

MATERNAL DEPRIVATION ON PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' READING ABILITY IN UYO SENATORIAL DISTRICT

Ubong Samuel Esu
Department of Early Childhood Care and Education,
College Of Education, Afaha Nsit,
Akwa Ibom State.

And

Dr. Esther A. Abiata
Department of Early Childhood Care and Education,
College Of Education, Afaha Nsit,
Akwa Ibom State.

Abstract

This study was conducted to assess the influence of maternal deprivation on pre-primary school pupils' reading ability in Uyo Senatorial District. Three thousand two hundred and forty pre-primary school pupils were randomly selected for the study. The personal folders of pupils were used to identify those maternally deprived while a reading passage was used to measure their reading ability. Two null hypotheses were formulated for the study. Analysis of data was done using t-test at .05 level of significance. From the analyses of data, findings were made that maternal death and mothers' prolonged sickness significantly influenced the reading ability of pre-primary school pupils. Based on the findings, recommendations were made among others that the extended family system should be used for the upbringing of children to compensate for maternal deprivation.

There is a critical period during the first few months of life when basic trust has to be on the child. After this period, the child may cease to be affectionate and become moody throughout life. Thus, a young child requires an environment where members are loving and caring. If there is any deprivation of care and attention, it could have great effects on later development.

An early study by Piaget reported by Hunt and Hilton (2000) about a study of mental development in children observed that the idea of conservation is established at

about three or four months of age. Up till then children experience little distress if one mother figure has to be substituted for another. Once the child has grasped the idea that objects and people have a permanent existence independent of their presence, then the idea that people and things can be lost is also established. The age when babies begin to search for loss parent by separation or death begins to have serious consequences.

Some works have been done on the influence of mothers' death on the academic performance of the child. One of the most recent studies is the one by Carlson (2009). In Romania, the one-time president of that country Nicolae Ceausescu is reported to have favoured policies to raise the birth rate. He established institutions for motherless babies and children whose parents could not care for them. After Ceausescu was executed in a coup in 1989, the orphanages were opened to the world and research work was carried out on them. Scientific study showed that the children were in the third or tenth percentile of physical growth and were grossly delayed in mental development as well as reading ability.

A study reported by MSan (2009) at the University of Miami Medical School on the influence of mother's death on the child. The affected infants who were admitted in the hospital, had inferior scores on mental tests but as they were messaged and cared for by nurses, they became more active and alert. They were more responsive to stimuli and were discharged from the hospital sooner than non-messaged infants. A follow up study found that these messaged children did better in tests of reading and motor ability.

Walsh (2001) wrote that there is a growing momentum, among Anthropologists, Endocrinologists, psychologists and neuro psychologists to recognize the role of mothers in the critical task of humanizing the species.

Rutter (2006) further reported of the study on Romanian children whose mothers had died and were brought up in institution. No personalized care was given to these infants and they lacked toys to play with. On McCarthy scales of general cognitive ability the children almost caught up with the average population after some years in the United Kingdom. The infants as an averaged group was 100 compared to the normal comparison of 109. However, they suffered in other areas such as quasi-artistic abilities.

Early studies by Bowlby (2008) had shown that there is a process called imprinting in the life of infants, which allows them to develop a firm attachment to the mother. If this attachment or special bond is broken, the infant would suffer serious consequences. Gold Farbs (1998) had earlier found that such children performed less well on IQ measures. The critical period when this attachment bond takes place in the first six years of life, Lenneberg (2007) had stressed that it is at this stage that language development takes place and when the learning is lost, it is lost forever. One of the factors that can lead to maternal deprivation is the death of the mother.

Hunt and Hilton (2000) found that maternal death which can give rise to deprivation has a tendency to disrupt intellectual growth because of apathy, over activity or interference with educational progress. This implies that the mother dies and there is no person caring enough his learning to read could be disrupted, his attention in class

would be hampered and his chances of going to school regularly could be hampered. In such cases, the reading ability of the child would be adversely affected.

