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**THE INFLUENCE OF CHILD NEGLECT ON  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL  
CHILDREN IN IBIONO IBOM LGA**

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**BY**

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***ABSTRACT***

*The study investigated influence of child neglect on social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom L.G.A. Four hypotheses were formulated for the study. The population for this study was all primary five pupils totaling 4000 pupils. Sample size of 90 primary five pupils was drawn from the population. Stratified sampling technique was used to select nine (9) primary schools from each clan in Ibiono Ibom L.G.A. and ten (10) primary five pupils from each of the sampled school. The research instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was duly validated by experts and was subjected to reliability test using Cronbach Alpha Technique which yields reliability co-efficient of 0.73 to 0.78. The data gathered was analyzed using dependent t-test statistics. The result revealed that there is a significant influence of physical, emotional, educational and medical child neglect on social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom L.G.A. Based on this finding, it was recommended that: Good and adequate medical treatment should be provided for school aged children. Educational care in terms of school needs such as uniforms, sandals, school bags, books and other required learning materials should be made available to pupils. Parents and caregivers should provide balanced diet, decent shelter, clothing(s) and basic sanitary conditions for their children.*

**KEYWORDS:** Physical, emotional, educational, medical, child neglect, social development, school children

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**Introduction**

Social development is the acquisition of the ability to behave in accordance with social expectations. It is the manner in which a child gradually get adjusted in his patterns of relationship with his fellow men, in line with the social norms and values. An individual is born with a wide range of behavior potentialities; but is later on, led to develop behaviors considered suitable for his social group. Every child tends to be dependent and helpless at infancy. In the first few days of life, the child is without any significant social awareness. After a few months, he can react to the adults approach with a smile; he can be active when spoken to by raising his arms, legs or by uttering some sounds. He may cry when the adults that attend to him goes away. This marks the beginning of social awareness. This indicates that the child wants the company of others.

A child tends to be more pleased when adults are around and satisfy his needs. Therefore, the foundation for future social development lies in the child's early

feelings of effective successful interaction with people in his immediate environment. Egbule (1100v) observed that through social development, a child acquires knowledge, tastes, habits, standards of judgment and morals. Child neglects deprive primary school children a great deal of these acquisitions due to exposure to psychological issue over time from attention and language deficits to reduce mental functioning. Child neglect is a failure to provide basic needed care for the child such as shelter, food, clothing(s), education, supervision, medical care and other basic necessities needed for child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social development (Umobong, 11010). It is also a situation where guardians or parents fail to perform some tasks that are necessary for the wellbeing of the child, which invariably can lead to the child's health and safety being endangered.

Child neglect according to Jull (11011) is the common form of child maltreatment generally characterized by omission in care resulting in significant harm or risk. Nevertheless, since children are human and are therefore social beings, which need to interact with family members and mates to develop desirable social skill for adult life and are termed as social development. Child neglect, as the name implies, occurs in different forms such as emotional child neglect, educational child neglect, medical child neglect and physical child neglect. Williams (1101L) explained emotional child neglect as depriving a child's emotional needs by parent or caregiver. It involves failing to provide the emotional support that one should provide, given one relationship to the other. Therefore, a parent or caregiver emotionally neglects a child when they fail to show the child the level of affection or attention as a parent or omitting to do things that tend to promote emotional wellbeing of the child. Francis (1100M) observed that neglected children display attachment disorder symptoms and eventually form insecure attachments to their caregiver because of caregiver's unresponsive interactions. This disturbed attachment to primary caregiver alters future relationships with peers by becoming emotionally and physically isolated from others reducing likelihood of forming emotional connections. Thus, affecting social development of the children negatively.

Emotionally neglected pupils feel that forming intimate relationship with others looses their control in life and exposes them by increasing their vulnerability. They react at a little dispute with anger, frustration and are less enthusiastic with completing a new task. Dubowitz (1100D) confirmed that emotionally neglected children of school age display attachment disorder symptoms because they do not usually have good relationship or bond with their parents. They cannot express their feelings safely and as a result may develop difficulties regulating their emotions and extraordinary behaviors.

