

## Socio Economic Determinants of Applicability of the Child Right Act Among Parents in Ibadan North Local Government Area of State Nigeria

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### Abstract

Nigeria has been a signatory to the Convention on the rights of the child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child since 1991 and 2001 respectively. The Nigerian Child Rights Act (CRA) was drafted in 1993 and signed into law in 2003.

Despite these measures, too many children still see their fundamental rights violated every day. The global statistics are dramatic, and may even be underestimations as 72 million children are not in school, of whom 56% are girls; 218 million children are working; 126 million are trapped in the worst forms of child labour; 25 million children are refugees and displaced; 9.2 million children die before their fifth birthday; 1.5 million children die every year from poor sanitation and unsafe water.

The study is a descriptive cross-sectional survey among parents in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State to investigate the knowledge and practice of parents on child's rights. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square and Independent t-test. Finally, information obtained were summarized and presented in tables and charts.

Findings revealed that respondents had inadequate knowledge of the rights of children. Respondents with poor, fair and good knowledge of child's rights were 81.0%, 11.5% and 7.5% respectively. However, the attitude displayed by respondents is favourable towards the observance of the Child's Rights Act. Factors limiting the effective implementation of the Child's Rights from the perspective of respondents include economic situation, man-made disaster, poor enforcement by regulatory agencies and societal values and norms.

This lack of awareness has been attributed to the vulnerability of the Nigerian child to social vices and harmful practices such as child labour, child trafficking, early marriage, female genital mutilation and widowhood practices.

### Introduction

In response to the challenges and threats of childhood development several treaties and conventions were developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to protect the child from the effects of migration, industrialization, and urbanization, The Convention and the Rights of the Child that aims to achieve the "common good" for the children is one of these measures. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted at the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989, and came into force on September 2, 1990 (UNESCO, 2005).

Taylor, Smith and Naim (2001) classified the rights of the child into three main categories of rights: (a) Provision rights—the rights of children to minimum standards of health, education, social security, physical care, family life, play, recreation, culture and leisure. (b) Protection rights—rights to be safe from discrimination, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation, substance abuse, injustice and conflict. (c) Participation

rights—civil and political rights such as a child's right to a name and identity, to be consulted and to be taken into account, to physical integrity, to access to information, to freedom of speech and opinion, and to challenge decisions made on their behalf.

Nigeria has been a signatory to the Convention on the rights of the child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child since 1991 and 2001 respectively. The Nigerian Child Rights Act (CRA) was drafted in 1993 and signed into law in 2003.

Despite these measures, too many children still see their fundamental rights violated every day. The global statistics are dramatic, and may even be underestimations as 72 million children are not in school, of whom 56% are girls; 218 million children are working; 126 million are trapped in the worst forms of child labour; 25 million children are refugees and displaced; 9.2 million children die before their fifth birthday; 1.5 million children die every year from poor sanitation and unsafe water; 2.1 million children under 15 live with HIV; 15 million children under 18 are orphaned of one or both parents due to AIDS (Montaldo, 2008).

In Nigeria, it is estimated that one million children under the age five years die every year, six million are under-nourished, 3.2 million are out of school, the nation loses between 52,900 and 59,000 children to pregnancies and child birth related complications annually and an unfriendly Juvenile Justice system with about 60% in police cells for simple cases of truancy, without legal representation (Shittu, 2010). Child labour and child abuses are still rampant in the country with the presence of street children and beggars (Ezelilo, 2001). This is an unjust and unacceptable situation for millions of children worldwide.

When considered in general, there are two sides with respect to children's rights: the children themselves and more importantly their parents (and guardians). Beasley and Adams (2004) confirmed that parents have rights and interests over their children and also determine their radius of action in terms of their social life. Therefore, both the child and the parents need to know the rights and responsibilities respectively, as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other complementary laws in order for children to exercise these rights. This understanding has prompted the interest of researchers in the field of Child Rights and Child Right Laws. While most of the available published studies focused on children themselves (Peens and Louw, 2000; Akengin, 2008; Cherney et al., 2008; Mulheron, 2008), few addressed the knowledge of adults about Child Rights (Hillman, 2006). Worse still, the literature is sparse on studies focusing on the parents, especially in Nigeria. Therefore, this study was conducted to document the socio economic determinants of parents practice to Childs' Rights Act in Ibadan North Local Government of Oyo State, Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

The study was a descriptive cross-sectional survey among parents in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State. The data collection was done by trained research assistants. Quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used for the study following a pre test in some selected communities within the LGA.