Bowlby (2008) support the relationship between maternal death and reading ability when he asserts that mental health requires a warm and continuing relationship with a mother figure in which both find satisfaction. Without this, the child suffers deprivation of attention, which make him become delinquent, depressed, have speech defect and a variety of other disorders. a control group

In an early study carried out by Golg Farb but reported by Miller (2004), it was shown that some children whose mother died and were brought to hospitals and foundling institutions, inspite of good medical care, showed motor and language retardation and language development is essential for reading ability. Some of these children were later transferred to foster homes at the age of three. The group was compared with who had been fostered from babyhood. It was found that the children in the first group had lower IQ scores, lacked concentration and were backward in behaviour, language and reading.

Later studies have however refuted the findings of Bowlby. Hunt and Hilton (2000) reported of another study in which a group of six children of pre-school age lost their parents in concentration camp during world war 11 and had remained together as a group inspite of several challenges of camps. After the war, they ended up in the same nursery school. The study showed that although the children eventually had emotional problems as a consequence of their horrible experience, there was no evidence of gross disturbance in intellectual achievement, which one might have expected. The children were protected by the strong ties, which they had developed for each other.

Even in animal studies, Prescott (2002) did not find any adverse effect in intellectual behaviour of monkey that was reared in single cages without the presence of a surrogate mother. In longitudinal study for the International Fovel Policy Research Institute, Glewive, Jacoby and King (2000) followed a group of Filipino children in the Philippines from birth until the end of their primary education. They found that the death and absence of mothers or other parenting factors could not account for the fact that malnourished children perform poorly in school. It is only when maternal death leads to malnourishment of the child that intellectual development including ability can be affected.

One other cause of maternal deprivation is prolonged sickness. If the mother was sick for a long time, it is certain that the child may not be attached to her during that period and she may not be able to provide the kind of care that could be possible to the child under normal circumstances. Unfortunately not much research work has been done in this area.

Prolonged sickness and hospitalization of the mother at the early stage of the child's life has similar effects as that of separation. Perhaps one of the studies related to this is that of Skeels reported in Hunt and Hilton (2000) who found a girl abandoned

with a deaf and dumb father. The girl when discovered was without language and had a low IQ.

Chauchan (2008) reported also that prolonged sickness of the parents can lead to the development of maladaptive behaviour as well poor performance in school as there could be no one to fully take responsibility of the child's education. Where the mother is the sole bread winner, as in single parent families and the same falls sick for a long time, it is obvious that the child would lack supervision and sponsorship in his education and this would adversely affect his reading ability. In a study on truancy causation and effects on academic performance by Ifokwe (2002), it was reported that prolonged sickness of the mother at an early stage of life through the beginning of schooling can adversely affect his class attendance and ability to read and write. Such children have been found to be truant and may later drop out of school. However, in extended families where there are many adult members to take care of the child the effect of maternal sickness on the child may not be significant.

Reading is the recognition and conscious reproduction of written or printed symbols, letters, word groups and sentences either mentally or vocally by means of eye or finger contact. Eye contact is used by humans that have no visual impairment whereas finger contact is used by the blind who makes use of Braille writing (Ngwoke, 2006). The difference in pupils' family background makes it necessary to assess the extent which maternal deprivation influence the reading ability of pre-school pupils in Uyo Senatorial District.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is the poor performances of some pre-primary school pupils in English reading in Uyo Senatorial district. The pre-primary level prepares individuals for found schooling. Where there is a low level of ability to read in pupils, this is likely to have an influence on their ability at higher levels. There seems to be an increase in single parent homes in Uyo Senatorial District. Many homes are broken by death, divorce, separation, desertion or prolonged absence of one of the parents. Cases of abandoned babies are increasing. Children from such homes are in pre-primary schools.

