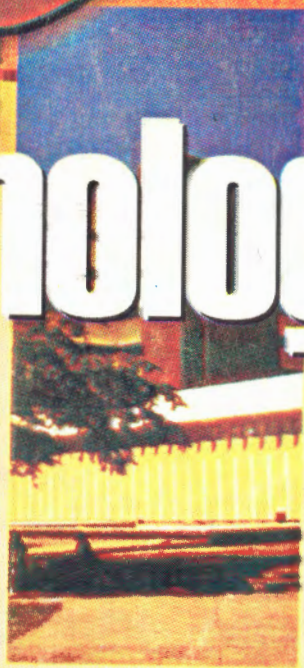


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EDITORIAL

This edition of our journal; *Ife psychologIA: An International Journal* is volume Seventeen Number One, 2009. It has seventeen brilliant articles from all areas of applied psychology. The articles submitted by Dr. Coker & Professor Omoluabi enhance psychometrics.

We thank you for your support.

Sincerely Yours,
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**COUPLES' SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS;
DETERMINANTS OF CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS IN
AKURE SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE,
NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine the socio-economic characteristics of couples as they affect the nutritional status of children ≤ 5 years of age in Akure South Local Government area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 200 couples whose last two children were not more than 5 years of age at the time of the interview. The mean age of the fathers was found to be 39 years while that of the mothers was found to be 32 years; more than half of the fathers (53.5%) had up to a tertiary education, whereas about half of the mothers (47.5%) had up to a secondary education. The result of the bivariate analysis revealed a significant relationship between fathers' income and children's nutritional status ($p < 0.05$); so also a significant relationship was found between mothers' age and children's nutritional status. Further analysis using the logistic regression coupled with the forward stepwise regression further found fathers' income as the best predictor of children's nutritional status, while mothers' age at first marriage was found to be the best predictor of children's nutritional status.

Introduction

Childhood nutrition is an important aspect of childhood health in any country and couples' socio-economic status has been found to be a major contributory factor to children's adequate nutrition. Nutrition is a fundamental pillar of human life, health and development across the entire life span. From the earliest stages of fetal development, at birth, and through infancy, childhood, adolescence and on into adulthood, proper food and good nutrition are essential for survival, physical growth, mental development, performance, productivity and well being - this makes feeding a critical aspect of caring for infants and young children (WHO,2004-2005). Malnutrition on the other hand is a pathological condition brought about by the inadequacy or over-consumption of one or more of the essential nutrients necessary for survival and growth. It reduces resistance to diseases, potentially creating a vicious cycle that can be extremely dangerous to young children. A wide range of factors result in malnutrition; they usually appear in combination, reinforcing each other to cause morbidity, mortality and disability. More importantly, the direct factors include poor feeding practices and/or shortfalls in food intake, as well as illness. Conditions such as diarrhoea can result in a sharp reduction in the absorption of essential nutrients, (UNICEF, 2001; Starfield, 1997,2002).

Parents are increasingly concerned about nutrition, both as it affects their children's immediate growth and development and as it affects later health. Solid foods are generally withheld for the first 4 to 6 months. This delay stems less from concerns about the digestibility of solids than from concerns that the infant's head control and oromotor coordination are not sufficiently developed before that age to allow the infant to participate appropriately in the feeding process. The order in which solid foods are usually introduced into the diet is based on tradition. Typically, cereals are begun first, followed by fruits, vegetables and meats. This order is not followed in many countries, and departures from it are of no particular nutritional concern. The nutrition of the toddler is characterized by a decrease in appetite and the emergence of iron deficiency as a nutritional concern. Two-to five-year-olds have been shown to vary their meal-to-meal energy intake by more than 30%, in contrast to a day-to-day variability of only 10%. A meal with high calorie intake is generally followed by a meal with low calorie intake, and vice versa, thus demonstrating that children are capable of

regulating their own calorie intake. (Simon, Carol and John , 2005; Ojofeitimi, Abiose , Ijadunola , Pedro and Jinadu 2001).

From the 2003 NDHS report, the nutritional status of children showed that overall, 38 percent of children are stunted (short for their age); 9 percent are wasted or thin (low weight-for-height), and 29 percent are underweight (low weight-for-age). Generally, children who live in rural areas and children of uneducated mothers are significantly more likely to be undernourished than other children. Rural children and children of younger or less educated mothers are disadvantaged in terms of nutritional status (NPC/ORC Macro, 2004). Childhood malnutrition has been identified as one of the key factors responsible for high infant and child mortality in Nigeria and couples' socio-economic characteristics such as education, income and occupation among other factors have been identified to contribute to the poor nutrition status of these children (Esimai, Ojofeitimi and Oyebowale, 2001). Hence, there is the need to assess the nutritional status of children and to analyze the effect of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of couples on the nutritional status of children in the study area.

