

An Assessment on Household Management Strategies Adopted by Nursing Mothers in Uyo Capital City, Akwa Ibom state

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Abstract

The main aim of the study is to assess household management strategies adopted by nursing mothers in Uyo Capital city, Akwa Ibom state. Two objectives, one research question and one hypothesis was formulated for the study. The population of 110 nursing mothers in Uyo Capital city, Akwa Ibom state. The researcher, having considered the role of women in the family and society, the stress and health challenges women undergo in trying hard to fulfill the wife – mother roles, submit that: Nursing mothers should always ask for help from relatives and husbands, as co-parenting reduces stress and its associated health challenges. Proper time management should be employed; long nap hours of the baby should be used effectively. From the study, multitasking is greatly discouraged. Nursing mothers should plan their weeks, set priorities and work on their to-do-list while incorporating rest most essentially.

Keywords: household, household chores, management strategies

Introduction

Throughout the ages, domestic tasks have traditionally been part of the female role. These tasks create unending and monotonous productive service in the lives of women. Women generally spend a considerable amount of their time and labour resources on these tasks. This has been investigated in advanced time-allocation studies by social scientists whose findings suggest that domestic work performed by women is essentially important in fulfilling the social and economic needs of the family and nation. In everyday life, women are socialized under the images of being (true and devoted wife) and (faithful and devoted to the husband). These idealized images stress self-giving, asceticism, reunification, selfless honour, devotion, obedience and loyalty to husband and family. The traditionally ideal and virtuous wife, mother or woman earns respect from within and outside of her family (e.g. Ramu 2009, 100).

The pervasiveness of the domestic role of women is so well established that, in general, they are expected to be domestically competent in the household. Therefore, in most cases girls are given domestic learning and recreation during their early induction to family life (e.g. Kalakdina 2005, 91; Jeffery 2009, 69). It has also been observed that women learn their gender role expectancies in their families and afterwards transmit them to their children. Thus, women initiate and maintain ritualistic and traditional behaviour for the future lives of the female children. The

deep-rooted and intensive idea behind the female's gender role responsibility is well expressed by phrases such as the 'house as the woman's natural place' or 'women are meant for housework'. This is because women have been responsible for doing housework for centuries, and they are necessary and skilled in this area. (Tenhunen 2017, 121).

Guided by these social notions, women perform the unending tasks allocated to the domestic field in their families (e.g. Jeffery 2009, 65-67). The duties of women include taking care of the children (feeding, bathing and bedding, etc.); sweeping and cleaning the house; fetching water for domestic needs either from a well, a pond, bore hold or a river; cooking and serving food for the men and children; scrubbing the utensils; washing the clothes of the men and children; looking after the storage of provisions (Seymour 2005). Along with these tasks, women also go to the market, engage in arts and crafts, knit and embroider, and perform agricultural tasks, such as preparing the ground, sowing, weeding, growing vegetables, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, drying, boiling (mainly paddy) and storage, etc., all of which are related to women's tasks as part of their 'housework'. These tasks are more cumbersome for nursing mothers whose roles at such time include taking care of an independent being, who needs time, care and affection alongside the normal household works. Similarly, Mothers benefit from problem-solving skills, planning and organising to reduce stress; working mothers, especially those who breastfeed had reduced levels of stress when they were organised and did not blame themselves. However, caution should be exercised as not all women could be fully organised when they need to be flexible and work around the baby's needs, such as breastfeeding. This study therefore investigate into the various method employed by nursing mothers to manage child rearing, household chores and perhaps with job.

Statement of problem

In most societies, women are assigned and restricted to the home as their primary occupational sphere. Even for those women who work outside of the home, housework is still one of their main chores. They often manage a heavy domestic workload, running the family and producing goods and services, whereas men's co-operation is minimal. Women are expected to bear responsibilities related to the domestic field which are socially and culturally assigned to them and to provide services which are asked. Many highly qualified women endeavour to combine their work and family life, rather than give up one for the other. As well, many women, usually due to domestic burdens, still remain part of a relatively disadvantaged stratum, although modern societies provide possibilities for greater interchangeability of the sexes between the public and domestic sectors. This suggests the women's ideology of conceptualizing the female role, wifery and motherhood in family life. Juggling multiple tasks simultaneously distorts women's temporal experiences and diminishes their quality of time; it causes fatigue and other health associated problems; back aches; waste pains; it leads to stress if there is inadequate assistance. Therefore, problems associated with nursing especially a new born is usually enormous, hence the study.

