases, the major source of parental income is wages and salaries, though self-employment offers another source of income.

A number of studies internationally and locally have reported that severe or fatal injuries due to child abuse are more likely to be found among families with low annual income.

The finding is also in line with the Ubom (2011) study, which focused on home background and child abuse. He found out that there is a correlation between parental poverty (which is a result of a low level of income) and child abuse.

A total of 200 children below 19 years of age who were still in primary and secondary school were engaged in street hawking as part-time jobs or duties. Out of a population of about twenty thousand (20,000), two hundred (200) were selected from Uyo, Etinan, Ikot Ekpene, Abak, and Eket. From the analysis, the correlation was .92 as against the table/critical value of .0884 at the .05 level of significance.

The statistical analysis method used was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result led to the rejection of the stated null hypothesis. This shows that income as an aspect of socio-economic status significantly relates to parents' tendency to abuse the child.

Researchers attribute the positive relationship between family income and child abuse to the fact that parents with low income tend to become more

irritable, tense, and explosive, which in turn increases their tendency to become more punitive toward their children (McLoyd, 2010).

Parents with this condition may perceive such a situation as stressful, especially in an uncontrollable way. It is this uncontrollable stress that appears to most directly contribute to the breakdown of personal coping capacities, according to stress theory, and therefore elicit a more negative socio-cultural outcome (Anyanwu, 2017).

Conclusion

In accordance with the findings of this investigation, it was determined that, family size and parental income level influence child abuse tendency.

Recommendation

The subsequent recommendations are made in light of the outcomes;

1. Parents and care givers should be encouraged by counselors to attend seminars to become knowledgeable on family matters.
2. Government and Non-governmental organization should help parents to develop the 21st century skills to work towards self-sufficiency and empower them with soft loans for the establishment of small-scale business enterprises, which would improve their income level to reduce child abuse tendencies.

References

- Anyanwu, J. C. (2017). Poverty in Nigeria: Concepts, measurements and determinants in Nigerian Economic. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 11(6), 86-95.
- Augustin, R. C. (2014). Prevalence and severity of domestic violence against pregnant women. *Mexico: Revista de Sande Publica*.

Brassard, M. R., Stuart, N. H., & Hardy, D. B. (2012). The socio-cultural maltreatment rating scale: child Abuse and Neglect, 77(1), 715-729.

Bugental, D., Lewis, J. C., Lin, E., Lyon, J., & Kopeikin, H. (2019). In charge but not in control: The management of teaching relationship by adults with low perceived power. *Developmental psychology*, 35(6), 1367-1378.

Chasnoff, I. J. (2018). *Drugs alcohol, pregnancy and parenting*. Hingham, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Ekpo, S. (2010). *Juvenile delinquency in Nigeria*. Uyo: A Benny Educational Publishers.

Gaudu, Y. K. (2018). The social economic based for child neglect in Nigeria. In P. O. Ebigbo & L. E. Nwegwu (Eds). *Child abuse and neglect in Nigeria* (pp 102-110). Enugu: ANPPCAN (Nigeria).

Gelles, R. J. (2019). Child abuse and violence in single parent families, parent absence and economic deprivation. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 59(4), 492-501.

Heald, S. (2012). The making men: The relevance of “a Gisu Rituals”. *Africa*, 52(4), 15-36.

McLoyd, V. C. (2010). The impact of economic hardship on black families and children, socio-cultural distress, parenting development. *Child Development* 6(2), 311-346.

Paxson, C. & Waldfogel, J. (2019). Parental resources and child abuse and neglect. *Child welfare*, 89(2), 239-244.

Ubom, I. U. (2011). Home background and child abuse in Akwa Ibom State: Implications for guidance. *Counseling the Nigerian Educational Psychologist*, 3(1), 149-158.