Methodology

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of eligible respondents from the study area. The study was conducted in Akure, the capital of Ondo state, Nigeria. Akure South Local Government area, which is the larger of the two local government areas in Akure has a population of 353,211. The local government is divided into 11 districts out of which 8 were purposively selected. The target population for the study is couples whose last two children were not more than five years of age as at the time of data collection. The systematic random sampling was employed to select and interview 200 couples. Structured questionnaire which contain both open and closed ended questions was used as the instrument for the data collection. Weighing scales and measuring rulers were provided to take the weight and the height of the index children respectively. These were used in addition to the information on the ages of such children to determine the nutritional status of those children.

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 11. Three levels of analysis were also employed, namely univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis. The Univariate analysis was used to examine the background characteristics of respondents and that of the index

children in the study area. Bivariate analysis (chi-square) examined the relationship between couples' socio-economic characteristics and the dependent variable (children's nutritional status). It also looked at the relationship between some intervening variables and the dependent variable. Binary logistic regression (multivariate analysis) was used to examine the influence of each of the independent variables on the dichotomous dependent variable, having determined the pattern and degree of association between the response and the explanatory variable as revealed by the bivariate analysis. The forward stepwise regression was employed to see those socioeconomic variables that were most significant predictors of children's nutritional status. The variables used as indices of couples' socio-economic characteristics include; age, age at first marriage, level of education attained, religion, type of occupation, type of marriage, income and Children Ever Born (CEB).

In assessing the nutritional status of the index children the information on the characteristics of the index children was used. EpiNut - Epi info statistical package was used to derive the Z-score values by imputing the age, sex, weight and height of the index children. Three set of Z-scores were generated, showing the height-for-Age (HA), weight for height (WH) and weight-for-age (WA) of the index children. A child is said to be stunted if such a child has a height lower for the age; a child with lower weight for height is said to be experiencing wasting while a child is said to be undernourished/underweight if such a child has a weight that is low for the age. (Burgess in Adetokunbo and Herberts, 2003; WHO,2006). However, for the purpose of this study, the information on the height for age was used since the information on height for age has been found to be a more reliable indicator of a child's nutritional status (Magadi, 2007).

Results

Information on the socio-demographic characteristics of couples is shown in Table 1. The mean age of the male respondents was 39 years, while that of the female respondents was 32 years. Also, 53.5% and 37% of male and female respondents respectively had tertiary level of education. More than half of the male respondents (53.5%) and almost one third of the female respondents (32.5%) were civil servants. More than 90% each of the male and female respondents respectively were Christians; 7.5% and 5.5% were Moslems respectively, while 1.5% respectively was traditionalists.

Table 2 is the result of the bivariate analysis showing the relationship between fathers' socio-economic characteristic and children's nutritional status. The majority of the stunted children (72.9%) belong to fathers who were below 40 years of age at the time of the survey. Fathers with a higher educational attainment had the least proportion (29.9%) of children who were not stunted. Also, fathers who were artisans had the least proportion of children who were not stunted (27%). A significant relationship at $p < 0.05$ exists between fathers' income and children's nutritional status.

Table 1: DISTRIBUTION OF COUPLES BY SOCIO - DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

