SOCIAL WORK ROLES AND THE WELLBEING OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN CALABAR MUNICIPALITY, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Social Welfare, services, socio-economic wellbeing

ABSTRACT
The objective of this study is to examine the correlation between social welfare services and the socio-economic well-being of individuals in Calabar South, Cross River State, Nigeria. To accomplish this objective, a hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The sample size consisted of four hundred respondents (400). A descriptive survey research approach was employed, utilizing research questionnaires as the primary data collection instrument. Data analysis was conducted using chi-square, simple percentages, and tables. The study's findings indicate a significant relationship between social welfare services in Calabar South and family income. This suggests that the income of many families in the area experiences an uplift during periods of heightened social welfare activities. The study underscores the importance of these findings for the residents of Calabar South.Base on the results, it is recommended that the government take prompt action to raise awareness and exposure among the populace, particularly through community mobilization, traditional leaders, youth groups, and faith-based organizations, regarding the opportunities provided by social welfare service activities in the area. Additionally, the role of non-governmental organizations in enhancing the socio-economic well-being of the population should be emphasized.

Introduction

Social welfare services encompass a broad spectrum of both public and voluntary initiatives, ranging from education and healthcare to community development, social insurance, housing, and more. These services are aimed at aiding disadvantaged groups who may face neglect, dependency, physical challenges, or deprivation due to political, religious, or ethnic reasons, thereby denying them the opportunity for a fulfilling life.

According to Esu (1982), social welfare services are essential for societal improvement, striving to achieve higher levels of social justice, security, freedom, and overall quality of life, considered inherent rights for every individual. These services are defined as initiatives designed to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, groups, and local communities, enabling them to effectively address the social issues prevalent in a constantly evolving society. Social welfare services gained prominence in the aftermath of World War II, particularly under British colonial rule, when global economic recession hindered the financing of developmental projects. Daric (2008) highlights family interference as a significant contributor to broken homes, often linked to gender preferences and polygamous marriages, leading to neglect and emotional strains within families.

Children in broken homes often struggle to maintain healthy relationships with their parents, leading to emotional and psychological challenges. Persistent broken homes can result in girls growing anxious and neurotic, while boys may exhibit aggressive or delinquent behavior. Ekanem and Nya (2010) emphasize the socio-economic repercussions of broken homes, including increased poverty, lower educational attainment, and reduced employment opportunities, particularly in single-parent households.

Social welfare services, such as financial aid, healthcare, education, housing support, and childcare, serve as a vital safety net for families in need. Financial assistance programs, including cash transfers and food aid, can alleviate poverty and provide stability. Access to healthcare, including mental health services, supports families' physical and emotional well-being. Education and job training programs offer avenues for single parents to enhance their skills and income potential. Housing assistance ensures access to safe and affordable living arrangements, while childcare facilitates parents' ability to work and provide for their families (Okoi, 2009).

However, it's important to recognize that social welfare services alone cannot address all the challenges faced by single-parent households. Factors such as social support, job opportunities, and discrimination also influence well-being. Nonetheless, social welfare services play a crucial role in providing a safety net and supporting the socio-economic well-being of families.

Social economic well-being encompasses the overall economic and social welfare of individuals and communities, including factors like education, healthcare, housing, employment, income distribution, social safety nets, and poverty levels (Eso, 2011). Efforts to promote social economic well-being involve policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, improving access to education and healthcare, fostering job creation and economic growth, and providing social safety nets for vulnerable populations.

Statement of Problem

In contemporary society, the issue of broken homes has become contentious, constituting a significant social problem within economic communities. This study places particular emphasis on the Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. A considerable portion of the population in this area is comprised of individuals with limited education, leading to a prevalence of superstitions. For instance, some men hold the belief that if their wives cannot conceive male children, the solution is to seek another wife, disregarding the biological fact that it is the male who determines the sex of a child, not the female. Additionally, in households practicing polygamy, husbands often show favoritism towards one wife, causing discord within the family and potentially resulting in broken homes.

Furthermore, there exists a skepticism towards the interventions provided by social

welfare agents, with some individuals questioning their legitimacy in interfering with family issues. Others exhibit reluctance to cooperate, viewing social welfare services as a futile endeavor. This study seeks to explore the role of social welfare services and their impact on the socio-economic aspects of broken homes.

