
IMPACTS OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES AND CHILD CARE IN BENUE SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF NIGERIA

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Abstract- *The study looked into the impacts of social work services and child care in Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria. The study established relationships between childcare and social work services with the current childcare facilities available in the area. It also examined specific problems facing child care in the Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria. The fieldwork was carried out using one thousand (1000) respondents in the studied area and statistical analysis was effectively utilized. Based on careful observations, recommendations were appropriately made about those facilities where more children facilities are urgently needed and further research work is necessarily required in the studied area. The origin and nature of early childhood education techniques were adequately examined and comparatively assessed to pave the way for meaningful adjustments.*

Keywords: Social work; Child Care; Childhood Education; vulnerable

Introduction

Children are defenseless members of every society. They are a large segment of the human population under diverse conditions across cultures and regions. UNICEF report in 2001, asserts that children are inflicted with serious pains due to various problems from their mothers who have been abandoned as widows." As [1] maintains, "...they are children regardless of their specific social circumstances and should not be reduced to depersonalized labels." They need to be diligently cared for because early childhood care is the bedrock of other higher levels of the child's total development [2-4]. Despite the overwhelming importance of early childhood care and training, Nigeria has paid lipservice to the programs, policies, and budgets towards their realization [5]. Childcare is a primary responsibility of the Government, but the Nigerian Government has failed to implement its stated policy in the National Policy on Education (NPE) [6].

Children are forced to hard labor in agriculture plantations, on family farms for planting, weeding, and harvesting, caring for livestock, and applying chemicals in Nigeria's rural communities. According to information presented at an ILO conference in 2005, children are employed as vendors/hawkers, shoe shiners, car washers, scavengers, beggars, and in other forms of child (forced) labor in metropolitan areas. Furthermore, despite the fact that everyone has the right to free early-childhood education under Article 26 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Nigeria has a 38.7 percent illiteracy rate. Similarly, while industrialized nations emphasize childcare and protection, in Nigeria; vulnerability to child trafficking, accident, and other evils are common. Indeed, children are also vulnerable to violence, and sexual exploitation with no access to adequate nutrition; health, shelter, and social protection especially, in remote rural settlements. Furthermore, as [7]; put it, children want to be respected, to be recognized: healthy and safe. They want to enjoy and achieve, make positive contributions, to experience economic well-being. However, in Nigeria, there exists poor infrastructure; equipment, and learning resources for early childhood care and development. There are no advocates, and neither are there linkage agents and agencies for children's welfare.

This study is, therefore, designed to ascertain the conditions of children in Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria especially, in terms of their survival needs; their coping and problem-solving capacities. The study will draw together the experiences, insights, and knowledge of both children and their parents. These facts will help to understand the nature of counseling that would be needed for the entire larger community to develop the right and necessary capacity for their support. The study will identify existing facilities established in this area by Government, community, and Non- Governmental Organizations for childcare. The extent of interventions or non-interventions of social workers in the plight of children in this research area is unknown. It is pertinent to know all these problems of children in this environment to provide solutions to them and hence, the rationale for this study.

1.1 Global Dimension of Child Care

Globally, social work services and child care, have received strong attention from governments; organizations, groups, families, and individuals. Except in Africa where child care is predominantly consigned to individual families, in countries and continents such as America and Canada; Europe, Asia, and Australia, child care: occupies priority positions in the affairs of the people. This is why in such countries and continents, social

workers are employed and attached to families to monitor the caring situation of their children.

Hence, the European Union (EU), World Bank; United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), and the United Nations International Fund for Medium Enterprises (UNIFEM), have continued to invest in child care and development in all spheres of children's lives. The Human Development Initiative (HDI), is intensively involved in campaigns across the world to ensure the well-being and survival of all children in their various families.

Everyone has the right to free early education, according to Article 26 (1) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Additionally, every signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has enacted the Child Rights Act to protect children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The United Nations International Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF) is another important global childcare organization. It is active in all member nations of the UN, designing, reporting, and intervening; in all cases of childhood abuse. Across the Region of Sub-Saharan Africa, UNICEF's Missing Childhoods is an integral part of campaigns against endless tragedies facing children.

The 1979 UN Convention on the Total Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Children based on Age is actively implemented in all member countries. A strong global policy framework is in place, based on multiple international accords, according to the DFID Report 2000. Additionally, there is a better knowledge of the remaining challenges that must be overcome to realize the objectives of global equality.

1.2 Structures and Organs of Child Care in Nigeria

There are some structures and organs for child care in Nigeria. The World Health Organization (WHO), is active in the health conditions of the Nigerian child. It carries out immunizations against children's diseases to prevent infant mortality and other problems associated with childbirth. Nigerians embrace this organ as a viable instrument of their children's care.