| Variables | | MALE N=200 (%) | FEMALE N=200 (%) | TOTAL N=400 (%) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Age | ≤29 | 9(4.5) | 73(36.5) | 82(20.5) |
| | 30-34 | 53(26.5) | 67(33.5) | 120(30.0) |
| | 35-39 | 56(28.0) | 38(19.0) | 94(23.5) |
| | 40-44 | 47(23.5) | 17(8.5) | 64(16.0) |
| | 45+ | 31(5.5) | 3(1.5) | 34(8.5) |
| | NR | 4(2.0) | 2(1.0) | 6(1.5) |
| | Mean Age | 39 | 32 | |
| | Median Age | 38 | 31 | |
| Age at first Marriage | Standard Deviation | 11 | 8 | |
| | ≤24 | 17(8.5) | 95(47.5) | 112(28.0) |
| | 25-29 | 72(36.0) | 77(38.5) | 149(37.25) |
| | 30-34 | 59(29.5) | 17(8.5) | 76(19.0) |
| | 35-39 | 26(13.0) | 2(1.0) | 28(7.0) |
| | 40+ | 5(2.5) | 0(0.0) | 5(1.25) |
| | Don't know | 0(0.0) | 4(2.0) | 4(1.0) |
| | NR | 21(10.5) | 5(2.5) | 26(6.5) |
| Highest level of Education | Mean | 37 | 28 | |
| | Median | 30 | 25 | |
| | Standard Deviation | 22 | 16 | |
| | No Education | 5(2.5) | 3(1.5) | 8(2.0) |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Education Attained | | | | |
| | Primary | 20(10.0) | 28(14.0) | 48(12.0) |
| | Secondary | 68(34.0) | 95(47.5) | 163(40.75) |
| | Post Secondary | 107(53.5) | 74(37.0) | 181(45.25) |
| Religion | Christian | 182(91.0) | 186(93.0) | 368(92.0) |
| | Islam | 15(7.5) | 11(5.5) | 26(6.5) |
| | Traditional | 3(1.5) | 3(1.5) | 6(1.5) |
| Ethnic Group | Yoruba | 173(86.5) | 169(84.5) | 342(85.5) |
| | Igbo | 16(8.0) | 17(8.5) | 33(8.25) |
| | Hausa | 0(0.0) | 1(0.5) | 1(0.25) |
| | Others | 11(5.5) | 13(6.5) | 24(6.0) |
| Occupation | No Occupation | 3(1.5) | 14(7.0) | 17(4.25) |
| | Civil Servant | 107(53.5) | 65(32.5) | 172(43.0) |
| | Artisan | 36(18.0) | 40(20.0) | 76(19.0) |
| | Farmer | 21(10.5) | 13(6.5) | 34(8.5) |
| | Business/ Trading | 21(10.5) | 50(25.0) | 71(17.75) |
| | Others | 12(6.0) | 18(9.0) | 30(7.5) |
| Average Monthly Income | ₦1,000 - ₦ 10,999 | 52(26.4) | 108(58.1) | 160(41.7) |
| | ₦11,000 - ₦ 20,999 | 67(34.0) | 54(29.0) | 121(31.6) |
| | ₦21,000 - ₦ 30,999 | 34(17.2) | 17(9.1) | 51(13.3) |
| | ₦31,000 - ₦ 40,999 | 16(8.1) | 4(2.2) | 20(5.2) |
| | ₦41,000 - ₦ 50,999 | 8(4.1) | 2(1.1) | 10(2.6) |
| | ₦ 51,000 + | 20(10.2) | 1(0.5) | 21(5.6) |
| Types of Marriage | Monogamy | 180(90.0) | 181(90.5) | 361(90.25) |
| | Polygamy | 20(10.0) | 19(9.5) | 39(9.75) |

Table 2: BIVARIATE ANALYSIS SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FATHERS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS: HEIGHT FOR AGE (STUNTING)

| VARIABLES | | STUNTE D | NOT STUNTED | X ² Value | P- Value |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Age | < 40 | 86(72.9) | 32(27.1) | 2.198 | 0.138 |
| | 40+ | 49(62.8) | 29(37.2) | | |
| Age at first marriage | < 30 | 66(74.2) | 23(25.8) | 2.951 | 0.086 |
| | 30+ | 56(62.2) | 34(37.8) | | |
| Level of Education | Lower Education | 60(68.2) | 28(31.8) | 0.083 | 0.773 |
| | Higher Education | 75(70.1) | 32(29.9) | | |
| Religion | Christian | 126(69.2) | 56(30.8) | 1.748 | 0.417 |
| | Islam | 11(73.3) | 4(26.7) | | |
| | Traditionalists | 1(33.3) | 2(66.7) | | |
| Type of Occupation | Civil Servant | 76(71.0) | 31(29.0) | 3.208 | 0.668 |
| | Artisan | 27(73.0) | 10(27.0) | | |
| | Farmer | 14(66.7) | 7(33.3) | | |
| | Business/ Trading | 14(66.7) | 7(33.3) | | |
| | Others | 5(45.5) | 6(54.5) | | |
| Types of Marriage | Monogamy | 122(67.8) | 58(32.2) | 1.352 | 0.245 |
| | Polygamy | 16(80.0) | 4(20.0) | | |
| Father's Income | ₦30,999 or below | 113(73.9) | 40(26.1) | 7.094 | 0.008 |
| | ₦31,000+ | 23(52.3) | 21(47.7) | | |
| CEB | 2 children | 47(68.1) | 22(31.9) | 1.957 | 0.376 |
| | 3 children | 46(75.4) | 15(24.6) | | |
| | 4 & above | 45(64.3) | 25(35.7) | | |