Objective of the Study

The main aim of the study is to assess household management strategies adopted by nursing mothers. The study specifically seeks to:

1. Find out the roles of women in the family and society

2. Evaluate household chores management strategies adopted by nursing mothers in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state.

Research Questions

1. **What are the household chores management strategies by nursing mothers?**

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief

Review of related literature

Concept of household chores

Mbilinyi (1999) conceptualises a household as a group of individuals unified by commonly held factors of belonging and identity, in which individual members have rights and entitlements, as defined by the norms of the wider society. Shelton (2006) goes further by classifying the households into three categories namely nucleus, extended and composite households. The nucleus household comprises of the father, mother, and their children. The extended household comprises of the father, mother, children, and relatives such as grandfather, grandmother, and cousins. The composite households comprises of the father, mother, their children, relatives and non relatives such as friends and house caretakers. The common categories of household which exist in Nigeria are extended and composite households. Household is an important social institution which shapes gender relations, transmits gender norms from one generation to the next and determines roles and opportunities available to the household members based on sex (Shelton & John, 2016).

House hold chores in the context of this study, are tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and ironing that have to be done regularly at home (Collins English Dictionary). These tasks had at most times been shouldered by the women (mothers). There are many other different definitions used to encapsulate exactly what housework, household chores, or unpaid work involves Eichler and Albanese (2007) define household chores as encompassing all physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual tasks used to uphold one's daily activities and household. Numerous studies on household work have included child care and domestic work such as cooking, cleaning, and gardening (Hakim, 2004). Others believe the definition of household chore is dependent on individual households and the historical time frame being examined such that there is no one clear definition for everyone (DeVault, 2011). The definitions of household work has evolved into an entirely different perspectives, the most common definition of household chore is seen as unpaid work performed in order to maintain a family and a home (Shelton & John 2016). This definition, although commonly used, does not describe any of the details involved in the work that is performed. Prior research has identified two different branches of household duties (Lennon & Rosenfield, 2004). These include invisible work and visible work. Visible work is the work that is easily recognized and appreciated, example laundry, cooking, etc. Invisible work is considered to be tasks that are performed but not acknowledged (Erickson, 2005). Another term used for this type of work is emotional work. Emotional or invisible work may include child care (Stewart & Joyce, 1999). Supporting a

spouse or child emotionally, being therapeutic, and being expressive are all included in the definition of emotional work (Erickson, 2005). The household work definition used in this study includes typical household work activities such as cooking and cleaning, but also includes emotional work. (Ramu2009)

Societal Expectations on Women

The society believes that norms, values, attitudes and beliefs are responsible for regulating housework by gender. Housework is women's work, whether or not they are educated or employed. Men are disinclined to perform domestic tasks because of deep conditioning in their upbringing and early experience. Women typically say that men are not prepared to do any kind of domestic job, as they have not been trained for such work by their mothers. Generally, women have been doing the domestic tasks. One cannot change that now (Sharma 2016, 63). Sharma also proclaim that these traditional attitudes belong to almost all women. 'Housework is part of the female role and that efficiency as a housewife is an important measure of success as a woman' (Sharma 2016, 64). Furthermore, Women are also more drawn towards occupations that focus on caring for others, such as nursing or teaching (Cejka & Eagly, as cited in Diekman & Schneider, 2010). In the Nigerian society, it is believed that the worth of the women's lives is based on becoming a successful, ideal wife and mother under traditional norms, values, attitudes and beliefs. After marriage, giving birth is a top priority for a woman. Otherwise she is looked down upon in society and regarded as a great is fortune to herself and her family. It is not only in bearing a child that the importance of motherhood is found, but also in the nurturing of the child with love, affection, devotion and sacrifice. 'Consequently, women place childcare at the top of their domestic and personal agenda', Ramu (2009, 103).

