

## The Evolution of Day-Care Centres and Nurseries in Ibadan

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### Summary

**Oyewole AI and Oyemade A. The Evolution of Day-care Centres and Nurseries in Ibadan.** *Nigerian Journal of Paediatrics*, 1981; 8: 11. A survey of day-care centres and nurseries in Ibadan has revealed that most of the centres were recently established and nearly all were privately owned. Their location, opening hours and fees reflect the social and economic needs of working mothers in the different social areas. The study has also shown that all pre-school child-care institutions lacked governmental supervision and guidance and consequently were found to be overcrowded and understaffed. In order to improve the standards of substitute child-care at a reasonable cost, it is recommended that all centres must be registered and supervised by the appropriate authority and that the government should encourage non-profit making organisations to become involved in the provision of pre-school child-care services.

### Introduction

MARRIED women among the Yoruba-speaking people in the south-western parts of Nigeria have always been employed in a wide variety of occupations including farming, fishing, hunting, traditional crafts and trade.<sup>1</sup> The Yoruba culture supports such activities because women are expected not only to take care of themselves, but also to contribute to the upkeep of their children and that of their relatives.<sup>2 3</sup> Although motherhood is the primary function of the woman, the social organization of the extended family relieves

her of some of the physical burdens of child-care.

In the last few decades, the improved opportunities in female education, industrial expansion and urbanization have shifted the economic activities of women from self-employment to wage-employment, while at the same time reducing the social function of the extended family. Consequently, working mothers have become increasingly dependent on young housemaids to look after their children while at work. However, with the introduction of the free primary education scheme, better opportunities for secondary education and the preference of young girls for higher status, industrial jobs have drastically reduced the availability of househelps in recent years. Presently, many working mothers are forced to take their children outside their homes to be looked after during working hours. In response to

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this need, services for the care of pre-school children are springing up in most urban centres in Nigeria.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the development of pre-school child-care services in Ibadan in relation to the needs of working mothers and their young children.

### Materials and Methods

The survey was carried out in Ibadan, the administrative capital of Oyo state of Nigeria. Ibadan, with an estimated population of 1 million, is reckoned to be the largest indigenous African city, south of the Sahara.

For the purpose of the survey, the town was divided into three social areas namely: the traditional, transitional and elite areas.<sup>4</sup> The traditional area consists of large family compounds where the extended family tie is known to be strong. Women in this area are mainly petty traders while the men are either farmers, craftsmen or unskilled workers. Residents in the transitional area are mostly settlers from other parts of the country attracted to the city by the employment opportunities in commerce and industry and as a result of such labour migration, the extended family tie has been greatly weakened. The elite area is mainly inhabited by professionals whose life style has become westernized and consequently the traditional extended family system has lost most of its significance.

Since there was no prepared list of child-care centres available anywhere, a street-to-street search was carried out by the authors in the different social areas in order to locate such institutions. In addition, information as regards their location was obtained from people residing in the neighbourhoods and also from proprietresses of child-care centres which had already been located.

In each centre, the supervisor was interviewed using a structured questionnaire. Information obtained included the year of establishing the institution, its ownership, the registration status,

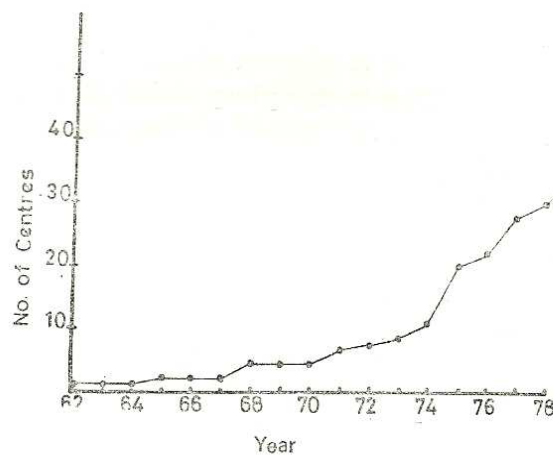
opening hours and fees charged. Finally, an inspection of the premises was carried out.

### Results

Two types of institutions were identified namely: day-care centres and nurseries. Day-care centres provide custodial and physical care for children between the ages of 6 weeks and 2½ years, while nurseries provide education for children between the ages of 2 and 6 years. A few institutions had both facilities.

#### *Establishment and Location*

The trend in the establishment of day-care centres and nurseries in Ibadan shows a gradual increase from one centre in 1962 to 8 in 1973 and with a sharp rise to 30 between 1973 and 1978 (Fig. 1). Out of these 30 centres, 5 (16.7%) were located in the traditional area, 11 (36.7%) in the transitional area and 14 (46.6%) in the elite area. All the institutions in the traditional area were nurseries, while in the transitional area, 4 (36.4%) were day-care centres, 3 (27.2%) nurseries and the remaining 4 (36.4%) had both day-care and nursery sections. In the elite area, 9 (64.3%) were nurseries, 1 (7.1%), a day-care centre and 4 (28.6%) had both sections.



*Number and Year of establishment of Day-care Centres and Nurseries in Ibadan*

#### *Ownership and Registration*

Twenty-six (87.7%) of the 30 centres were privately owned and 7(26.9%) of these were registered with either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health while the remaining 19(73.1%) were unregistered. Three (10%) centres belonged to voluntary organisations and 1(3.3%) was owned by a governmental agency and all of these were unregistered.