Educational child neglect is another form of child maltreatment leading to poor social development in the future. Stepenson (11011) noted that educational child neglect is all about parent's failure to provide for child basic needs about school and education. It occurs when the child's educational needs is not provided. It is disheartening to see under age children who are supposed to be in school engaged in hawking goods along the road. Ekpo (11010) explained that these pupils lack curiosity to face challenges in classroom among friends. They are not polite and cannot participate fully in the society as they grow up. They experienced lower academic achievement due to the poor cognitive and language development, which leads to poor leadership ability in their social life.

According to Ike (1100C), educationally neglected pupils show increase in criminal and delinquent behaviors in later life. He also observed that educationally neglected children display poor self-control and a lack of creativity in solving problems. They perform significantly poorer on intelligent quotient test than their counterpart does. Udofot (1101V) examined impact of child neglect on adaptation to school using one hundred and seventy (100) school children of both sexes, ages 5-11 years. He discovered that neglected children significantly score lower in kindergarten classroom behavior and first grade academic performances than non-neglected children. They are at risk of poor resolution of developmental task resulting in part from prior developmental failures. Therefore, the rate of their social development is limited.

Medical child neglect is another form of child maltreatment, which leads to poor social development. Medical child neglect is defined as parent's failure to provide adequate medical and dental care for their children especially when it is needed to treat a serious physical injury or illness (Abiola, 1101). Ekpe (1100M) saw medical child neglect as when basic health care needs are not met resulting in harm or potential harm. It could occur in the following situations:

- (a) When a parent fails to seek care for illness or injury in a timely manner
- (b) When a parent fails to comply with medical recommendations, example failing to administer prescribed medications in the appropriate manner or administering medications in a manner which impairs the child's recovery.
- (c) When parents fails to provide or consent to treatment for a treatable condition that may be life threatening.
- (d) Refusing to support the child's medical expenses for an acute illness without good reasons,

Abiola (1101) reported that the brain structure of a medically neglected child is significantly altered and the overall cerebral volume of the brain of these children is significantly admonished with a reduced midsagittal area of the corpus callosum and ventricular system is enlarged, thereby resulting in decreased cognitive growth, poor social development and functioning. According to National Research Council (1100), inadequate and abusive care can have considerable consequence in terms of children's health, social, psychological cognitive and brain development. Also children who have experienced neglect are therefore at increased risk for a number of problematic developmental health and poor social skills.

Physical child neglect is also one of the forms of child maltreatment and the most commonest happening to our children. Ibrahim (1100V) explained that physical child neglect is failure of a caregiver to provide the basic physical needs of the child such as food, shelter, clothing, and sanitary condition which can likely result in serious impairment of the child's social development. These children are deprived of basic needs within their environment that affects them and the society which can lead to a wide range of adverse consequences on pupils social development. With the above situation, physically neglected pupils will be highly aggressive with peers at a little dispute. Also, they suffer problematic relationship because of hunger, they may involve themselves in stealing peer snacks at school. Smith (110111) reported that physically neglected children sometimes feel timid and inferior before friends from sound socio-economic status due to their unkempt body and torn clothes. They are also ridiculed by mates which can make them to avoid such friends. He added that these children are at increased risk of emotional and behavioural problem including anxiety, depression, academic problem which hinder their level of social development at later stage. This paper examined the influence of child neglect on social development of primary school pupils in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It has been observed that primary school children find it difficult to trust others when in distress which may lead to persistence experience of anxiety and anger. Children who are neglected suffer chronic low self-esteem to severe dissociative states (personality disorder), cognitive and attention problems with severe organic brain syndromes. Also, primary school children exhibit poor peer relationship and extraordinary violent behaviours which affects them and the society they live which may result in educational failure when they grow up. Therefore, the problem of this study is to examine the influence of child neglect on social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- (i) Determine the influence of physical child neglect on social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom LGA.
- (ii) Examine the influence of emotional child neglect on social development of primary school children.
- (iii) Ascertain the influence of medical child neglect on social development of primary school children.
- (v) Determine the influence of educational child neglect on social development of primary school children.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

- (i) To what extent does physical child neglect influence social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom?
- (ii) How does emotional child neglect influence primary school children's social development?
- (iii) To what extent does educational child neglect influence social development of primary school children?
- (v) How does medial child neglect influence the social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom LGA?

