

Impact of Adolescent Fertility on Level of Child Fostering in Southwestern, Nigeria: Empirical Evidence from Osun State

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to establish the relationship that exists between timing of first childbirth and level of child fostering in Southwestern, Nigeria. Quantitative research method which involves multi-stage random sampling of 1,000 women of reproductive age (15-49 years) with at least a live birth was used in the study. In addition, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted among the populace in the study area. The pre-childbirth family socio-economic backgrounds of respondents for survey were controlled and all the respondents had similar pre-childbirth socio-economic background. The only discriminatory variable that separates these respondents into 2 groups is the timing of the first childbirth. The study group consists of 500 adolescent mothers who had their first childbirths during ages 10-19 years; while the control group consists of 500 older mothers that had their first childbirths at age 20 years and above. Findings of the study show significant relationship between age at first childbirth and level of child fostering at $p < 0.01$. Specifically, 40.8% of adolescent mothers compared with 9.8% of older mothers have fostered at least one of their children. Findings on socio-economic differentials in the level of child fostering show significant relationships between place of residence, current age, educational level, occupational status, marital status, form of marriage, number of children ever and level of child fostering. For example, there is significant difference in level of child fostering between adolescent mothers in the rural and urban areas of the region at $F = 4.2$, $p < 0.05$. In conclusion, women who have their first childbirth as adolescents, irrespective of their socio-economic status, are more likely to foster their children than those who delay childbearing until their twenties, when the later were at similar categories to the former, in the region.

Key words: Adolescent, fostered, fertility, empirical evidence, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental characteristics of traditional society in all Nigerian ethnic groups was the extended kinship unit. This was essentially coterminous with all persons with whom an individual had a genealogical relationship, plus those brought into the kinship unit through marriage as wives in culture where marriage was exogenous. The extended family, as this unit is more commonly known, performed a range of functions, from the allocation of land to the adjudication of disputes. It also provided mechanisms of mutual support, underpinned by a moral code that encouraged individuals to see themselves as extensions of a social unit. The norms of extended familism included cooperation, solicitude, respect, obedience and hospitality among others. Children within extended traditional family were perceived as belonging to the extended family, which had collective responsibility for their socialization. Thus child

fostering is a socio-cultural practice in all traditional Nigeria societies (National Planning Commission, 2001).

Child fostering can be defined as the assumption of the rights and duties of parenthood by adults within an extended family who were not the child's biological parents. Past ethnographic and anthropological studies in Nigeria showed that fostering provided opportunities for upward social mobility for fostered children. For example, the literature on fostering in Nigeria (Clignet, 1967; Djotelo, 1967; Lloyd, 1967; Fadipe, 1970) is consistent in concluding that foster parents were seen as persons of superior status to the biological parents and that foster parents traditionally lived up to the expectations associated with their assumed parental status. A scholar in the literature has noted that the practice of child fostering is wide spread in Nigeria. For example, a study in the city of Ibadan by Isiugo-Abanihe (1985) shows that 32% of males and 24% of females indicated that they had children under 15 years living elsewhere. Similarly, 37% of

males and 33% of females revealed that they had children who were not their offspring residing with them.

In the modern Nigeria society, different factors have diminished the sense of mutual obligation among extended family members, particularly in urban areas. Some of these factors are the dispersal of extended family members, their insertion in a more complex economy where access to resources is governed only to a limited extent by familial ties and the materials pressures resulting from intensification of poverty over the past 2 decades (National Planning Commission, 2001). Nonetheless, elements of the system remain, even in the urban areas. It is common for relatives to demand for assistance or favours on extended family members fortunate to have higher levels of income and assets. Thus, the 1999 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) reported that 9.0% of children in the country live with neither of their biological parents (NPC, 2000). However, existing recent data suggest that the traditional fostering arrangement in Nigeria has become subject to abuse. Increasingly, the placement of children from rural families has become mediated by child traffickers who exploit the trust of parents with expectations found on the traditional notion of fostering. Once placed in urban homes, often as domestic servants, such children are vulnerable to gross exploitation (National Planning Commission, 2001).

