



Babysitters' Interpersonal Relationship with Parents and its Influence on Children's Psychosocial Development

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Abstract: *This study was out to investigate babysitters' interpersonal relationship with parents and its influence on children's psychosocial development in Buea Fako Division of the South West Region. A random sampling technique was used to select the homes that made up the sample for this research. Fifty (50) questionnaires were equitably distributed to children between the ages of 3-7, Fifty (50) other questionnaires to babysitters of these children. In addition 50 interviews were conducted to parents whose children constituted part of the sample, and 10 children age 3 from these 50 families were selected for observation. This distribution took care of gender parity as 25male and 25female children were targeted, this was same with parents 25male and 25 female; and for children under observation 5 male and 5 female were targeted. The data were analyzed using thematic/content analysis and pre-coding and a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) standard version, release 17.0. The results showed that babysitter interaction with parents also has an influence on child psychosocial development. The researcher recommends that parents should be steadfast in their duty of child upbringing by taking into consideration the babysitter /parent's interaction so as to enhance children's psychosocial development.*

Keywords: *Babysitters, Interaction & Psychosocial development.*

1. Introduction and Background

Care giving engages babies in social interaction. A majority of children today spend their first years of existence within the context of the family. This is because parents want their children to grow up into socially and emotionally matured individuals, characterized by a healthy personality and good social standard. As a result of this, the quality of care giving in the course of development has become a major pre-occupation for both parents and the society at large.

According to Nsamenang (1999), family activities and parents in particular within each defined culture affects the way children master the developmental tasks of childhood. Parents and baby sitters (care givers) through the process of interaction encourage and affirm acceptable behaviour and discourage undesirable behaviours in children. It has been noted that when parents and baby sitters interact with children, this will enable them behave in a manner that responds to their needs, thereby enabling the children to play a major role in their own emotional and social development. Although emphasis has been made on care giving, most Cameroonians especially mothers are not aware of the importance of their interactions to their children's emotional and social development. Instead they tend to bring in baby sitters to assume their roles in the care giving and interaction with their children. Some mothers look at their interactions with their children as trivial and so see no need to engage in such activities.

Children need stable relationships, a view shared by Bowlby (1953). To him a warm, intimate and continuous relationship between mother (or mother substitute) and child is essential to healthy personality development and that physical, intellectual, emotional and social development are impaired where the child is without such a relationship. As a result, this research aims at finding out the influence of baby sitters (caregivers) on children's emotional and social development in selected families in Buea.

A child's emotional and social development is a function of the family structure and function. Since children are seen to be vulnerable and disadvantaged, the United Nations relevant agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), have taken upon themselves over the past years on issues enhancing the development of children. Young children require good health care, nutrition, warmth and sensitive human interactions (particularly with those who care for them) and opportunities for stimulation and learning if they are to thrive and benefit from the opportunities provided in schools (Alderman and Engels,(2008).Care giving mediates much of the child's experiences and development. It appears that many people especially mothers are not aware of the importance of care giving in children's development in general. From what is observed, most mothers consider care giving to be a minor task and that perhaps may be why some of them bring in baby sitters from any part of the country regardless of the age, educational level and cultural background of the care giver.

Baumrind (1987) postulates that children develop positively when they have developed a sense of industry and competency. That is a sense of their control over their fate in life, and a stable identity. All these are said to foster in a child when he/she is treated with dignity and allowed to develop from their experiences.

Baumrind goes further to say that children who have developed these characteristics appear to involve in pro-social behavior, exhibit positive academic performance and do not involve in deviant peer groups. This is the main reason why the care giving style in the development of the child, plays a great role in what the child becomes.

Studies by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1994), and Hirschi (1996) have shown a strong positive predictor of developmental level in the children and their connection to other persons. They for instance hypothesized that children who have a sense of connectedness to their parents, particularly their mothers, tend to be less likely to engage in antisocial behavior. This view goes on to emphasize the fact that parents (mothers) have a very important role to play in the development of children's psychosocial competences. It should be noted that care givers differ, the researcher decided to work with baby sitters whose responsibility is focused on children and to establish a relationship between baby sitters and children's psychosocial development