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- (i) There is no significant influence of physical child neglect on social development of primary school children.
- (ii) There is no significant influence of emotional child neglect on social development on primary school children.
- (iii) There is no significant influence of educational child neglect on social development of primary school children.
- (v) There is no significant influence of medical child neglect on social development of primary school pupils.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey design for the study. The population for this study consisted of all primary five pupils in Ibiono Ibom LGA, estimated at four thousand (4,000) pupils. A sample size of ninety (90) primary five pupils was drawn from the population. Sampling method for this study was stratified sampling technique to enable fair representation of the population of the study. The researcher selected schools for respondents. Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area is made up of One Hundred and Ninety-Three (193) villages grouped into nine (9) clans, namely: Afaha Obio Eno, Afua, Idono, Idedep, Ikpanya, Ikot Usen, Use Ndon, Oko Ita and Utit Obio which are held together by common traditions, custom and ancestral relationship. Nine (9) schools were systematically selected for the study. This was obtained by randomly selecting one (1) school in each clan in Ibiono Ibom LGA. In each public school, two percent (2%) of the total number of children, both male and female in primary five classes belonged to the sample. Ten (10) pupils per school were selected. Simple balloting was used. Pieces of papers with 'yes' and 'no' written on them were rolled and put in a container and those that picked 'yes' were used as sample for the study. A research instrument titled 'Child Neglect Variables Questionnaire (CNVQ)' was used to gather data for the study. Section A seeks to obtain personal information from the respondent while section B contained a 14-item likert-type sub-scale that measured the different variables of child neglect as well as social development. The validity of the instrument was determined using face validity. Data obtained were analysed using the Cronbach alpha coefficient to determine its internal consistency. The reliability figures for the different sub-scales ranged from 0.63 to 0.80 showing that the instrument was high enough to be used for the study. The data obtained were analysed using dependent t-test analysis.

## RESULTS

Null hypothesis 1:

There is no significant influence of physical child neglect on social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom LGA.

**Table 1: Dependent t-test analysis of influence of physical child neglect on social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom LGA.**

Variable	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Physical child neglect	10. V	11. DO			
			DM	111. VO	1. ML
Social development of pupils	111. V	111. O111			

The table presented above shows dependent t-test analysis of influence of physical child neglect on the social development of primary school children. The result shows that t-cal of (111.vo) is greater than t-crit of (1.ML) at .0x level of significance with DM degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and this implies that there is a significant influence of physical child neglect on social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

**Null Hypothesis 2:**

There is no significant influence of emotional child neglect on social development of primary school children.

**Table 2: Dependent t-test Analysis of influence of Emotional child neglect of social development of pupils**

Variable	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit
Emotional child neglect	11. VO	11. 11111			
			DM	11. DV	1. ML
Social development	111. V	111. O111			

As shown on table 11, the calculated t-value of (11.DV) is greater than the critical t-value of (1.ML) at .0x level of significance with DM degree of freedom. This indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is upheld, meaning that there is a significant influence of emotional child neglect on social development of primary school pupils in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

**Null Hypothesis 3:**

There is no significance influence of educational child neglect on social development of primary school pupils.

**Table 3: Dependent t-test Analysis of influence of educational child neglect on social development of pupils.**

Variable	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit
Educational child neglect	c. DIII	o. IIIII			
			DM	v. III	I. ML
Social development of pupils	III. OV	III. OIII			

Table III shows dependent t-test analysis of influence of educational child neglect on social development of pupils. The calculated t-value is of (v.III) is greater than the critical t-value (I.ML) at .0x level of significance with DM degree of freedom. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is upheld.