Role of women in the family

A woman as far as family life is concerned is the companion of a man in all sorts of development including her contribution in the economic activities of household economy. The woman in its various roles as mother, wife, daughter, grandmother, daughter-in-law helps in household affairs to boost the economy. The role of mothers cannot be over-estimated in the family circle as the usual parlance: "men build houses but women build homes". Mothers, especially in Nigeria still take care of their children even after the children had been married. Therefore, child upbringing is a lifelong responsibility. This responsibility of combining child rearing with household chores and job for most women has been cumbersome especially in the early part of family life (Sharma 2016). This situation had attracted the attention of researchers especially in the Nursing field to investigate into the various ways in which nursing mothers could have a stress free nursing experience.

It has been attested that child weaning goes with long term benefits (decreased cancer risks, reduced rates of obesity and increased immunity for the baby) as well as certain difficulties such as: sharing the body with another human being, taking care of the host' body, breastfeeding the baby quite often might cause back pain, wrist pain, waist pain, etc. Another important nursing challenge is the bone loss. Mara Horwitz, an associated Professor of medicine at the University of Pittsburgh's division of endocrinology and metabolism noted that, when nursing, calcium is taken directly from the bones to ensure the milk sucked by the baby has enough calcium. Therefore, without the extra protection of surging estrogen that safeguard the bone while pregnant, mothers likely lose 5-10% of their bone mass within six months of starting to breastfeed. Research shows that a lack of calcium at this time could increase risk for gum

disease. (Online Article 2019) Household works are subjected to include everything, which is done to organize and care for a family and a home which include: cleaning the home, preparing food for the family, laundry, shopping, helping children with homework, dropping children off at school and picking them up at the close of school, taking children to church or religious gatherings, visiting friends and families, regular domestic, and social work and also economic work, which are conducted while remaining at home. As far as the women's daily works are concerned, they are mostly undefined and thought of as obligation rather than a work. All these obligations when combined with nursing a baby are to a great extent cumbersome and needs management/coping strategies (Sharma, 2009).

Management strategies Adopted by Nursing Mothers

A woman's role as a spouse, a mother and an employee often overlaps and creates conflict. Experiences of first time mothers combining the role of a spouse and an employee constituted ecstasy, struggle and support. Though it creates excitement of transiting to motherhood, that new stage of life as a woman comes with numerous challenges. In meeting the challenges and demands of motherhood, first-time mothers employed several strategies. These included obtaining support from parents, family relatives and external sources, self-designed coping strategies: time management to overcome stress and developing a work family plan. Below is a brief summary of the strategies:

Obtaining support from parents, family relatives and external sources

It is practically not possible to single-handedly manage the home and take care of a new born or toddler, therefore most nursing mothers often seek for support from several sources in order to cope with the responsibilities that come with child bearing while others shy away. Mothers, mother in-laws, friends and husbands could be of help to perform the demanding tasks of motherhood and the dual role of work and family. These people may provide financial support, role-model support, care-giving and informational support so the mothers can perform their household chores satisfactorily. It is equal responsibility of the father to take care of the child as it is for the mother. Anything less than this might cause increased fatigue and worsened health condition (Brady et. al., 2016). Participants expected help and empathy from and collaboration with their spouse rather than other family members. Most of the participants stated that emotional support and assistance from their spouse play an important role in their stress reduction. A respondent admitted '*My husband sometimes gets up to take care of our baby at night. He asks me to rest as I already worked hard with my job and at home. His words are heartwarming and energising with love*'.