Also, Nigeria enacted the National Policy on Education in 1977, revised in 1981; 1989, 1998, and 2004. This structure is for the education of the Nigerian child. However, there has been poor coordination and handling of the structure and this is why, "ironically, the policy statements on this level of education are a failed one" [8].

The country's Early Childhood Education (ECE) is under the effective supervision of the Universal Basic Education Act of 2000. Early Childhood Education (ECE), which serves as a foundation for a child's lifelong education, is essential to achieving the objectives of Education for All (EFA). However, only 10% of daycare centers and nursery schools are owned by government entities in Nigeria, which severely restricts access to ECE for underprivileged, disadvantaged, and marginalized groups [9].

In 2003, Nigeria adopted the Child Rights Act which embodies the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Act provides a comprehensive framework for preventing and responding to violence and other forms of exploitation of children. By the year 2013, out of 36 states, 23 had already adopted this law. There are also legislations and policies in Nigeria prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting (FGM/C). The problem however, is that these legislations and policies are largely inactive as UNICEF

reports that, "27% of females in Nigeria have been subjected to this practice. Indeed, in some Southern states, FGM/C has been carried out on over 70% of females". In 2004, Nigeria launched the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), as her initiative and plan to carry out "law reforms to strengthen the skill base of the most vulnerable especially, children and young people which will prevent such people from becoming poorer and poorer." This is targeted at integrating all economic efforts at all levels of the Government to fortify the foundation of all those in need of care at their formative stage of life. Again, like in most other laws in Nigeria, these law reforms have ended up in wreckages due to misdeeds by those in leadership positions enchanted by the nation's brave and stubborn corruption.

The above structures and organs for child care in Nigeria notwithstanding, a lot still needs to be done in the care conditions of children in the country. This is because, mere Structures and organs in a country, are not enough to guarantee children's welfare; unless a healthy atmosphere for their implementations exists. In rural Nigeria, this implementable atmosphere does not truly exist for ideal child care.

1.3 Problems of Child Care in Nigeria

A lot of challenges still face child care in Nigeria. The existence of negative customary and traditional practices against children is one such problem. In some parts of Nigeria such as Benue State, children are subjected to overwork resulting in physical and emotional abuse. They are made to carry heavy loads beyond their limits of physical capabilities but, are accepted by traditions as an essential ingredient of early childhood training. The existence of pervasive patriarchal ideology in the country also militates against child care. Nigeria has been under male leadership and domination since independence. As vital and intimate custodians of children, women ought to be highly valued in their opinions, roles, and decisions about child care in society. Therefore, extreme marginalization that keeps women out of the political and family decision-making process about children's welfare spares doom for child care philosophy in our environment.

There is low education of women in Nigeria. In addition, women's education is perceived as an instrument of domesticity though this is changing. The impact is that women are excluded from providing congenial opinions on childcare practices in the country. The lack of an effective, functional, and enforceable legal framework for children's welfare in Nigeria, is another obstacle to meaningful child care practices. Both the laws promulgated in the country and the international enactments on childhood training and development are poorly executed.

Our socialization process is another hindrance to proper child care in the country. Nigeria practices parent-centered socialization instead of a child-centered upbringing. This has led to the negligence of children's views and expressions in areas of their desires, feelings, needs; likes, and dislikes. This sustained dictatorial system estranges the child from building the required emotional strength, as well as cultivating the corresponding love and confidence for parents.

Nigeria has a culture of materialism which emphasizes extrinsic values instead of intrinsic values which respect human dignity based on knowledge and non-material things.

Hence, child care is replaced with child abuse for money through ritual killings, child-trafficking, and sacrifices of vulnerable children in the form of kidnapping and violent attacks on villages and homesteads in the country.

1.4 Child Care Practices in Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria

Everywhere in this area, child care used to be the primary duty of each family. However, currently, child care is no longer restricted to the primary family of the child. This is due to the growing number of abandoned children in this area as a result of the death of parents and marital dislocations. Individuals, churches, and non-governmental organizations have joined the task of children's care. Hence, Homes and Day-Care Centers, for the care of children in need; are set up across the District. Also, there are youth and women empowerment organizations virtually in all the nine local government areas, intending to care for needy children and young people. The snags here are that most of these established bodies, maintain the tempo suitable for effective realization of the goals of child care.

Similarly, all the local government authorities have health and social welfare units; which are specifically assigned to handle children's care. There have been joint and collaborative efforts of the local government authorities in approaching reputable organizations and higher governments of the country for support to build structures and organs solely for children and young people across the entire area.