A careful observation shows that many pre-primary school pupils can speak in English but when it comes to reading, problems arise. The ability to read is the initial benefit that one derives from formal education. Literacy is not just the ability to read and write but the ability to carry out these tasks intelligently. Thus, many pre-primary school pupils in Uyo Senatorial District unable to read well, questions are raised as to whether maternal deprivation can contribute to this inability.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, this study sought to determine;

1. The influence of maternal death on pre-primary school pupils' reading ability.
2. The influence of prolonged sickness of the mother on pre-primary school pupils' reading ability.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were stated for this study:

- (1). There is no significant influence of mothers' death on pre-primary school pupils' reading ability.
- (2). There is no significant influence of prolonged maternal sickness on pre-primary school pupils' reading ability.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the following ways:

It will be useful to parents as it will encourage them to do all they can to keep a stable home for the sake of their children. This will allow the children to have someone to copy and learn from. It will help the children to have close interaction with the mothers.

It will be useful to mothers as it will enlighten them on the importance of establishing a firm, healthy and long lasting relationship with their children. This will help them spend quality time with their children during the early days of life so as to establish a firm attachment bond with them.

Area of the Study

This study was carried out in Uyo Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

Research Design

This study is an ex-post-facto research comparative or after-of-the-fact research (Tuckman 2002).

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 3,240 pre-primary school pupils was selected for this study using the stratified random sampling technique. The list of approved pre-primary schools in the State Ministry of Education, Uyo (Inspectorate Division) and serial numbers assigned to them.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. The first was the personal folders of pupils which had information on parental background. It is this information that was used to select pupils whose mothers have died and were sick for a

long time. The second instrument was a reading passage for pre-primary schools. This was used to collect information for the dependent variable.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher visited all the pre-primary schools approved by the government in Uyo Senatorial District to identify the maternally deprived pupils. Those sampled were visited often to administer the instrument to the pupils. Permission was obtained from the school heads and proprietors (where applicable). They allowed access to the pupils folders as well as teachers who helped to administer the reading passage.

Data Analysis Technique

The data collected for this study were analysed using t-test to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significant

Results.

Hypotheses 1

There is no significant influence of mothers’ death on pre-primary school pupils’ reading ability in Uyo Senatorial District.

T-test Analysis of the Influence of maternal death on pupils’ Reading Ability.

Groups	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Pupils with living mothers	1800	6.24	1.13	4.78	t1.96	Rejected
Pupils with dead mothers	212	4.08	1.09			

$P < .05$; $df = 2010$

The result in Table 1 shows that the calculated t-value of 4.78 is greater than the critical t-value of t1.96. The first null hypotheses stating that mothers’ death has no significant influence on pupils’ reading ability is reflected at .05 level of significance this means that the death of mothers has a great influence on the reading ability of pre-primary school pupils.

Hypotheses 2

There is no significant influence of prolonged Maternal Sickness on Pre-Primary School Pupils’ Reading Ability in Uyo Senatorial District.

Groups	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Pupils with health mothers	1800	7.81	2.15	7.09	t1.96	Rejected
Pupils of mothers with prolonged sickness	186	3.93	.73			

$P > .05$; $df = 1984$

The result in Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 7.09 is greater than the initial t-value of t1.96. The scores from null hypothesis which states that prolonged

maternal sickness has no significant influence of pre-primary school pupils' reading ability in Uyo District is rejected at .05 level of significance. This means that pupils whose mothers are healthy tend to have a higher reading ability than those mothers with prolonged sickness.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are supported by some of the earlier findings of other researchers in similar and relaxed areas.

The first finding of this study was that maternal death had a significant influence on the reading ability of pre-primary school pupils. This finding is in line with that of Ackerman (2010) in which children whose mothers had died in their early days in life were found to have inferior scores on mental tests and reading ability. Putter (2001) found that children whose mothers had died and were brought up in institution had inferior reading scores.

In second finding of this study was that prolonged sickness of the mother had a significant influence in the reading ability of pre-primary school pupils. The finding corroborates an earlier finding by Hunt and Hilton (2000) who found that maternal sickness led to lack of supervision and consequently a reduction in children's achievement in school which includes reading ability.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are made:

When the mother is alive she would contribute towards the supervision of the child's education, get him prepared for school and get the meals ready when he is back and these may help to enhance the child's academic performance.