Qualitative information from FGD interviews were transcribed verbatim from the tape recordings, translated into English and manually analyzed using the analysis approach that involved grouping together similar themes in each transcript and identifying emerging trends and differences found across the transcripts. Qualitative data were presented alongside quantitative interpretations using descriptive and, where possible, verbatim quotes.

Quantitative data were entered into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15.0. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square and Independent t-test. Finally, information obtained were summarized and presented in tables and charts.

### Sampling technique

A five-stage sampling selection strategy was employed to select respondents for the study. The LGA was stratified into its developmental regions (i.e inner-core, transitional and peripheral) and then into its constituent wards.

### Developmental areas and their constituent wards in Ibadan North LGA

Developmental areas	Constituent wards
Inner-core	1,2,3,4
Transitional	6,7,8,12
Peripheral	5,9,10,11

Balloting was done to select two (2) wards from each developmental area making a total of 6 wards that were selected from the LGA.

Based on the expected sample size of 432, seventy-two (72) respondents were selected in each of the six (6) randomly selected.

### Instruments for data collections

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used for the study. The instruments were developed using information available from extensive review of literature and instruments used in previous studies on rights of the child ( Akengin, 2008; (Mulheron, 2008; Okoye, 2011). The initial proposal for this dissertation along with the instruments was subjected to a series of review by the researcher's supervisor.

### Validity and Reliability

**Validity:** A draft of both the FGD guide and questionnaire was constructed by consulting relevant literature. Corrections on the instruments were made before the proposal presentation at the Departmental level where other lecturers made their contributions to ensure the face and content validity of the instrument. The instruments which were originally drawn in English were translated into Yoruba to enable respondents who do not speak English understand the questions.

**Reliability:** A number of steps were taken to ensure the reliability of the instruments used for this study.

First, four experienced research assistants were recruited for the survey. A training programme was conducted for the Research Assistants to ensure that they had adequate understanding of the instruments prior to commencement of data collection. The training focused on the objectives and importance of the study, sampling process, how to secure participants' informed consent, basic interviewing skills and how to review questionnaires to ensure completeness.

## Results

### Quantitative

The mean age of respondents was  $44.7 \pm 11.6$  years. Most (37.7%) were in the 40-49 years age category. Two hundred and thirty-three (53.9%) were females. Majority were married (87.2%) and belonged to the Yoruba ethnic group (85.2%). More than half were Moslems (56.3%) while 41.9% had secondary education. (Table 1)

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Frequency (N=432)	%
Age (years)		
Less than 30	36	8.4
30-39	91	21.1

40-49	163	37.7
50-59	93	21.5
60 and above	49	11.3
<b>Mean:</b>	44.72±11.567	
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	199	46.1
Female	233	53.9
<b>Martial Status</b>		
Married	377	87.2
Divorced	4	0.9
Separated	24	5.6
Widowed	27	6.3
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	184	42.6
Muslim	243	56.3
Traditional	5	1.1
<b>Educational status</b>		
No formal education	55	12.7
Primary	106	24.6
Secondary	181	41.9
Tertiary	90	20.8
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Yoruba	368	85.2
Ibo	49	11.3
Hausa	15	3.5