The African concept of babysitting dates back to the antiquities where a married couple was given a child to stay with from either the woman's family or the mans to help the woman at home and more especially to take care of the children when the woman eventually puts to birth . This evolved from a child to in-laws, coming to spend some months or years in the house to take care of the child or children. This was done so that the child can grow up to know the vernacular and get used to the cultural norms. However with the coming of industrialization, family members available for such duties were now occupied with work, and so can no more do such work as tradition or custom demands. There is a shift from the traditional way of practice to the modern way. Mothers today regardless of

cultural barriers bring in baby sitters who are not relations to help in care giving of their children due to the modern schedule of activities where even the mothers are working so as to assist in the economic standard of the house. Mothers take fewer considerations to the background of the baby sitters because of their many busy schedules unfortunately; they do not take time off to teach the baby sitters what is expected of them. This issue of same family members not brought into the family to babysit the children but some others from different cultures or social backgrounds with different life styles, values, level of education, might be a hindrance to the children's psychosocial development. This is because some of these baby sitters lived with their parents while some with relatives and what they learnt from their parents or relatives is what they will put in the young children. This may either affect them positively or negatively in the development of emotional and social competences. From the literature of Trisha and Niger (2009), the researcher came across some types of care giving styles which are similar to parenting styles because all are addressing parenting such as, authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive care giving styles. These types of care giving styles all have a role to play in a child's psychosocial development. With this knowledge, the researcher became interested to know how babysitters (care givers) during the process of care giving impact on the emotional and social development on children.

2. Statement of the problem

Parenting is a biological given yet most parents shift their parenting roles to others such as babysitters without adequately preparing them for such roles. Today in our context, due to parent's preoccupation with too many social, professional, economic and financial engagements Conger et al, (1989), parents more and more seek for the assistance of baby sitters. Usually the baby sitters' background, values, roles, and the way they interact with the child and respond to the child's needs do not match with family values. The resulting effects to such mismatch poses great challenges to the children in school context as learning disruptiveness, where negative behaviours are exhibited lack of respect for elders, Brooker,(2008) and friends, fearful of strangers and more prone to behaviour problems, including social withdrawal and dependence on adults can be a function of their early experiences. For this reason this study seeks to find out how baby sitters interaction with parents influences the psychosocial development of the children under their care.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

Fifty (50) babysitters, fifty (50) couples and fifty (50) children took part in this study during interviewed.

3.2 Design

The study followed a triangulation design combining both quantitative and qualitative survey approaches. The study was quantitative because it sought to appraise the extent to which babysitter background (age) impact on the psychosocial development of children. The study was qualitative because the process of babysitter interaction with children and their influence on the psychosocial development of the children was assessed using open ended questions and interviews that were analyzed using a combination of thematic and content analysis processes to group viewpoints or opinions under umbrella terms or concepts. But in this qualitative perspective, concepts and ideas primarily considered to their statistical weights. In other words, a concept or viewpoint if mentioned even once was considered in the analysis of data.

3.3 Measure and procedure

3.3.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

Fifty households which have baby sitters and children were sampled for the study. Hence, 50 babysitters, 50 couples and 50 children were interviewed.

Sampling was deductive because Buea was chosen based on the existence and growing employment of babysitters. Babysitters, the parents and the children were purposively and incidentally selected during the study period based on their availability to freely and properly participate in the

study. Ten of the 50 households were sampled for observation using simple random sampling technique.

3.3.2 Instrumentation

Data for this study was collected with the aid of a 4 point likert scale questionnaire for babysitters which was administered to 50 respondents purposively and incidentally selected for this study. The questionnaire was made up of 40 structured closed ended statements and five open ended statement. For the forty statements, the respondents were required to express their feelings about each item; that is stating whether they strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD), and expressing themselves for the six open ended questions.

Also an Osgood scale questionnaire was used to collect data from the children which was administered to 50 children selected for this study. The questionnaire was made up of 29 structured closed ended statements. For each of these statements the children were required to express their feelings about each item. They were to state a Yes, No, Sometimes, and Undetermined.

In addition, an interview was conducted by the researcher with the aid of an interview guide in order to obtain rich qualitative data from respondents. This was directed to parents of the children. The interview was made up of 19 open ended questions pertaining to the variables of the study that is babysitters and the psychosocial effects on the development of children.

Lastly an observation was conducted by the researcher with the aid of an observation guide to further enhance the richness of the qualitative data gotten from the respondents. The observation was focused on 10 children randomly selected from the sample, who were all 3 years old. The observation guide had 25 points pertaining to the variable of the study that is babysitters and the psychosocial effects on the development of children, to describe life the compartments of the children and babysitters.

3.3.3 Statistical analysis

A triangulation process was followed in analyzing the data by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in the analysis and interpretation of results as well as two different statistical packages. Since the questionnaire was a combination of both open-ended and close-ended questions, to be in line with the standardized approaches of data processing and analysis, the data management and analysis went through a number of systematic steps all complementary to each other.

4. Results

It was realized that quality of interaction with parents did not really influence child psychosocial development (Spearman's rho: $r=-0.037$; $P=0.798$). Almost half of the babysitters did not perceive their interaction with parents as satisfactory 235 (47.0%) and this distribution was not dependent of age (χ^2 -test: $P>0.05$).