Conceptual Review

Government policies and educational system in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State

The relationship between government policies and the education system is fundamental, with governments wielding significant influence over educational structures and practices in many countries. As outlined by Ubi (2015), government policies can shape various facets of education, encompassing curriculum design, funding allocation, teacher recruitment and training, student evaluations, and more. For instance, policies dictate which subjects are taught, instructional methodologies, and resource provision for educators and learners. Moreover, government policies determine the financial investment in education and its distribution among educational institutions, profoundly impacting educational quality and resource availability.

Furthermore, governmental directives impact teacher recruitment criteria, training standards, and professional accountability measures. Certain governments may mandate specific qualifications or examinations for teacher certification, shaping the caliber of educators. Overall, governmental policies wield considerable influence over the education system, molding the educational experiences of students. Governments bear the responsibility of crafting and implementing policies to enhance societal well-being, fostering an orderly and conducive environment for societal advancement. However, as explored by Sunday and Awusa (2011), the complexity of governance and policy-making can lead to unintended consequences. In Nigeria, for instance, societal fragmentation among ethnic groups presents a significant challenge to national unity. To address this, governments introduce policies like educational quotas aimed at fostering inclusivity and bridging divides. While such policies promote unity, they may inadvertently undermine educational quality, as seen in the case of university quotas impacting academic standards.

Additionally, ill-informed policies such as uneven fund distribution can disrupt academic activities, exemplified by salary arrears prompting strikes among lecturers and support staff. These disruptions directly impede educational processes within affected institutions. In summary, while government policies are essential for societal progress and cohesion, their impact on education must be carefully balanced to ensure both unity and academic excellence are upheld.

Economic condition and family income in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State

Socioeconomic status (SES) serves as a comprehensive measure, blending economic and sociological factors to assess an individual's or family's position within society relative to others. As highlighted by Marmot and Michael (2014), when evaluating SES, factors such as household income, educational attainment of earners, and occupational status are scrutinized. This holistic approach contrasts with individual assessments, where personal attributes are considered.

Lareau (2013) categorizes SES into three main tiers: high, middle, and low, representing the spectrum of socioeconomic positions. Assigning individuals or families to these categories involves assessing any or all of the three primary variables: income, education, and occupation.

Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that low income and limited educational attainment serve as potent predictors of various physical and mental health issues, often attributable to adverse environmental conditions that perpetuate social disadvantages (Simiyu, 2011).

When examining income, it encompasses various sources such as wages, profits, rents, and other forms of earnings, including governmental assistance. Income can be understood in both relative and absolute terms. Absolute income, as posited by economist Keynes, indicates that consumption increases proportionally with income, albeit not at an identical rate. Conversely, relative income influences savings and consumption patterns relative to others within society. Income

inequality, a prominent issue globally, is commonly assessed using the Gini Coefficient, where a value of 0 signifies perfect income equality, while 1 indicates absolute inequality (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2014). This measure enables policymakers and researchers to gauge and address disparities in wealth distribution.

Overall, income serves as a widely utilized metric for assessing socioeconomic status due to its accessibility and comprehensiveness. Understanding and addressing income inequality are crucial steps towards promoting social equity and improving overall societal well-being.

Social Attitudes and Safety Nets in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State

The impact of broken homes on both families and society has been extensively studied. Polanen (2010) highlights various effects, some immediate and others manifesting over time.

Colcord (2019) emphasizes the significant impact on children from broken homes, leading to long-lasting intellectual, physical, and emotional scars. Saheed (2018) and Okoi&Omang (2018) further note the development of Attachment Disorder in such children due to lack of emotional support.

McLanahan (2019), supported by Ofem et al. (2021), suggests that children from broken homes are more prone to future marital instability. This is attributed to disrupted parental investment and lack of conflict resolution skills.