Most respondents were multi-parrous as the number of children reported ranged between 1 and 12 with a mean of 3.99±1.7. Most (80.2%) had three children and above. However, when asked for the number of children who were 18years old and below, most respondents (67.8%) reported having between 1 and 2 children. More than half were traders (58.6%) whose monthly income was less than ₦20,000 (46.1%). (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Number (N=432)	%
<b>Parity</b>		
1-2	83	19.2
3-4	213	49.3
5-6	105	24.3
7 and above	31	7.2
<b>Number of children less than 18years</b>		
Between 1 and 2	293	67.8
Between 3 and 4	114	26.4
5 and above	25	5.8
<b>Occupation</b>		
Trading	253	58.6
Artisan	76	17.6
Civil servant	40	9.3
Driving	30	6.9
House-wife	13	3.0
Others <sup>a</sup>	20	4.6
<b>Monthly income</b>		
Less than ₦10,000	42	9.8
₦10,000 - ₦19,990	200	46.3

₦20,000 - ₦29,990	63	14.6
₦30,000 – ₦ 39,990	32	7.4
₦40,000 – ₦ 49,990	44	10.2
₦ 50,000 and above	51	11.7
<b>Area of residence</b>		
Inner-core	189	43.8
Transitional	128	29.6
Peripheral	115	26.6

**a: Security, cleric, retiree**

One-fifth (18.3%) of the respondents said they were aware of the child’s rights law in Nigeria. The year of awareness reported by respondents span three decades between 1960 and 2010. The years mostly reported by respondents ranged between 1960 and 2000 (61.8%). Forty-seven percent out of the 76 respondents who reported awareness of the child’s rights law in Nigeria had seen a copy. Of these, 94.4% and 5.4% had read the copy of the child’s rights act wholly and partially respectively (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Respondents’ Knowledge on Child’s Rights Laws in Nigeria

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Number (N=432)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Awareness</b>		
Yes	79	18.3
No	353	81.7
<b>Year of awareness</b>		
1960-1969	7	8.7
1970-1979	18	22.8
1980-1989	17	21.5
1990-1999	19	24.1
2000-2010	18	22.8
<b>Aware of year law was established</b>		
Yes	56	12.7
No	379	87.3
<b>Year mentioned</b>		
Correct	5	9.1
Incorrect	51	90.9
<b>Ever seen a copy of law on child’s rights</b>		
Yes	36	47.4
No	40	52.6
<b>Ever read a copy of law on child’s rights (n=36)</b>		
Yes, wholly	2	5.6
Yes, partly	34	94.4

Results reveal that respondents scored high in the application of eight statements that are related to the rights of the child assessed by this study as: 83.1% reported that their children have a say in most matters; 91.4% apply pressure on their children to succeed; 89.8% restrict their children on what they are allowed to do; 92.4% place limitations on the decisions their children are allowed to make about their lives; 94.9% allow their children to choose the carrier they want to pursue; 96.3% put the best interest of their children into account at all stages whenever decisions are taken which have impact on the child; 90.3.% involve children in the decision-making process and; 90.3% allow their children to go to school.(Table 4).

**Table 4.** Associations between demographic variables and mean knowledge score on Child's Rights

Law			
Variable	Mean Knowledge score	Standard Deviation	p-value
<b>Age</b>			
Less than 40years	1.2	3.0	0.113
40years and above	1.5	3.1	
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	1.8	3.4	0.000
Female	0.9	2.7	
<b>Level of Education</b>			
Primary or none	0.3	1.4	0.000
Secondary and above	2.0	3.6	
<b>Parity</b>			
Between 1 and 2	1.5	3.1	0.653
More than 2	1.3	3.1	
<b>Level of Income</b>			
Less than N20,000	0.7	2.1	0.000
N20,000 and above	1.5	3.2	
<b>Area of Residence</b>			
Inner-core	0.9	2.5	0.002
Transitional	1.3	3.1	
Peripheral	2.1	3.5	
<b>Overall mean score</b>	1.33±3.0		

Table 4.5 shows respondents' knowledge score on the Child's Rights Law in Nigeria based on a 12point scale. According to the table, majority (84.7%) of the respondents had poor knowledge, 10.2% fair and 5.1% good knowledge scores. The overall mean knowledge score on child's rights law in Nigeria was 1.33±3.0. However, the mean knowledge score was significantly different by sex (p=0.000), educational status (p=0.000), level of income (p=0.000) and area of residence (p=0.002) (table 4.5).