Given the above identified negative effects of child fostering in modern Nigeria society, this article examines the effects of adolescent fertility on level of child fostering among women in Osun State, Nigeria. It is imperative to note that a scholar has argued in the recent past that the practice of child fostering is one of the major reasons for high fertility in sub-Saharan Africa. This is because, child fostering leads to separation between reproductive decision-making and the resultant economic burden or cost of children, which is not borne by the decision makers alone, but also by their relatives (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1994).

This study is sub-divided into two sub-sections. The first one examines the prevalence rates of child fostering among adolescent and older mothers in Osun State, Nigeria, while the second sub-section investigates the socioeconomic determinants of level of child fostering in the region after the age at first childbirth has been controlled in the analysis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Quantitative (cross-sectional survey) and qualitative (in-depth interviews) research methods were used to generate data in the study. The reason for this was to generate both reliable and valid information

concerning the topic under study. The combined quantitative and qualitative methods were geared toward identifying the mechanism by which age at first birth determines the prevalent rate of child fostering among children of sampled women in Osun State, Nigeria. Osun State is composed of 30 Local Government Areas (LGAs) during the time of survey in the year 2002. Two LGAs out of the 30 LGAs in the State were purposively selected for the study with the aid of quota system of sampling method. The procedures adopted here involved the stratification of the 30 LGAs into 2 main strata on the basis of rural/urban-characteristics of the Local Government Areas in the State. One LGA each was purposively selected from each stratum of the 2 strata. The 2 LGAs selected are Osogbo LGA with headquarter in Osogbo the State capital of Osun State and Ola-Oluwa LGA with headquarter in Bode-Osi. Osogbo LGA represents the urban centres in the State. The 1991 Population Census figures show that the total population of this LGA was 106,386 in 1991 and its current estimated population is about 141,181. Ola-Oluwa is purely a rural LGA. The local government is made up of 115 rural communities, out of which 9 are major communities. Ola-Oluwa LGA had a total population of 39,454 people in 1991 and the current estimated total population of the LGA is about 52,000. The LGA represents the rural communities in Osun State for the study. The study populations of the survey are women within the child bearing age (15-49 years) with the following three distinctive characteristics. One, each and every one of the respondents must have at least a live birth as at the time of survey. Two, they must have similar socioeconomic background before their first childbirth. Parental educational and occupational statuses were used to determine the pre-pregnancy socioeconomic background of the respondents. It was decided that the fathers of the respondents should possess not more than primary school level education and should be in occupations that are largely blue-collar in nature (i.e. Artisans, traders, farmers). The paternal educational and occupational status was used to determine the pre-pregnancy socioeconomic background of the respondents. Three, an important discriminatory variable was also needful among these women in order to be able to accomplish the research objectives. This discriminatory variable is the fact that 1 group among these women must have had a childbirth before age 20 (Adolescent mothers); this constitutes the study group, while the second group must have given birth by age 20 and above (older mothers), which serves as the control group.

A multistage random sampling technique was utilized to select the respondents in the Survey, while In-depth

interviews respondents were selected using purposive sampling method (this method is based on convenience and relevance of the respondents to the theme of the study). The non-existence of a sampling frame (i.e. the list of all women within the childbearing age that posses the three features stated above in Osun State) necessitated the adoption of a multi-stage random sampling technique in the Survey exercise. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents for the In-depths interviews. Their selection was based on relevance, availability and convenience. Quantitative data were analyzed with the aid of frequencies, percentages, means, Pearson chi-square and analysis of variance (ANOVA), while qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adolescent fertility and level of child fostering: Table 1 below reveals the prevailing rates of child fostering among adolescent and older mothers in Osun State, Nigeria. According to the Table, prevalence level of child fostering is higher among children of adolescent mothers compared with the level among children of older mothers in the State. Specifically, 40.8% of sampled adolescent mothers have fostered at least one of their children in their lifetime.