UNICEF is another important structure actively in place for the care of children in this area. In addition, the European Union, the World Bank; United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), and the United Nations International Fund for Medium Enterprises (UNIFEM), are all active in investments in child care and development in all spheres of children's lives here. Again, the main problems of this area are its predominantly rural mature and remote location of most households. These greatly hinder easy accessibility to children for their care.

The Universal Basic Education Act (UBE Act) of 2000 for monitoring Early Childhood Education (ECE), is entrenched in this area as a foundation for a life-long education of children. It must be noted however, that despite all these efforts by various sectors, a lot still needs to be done to accomplish any meaningful achievements in child care especially; in the nooks and crannies of the rural settlements.

1.5 The Role of Social Work Services on Child Care in Nigeria

All resources including human beings, equipment, and land spaces, freely released and utilized for children's welfare; are the social work services on child care in Nigeria. They include knowledge, physical and psychological assistance, given to families for care of their children in the country.

Every segment of society must be involved in this process of services to children. The Government must provide the framework for legal and administrative functions. The family and the entire people must accept child care etiology and create the enabling environment for it to subsist. It is a free-will function whose success depends on mutual feelings of love generated genuinely from the inner hearts of adults towards children no matter their family backgrounds and status. All these encompassing services are indispensable to the realization of child care and development in Nigeria.

1.6 Impacts of Child Care on the Development of Nigeria

Proper child care in Nigeria will produce a cream of hardworking, reliable, and patriotic sans. Such children will replenish the wasting generations of adulthood as partners' quick growth. Similarly, effective child care will conserve useful young people who contribute immensely to higher earnings and improvements in the living conditions of the entire country.

Child care will enable Nigeria to obtain a positive change by having increased youth participation in the private and public sectors of the economy. At the same time, proper care of the Nigerian child will lead to the formation of ideal households, communities, and organizations in the country. At the household level, there would be widespread joy in the functioning of families. At the community level, love and commonality of tests would emerge. At the organizational level, productivity would spring up.

It is maintained that empowerment generally, brings about dividends that are of non-economic benefits to society [10]. Therefore, Nigeria cannot afford not to prioritize programs and projects which stand to boost social services specifically to families for the sustenance of their children's care.

2.0 Review of Related Work (Theories and Models)

2.1 Functionalist Theory of Development

The central idea of this theory is that society is made up of interrelated parts that engage in a continuous exchange of relationships which produces harmony. This means that, no matter the nature, size, and location of these interrelated parts; all of them work together to produce harmony.

Jacob and Olakunle [11], however, maintain that problems arise in society when there is a disruption in this harmonious interaction of the various parts. Consequently, in the communities of Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria, there would be disruptions and disharmonies in the entire community if and when children are ill-treated.

Furthermore, it is believed that harmony in a social system is maintained with shared collective conscience based on common norms; values, and institutions. The various parts that make up society, are functionally interdependent, but intimately held together by formal laws that determine their mode of relationships. The dissimilar members are controlled by norms and values which should not despise or discriminate against any member including the children in communities of Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria. Since this harmony can only be readily guaranteed by valueconsensus, such consensus must always be solicited for and obtained from all and sundry for children's care.

Children or issues about them are a part of the "all and sundry" that ought to be part of such consensus. Basse et al. [12], maintain that "the effectiveness of social work service is judged by the way the individual is relating to the situation in which he finds himself, and to the values and responsibilities which these relationships hold for him."

Mookerjee [13], clearly collaborates the views of Ekpe and Mamah when he says that social work is always concerned with factors in the environment that create problems for

human beings and which may hinder or promote the fulfillment of their lives. The functionalist theory does not concretely concern itself with the discrete behavior or feelings of these varied components. This is why this theory cannot be an accurate guide for this study especially as it treats the various units generally instead of specifically. It does not explain the specific conducts and contributions of each of the interrelated parts in the manner that they operate to create harmony. We, therefore, need to examine other active theories to appropriately guide this study.

2.2 Role Theory

A role, according to Turner [14], is a predetermined series of actions or deeds that a person engages in throughout an engagement. People react in radically varied and predictable ways for a variety of reasons, and a lot of that has to do with who they are as individuals and how particular their circumstances are [15]. This explains why Turner [14] claims that people's roles and the kinds of individuals they encounter have a significant impact on how they behave in various contexts and circumstances. As a result, a social worker is required to act in his capacity as a liaison or an advocate, and the government is expected to provide the necessary legislation to alter the mentality of the populace and improve the suffering of children.

While the role theory helps us to see the responsibility of each member to the role performance, it does not, however, provide sufficient for the compelling behavior of each member within the role to be performed. It, therefore, cannot be taken to adequately guide this study. We have to examine other theories.