**Table 5.** Application of the Rights of the Child among respondents

Practices	Ever Applied N (%)	Never Applied N (%)	Total N (%)
My children do not have a say in most matters	73(16.9)	359(83.1)	432(100.0)
I always apply pressure on my children to succeed.	395(91.4)	37(8.6)	432(100)
I place restrictions on what my children are allowed to do.	388(89.8)	44(10.2)	432(100)
There is limitation on the decisions my children are allowed to make.	400(92.6)	32(7.4)	432(100)
I allow my children to choose the carriers they want to pursue.	410(94.9)	22(5.1)	432(100)
I take the best interest of my children into account at all stages whenever decisions are being taken which have impact on them.	416(96.3)	16(3.7)	432(100)
I involve my children in the decision-making process according to their age	390(90.3)	42(9.7)	432(100)

and maturity.

My children don't go to school.	42(9.7)	390(90.3)	432(100)
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The overall application score of the rights of the child among respondents is shown in table 4.4. According to the table, majority (92.4%) of the respondents had good score on the application of the rights of the child assessed by this study. The mean application score was  $6.5 \pm 0.92$  which was found to be significantly associated educational status ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 6.** Overall Application score

Score	Number	%
Good	399	92.4
Fair	10	2.3
Poor	6	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 6.** Association between demographic characteristics of respondents and Mean Application score of the child's rights

Variable	Mean score	Standard Deviation	p-value
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	6.4	1.0	0.69
Female	6.6	1.0	
<b>Level of education</b>			
Primary or no education	6.6	1.0	0.004
Secondary and above	6.4	1.0	
<b>Parity</b>			
1-2 children	6.4	1.2	0.015
More than 3 children	6.5	0.9	
<b>Region of residence</b>			
Inner-core	6.5	0.9	0.322
Transitional	6.4	1.1	
Peripheral	6.5	0.8	
<b>Income level</b>			
Less than ₦20,000	6.5	0.9	0.139
₦20,000 and above	6.6	0.7	
<b>Mean</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>0.9</b>	

### Qualitative

#### Factors limiting effective implementation of the Child's Rights Law:

It emerged from all the discussion groups (except the male peripheral group) that the government is the only factor limiting the effective implementation of the child's rights law in Nigeria. Few comments from discussants in all these groups include the following:

*"The government is selfish. All they know is about themselves. Nigeria is the second most corrupt country in the world. For example, we have reliable information that an honourable to the Federal House of Representatives has squandered the constituency allocation for developmental projects for this area"* – Male discussant in the transitional area.

*"The government doesn't pay salary regularly. So how will parents be consistent in granting children access to their rights"* – Male discussant in the inner-core area.

*"The government is responsible for the gap between the rich and the poor, which is reflected in the difference in the quality of education received between children in the private and public schools".* – Female discussant in the transitional area.

*"The harsh economic situation in the country which is caused by bad governance has forced parents to work almost throughout the day to meet demands at the home-front. As a result, most parents don't have time for proper upbringing of their*

children. They only meet in the morning and the children might have slept before the parents return late in the night. This is dangerous and is a cause of exposure of children to various forms of abuses. – Female discussant peripheral area.

“The unemployment rate in the country is high. Both parents are not working in some situations which limit the ability to meet the needs of the family” -Female discussant in the inner-core area.

Comments from most discussants in the male peripheral group who opined that the parent is the factor limiting the effective implementation of the rights of the child are summarized in the following quotes:

“Eighty percent of the blame should be placed on parents. A father who gave birth to a child should be able to take care of his basic needs. The government is there to complement the efforts of the parents”.

“Government alone cannot do everything. Currently, the government is paying for the examination fees of the Senior Secondary School students, which is laudable”.

“The pressure of child care in most homes is placed on the mother alone and there is a limit to the ability of women when it comes to upbringing of the child”.