#### *Operations*

Table 1 summarises the average numbers of children enrolled, the staff-child ratio, the daily opening hours and the fees charged per month in the three areas respectively. In the day-care centres, enrolment ranged from 18 children in the transitional area to 20 in the elite area, while in the nurseries it ranged from 58 children in the elite area to 90 in the transitional area. The staff-child ratio varied from 1:7 in the day-care centres in the elite area to 1:51 in the nurseries in the traditional area. The day-care centres opened from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the elite area and to 6 p.m. in the transitional area. The nurseries opened from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the elite and transitional areas, and from 8.30 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the traditional area. The fees charged per month ranged from ₦1.25 for nursery services in the traditional area to ₦22.00 for day-care services in the elite area.

#### *Premises*

Various types of premises were used for the centres in the three areas. Out of the 5 nurseries in the traditional area, 3(60%) were operated in open sheds, 1(20%) in a community centre and 1(20%) on the pavement along a busy main road. In the transitional area, out of 11 centres, 9(81.8%) were operated within the living accommodation of the proprietress, 1(9.1%) in a domestic servant's quarter, and 1(9.1%) in a building erected specifically for the purpose of a nursery. In the elite area, out of 14 centres, 7(50%) were operated in garages, 3(21.4%) in domestic servant's quarters, 3(21.4%) in houses adapted for

the permanent use of the child-care centre and 1(7.2%) was operated in the living room of the proprietress.

#### **Discussion**

In Nigeria, child-rearing practices are undergoing important changes with increasing number of young children being cared for outside their own homes while their mothers are at work. The present study has shown that nearly half of the child-care centres in Ibadan are located in the elite area and most of them offer nursery-care facilities and a few, day-care services as well. In the transitional area, nearly three-quarters of the institutions have day-care facilities, while in the traditional area, day-care centres are non-existent. These findings are not surprising since parents in the elite area can afford to employ nursemaids privately to care for their infants within the home environment but prefer to send their children between the ages of 2 and 5 years to nursery schools for the educational stimulation. The non-existence of day-care centres in the traditional area suggests that the extended family still fulfils its function in providing substitute care and also that the working pattern of self-employment, characteristic of women in that area, interferes less with domestic duties.<sup>5</sup> The popularity of day-care in the transitional area is also a reflection of the social and economic conditions of many working mothers in that area. Unlike the women in the traditional area, mothers in the transitional area can no longer expect help from the extended family neither can they afford the high wages for housemaids. Therefore, day-care centres with their extensive opening hours and moderate fees are an obvious choice for substitute care by women with long working hours and on low wages.

The present study shows that many day-care centres take as many as twenty children in a single standard-size room, while some nurseries use one-car garages to accommodate fifty or more children. Such overcrowded conditions not only increase the risk of cross-infection but also limit

TABLE I

*Number of Children Enrolled, Staff-Child Ratio, Opening Hours and Fees Charged in Day-Care Centres and Nurseries in Ibadan*

<i>Type of Institution</i>	<i>Average Number of Children Enrolled</i>		
	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Transitional</i>	<i>Elite</i>
Day-Care	-	18	20
Nurseries	62	90	58
Day-Care/Nurseries	-	45	35
	<i>Staff-Child Ratio</i>		
	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Transitional</i>	<i>Elite</i>
Day-Care	-	1 : 8	1 : 7
Nurseries	1 : 51	1 : 22	1 : 15
Day-Care/Nurseries	-	1 : 12	1 : 7
	<i>Daily Opening Hours</i>		
	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Transitional</i>	<i>Elite</i>
Day-Care	-	7 a.m. - 6 p.m.	7 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Nurseries	8.30 a.m. - 12 p.m.	7 a.m. - 1 p.m.	7 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Day-Care/Nurseries	-	7 a.m. - 6 p.m.	7 a.m. - 4 p.m.
	<i>Fees Per Month</i>		
	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Transitional</i>	<i>Elite</i>
Day-care	-	₦ 8.25	₦16.00
Nurseries	₦1.25	₦13.50	₦15.50
Day-Care/Nurseries	-	₦11.50	₦22.00

the opportunity for educational and social stimulation. The staff-child ratio in all the centres was found to be very poor ranging from 1:7 in the day-care centres to 1:51 in the nurseries. Under such conditions, the children are likely to be deprived of individual attention and consequently may suffer from emotional deprivation.<sup>6</sup>

Although the opening hours of the child-care centres in Ibadan are convenient to most working mothers, the present study has however, shown

that these centres do not provide suitable conditions for good child-care. It is to be noted that most of the centres were not registered with any authority and the few that were, lacked supervision. In order to ensure adequate care of our young children, day-care centres and nurseries must be registered with the appropriate authority and adequately supervised with regards to the size and safety of buildings, staff-child ratio and the quality of care and education. However, such

improved standards may increase costs and those most likely to be affected are the working mothers in the traditional and transitional areas who may not be able to pay the higher fees and will consequently be deprived of such child-care facilities. It is therefore, suggested that voluntary and religious organizations be encouraged to participate more actively in the running of day-care centres and nurseries especially in the poorer areas as these organizations will be able to provide a cheaper service than privately run centres. Also, employers of female labour should be induced through tax incentives to set up subsidized day-care centres for the pre-school children of their staff. This method of child care has been reported to be highly successful in a number of Eastern European, Asian and Latin American countries.<sup>7</sup> In Nigeria, infants in particular, would benefit from such an arrangement as mothers would have the opportunity to interact more frequently with their children.

Undoubtedly, demand for day-care and nursery care will grow rapidly over the next few years in all urban centres in Nigeria as opportunities for women in wage employment continue to increase. It therefore seems appropriate that the government should provide guidelines as to the

quality of services expected of institutions for the pre-school child. Such guidelines should seek to safeguard the physical and psychosocial needs of young children and at the same time, they should ensure that substitute care facilities are made available to working mothers at a reasonable cost.

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