2.3 The Systems Theory

A system, according to Zastrow [16], is a collection of elements that routinely interact or are dependent upon one another to produce a cohesive whole. It resembles the human body exactly. According to the systems theory, a system is made up of various components, and each component plays a crucial role in creating the desired, functional whole. Due to the system's unity, any change in any one component simultaneously affects the system as a whole and each component individually. Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria is a system that consists of the social worker, politicians; government authorities, lawyers, law-makers: children, and adults, as sub-systems who must interact for the effective functioning of the whole community. The survival of the whole, results from harmonious relationships of the different parts. This implies that the whole community of Benue South Senatorial District cannot function well if there is an injury caused to children who are a part of the entire community. If children who are sub-systems are adversely affected, they cannot function properly neither can the whole community function well.

However, the precise roles that each of the individual systems' subsystems plays in the overall system are not entirely explained by the systems theory. It also does not account for the level of performance of each of the parts that make the whole. Similarly, the theory does not as well account for the extent and nature of community participation as a whole in the maintenance of the individually interrelated parts. If the whole is to survive well and make definite progress without destroying any of its parts, it must provide for the continued welfare of all that make up the whole. The systems theory, however, does not provide the necessary strength that the whole should give to each part to account for the existence of the whole. Therefore, the theory cannot serve as the most appropriate base for this study.

2.4 Communication Theory

The basis of communication theory is that available information from individuals' environment and from within the individuals themselves should permit them chances to adapt and cope well with life. The theory thus asserts that people's care, results from available information they perceive and evaluate [17-19].

Hence, this theory cautions against influences of unmanageable environmental information to the individual in any community including Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria. This means that the community should ensure that children are not fed with unmanageable information that may strangulate them.

2.5 Problem-Solving Model

This model holds that a person's sense of competence and confidence arises from experiencing the self as effective in action. If a person's motivation and abilities are to be engaged in learning, he must feel and see that there is a problem to be solved and that of course, the problem in some vital ways involves him [20].

This model thus, can be a base for mobilizing children and young persons to active participation in solving their problems of neglect, abuse, and destitution! The model cannot, however, be the most accurate base for this study because it does not stipulate how these problems can be solved through the mere involvement of the child or the young person who lives in a largely illiterate and uncaring environment of the type found in Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria.

2.6 Task-Centered Model.

The main concern of this model is on helping clients devise and carry out tasks to alleviate their problems by defining the problems and goals openly. It is a model built to address the relationship problems of individuals and families with psychological issues [21]. The model centers on the resolution of problems of clients caused by some traumatic events in their lives such as when a child suddenly loses his/her parents and is faced with challenges of lack of money, food housing; education, or health care. It stresses the need for collaborative relationships between children and social workers in the resolution of the child's emotional problems of depression. This model, however, is short of being selected to guide this study as its framework. This is because it lacks the multisided ways required to solve the care problems of the child in this area.

2.7 Client-Centered Model

This model stresses that "if individuals are forced into socially construed model, but are accepted for what they are, they will turn out good and live in ways that enhance both themselves and society" [14]. Therefore, to solve a client's problem is to perceive it from the understanding of the problem and by allowing his/her active, voluntary, and responsible participation in the helping process.

This model is useful, yet it cannot be taken as the framework for this study because the care problems of children of this community, lie more with the change of negative mindset of the adult community members rather than with active, voluntary, and responsible

participation of the children themselves. After all, children at their tender age, cannot force themselves on any unwilling and repulsive adults to attain full care and transformation.

2.8 Competence Transaction Theory.

This theory is based on the outcomes of relationships between an individual and his/her social environment. An individual's care or welfare derives from feelings of competence in a system in terms of the goodness of fit between the system and the environment with which she or he interacts. An individual's sense of power results from a good fit between his or her environment. Hopps et al. [22]; posit that such a fit must offer him or her some support, security, protection, and resources. Indeed, the care of children is obtained in the context of the interdependence of the individual child and environmental factors operating in competent manners that allow the child to function well. Children are empowered because the result of their interaction with the environment has been a gain in access and control of resources [23]. The theory stresses the importance of a community in helping to promote a system's capacity to be competent to function properly [24]. Katherine et al. [25]; maintain that care or empowerment is often the product of self-help groups which provide the needed emotional and social support, assistance, and a forum for learning new skills and a base of power for the collective interest of the group. Group participation provides the required ginger that the child needs to propel her or him into active relationships for his or her better future. This is the required path that every child in this area should be groomed to imbibe.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

The competence transaction theory is the theoretical framework of this study. This is because the theory recognizes that if children or their tissues are marginalized and estranged from the political decision-making process of their community, care becomes hard for them to obtain due to limited opportunities open for their improvement. The hope for the care of children in their communities lies squarely in the change of adults' negative minds about childhood needs security. A positive mindset of adults about childhood would create an enabling environment for unhindered meaningful growth processes for children in their families of exercise.

