

## **Extended abstract**

### **Introduction and Statement of the Problem**

One of the variants of modernisation includes the involvement of women in paid employment. This development implies that women who over time were full housewives and mothers had to divide their time between paid employment and family care. This has implications on the family structure, child health and development (Basu, 1992). This development necessitated the establishment of several policies from the government to combat these shortcomings. In the labour sector on the other hand and where these women are employed, work organisations continually enact policies in written and unwritten forms to ensure that their aims and objectives are achieved. These developments have implications on the nursing mothers who had to juggle between these roles. This study therefore sought to understand different strategies adopted in meeting the policy and work demands and its implication on the health of the mother and children.

A study of this dimension became imperative considering the roles of women in the economy and more especially in the labour force in recent times. Studies have showed that women form almost half of the total workforce and the figure is expected to rise sharply at the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Falzon, 2007 and Orr, 1997). Further, it is an established fact that women workers are an essential part of the work system and cannot be dispensed with in any way (Barnett, Marshall & Sayer, 1992). However, in spite of their uniqueness and qualities, studies have showed that women suffer a great challenge due to a combination of work and child care. For instance, Hoffman (1963) observed in his study that work stress has an influence on the quality of the parent-child interaction. Aside this, 78.0 percent of working women still come back home to look after their children when they close from work (Falzon, 2007). The implication of this is that mothers combine two jobs at the same time- a paid employee and a nursing mother. The children are not left out of this challenge; studies reveal that lack of contact between children and parents was directly responsible for the rising levels of mental health problems, sleep disorders and among others (Falzon, 2007). Ammaniti, et al (2004) also observed that separating children from their parents store up behavioural difficulties for them. It therefore becomes important to understand methods and strategies adopted by mothers to meet the demands of workplace and child care. Further, an assessment of these strategies in relation to the health and welfare of the child also becomes necessary in this study. The following are the objectives of the study:

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to examine coping strategies among nursing mothers and implications on child health in selected organisations in Ado Ekiti, south west Nigeria. The specific objectives were to

- a. Examine the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents
- b. Assess the coping strategies of the respondent in combining motherhood and employment
- c. Understand the challenges respondents face in combining motherhood and employment
- d. Assess its implication on the mother's health and the child

### Method and Result Findings

A total of one hundred and sixty female nursing mothers were selected from government establishment in Ado Ekiti, the state capital of Ekiti state through a purposive sampling technique over nine 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 within the work setting. In eliciting data from the respondent, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. 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.

**Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Based on Selected Socio-Economic Variables**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20 years	16	10.0
21-30 years	28	17.5
31-40 years	64	40.0
41 and above	52	32.5
<b>Total</b>	160	100.0
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	8	5.0
Secondary	32	20.0
Tertiary	52	32.5
Professional qualification	68	42.5
<b>Total</b>	160	100.0
Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	136	85.0
Separated/divorced	24	15.0
<b>Total</b>	160	100.0

The table above explains the percentage distribution of respondents' age, education, marital status and professional qualification. Findings on age revealed that respondents between age 31 and 40 dominated the study constituting 40.0 percent. The least were respondents aged 20 and below (10.0 percent). This may not be strange considering the requirements as regards entry into labour force. This is further reflected on the respondents' educational qualification respondents who had tertiary education and professional qualification formed the majority with 32.5 percent and 42.5 respectively. Findings on the marital status also revealed that a majority of the respondents were married.

**Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents on the Challenges Faced and Implication on Mother and Child**

<b>Challenges faced by Mothers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Difficulty in combining motherhood with job	117	73.1
Financial problem	43	26.9
<b>Total</b>	160	100.0
<b>Perceived implications of the challenges on child</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Malaria	35	22.0
Diarrhoea, loss of appetite and weakness	37	23.1
Emotional and physical discomfort	88	54.9
<b>Total</b>	160	100.0
<b>Perceived implication of challenges on the mother</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Loss of concentration at work	23	14.5
Stress and body weakness	100	62.3
Frequent disagreement with spouse and colleagues at work	37	23.2
<b>Total</b>	160	100.0

The table above describes the percentage distribution of respondents as regards the challenges they face and the perceived impact on them and their children. Findings revealed that about 73.1 percent claimed the challenges include how to combine work with mother hood while 26 .9 percent attributed it to financial challenges in meeting their needs and that of their children. Their argument was that they engage in paid employment based on the need to get more money to take care of themselves and their children. Regarding the implications on them and their children, respondents claimed that their children experience diarrhoea and malaria (22.2 percent), loss of appetite and weakness (23.1 percent) while 54.9 percent claimed that their children experience some emotional discomfort like refusal of their children to stay with child attendants. However, 23.0 percent claimed that their children did not show any negative symptoms as a result of their jobs. On the part of the mothers, 62.3 percent claimed that their major challenge as a result of combining work and motherhood includes stress and in ability to focus on their work. On how they cope with child care and work, (10.1 percent) claimed they leave work after child delivery for a year. Further, (23.6 percent) of the respondents argued that they invite relatives to come and assist while away to work to work. Further, about 34. 2 percent secured the service of house help and crèche operators. Also, (32.1 percent) opined that it is a family affair as both the husband and respondents shoulder the responsibility together. IDI interview further buttressed this. As regards the coping strategies, respondents claimed that regular medical check up (45.2 percent) and religious means (54.8 percent) are their coping mechanisms. Chi-square result further showed a

relationship between SES and child health, where a child is kept and the health of the child.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Combining work and motherhood is a difficult process for mothers. This challenge may continue considering the persistent demand of employers for effectiveness and productivity. Children and mothers may also continue to experience different kinds of challenges due to the demands in the workplace. The study recommends the need for both stakeholders (policy makers and employers of labour) to adopt means of ensuring that nursing mothers in workplaces meet health requirements and perform better in a conducive atmosphere.

### References

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