This is considerably higher when it is compared with just 8.8% among sampled older mothers that have ever fostered at least one child. Furthermore, the mean number of child fostering of adolescent mothers is 0.53 while their older mothers counterpart have just 0.19 as their mean number of child fostering. Thus the alternative hypothesis which states that maternal age at first childbirth has significant effect on the level of child fostering is accepted at 0.01 level of significance. This is because the Chi-square result of the relationship is 164.737 with 5 as the degree of freedom and $p < 0.01$. The Contingency coefficient value is equal to 0.376. This figure shows that

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents showing the relationship between age at first birth and Number of Child Fostering (NCF)

Level of Child Fostering (LCF)	Adolescent mothers		Older mothers		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
None	296	59.2	456	91.2	752	75.2
One	162	32.4	13	2.6	175	17.5
Two	28	5.6	17	3.4	45	4.5
Three	10	2.0	10	2.0	20	2.0
Four	3	0.6	4	0.8	7	0.7
Five	1	0.2	-	-	1	0.1
Total	500	100.0	500	100.0	1000	100.0
$X^2 = 164.737$						
d.f = 5, C = 0.376,						
p = 0.000						
Mean number						
of child fostering	0.53		0.19			

about 38% of the occurrence of child fostering in Osun State, Nigeria can be accounted for as a result of age at first childbirth of women within the State.

Response of 35 years old woman who gave birth during adolescence further explain the reasons for high level of child fostering among children of adolescent mothers in the study location. The woman stated that:

I was 17 years old when I gave birth to my first child and I am number three among four wives of my husband. Presently, I have 6 children and my husband was not giving us good and enough support. Because of the situation, I have fostered three of my children to my relatives. The first born is living with my mother, while the other 2 seniors are living with my brother in Ibadan. The little support I usually receive from my husband and the money I make in my business is what I am using to train and feed the 3 other children that are living with us.

The above data show that adolescent mothers in Osun State, Nigeria are more likely to have high parity, receive little support from their husbands and foster many of their children because of their poor socio-economic condition.

Age at first childbirth and socio-economic differentials in child fostering level: The socio-economic determinants of child fostering were examined for adolescent and older mothers separately in this section. This was done in order to establish whether age at first birth, especially childbearing during adolescence, have significant effects on each of these socio-economic determinants of child fostering in Osun State, Nigeria. The output of this analysis can be seen in Table 2-4.

Place of residence: Child fostering patterns between adolescent and older mothers are not the same on the basis of their place of residence. Specifically, adolescent mothers in the rural areas compared with their counterparts in the urban areas fostered more of their children; whereas older mothers living at urban centers fostered most of their children in relation to their counterparts living in rural areas. Critical examination of this relationship and results of analysis of variance (ANOVA) on Table 2 reveal that place of residence is not a significant factor to predict child fostering among older mothers since the ANOVA results show that $F = 0.176$ and $p = 0.675$ on child fostering among the older mothers living at both rural and urban areas of the study location.

Table 2: Mean Number of Child Fostering (NCF), Standard Deviation (SD) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) by place of residence, current age and educational level for adolescent and older mothers