Table 3 shows that a significant relationship at $p < 0.05$ exists between mothers' age and children's nutritional status. The relationship between mothers' age at first marriage and children's level of stunting shows that, a higher proportion of children who were not stunted belong to mothers who were first married before the age of 30 years. Almost 29% of the children whose mothers were of a lower educational status were not stunted, compared with about 35% of those children whose mothers were of a higher educational status. Furthermore, a higher proportion of the children who were not stunted come from a monogamous home, while a higher proportion of the children whose mothers were of a higher income status were also not stunted. The table further shows that, mothers of parity 4 and above have the highest proportion of children who were not stunted.

Table 3: BIVARIATE ANALYSIS SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTHERS' SOCIO ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS: HEIGHT FOR AGE (STUNTING)

| VARIABLES | | STUNTED | NOT STUNTED | X ² Value | P-Value |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------|---------|
| Age: | < 35 | 104(74.3) | 36(25.7) | 5.919 | 0.015 |
| | 35+ | 34(56.7) | 26(43.3) | | |
| Age at first marriage | < 30 | 115(66.7) | 57(33.1) | 0.376 | 0.540 |
| | 30+ | 14(73.7) | 5(26.3) | | |
| Level of Education | Lower Education | 88(71.5) | 35(28.5) | 0.957 | 0.328 |
| | Higher Education | 48(64.9) | 26(35.1) | | |
| Religion | Christian | 129(69.4) | 57(30.6) | 2.738 | 0.434 |
| | Islam | 8(72.7) | 3(27.3) | | |
| | Traditionalist | 1(50.0) | 1(50.0) | | |
| Type of Occupation | No occupation | 8(57.1) | 6(42.9) | 3.040 | 0.694 |
| | Civil Servant | 46(70.8) | 19(29.2) | | |
| | Artisans | 30(75.0) | 10(25.0) | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Farmer | 7(53.8) | 6(46.2) | | |
| | Business/ Trading | 35(70.0) | 15(30.0) | | |
| | Others | 12(66.7) | 6(33.3) | | |
| Types of Marriage | Monogamy | 124(68.5) | 57(31.5) | 0.221 | 0.638 |
| | Polygamy | 14(73.7) | 5(26.3) | | |
| Mother's Income | ₦30,999 or below | 127(70.9) | 52(29.1) | 2.287 | 0.130 |
| | ₦ 31,000+ | 3(42.9) | 4(57.1) | | |
| CEB | 2 children | 49(68.1) | 23(31.9) | 1.653 | 0.437 |
| | 3 children | 45(75.0) | 15(25.0) | | |
| | 4 & above | 44(64.7) | 24(35.3) | | |

The result of the multivariate analysis using the logistic regression (table 4a) shows that fathers' age at first marriage is a significant predictor of children's nutritional status at ($p < 0.05$). Children from monogamous homes are four times more likely to be well nourished compared with children from polygamous homes. Also, fathers' occupation is significantly related to children's level of stunting. The result of the forward stepwise regression in table 4b further shows that fathers' income is the best predictor of children's nutritional status.

Table 5a is the result of the logistic regression relating mothers' socio economic characteristics with children's nutritional status. The table shows that mothers' income is a significant predictor of children's nutritional status at ($p < 0.05$)

Table 4a: LOGISTIC REGRESSION RELATING FATHERS' SOCIO ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS WITH CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS: HEIGHT-FOR-AGE (STUNTING).

| Variables | Log b co-efficient | Odds Ratio | p-value |
|--------------|--------------------|------------|---------|
| Fathers' Age | 0.017 | 1.017 | |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|-------|----------|
| | | | 0.314 |
| Age at First Marriage | -0.012 | 0.988 | 0.196 |
| Income | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.008* |
| Type of Marriage: | | | |
| Monogamy | 1.492 | 4.445 | 0.050** |
| Polygamy | RC | 1.000 | - |
| Children Ever Born: | | | |
| 2 children | -0.168 | 0.845 | 0.681 |
| 3 children | -0.745 | 0.475 | 0.085*** |
| 4&above | RC | 1.000 | - |
| Religion: | | | |
| Islam | -1.714 | 0.180 | 0.218 |
| Traditionalists | -1.804 | 0.165 | 0.236 |
| Christians | RC | - | - |
| Education: | | | |
| Primary | -0.522 | 0.576 | 0.454 |
| Secondary | 0.113 | 1.120 | 0.792 |
| Post Secondary | RC | 1.000 | - |
| Occupation: | | | |
| Civil Servants | -0.388 | 0.249 | 0.040* |
| Artisans | -1.299 | 0.293 | 0.088*** |
| Farmers | -0.276 | 0.759 | 0.745 |
| Business/Others | -1.484 | 0.227 | 0.069*** |
| No Occupation | RC | 1.000 | - |