Self-designed coping strategies

First-time mothers explained that they managed their time efficiently as a result of the emergence of new responsibilities. Most of the first-time mothers indicated that they performed varied responsibilities and as such were compelled to adapt coping strategies as a way of ensuring equilibrium. Such coping strategies include: getting a carrier for the baby, using disposable plates and cutleries for the first few weeks with the newborn to save tons of time from washing dishes, buying stuffs online (courtesy of ICT), not trying to be multi-tasking, less perfection ideas, etc. These self-designed strategies have proven to be functional.

Time management to overcome stress

Despite the changes in the status of women in the world, the burden of housework and care of children continues to fall on them. The transition to parenthood is a stressful life event. When an employee becomes a mother, a new role is added to the previous role. Although some studies have shown that employment positively affects the psychological wellbeing of working women, those with very young children feel overloaded and experience conflicts in their role. These experiences can diminish the positive effects of working (Seto et. al., 2004).

The first thing that a new mother needs to do is rest. It is the phase when they need to enjoy motherhood and spend as much time as possible with the baby. Rest is necessary to avert health challenges and to ensure proper care of the baby. New mothers have to cope with a heavy workload at home, including housework and childcare. Experienced mothers confirmed that it is necessary for first time mothers or nursing mothers to rest and spend as much time as possible with the baby and also plan out their days. For example, meals can be prepared in advance for a week and then stored in the refrigerator. On the other hand, huge laundry chunks are done once in a week while extra clothes are kept for the baby. While the baby sleeps longer, such times are identified and used effectively. By lowering expectations such as keeping the house sparkling, more time and energy can be gained to take care of the baby. Stress though is a part of life and a subject that is difficult to avoid (Dhanadhkyam & Naveen, 2015).

Stress is a growing problem for all employees, but it is experienced at a high level for working breastfeeding mothers. The rate of stress-related illnesses amongst women is two times the rate of those in men. Stress occurs following an inconsistency in a person's ability to meet the perceived demands of the environment (Sawyer, 2015). As Craig's (2007) study found, employed mothers found alternative ways to maximise their time with children, including "time squeezing"(working more intensively at certain times of the day) and "time shifting"(taking time from leisure and self-care). In all, he recommended rest, which results from effective time management as a sure way for stress relief. Also, working mothers usually use childcare facilities, reduce their hours of work to part time and undertake long maternity leave as stress coping mechanisms as noted by Ilies et. al., (2007). However, not all working mothers can afford or are offered these measures. Furthermore, a mothers' performance at her job and her home often reveals her ability to cope with the concurrent demands of work and family. Community resources, such as recreational facilities for exercise, creative arts, self-care promotion, social support and cognitive skill development, are also available to help mothers reduce stress (Ospow & Spokane, 2008). However, not all women have access to these resources for stress management.

Developing a work-family plan and adhering to it

Some nursing mothers unfortunately stay alone with their children and do not have access to any support. It is most common to see some families where the only time the woman could meet her husband is when he is to give money for the baby's up-keep, thus the bulk of the house chores rest on the mother. It is then necessary to draw a schedule of activities for the week and strictly follow it in order to maximise time and also be able to do all that is necessary. This might require waking up at dawn to perform household duties by which time the baby may still be in bed; establishing work hours and rest hours; a workable to-do-list, putting priorities right, and getting a baby carrier can be helpful as it allows the mother to work around and do a lot of chores while still carrying the baby.

In a recent research of nurses who supervised their children's homework over the phone at work, it was revealed that this "synchronised" time use, when women are performing work and home tasks simultaneously, should be recognised as an "additional form of labour" due to the intensity of time experienced in this way (Morehead's 2001:365). Similarly, Marg, a mother of two children under five years of age, who worked 30 hour per week as an academic, recounted that the merging of home and work tasks was an intense form of time use, but used work-family plan strategy as a necessary way to keep up with her job.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Correlational survey design was used for this study.

Area of the Study

The study area was Uyo Capital city, Akwa Ibom state.

Population of the Study

The target population for this study will be nursing mothers in Uyo Capital city, Akwa Ibom state

Sample and Sampling Technique

In this research a proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample size of one hundred and ten (110) nursing mothers in Uyo Capital city, Akwa Ibom state.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire tagged An Assessment on Household Management Strategies Adopted by Nursing Mothers Questionnaire (AHMSANMQ)

Validity of the Instruments

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in test, measurement and evaluation.