A healthy mother is necessary in the supervision of the child's academic activities. It is not enough for the mother to be alive but has to be healthy in order to play her role well so that the academic performance of the child may improve. This is particularly necessary where the father is often out of the house.

The attachment bond between the child and the mother is necessary for the child to develop well, and achieve well in school.

A mother has to pay close attention to the child's behaviour and upbringing so as to help him do well in school. When her attitude is laissez-faire, the child may become truant, stop to do assignments and homework and at the end perform badly at school.

Recommendations

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

- (1). Mothers should devote enough time and attention to their young children.
- (2). Breastfeeding should continue to be encouraged as this increases the attachment bond between mother and children.

- 4). Where any of the parents is dead, significant adult caretakers should be involved in the upbringing of the children to carry out any adverse effect of such incidence.
- (5). Mothers who are not good care givers should learn from experienced mothers how to do so.
- (6). The extended family system in our society should be used for the upbringing of children so that even where the mother is sick, dead, absent or working, other women would be available to provide adequate uninterrupted care for the children.

References

- Ackerman, N. W. (2009). *The Psychodynamics of Family Life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Ainsworth, M. D. (2009). Infant-Mother Attachment. *American Psychologist* 34, 933 – 937.
- Bowlby, J. (1981). *The Effects of Mother-Child Separation: A Follow up Study*. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*. 29: 21 – 47.
- Bowlby, J. (1999). *Forty Four Juvenile Thieves, Their Character and Home Life*. London: Baitere Trindall and Cox.
- Bowlby, J. (2012). *Maternal Care and Mental Health*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- Bowlby, J. (2008). *Child Care and the Growth of Love*. Harmons Works: Pengium Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A Secure Base: A Clinical Application of Attachment Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Clarke, A. M. and Clarke, A. B. (2002). *Early Experience: Myth and Evidence*. London: Open Books.
- Carvel, J. (2003). *Working Mothers, Bad for Children*. The Gaurdun (US) Friday November 14.
- Chauchan, S. S. (2008). *Advanced Educational Psychology*. Dichi: Vitkas Publishing House.
- Carlson, M. (2009). *The Science of Mother's Day. Humanity of his Course: Board of Rights*.

- Dyer, C. (2002). *What About the Kids?* The Guardian (US) 13th February.
- Dansiger, S. K. (2012). *Children and Youth Services Review 50 Special Issue: Child Poverty and Several Policie.*
- Faller, K. (2008). *The Parental Alienation Syndrome: What is it and Child Maltreatment 3, 100, 7115.*
- Gleauch, S. and Gleauch, E. I. (1962). *Family Environment and Delinquency.* London: Kaga Paul.
- Gardener, R. A. (2008). *The Parental Alienation Syndrome: What is it and What Data Support it? Child Maltreatment 3(4) 309 – 312.*
- Goldfarh, W. (1943). *Infant Rearing and Problem Behaviour.* American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 13 249 – 265.
- Hayes, N. (2000). *Foundation of Psychology: An Introductory Text 3rd Edition.* London: Thompson.
- Hunt, S and Hilton, J. (2000). *Individual Development and Social experience.* London: George Allen and Lenwin Ltd.
- Jones, K. L. (2008). *Recognizable Patterns of Human Malformations.* Philadelphia: W. B. Sainders.
- Kolter, K. M. andCastramous, J. N. (2007). *Family Background in Prison Groups: A Comparative Study of Parental Deprivation.* Journal of Psychology. 117, 371 – 380.
- Lindgren, H. C. (1996). *Educational Psychology in the Classroom.* New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lenaeborg, E. (2007). *Biological Foundation of Language.* New York: Wiley.
- Miller, K. (2004). *Fifty Years of Maternal Deprivation Reassessed.* Pediative Research, 5: 4 – 19.
- Montagu, A. (2007). *A Scientist Looks at Love.* Pli Deta Kappan.

Academic Scholarship

Prescott, J. W. (2002). *Before Ethics and Morality*. The Humanist:
November/December.

Patterson, C. H. (2007). *Relationship Between Counselling and Psychotherapy*. New
York: Harper and Row.