	Adolescent mothers			Older mothers		
Socioeconomic variable	Mean			Mean		
	Number	NCF	SD	Number	NCF	SD
Place of residence						
Rural	231	0.61	0.79	210	0.17	0.66
Urban	269	0.46	0.75	290	0.20	0.66
Total	500	0.53	0.77	500	0.19	0.66
	F = 4.207, D.F = 1, p = 0.041			F = 0.176, D.F = 1, p = 0.675		
Current age						
15-19	171	0.12	0.35	-	-	-
20-24	132	0.30	0.49	88	0.02	0.15
25-29	106	0.74	0.62	185	0.02	0.18
30-34	39	1.08	0.74	116	0.10	0.40
35-39	33	1.64	1.11	62	0.13	0.46
40-44	16	1.25	1.06	34	1.09	1.31
45-49	3	3.33	1.15	15	1.93	1.67
Total	500	0.53	0.77	500	0.19	0.66
	F = 58.700, D.F = 6, p = 0.000			F = 49.592, D.F = 5, p = 0.000		
Educational level						
None	42	1.02	1.14	32	0.97	1.43
Primary	246	0.50	0.80	51	0.07	0.34
Secondary	209	0.46	0.59	326	0.15	0.58
Higher	3	1.00	1.00	91	0.11	0.46
Total	500	0.53	0.77	500	0.19	0.66
	F = 7.075, D.F = 3, p = 0.000			F = 17.850, D.F = 3, p = 0.000		

The patterns of relationship among adolescent mothers show that rural dwellers among adolescent mothers fostered more of their children than their counterparts living in the urban areas of the State. This relationship is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The explanation for this observation may be found in the level of support accorded adolescent mothers in the rural areas of the State. According to, one adolescent mother in Telemu, a rural area in Ola-Oluwa LGA:

You see, I live amidst my people; my mother, father and sisters are living in this community. They are very supportive in all areas and I normally run to them for help. In fact, my first child is living with my mother. She is the one feeding, clothing and paying his school fees.

The above findings suggest that adolescent mothers in the rural areas receive more support from their relatives in the area of child rearing. This is much more expected because the lineage and extended family structure seems to exercise much influence on the level of social relationship and community supports among individuals at rural areas in the State.

The above finding on rural-urban differentials in the prevalence of child fostering among adolescent mothers is slightly different from Isiugo-Abanihe's finding in 1985, but the behavior of older mothers in the rural and urban

areas of the State confirm his finding. The finding of this scholar points to a greater prevalence of child fostering in urban centers as 30.0% of rural mothers and 36.0% of urban mothers indicated that they had children living away from them. He further argued that the greater occurrence of child fosterage in urban centers can be attributed to poverty and other related problems which force mothers to work, trade or return to school. Consequently, fostering offers a viable alternative to bring up children (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985).

Current age: Data on Table 2 show a positive or direct relationship between current age of the respondents and level of child fostering for both adolescent and older mothers in the study location. Thus younger women fostered relatively small number of their children compared with the level of child fostering among elderly mothers. For example, the mean number of child fostering among adolescent mothers aged 20-24 years was 0.30 and it increased to 33.3 among their counterparts who were in age group 45-49 years. Likewise among the older mothers, the mean child fostering among older mothers in ages 20-24 years was 0.02 and it increased to 1.93 at ages 45-49 years. Thus it is clear that this relationship is true for both adolescent and older mothers in Osun State, Nigeria. The only essential point to note is that irrespective of current ages of the respondents, adolescent mothers in each of the age groups consistently fostered high number of their children compared to older mothers. Therefore, it can be deduced from above analyses and findings that irrespective of current age of respondents, many of adolescent mothers are normally in poor socio-economic condition and crisis that necessitated or constrained them to foster more of their children relative to older mothers in Osun State, Nigeria. This relationship is found to be statistically significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Educational level: Education has been identified to play a significant function in predicting different socio-demographic behaviours of people in all known human societies. Likewise data on Table 2 shows that educational status of both adolescent and older mothers determine their mean number of child fostering in Osun State, Nigeria. This relationship is significant at 0.01 level of significance. One important thing to note from the data is that at each stage of educational levels of the respondents, adolescent mothers have higher mean number of child fostering than older women. Among older mothers in general and starting from secondary school level among adolescent mothers, the higher the educational level of the women, the lesser their mean number of child fostering.