Reliability of the Instrument

The responses in the questionnaire were coded and treated with Cronbach Alpha statistics to examine the consistency of the instrument.

Method of Data Collection

The instruments were administered to the respondents via direct delivery method.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, percentage analysis for the research question and regression analysis for the hypotheses were used for the analysis. The result was tested for significance at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Research Question One

The research question sought to find out the household chores management strategies by nursing mothers. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed as can be seen in table 1 and figure 1.

Table 1
Percentage analysis of the household chores management strategies by nursing mothers.

Household chores management strategies by nursing mothers	Freq	Percentage (%)
Obtaining support from parents family relatives and external sources	73	66.36
Time management to overcome stress	15	13.64
Developing work-family plan and adhering to it	22	20
TOTAL	110	100

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 present the percentage analysis of the household chores management strategies by nursing mothers. From the result, it was observed that the highest percentage of the respondent 73(66.36%) said the household chores management strategies by nursing mothers is Obtaining support from parents family relatives and external sources, second to the least respondents on the subject matter affirmed the strategy is 22(20%), while the least number of respondents 15(13.64%) said Time management to overcome stress.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis one

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief. In order to test the hypothesis regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

Table 2

Regression Analysis of the influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief.

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.81 ^a	0.66	0.66	1.08	0.66

***Significant at 0.05 level; df= 108; N= 110; critical R-value = 0.197**

The table shows that the calculated R-value 0.81 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.197 at 0.5 alpha level with 108 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.66 predicts 66% of the influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief. It was also deemed necessary to find out the extent of the variance of each case of independent variable (household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief) as responded by each respondent (see table 3).

TABLE 3

Analysis of variance of the influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	246.36	1	246.36	211.44	.000 ^b
Residual	125.83	108	1.17		
Total	372.19	109			

The above table presents the calculated F-value as (211.44) and the P-value as (000). Being that the P-value (000) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the data analysis in table 1 displays the household chores management strategies by nursing mothers. From the analysis it was observed that these strategies includes Obtaining support from parents family relatives and external sources, time management to overcome stress and developing work-family plan and adhering to it as responded by the respondent, the outcome of the analysis was therefore in agreement with the findings made of Brady et. al., (2016), who opined that Mothers, mother in-laws, friends and husbands could be of help to perform the demanding tasks of motherhood and the dual role of work and family. He also stated these people may provide financial support, role-model support, care-giving and informational support so the mothers can perform their household chores satisfactorily, It is equal responsibility of the father to take care of the child as it is for the mother. Anything less than this might cause increased fatigue and worsened health condition. Also the result agreed with the findings of

The result of the data analysis in table 2 was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value 0.81 was greater than the critical r-value (0.197) at 0.05 level with 108 degree of freedom. This result implies that there is significant influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief. The significance of the result is in agreement with the opinion of Sharma (2016), who states that this responsibility of combining child rearing with household chores and job for most women has been cumbersome especially in the early part of family life, this situation had attracted the attention of researchers especially in the Nursing field to investigate into the various ways in which nursing mothers could have a stress free nursing experience.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the research, it was concluded that strategies such as obtaining support from parents family relatives and external sources, time management to overcome stress and developing work-family plan and adhering to it is very necessary for household chores management by nursing mothers. An also, there is significant influence of household chores management strategies on nursing mother extent of stress relief.

Recommendations

The researcher, having considered the role of women in the family and society, the stress and health challenges women undergo in trying hard to fulfill the wife – mother roles, submit the following:

Nursing mothers should always ask for help from relatives and husbands, as co-parenting reduces stress and its associated health challenges.

Proper time management should be employed; long nap hours of the baby should be used effectively. From the study, multitasking is greatly discouraged. Nursing mothers should plan their weeks, set priorities and work on their to-do-list while incorporating rest most essentially.

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