This means that there is a significance influence of educational child neglect on social development of primary school pupils in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

#### Null Hypothesis 4:

There is no significance influence of medical child neglect on social development of primary school pupils.

**Table 4: Dependent t-test Analysis of medical child neglect on social development of primary school pupils**

Variable	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit
Medical child neglect	D. VO	O. IIIO			I. ML
			DM	v. III	
Social development of pupils	III. OV	III. OIII			

Table v presented above shows dependent t-test analysis on influence of medical child neglect on social development of primary school children. The result shows that t-cal of (v.III) is greater than t-critical of (I.ML) at .0x level of significant with DM degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and this implies that there is a significance influence of medical child neglect on social development of primary school children in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

#### Discussion of Findings

The result of the study as presented in Table I was significant. This implies that there is a significant influence of physical child neglect on social development of primary school children. The findings of the study is in line with the opinion of Ibrahim (IIIV) who explained that physical child neglect is failure of a care giver to provide the basic physical needs of the child such as food, shelter, clothing (s) and sanitary condition which can result in serious impairment of the child's social development. The findings is also supported by Smith (IIIII) who reported that physically neglected children sometimes feel timid and inferior before friends from sound socio-economic status due to their unkempt body and turn clothes. He added that these children are at increased risk of emotional and behavioral problem which hinder their level social development at later stage.

The result of data analysis on table II was significant because the obtained t-value (II.OV) was greater than the critical t-value (I.ML) at .0x level of significance with MD degree of freedom. The result therefore means that there is a significant influence of emotional child neglect on social development of primary school pupils. The significance of the study is in agreement with the idea of Francis (IIOM) who observed that emotionally neglected children display attachment disorder symptoms and eventually form insecure attachments to their caregivers as a result of caregivers' unresponsive interactions. This disturbed attachment to caregivers alters future relationships with peers by becoming emotionally and physically isolated from others reducing likelihood of forming emotional connections. Dubowit<sub>III</sub> (IIOD) also concluded that emotionally neglected children of school age display attachment disorder symptoms because they do not usually have good relationship or bond with their parents. They cannot express their feelings safely and as a result may develop difficulties regulating their emotions and extra-ordinary behaviors

The findings of the study also revealed that there is a significant influence of educational child neglect on social development of primary school pupils as presented in table iii. The opinion of Ekpo (1000) is in support of this result who reported that educationally neglected children lack curiosity to face challenges in class room among friends. They are not polite and cannot participate fully in the society as they grow up. They experienced lower academic achievement due to poor cognitive and language development which leads to poor leadership ability in their social life.

Data analysis on table v was significant. This result implies that there is a significant influence of medical child neglect on social development of primary school pupils. The significance of the result is in agreement with the idea of Abiola (1001) that concluded that the brain structure of a medically neglected child is significantly altered and the overall cerebral volume of the brain of these children is significantly admonished with a reduced midsagittal area of the corpus callosum and ventricular system. This thereby results in decreased cognitive growth, poor social development and functioning.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made:

Child neglect of primary school pupils has a significant influence on social development of these pupils. Some of the area these children are neglected identified as emotional, physical, educational and medical child neglect as having significant influence on pupils social development. Thus, child neglect invariably endangered the health, development and personality of most primary school children in the area as noted in their low self-esteem, insufficient self-competence and poor social interaction among peers.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. Parents and caregivers should be discouraged from all forms of child neglect which is the most common areas of child maltreatment that affect the total wellbeing of primary school children.
- ii. Parents and caregivers should be responsible enough to adequately provide balanced diet, decent shelter, clothing(s) and basic sanitary conditions for their children.
- iii. Educational care in terms of school needs such as uniforms, sandals, school bags, books and other required learning materials should be made available to pupils.
- v. Good and adequate medical treatment should be providing for school aged children to avoid any developmental disorder which could affect their learning.
- x. Emotional needs of these children should be considered by parents to enhance effective child social development in school.

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