It can be argued that there is a negative or inverse relationship between educational level and number of child fostering in the study location, although the proportion of this is relatively higher among adolescent compared with older mothers in the State. Specifically, the mean number of child fostering among adolescent mothers who have primary education was 0.50 and this reduced to 0.46 among adolescent mothers with secondary education. In addition, among the older mothers, the mean number of child fostering among women who have secondary education was 0.15 and the mean reduced to 0.11 among older mothers who have higher education. Therefore, to reduce levels of child fostering and fertility in Osun State of Nigeria, women education must be taken serious by both policy makers and programmes designers within the State.

Occupational status: Occupational status of a woman is not a significant explanatory factor for levels of child fostering among older mothers in Osun State, Nigeria. This conclusion is based on the fact that the observed differences on the level of child fostering among older mothers by occupational status is not statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance. But surprisingly, occupational status is significant in the explanation of levels of child fostering among adolescent mothers at 0.01 level of significance. Table 3 shows that adolescent mothers who are civil servants have the highest level of

child fostering compared with their counterparts in other groups of occupation. The explanation for this may not be divorced from the fact that adolescent women in other occupational groups, except civil service, need the help and services of their children in their respective occupations or shops. This is more pronounced when housemaids and office assistants are difficult to engage; thus adolescent mothers especially those in occupations compatible with child rearing have lower level of child fostering, while those in the formal sector-civil service, fostered their children to their relatives.

Marital status and form of marriage: Marital status is a significant determinant of child fostering among both adolescent and older mothers in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, Table 3 shows that divorced women and widows are more likely to foster their children than women in other marital status categories. Child fostering is much more pronounced among widowed adolescent mothers where the mean number of child fostering is as high as 3.00, whereas older mothers in the same category have 1.40 as their mean number of child fostering. It is important to note also that single or unmarried older mothers seem to be financially viable and independent. The reasons for this assumption is based on the data in Table 3 which state that out of 13 single older mothers identified in the study, none of them ever fostered their children despite the fact that their mean number of children ever born (1.38) is slightly higher than the one (1.20) among adolescent mothers who are also single mothers. Specifically, the mean number of child fostering among single or unmarried adolescent mothers is 0.13. The above observed relationship is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Forms of marriage also determine levels of child fostering among both adolescent and older mothers in Osun State, Nigeria. In particular, women in polygynous unions have higher mean number of child fostering than those women in monogamous unions. Specifically, among adolescent mothers, the mean child fostering of women in monogamous marriages was 0.46 compared to 0.79 among adolescent mothers in polygynous unions. Also, the mean child fostering among older mothers in monogamous unions was 0.05, while it was 0.44 among older mothers in polygynous marriages. In addition, it is essential to note that child fostering is higher in the two forms of marriage among adolescent mothers compared with their counterparts who are older mothers. This relationship is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Number of children ever born: As expected, data on Table 4 shows a positive or direct relationship between number of children ever born and levels of child fostering

Table 3: Mean Number of Child Fostering (NCF), Standard Deviation (SD) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) by occupational status, marital status and form of marriage for adolescent and older mothers

Socio-economic variable	Adolescent mothers			Older mothers		
	Number	Mean NCF	SD	Number	Mean NCF	SD
Occupational status						
Trade/Craft	360	0.61	0.83	358	0.23	0.75
Farming	23	0.48	0.51	11	0.00	0.00
Wage labour (WLE)	40	0.40	0.59	26	0.07	0.27
Civil Servant	9	0.78	0.83	74	0.06	0.34
Professional	-	-	-	27	0.15	0.46
Unemployment	68	0.16	0.44	4	0.00	0.00
Total	500	0.53	0.77	500	0.19	0.66
	F = 5.618, D.F = 4, p = 0.000			F = 1.180, D.F = 5, p = 0.318		
Marital status						
Single	79	0.13	0.37	13	0.00	0.00
Married	350	0.59	0.75	446	0.14	0.56
Separated	50	0.46	0.86	23	0.30	0.70
Divorced	17	0.88	0.70	13	1.31	1.49
Widowed	4	3.00	1.15	5	1.40	1.95
Total	500	0.53	0.77	500	0.19	0.66
	F = 19.687, D.F = 4, p = 0.000			F = 16.405, D.F = 4, p = 0.000		
Form of marriage						
Monogamy	231	0.46	0.59	316	0.05	0.31
Polygyny	190	0.79	0.98	171	0.44	1.00
Total	421	0.61	0.80	487	0.19	0.67
	F = 18.003, D.F = 1, p = 0.000			F = 38.978, D.F = 1, p = 0.000		