The theory emphasizes the need for learning new skills and securing positions which are key areas of relevance to children in this community. If there are clearly defined, workable policies, programs, and projects that would mainstream children's needs and recognition, they can learn and acquire skills for their empowerment. The emphasis here is for children to be placed on the priority list of attention by the communities' adults.

Also, this theory emphasizes the need for children to be developed and made to understand the values of organized responses to circumstances that affect their lives. This means that children and all young people, are to be socialized and encouraged by both parents and social workers in this community, to become organized groups. Such groups would treasure organized self-help actions which may seek and obtain assistance from the legal fraternity, governments, and international agencies, which would speed up the building of strength and confidence against psychological tortures being experienced by children in this community.

In addition, the strength lies in its emphasis that a child weaned and molded to grow into adulthood in collective group spirit has in-built resilience for countering unhealthy

invasions in his adult life. It is our conviction here that, the lessons assembled by this theory, have direct links with realities and implications for both children who are the target audience; as well as social workers and the entire society, who are the agents in the change transaction theory for its enrichment to our chosen study requirement.

Research Hypotheses

The following three hypotheses shall guide this study

- i. There is a relationship between the level of education and support for programs that promote child care.
- ii. Respondents who have ever married are more likely to support childcare programs than those who are single.
- iii. Female respondents are more likely to support childcare programs than male respondents.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Study Design

This evaluation investigation seeks to ascertain how effectively children have been cared for among the residents of Nigeria's Benue South Senatorial District. The main yardstick for measurement is the efficiency of social work services to children in the environment under study. These include how social work services are organized and delivered, how physical and non-physical facilities are used and maintained, how well social workers perform their jobs, and how to carry out initiatives and programs involving childcare. They also include the involvement of children's issues in decision-making in the Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria.

A cross-sectional survey strategy would be employed because data for the area would only be gathered during one time period. The survey design would be used for financial considerations as well as for generalizations to huge populations.

4.2 The Study Area and Scope of the Study.

This investigation is focused on Nigeria's Benue South Senatorial District. The scope of the study is the appraisal of children's care projects, issues, and activities that promote the achievement of welfare for children in this study environment. To do this, a critical evaluation would be made of the care programs, projects; actions, and issues in this area since 2008. The researcher would examine every facet of childcare policies that have been developed and put into place in the sample community, whether they were done so by the local government, local groups, organizations, or people themselves.

4.3 Study Population.

The population of Nigeria is 88,514,505 people and the Benue South Senatorial District has a population of 176,647 persons as reported by the National Population Commission report 1991 and 2006 respectively.

4.4 Sample Size.

From the population of the nine local government areas under study, a sample size of 1000 people would be chosen. There will be no restriction on the sample size regarding occupation or social level. Efforts would be made to cover all categories of the population including widows and widowers, executive members of village/community/organization/unions, married males, and married females. Others to be included would be, high school/university students, farmers, and business entrepreneurs. Efforts would also be made to ensure the inclusion of inhabitants who have more knowledge and facts about the locality.

4.5 Sampling Technique.

Random sampling would be used. The population would be grouped using the following parameters: widows, widowers, executive members of village/community/organization/unions; married males, married females, civil servants/business entrepreneurs: farmers, and university/high school students. To guarantee the equitable distribution and gathering of accurate data on the research population, this categorization was necessary. Efforts would be made to avoid the use of any occupational frame of community members as Benue South Senatorial District does not have an occupational frame in the offices of the local government council areas for such classification. Rather, we will classify according to direct effect and social location, but not individual social status. Therefore, to get a sample of 1000, each local government council area would be divided into eight parameters listed above. The right numbers for each stratum or parameter would be chosen using a straightforward random sampling process. Each parameter would be given a specific value, such as a number or a percentage. Each of the nine local government council areas studied would produce 125 Respondents after the sampling exercise in each community.

4.6 Instruments of Data Collection (Method)

Questionnaires and interviews would be used as instruments for data collection. The questionnaire's questions would be made to gather background data on the respondents, the research techniques, and the scope of childcare practices in the study area. The questions which would be asked in the questionnaire, range from personal characteristics, and the nature of problems of children to knowledge of government/community policies on children's welfare. Others include the available social support systems to children, present caregivers; types of available care from government and social workers, and then the kinds of treatments meted out to children.