Margaret (2018) discusses the financial repercussions, stating that divorce increases financial burdens, especially for mothers, leading to decreased standard of living, particularly among lower socio-economic groups. Morgan (2017) adds that assets, including the matrimonial home, may be liquidated post-divorce, further impacting household income negatively. Regarding social welfare, governments implement policies aimed at aiding the needy and less privileged, including financial assistance for the elderly and unemployed youth, healthcare provision, and educational support (Ofem et al., 2020). Understanding how these services relate to broken homes is crucial for effective intervention and support.

Theoretical Framework

Poverty theory by Oscar Lewis (1996)

Oscar Lewis (1996) introduced the theory of poverty, suggesting that the sub-culture within impoverished communities develops mechanisms that perpetuate their condition, such as inadequate clothing, nutrition, and hygiene. Breaking out of this cycle is often difficult or impossible due to limited opportunities. Children born into poverty face obstacles to education, as their families struggle with financial instability, which further exacerbates their circumstances.

This theory is relevant to the research at hand as it underscores how poverty influences parental factors that affect children's academic performance. Parents with low incomes may struggle to provide their children with essential academic resources like textbooks, school fees, and proper nutrition, thereby hindering their educational success.

Furthermore, the theory highlights how sub-cultural values are internalized, particularly impacting those who are illiterate and may resist such values. For instance, the belief that maternal figures are solely responsible for children's education can place a heavy burden on mothers, complicating their ability to support their children academically. Poverty may also force parents to resort to sending their children to work as street hawkers, further impeding their educational progress.

Child development theory by Lev Vygotsky (1896)

Lev Vygotsky (1896) introduced the theory of child development, emphasizing that children acquire knowledge of their environment through physical interaction. His socio-cultural theory posits that learning is inherently social, requiring support from parents, caregivers, peers, and society at large to develop higher psychological functions.

Vygotsky focused on how cultural elements, such as customs, beliefs, skills, and values, are transmitted to new generations within a society. According to his theory, social interaction within the family and with knowledgeable members of the community plays a pivotal role in children's acquisition of

behaviors and cognitive processes relevant to their culture. In this context, adult or peer intervention is crucial for facilitating development.

He argued that while initial development is driven by a child's immediate social interactions, as learning becomes internalized, there is a transition to individual learning. Vygotsky viewed children as apprentices who learn alongside those with greater experience, benefiting from their understanding of their abilities and needs.

Methodology

The research employed a descriptive research design, aimed at uncovering existing phenomena by querying individual respondents about their beliefs and attitudes on the subject matter. This design was chosen because it allows for comprehensive coverage of the study area, facilitated by the ease of gathering information from respondents through questionnaires. The focus of this research project was the Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, situated in the Southern Senatorial District. Established in 1991 from the former Calabar South, it comprises eleven council wards with its headquarters located in Anantigha. These wards are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

Calabar South is composed of various districts, including Henshaw Town, EfutUwanse, and EfutEbua. Christianity is the predominant religion in this area, while the Efik and English languages are widely spoken. According to the National Population Commission (2006) Census, the population of Calabar South was 191,515. Its geographical coordinates are approximately latitude 5.07N to 4.53N and longitude 8.15E. Various occupations are pursued in the area, including peasant farming, trading, fishing, and some civil service roles, with numerous dialects spoken.

The sample size for the study comprised 400 men and women selected from a study population of 3,742. These individuals included food vendors, riders, hawkers, etc., who shared their experiences relating to events like social welfare service activities. The sample of 400 respondents was drawn after dividing the entire area into four research zones and selecting one hundred respondents from each zone using the stratified sampling technique. This sample size was determined to test the hypotheses proposed for the study.

The sample size was finally arrived by applying the Taro Yamen formula which is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where N = total population for the study

E = standard error which is @ 0.05 level

$$= \frac{374}{374} + (005)^2$$

$$= \frac{3743}{3743} (0.0025)$$

$$3743 = 9.36$$

$$\frac{3743}{9.36} = 400$$

Findings

Table 4.1 Distribution of respondents by sex

Sex	Frequencies	percentage (%)
Male	161	40.45
Female	237	59.54
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 4.1 above indicates that one hundredth and sixty-one (161) of the respondents representing 40.45% were males while two hundredth and sixty-seven (267) of the respondents were females representing 59.54% indicating that more females were selected for the study and also indicating that more females are involved in income generating activities during the peak of social welfare service activities in the area.