Table 4: Mean Number of Child Fostering (NCF), Standard Deviation (SD) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) by number of children ever born and monthly income for adolescent and older mothers

Socioeconomic variable	Adolescent mothers			Older mothers		
	Number	Mean NCF	SD	Number	Mean NCF	SD
Number of children Ever Born (CEB)						
One	176	0.06	0.27	116	0.008	0.09
Two	103	0.31	0.47	117	0.0	0.13
Three	69	0.57	0.61	133	0.05	0.33
Four	68	1.04	0.78	94	0.31	0.83
Five and above	84	1.33	0.99	40	1.35	0.35
Total	500	0.53	0.77	500	0.19	0.66
	F = 79.157, D.F = 4, p = 0.000			F = 52.630, D.F = 4, p = 0.000		
Level of monthly income (N)						
0-5,000	439	0.49	0.78	196	0.18	0.64
5,001-10,000	50	0.76	0.72	240	0.20	0.72
10,001-15,000	9	1.00	0.50	49	0.14	0.54
15,001-20,000	2	0.50	0.71	9	0.11	0.33
20,001-25,000	-	-	-	2	0.00	0.00
25,001-30,000	-	-	-	4	0.00	0.00
Total	500	0.53	0.77	500	0.19	0.66
	F = 2.948, D.F = 3, p = 0.032			F = 0.195, D.F = 5, p = 0.964		

for both adolescent and older mothers in Osun State, Nigeria. At each of the fertility levels, except fertility level five and above, adolescent mothers fostered higher number of children compared with older mothers. This positive relationship is significant at 0.01 level of significance for both adolescent and older mothers. This information reveals nexus of relationship that exist between fertility levels of women and occurrence of child fostering in the study location. In order to reduce number of child fostering in Osun State, effort should be made to reduce levels of fertility among women in the State. One of the possible ways to do this is to discourage adolescent fertility among women in every community in the study location, since adolescent fertility always exhibits or associates with high levels of fertility in the State.

Level of monthly income: An n-shaped relationship also exists between level of monthly income and level of child fostering among adolescent and older mothers, although the observed relationship is not significant among older mothers. According to Table 4 below, among adolescent mothers, child fostering increases with level of monthly income until when income level reaches N10,001-N15,000 and then dropped consistently at higher levels of income. The above relationship is significant only at 0.05 level of significance.

CONCLUSION

In summary, data in this study show significant relationship between age at first childbirth and level of

child fostering in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, many of adolescent mothers fostered their children compared with older mothers in the State. In addition, findings on socio-economic differentials in the level of child fostering show significant relationships between place of residence, current age, educational level, occupational status, marital status, form of marriage, number of children ever born and level of child fostering in Osun State, Nigeria.

Child fostering have been identified to be a subject of abuse in Nigeria in the recent time (National Planning Commission, 2001). In fact, Isiugo-Abanihe (1985) noted that oftentimes, foster parents, as sources of additional income, use such children in economic activity. This author noted that such labour is usually not frowned at by their biological parents as they see the act as part of the training the child is expected to go through. But many a time, children in these situations do not receive any formal education. Instead, they are forced to serve as domestic servants, become street hawkers, or engage in other activities and many of them are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse by their guardians. Thus in order to eradicate or reduce to the barest minimum the incidence of child fostering in Osun State, Nigeria, adolescent fertility must be discouraged in the State.

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