The interview method is only a verbal exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee in which the former seeks to learn more about the latter's opinions or views regarding a specific topic or incident. The interview guides for professional social workers would be used to obtain more information on reasons for failures in providing child care projects and programs in Nigeria as a whole and in Benue South Senatorial District in particular.

4.7 Administration of Research Instruments.

The Researcher shall train and make use of six Research Assistants who are intimate with each unit of the study area. They shall be students of Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo where the Researcher is a lecturer. The Researcher with the Research Assistants, shall

conduct mock interview sessions on how to administer the questionnaire using three units in the research area which would not be used for the sample study.

Announcements shall be made through local churches, community meetings, market squares, and jingles in local mass media; to create maximum awareness and participation of respondents. The questionnaire shall be interpreted in the local language to respondents who cannot speak English Language and the data would be collected in three consecutive weeks with the Researcher coordinating the survey. Each of the Research Assistants would be given a letter of introduction for easy acceptance by the target interviewees. The primary data would be the information obtained in the course of administering the questionnaire, while the secondary data would be information gathered from textbooks, seminars; workshop proceedings, files of NGOS, and handbills in the Social Welfare Ministry and Community Development Department of the area of study.

4.8 Methods of Data Analysis.

Simple percentages and frequency distribution tables would be used to assess the data to be collected. To clarify the correlations between variables, Chi-Square (X²) would be used to evaluate the study's hypotheses. The prominent aspects of the respondents' comments would be compared to the goals of the research project as part of a qualitative analysis of the interview data.

5.0 Result and Discussion

Out of the nine local government areas that make up this senatorial district, eight were selected for this survey while the ninth, Ohimini; was used for our pilot survey. As can be seen in Table 1, from each of the eight local government areas surveyed, the Research Assistants returned at least one hundred and twenty-five (125) out of the one hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaires issued to each of them as instructed. Based on these efforts, the one thousand (1000) targeted sample populations were needed to have to realize the accuracy of our survey, was obtained

Table 1: Local government areas and populations used: Enrollment in local colleges, 2005

S/N	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS	POPULATION
A.	Ado	125
B.	Agatu	125
C.	Apa	125
D.	Obi	125
E.	Ogbadibo	125
F.	Oju	125
G.	Okpokwu	125
H.	Otukpo	125
TOTAL		1000

Table 2 shows that out of one thousand (1000) respondents interviewed, nine hundred and fifty that is, ninety-five (95%) of them agreed that parental poverty is a specific problem facing children in this area of Nigeria; while only fifty that is, 5% of them disagreed. This implies that parental poverty is a major challenge facing children in terms of their appropriate care. It is indeed true that the exercise of willingness to provide material, financial, health, and educational care for children; isa direct product of having the necessary means. Hence, parents who may genuinely desire to provide care for their children may be hindered by the absolute lack brought about by their poverty. Poverty thus creates propensities in the attitudes of parents to even ignore what they regard as their legitimate roles to be played in the lives of their children to attain the level of care necessary to enhance their well-being in life. We do invariably understand or accept that care for children must not be reduced to provisions of material, financial, health; education, and other physical needs alone. Indeed, it goes far beyond including a valuable emotional and mental share of feelings with children to guarantee their peaceful growth and development. It is very common to observe today, that there exist a lot of financially and materially rich people with children who are carelessly handled or maltreated because such people lack the necessary qualities that ought to provoke the right care for their children. However, it must be noted that the general idea of respondents here, incidentally tallies with the perception that poverty is a strong ingredient that frustrates the fortitude of parents and other adults in rendering all the veritable care that children deserve in their formative years.

Table 2: Specific Problems Facing Children in Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria

S/N	Number of respondents	Nature of Response	Percentage (%)
A.	950	Yes	95
B.	50	No	5
	1000		100

As can be seen in Table 3, twenty (20) or two (2%) out of one thousand (1000) respondents, agreed that there are learning facilities for children in their homes for the comfortable learning process; while nine hundred and eighty (980) or ninety-eight percent (98%) of the respondents said there are no learning facilities in their homes for children's comfortable learning process.

These pieces of information confirm that the majority of children in this environment have no essential facilities in their homes which would enhance their care therapy. To obtain a profitable or reliable citizenry, there is a dire need for parents to possess adequate resources in their homes to ease the proper care of their children within society. Since these are currently lacking in this area, the bright future of childcare philosophy hangs unpredictably in the air.