Tables 1. Relationship between babysitter interrelation with parents and psychosocial development of the child

			Psychosocial development of the child	Quality of interaction with parents
Spearman's rho	Psychosocial development of the child	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.037
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.798
		N	50	50
	Quality of interaction with parents	Correlation Coefficient	-.037	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.798	.
		N	50	50

Table 2. Distribution of babysitters' perception of interpersonal relationship with parents

Concepts	Agree	Disagree	N
I am usually not comfortable being with the child's mother	39(78%)	11(22.0%)	50
I am comfortable being with the child's father	16(32.0%)	34(68.0%)	50
I sometimes go shopping with the child's parents	11(22.0%)	39(78.0%)	50
I sometimes play cards or scramble with the child's parents	6(12.0%)	44(88.0%)	50
The relationship between the child's parents and me influences the way I care for the child.	40(80.0%)	10(20.0%)	50
I feel comfortable telling my problems to the child's parents	20(40.0%)	30(60.0%)	50
I cannot tell the child's parents about my problems	33(66.0%)	17(34.0%)	50
The child's parents will not care if I go for a day without food	16(32.0%)	34(68.0%)	50
The child's parents yell at me a lot.	46(92.0%)	4(8.0%)	50
The child's parents are always nice to me.	38(76.0%)	12(24.0%)	50
MRS	265 (53.0%)	235 (47.0%)	500

Table 3. Distribution of babysitters' perception of interpersonal relationship with parents by age

Concepts	Agree		χ^2 -test
	<20 MRS=310	20+ MRS=190	
I am usually not comfortable being with the child's mother	25 (80.6%)	14 (73.7%)	$\chi^2=0.333$ P=0.564
I am comfortable being with the child's father	11 (35.5%)	5 (26.3%)	$\chi^2=0.455$ P=0.500
I sometimes go shopping with the child's parents	6 (19.4%)	5 (26.3%)	$\chi^2=0.333$ P=0.564
I sometimes play cards or scramble with the child's parents	4 (12.9%)	2 (10.5%)	$\chi^2=0.063$ P=0.802
The relationship between the child's parents and me influences the way I care for the child.	27 (87.1%)	13 (68.4%)	$\chi^2=2.568$ P=0.109
I feel comfortable telling my problems to the child's parents	15 (48.4%)	5 26.3(%)	$\chi^2=2.391$ P=0.122
I cannot tell the child's parents about my problems	19 (61.3%)	14 (73.7%)	$\chi^2=0.806$ P=0.369
The child's parents will not care if I go for a day without food	10 (32.3%)	6 (31.6%)	$\chi^2=0.002$ P=0.960
The child's parents yell at me a lot.	29 (93.5%)	17 (89.5%)	$\chi^2=0.266$ P=0.606
The child's parents are always nice to me.	24 (77.4%)	14 (73.7%)	$\chi^2=0.090$ P=0.764
MRS	170 (54.84%)	95 (50.0%)	$\chi^2=1.11$ P=0.293

5. Discussion

The findings revealed that, there is no significant relationship between babysitters interpersonal relationship with parents and children's psychosocial development. The Spearman's rho: $r = 0.0037; p=0.798$, the nature of relationship between the variables was discovered not to be moderate because almost half of the babysitters did not perceive their interaction with parents as satisfactory 47.0% and this distribution was not dependent of age ($p>0.05$).

Observations also enriched the findings of objective four, were it was observed that babysitters did not have a cordial interaction with the parents of the children. All what was done by some of the parents was to find out about the children's welfare, whether they have eaten or slept during the course of the day. Bowlby (1980) postulated that attachment system is designed by evolutionary processes to maintain proximity between children and their parents. Bowlby maintained that attachment is a theory of how children experience and internalize such emotions as security, love, anxiety, anger, sadness and loss. When babysitters are not shown attachment by parents of the children they care for, this might affect the interaction the babysitters will have with the children

From the findings, although half of the babysitters interviewed said that the quality of their relationship with the parents of the children they are looking after was unsatisfactory, this does not however, suggest that the quality of interaction between babysitters and parents should be given no priority in child care policy at home. One of the reasons for this is that although the quality of relationship between parents and babysitters per say may not have a direct relationship with children's psychosocial development, it does nevertheless affect other areas that impact directly on child psychosocial development and as such can have an indirect effect on the psychosocial development of children. One such area is in quality of relationship between babysitter and child, especially involving activities like play that bring the two into mutual interaction. If the relationship between the child's parents and the babysitter is poor this in turn could affect negatively the quality of response to the child's basic needs, the quality of interaction between babysitter and child, quality of play between babysitter and child and vice versa. Thus, for the healthy development of the child (including healthy psychosocial development) it is necessary to motivate the babysitters so that the quality of their care-giving should be optimum.

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