Table 4b: FORWARD STEPWISE LOGISTIC REGRESSION RELATING FATHERS' SOCIO ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS WITH CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS: HEIGHT-FOR-AGE (STUNTING).

| Variable | Log b co-efficient | Odds Ratio | p-value |
|----------|--------------------|------------|---------|
| Income | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.009* |
| Constant | -1.315 | 0.268 | 0.000 |

* Significant at 1% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 10%

RC = Reference Category

Table 5a: LOGISTIC REGRESSION RELATING MOTHERS' SOCIO ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS WITH CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS: HEIGHT-FOR-AGE (STUNTING).

| Variables | Log b co-efficient | Odds Ratio | p-value |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------|----------|
| Fathers' Age | 0.032 | 1.033 | 0.271 |
| Age at First Marriage | -0.072 | 0.931 | 0.129 |
| Income | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.033** |
| Type of Marriage: | | | |
| Monogamy | -0.6775 | 0.930 | 0.912 |
| Polygamy | RC | 1.000 | - |
| Children Ever Born: | | | |
| 2 children | -0.102 | 0.903 | 0.816 |
| 3 children | -0.644 | 0.525 | 0.132 |
| 4&above | RC | 1.000 | - |
| Religion: | | | |
| Islam | -6.775 | 0.001 | 0.793 |
| Traditionalists | -7.431 | 0.001 | 0.773 |
| Christians | RC | 1.000 | - |
| Education: | | | |
| Primary | -0.393 | 0.676 | 0.575 |
| Secondary | -0.363 | 0.696 | 0.394 |
| Post Secondary | RC | 1.000 | - |
| Occupation: | | | |
| Civil Servants | -1.393 | 0.248 | 0.062*** |
| Artisans | -1.189 | 0.305 | 0.108 |
| Farmers | 0.675 | 1.965 | 0.527 |
| Business/Others | -1.062 | 0.346 | 0.131 |
| No Occupation | RC | 1.000 | - |

Table 5b: FORWARD STEPWISE LOGISTIC REGRESSION RELATING MOTHERS' SOCIO ECONOMIC SHARACTERISTICS WITH CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS: HEIGHT-FOR-AGE (STUNTING)

| Variables | Log b co-efficient | Odd Ratio | p-value |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Age at First Marriage | -0.047 | 0.954 | 0.111 |
| Constant | 0.410 | 1.508 | 0.581 |

** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 10% RC Reference Category

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study assessed the influence of socio economic characteristics of couples on the nutritional status of their children particularly the level of stunting of children 5yrs and below. Findings from the study (as shown in table 1) found the mean age of the fathers to be 39years, while that of the mothers was 32 years. More than half of the fathers (53.5%) had a tertiary education, while almost half of the mothers (47.5%) had up to a secondary education. Majority of the couples interviewed were civil servants. While about 60% (58.1%) of the mothers averagely earned between N1,000 and N10,000 a month, almost 75% (73.6%) of fathers averagely earned above N10,000 a month. Information on the nutritional status as revealed by the level of stunting showed that about 70% (69%) of the children were stunted.

The result of the bivariate analysis (tables 2 and 3) showed a significant relationship between fathers' income and children's level of stunting; and also between mothers' age and children's level of stunting. Esimai et al (2001) also found couples' income among other variables as a key determinant of children's nutritional status from a study conducted on the socio cultural practices influencing under 5 nutritional status in an urban community in Osun state. Also, Magadi (2007) found a strong relationship between the age of mothers and children's nutritional status. Further analysis using the logistic regression and the forward stepwise regression further

stressed fathers' income and mothers' age at first marriage as best predictors of children's level of stunting.

It is very clear from the study that, a wide gap still exist between couples, that is, husbands and wives with respect to their socio economic characteristics, just as we have a wide gender gap in the larger society. Women, especially mothers need to be more empowered to meet up with the challenges of the health of their children, especially their nutritional requirements, which on the long run will bring about a drastic reduction in the incidence of childhood deaths both locally and globally.

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