Table 3: Specific Problems facing children in Benue south senatorial district of Nigeria. Enrollment in local colleges, 2005

S/N	Number of Respondents	Nature of Response	Percentage (%)
C.	20	Yes	2
D.	980	No	98
	1000		100

Table 4 shows that nine hundred and sixty (960) that is, ninety-six percent (96%) of the respondents interviewed, accepted that it is good to over-work children, while only forty (40) or four percent (4%) of them said it is not good to over-work children. The table thus shows that the general philosophy of the people in this research area is that, over- work of children is normal as a practice. All respondents who support children's over-work said it is part of childhood training to avoid lapses during the adult stage of the children's lives. However, the few that is, forty (40) or four percent of respondents who do not support children's overwork, maintain that such a practice can instill negative feelings and attitudes into children as they grow up into adulthood.

From these revelations, it has become very clear that children of this environment face these critical burdens of over-work as specific problems on an almost daily basis. The facts here also indicate that since it is the philosophy of the people of this area which constitutes this specific problem of over-work for children, it may be difficult for childcare to receive a quick improvement in terms of a drastic positive change against the practice in the community.

Table 4: Specific problems facing children in Benue South senatorial district of Nigeria.

S/N	Number of Respondents	Nature of Response	Percentage (%)
A.	960	Yes	96
B.	40	No	4
	1000		100

Table 5 shows that ten that is, 1% of respondents interviewed; agreed that their communities formulate or make policies specifically about child care, while nine hundred and ninety or ninety-nine percent of the respondents interviewed, disagreed that their communities make policies specifically about child care. This is a clear indication that child care in this area is strictly individual family affairs. The hard fact is that how a child is raised is the sole responsibility of an individual family. How the individual family succeeds does not concern the community.

However, when a child commits a crime as a result of his or her family's failure to properly take care of him or her, the entire community or communities gather to decide the appropriate punishment for the child and his or her family. Hence, it is the end product or the outcome of a child's-behavior or actions that the entire community or communities would show collective interest in and not the processes that should lead to the outcomes. This is not an encouraging system and needs to be discouraged to create an enabling atmosphere for healthy child care in the bid to build a virtuous and solid society.

Table 5: Specific problems facing children in Benue South senatorial district of Nigeria.

S/N	Number of Respondents	Nature of Response	Percentage (%)
A.	10	Yes	1
B.	990	No	99
	1000		100

Table 6 shows visibly that nine hundred and eighty (980) or ninety-eight percent (98%) of the respondents interviewed, accepted that the location of their villages hinders accessibility to children; while twenty (20) or two (2%) believe that their village locations do not hinder accessibility to children. The data here show that locations particularly, those families that reside in remote villages, have problems with their children being inaccessible to a vast number of modern facilities including information on health and other vital social amenities tenable in towns.

It must, therefore, be noted here that, due to the rural nature of this research area; many children here are denied modern childcare methods suitable or applicable to their counterparts whose parents are in the cities. For instance, almost all schools visited during this research, lack basic equipment for teaching and learning processes, while many of them are deserted with teachers looking like refugees across the Sahara Desert due to non-payment of salaries of up to twelve months and above.

Child care is more successful as a joint venture between parents in families and teachers in schools except only in cases where the biological parents of the children are incapacitated or dead. Even at that, it is expected that children in Homes privately or publicly set up, are more cared for with the collaboration of operators of the Homes and the teachers in schools where affected children are exposed to and made to receive available care.

Table 6: Specific problems facing children in Benue South senatorial district of Nigeria.

S/n	Number of respondents	Nature of response	Percentage (%)
A.	980	Yes	98
B.	20	No	2
	1000		100

Table 7 reveals that eight hundred and fifty (850) or eighty-five percent (85%) of the respondents support the traditional and customary system of the people whereby parents dictate to children in all their affairs at all times. As the table shows above, only one hundred and fifty (150) or fifteen (15%) of those interviewed, are against the system whereby priority is given to parents in issues or actions and behavior of children. The decisions of parents are final and considered appropriate for children even in areas of the desires, likes, and dislikes of children. The assumption here is that parents would always know better what is good or bad, suitable or unsuitable for their children, and therefore; must be free to take decisions for the children no matter how critical, sensitive, and personal the affairs may be.

The danger in this traditional and customary practice is that the world keeps changing with new and strange discoveries which many parents are unaware of or even handicapped to comprehend. Therefore, there are serious risks involved in completely submitting to the dictates of parents in virtually all cases concerning children's welfare. Hence, adequate consultations and analyses should be made jointly or collectively before decisions are taken on the welfare of children to avoid errors that may affect the entire lives of the children via an old-held tradition or custom that takes no account of the dynamism of the world. This is not to completely shun the ideas of parents in all matters of child care. It is rather, to be careful and judicious in submitting to parental decisions so that things that may unknowingly lead to disasters for the children may be skipped.