Factors limiting effective implementation of the child’s rights law in Nigeria from the perspective of survey respondents are shown in table 4.17. The factors mentioned in ranking order include economic situation (97.2%), man-made disaster (97.2%), government (92.5%), ethnic conflicts (83.6%), poor enforcement by regulatory agencies (78.2%), lack of knowledge (78.1%), lack of punishment for offenders (75.9%), societal values and norms (71.4%) and religious views of parents (57.2%).

**Table 7.** Factors limiting effective implementation of the Child’s Rights Law among respondents

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Government	394	92.5
Economic situation	415	97.2
Societal values and norms	304	71.4
Religious views of parents	241	57.2
Poor enforcement by regulatory agencies	334	78.2
Lack of knowledge	332	78.1
Ethnic conflict	356	83.6
Man-made disaster	414	97.2
Lack of punishment for offenders	322	75.9

## Discussion

The level of awareness on the child’s right displayed by respondents in this study has implications on the observance of its provisions among respondents. This opinion might be shared by other scholars who believed that one of the problems why it is difficult to implement the child’s right act is because people are not aware of the act nor do they have knowledge of its basic provisions. For example, a Director General of the Legal Aid Council in Nigeria, Mrs. Joy Bob-Manuel explained that the Child’s Rights Act has not received sufficient awareness and acceptance since its domestication because of a general but undue apathy as a result of lack of understanding and full appreciation (Bamigboye 2011). This lack of awareness has been attributed to the vulnerability of the Nigerian child to social vices and harmful practices such as child labour, child trafficking, early marriage, female genital mutilation and widowhood practices (Alemika et al., 2004).

Several factors contribute to the increasing reports of low level of awareness of the child’s rights acts in Nigeria. First, the incompatibility of certain provisions of the child’s right bill (such as early marriage) with religious and cultural traditions in some parts of the country stalled the first passage into law in 1993 (UNICEF 2002). Second,

the child's rights act was recently passed into law in 23 out of the 36 states of the federation as at 2007 (UNICEF, 2007)

There is a need for public awareness campaign to increase awareness of the child's rights, which would serve as the foundation on which understanding and empowerment are built. This is because greater public awareness can lead to: increase political will, implementation and monitoring, increased advocacy, positive proactive response to advocacy by adult members of the society, realization of children's rights and improved well being (Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia Canada, 2011).

The application of Child Rights act findings is encouraging and is an indication that respondents know their roles in the implementation of the rights of the child provided there is an enabling environment for them to do so.

While factors limiting effective implementation of the rights of the child from the perspective of the respondents reveal socio-economic and political factors that can be overcome by accountability, transparency and good governance. These factors have been indicted as responsible for preventing effective implementation of issues that will positively impact on the lives of people in Africa (World Bank 2005).

A Federal Ministry of Justice Report (2008) reported that poverty constitutes a serious problem to the health of women and children in Nigeria. Poverty explains the numerous cases of nutritional deficiencies leading to different kinds of diseases especially among pregnant women and children. This led to the introduction of the National Food and Nutrition Policy 2001 and the National Guidelines on Micronutrients Deficiencies and Control in Nigeria in 2005.

A major challenge to the implementation of the child's rights is the lack of knowledge about the existence of laws and their provisions. Health education and promotion strategies can be used to promote understanding of the rights of the child, prevent their violation, improve the extent of their promotion and encourage positive attitudinal change on rights of the child.

Problems relating to the understanding of the child's rights laws, conventions and treaties can be addressed through awareness raising and sensitization programme. To achieve this, the mass media can be used, namely television, radio, billboards and newspapers. In using the media, emphasis should be placed on what constitutes this body of rights, the relevant laws, conventions and treaties.

The promotion of the rights of the child and the prevention of their violations are issues which require extensive legal and policy reform.

## **Conclusion**

This study described the socioeconomic factors affecting parents from promoting the rights of the child in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. Findings revealed that respondents had inadequate knowledge of the rights of children. However, the attitude displayed by respondents is favourable towards the observance of the Child's Rights Act. Factors limiting the effective implementation of the Child's Rights from the perspective of respondents include economic situation, man-made disaster, poor enforcement by regulatory agencies and societal values and norms.

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