Table 7: Traditional and customary systems that hinder rights and assistance of children in Benue South senatorial district of Nigeria.

S/n	Number of respondents	Type of response	Percentage (%)
A.	850	Yes, I support	85
B.	150	No, I do not support	15
	1000		100

Table 8 illustrates that six hundred and fifty (650) or sixty-five percent (65%) respondents accepted that children must always depend on adults for whatever they want or desire, while three hundred and fifty (350) or thirty-five percent (35%) disagreed that children must depend on adults for whatever they want or desire. Even though the table above, indicates that the majority of respondents agreed that children must always depend on adults for whatever they want or desire, there is a growing awareness among people now that not all adults these days can or must be trusted for children to always depend on in areas of their needs or desires. The sizeable number of respondents who opposed this view shows that there is a lot of awareness now that our adults of today, are no longer to be trusted or depended upon because of the growing size of falsehood among them in outright manifestations of end-time signs.

In addition to the growing size of dishonesty among adults of today, there are also upward trends in the movements of many adults towards the chrome of envy against children of other families for their potential or virtues. These are some of the reasons why children shouldn't entirely depend on adults for whatever they desire or want especially the adults who are unknown.

Table 8: Traditional and Customary Systems That Hinder Rights and Assistance of Children in Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria

S/N	Number of respondents	Type of response	Percentage (%)
A.	650	Yes	65
B.	350	No	35
	1000		100

Table 9 shows a total number of fifty (50) or five percent (5%) of respondents agreeing that children have rights that should be respected, protected, or up-held, while nine hundred and

fifty (950) or ninety-five percent (95%) of the respondents, maintain that children have no rights to be respected and protected. These data demonstrate the level or extent of the illiteracy of the people of this area and the unfortunate situation of children in this environment. It is also not surprising that children here are often handled as if they are inanimate beings to the extent that unmarried women will give birth to children and throw them away into toilet pits or abandon them in bushes to die off. Though children cannot speak or act in the same way as adults, it does not mean that they have no feelings, emotions, or desires. It also does not mean that they are not human beings or people with inherent dignity who ought to be honored and fortified for a better societal future. These explain why in advanced countries, children's issues especially, where they relate to care, are treated with the highest level of seriousness. In such countries as Britain, Australia, Canada, and the United States of America; huge amounts of money and other resources, are invested in child care and other related sectors to capture the relevant strength for sustaining children's welfare and development. These realities are the footprints that our country and society should follow. Indeed, they should be the peppersoups of fish and fowls which our leaders so much treasure and consume in joints at Ikoyi and Asokoro even to the detriment of children in need but tied to the shackles of suffering eluded from real care.

Table 9: Traditional and Customary Systems that Hinder Rights and Assistance of Children in Nigeria

S/N	Number of respondents	Type of response	Percentage (%)
A.	50	Yes	5
B.	950	No	95
	1000		100

Table 10 here reveals that out of the one thousand (1000) persons interviewed, three hundred (300) or thirty percent (30%) of them said they are aware that child care is a problem in their communities. From the table, the indication is that seven hundred (700) or seventy percent (70%) said they were not aware that childcare is a problem in the district. The data indicate that the majority of respondents are not aware of child care as a problem. Since the majority are unaware of childcare as a problem, there is absolutely nothing done to reduce their urge or craving for giving birth to more children. In fact, in the typical villages where manual farming work is the order of the day, the more children one has, the greater the chances of the person to succeed in the scourging stress of the physical venture.

Table 10: The Level of Awareness of the People About Child Care as a Problem

S/n	Number of respondents	Type of response	Percentage (%)
A.	300	Yes	30
B.	700	No	70
	1000		100

6.0 Conclusion and Future Scope

It is our conclusion here that a lot needs to be done to attain healthy and tangible childcare practices in this research area. More education of youths will manifest positive changes in

the environment. This is because women will be allowed greater rights and obligations to participate in decisions about the affairs of children. Improved social facilities such as transport, health, communication, and living conditions of the people; will activate positive childcare practice methods in this zone. The veritable influences of international organizations on child care practices, and the zero-option of accepting modern changes, have combined to open the gates of rural residents to permit the overhauling of the entire system of the people for rapid upliftment of the glory of child care philosophy. Moreover, child abuse is increasingly becoming a stigma that families are prepared to resist to usher in harmony for peace to grace the incoming celebration of social services. Herein lies the succor for appropriate achievement for society in general and the Benue South Senatorial District of Nigeria in particular. More research on childcare systems should be carried out to cover more states, Nigeria, and the entire globe.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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Authors Contribution

Ejembi, Febian Sule conceived the study and wrote, reviewed and edited the manuscript and its final version.

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