Table 4.2 Distribution of respondents by age

Age	Frequencies	percentage (%)
10-13	209	69.5
14-16	105	27.2
17-19	43	2.0
20 and above	41	1.2
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 4.2 above indicates that majority of the respondents that is 209 representing 69.5% were between the ages of 10-13, ages 14-16 were 105 representing 27.2%. ages 17-19 had 45 respondents representing 2.0% while respondents who were 20 years and above were 41 representing 1.2%. This indicates that children of school age are involves in economic activities associated with social welfare service activities in the area

Table 4.3 Distribution of respondents by educational qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
B.Sc and above	140	35.4
HND and OND	128	31.7
SSCE and above	130	32.9
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

The table above shows that 140 respondents representing 35.4%, 128 respondents representing 31.7%, while 130 representing 32.9% have B.Sc and above, HND and OND and SSCE and below respectively.

Respondents variables data

Question: Have social welfare service activities impacted positively on family income in Calabar South?

Variables	Frequencies	percentage (%)
Yes	251	63.0
No	147	37.0
Total	398	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

If yes to above, rate the impact on a scale of 1-5 with 1 as very high impact

1	244	56.3
2	50	12.6
2	75	18.8
4	22	5.5
Total	398	100%

The level of business potentials in Calabar South is directly proportional to level of social welfare service activities in the area.

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Yes	244	63.0

No	154	37.0	
Total	398	100%	

Business potentials during social welfare service activities are highest in which sector?

Commercial motor bike	50	12.6
Accommodation and hostel services	75	18.8
Good vendors	95	23.9
Selling of state cultural products	10	3.8
Commercial taxes	163	40.9
Sale of emblems	20	5.0
Total	398	100%

Social welfare service and income generating capacity of people in the study area. Income generating capacity of the people in Calabar South expands during the social welfare service activates in the area.

1 (very high)	199	50%
2 (moderate)	100	30%
3 (the same)	60	10%
4 (indifferent)	39	10%

Test of Hypotheses

There is no significant relationship between level of truism activities

South and family income of the people.

Table showing simple regression analysis between level of social welfare service activities in Calabar South and the income of the families in the area

R	R square	Adjusted R square	Error of the estimate
.173	.068	0.67	6.92000

Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	1036.72	2	876.821	49.423	.000
Residual	26229.801	396	45.588		
Total	27266.522	398			

The table above shows that the simple regression analysis on the relationship between social welfare service activities in Calabar South and income of families produced an adjusted R^2 of 67, meaning that the variance of 67.0% can be produced. The F-value of ANOVA shows F - 49.423 having a P value of .000 with 2 and 36 df. at.05 level of significance. With this result t means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significance relationship between level of social welfare service activities in Calabar South and family income.

The development of social welfare service activities in Calabar South does not significantly relate with the development potentials m the area. To test this hypothesis, the contingency chi-square statistic will be used that is:

(X-) = £ (O-E)

Where O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

£ - Summation sign

And E = (RT) (CT)

GT

398 x 320

960 = 114.3

617x320

960 = 205.6

343 x 320 = 114.3

960

617x320 = 205.6

960

343 x 320

960 = 114.3

Discussion of Findings

The following are the findings from the study; Firstly, one notable outcome reveals a substantial correlation between social welfare services activities in Calabar South and family income. This suggests that the income of many families in the area experiences a notable increase during the peak of social welfare service activities, such as the renowned social welfare service events.

The study underscores the significance of these business opportunities for residents of Calabar South, particularly during festive periods, and especially during the height of social welfare service activities in the area.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the correlation between social welfare services and the socio-economic well-being of the residents of Calabar South. A sample of 398 respondents was selected for the study. Data was collected through questionnaires and subjected to rigorous statistical analysis using appropriate tests as per the formulated hypotheses. The analysis revealed a strong and significant relationship between social welfare service activities and various factors including family income, business potentials, and income-generating capacity among the people of Calabar South.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Given that family income serves as a pivotal component of national income and an indicator of macroeconomic development, the government should prioritize the development of other sectors of social welfare services to attract more families to the economic benefits offered by such services in the area.

ii. Recognizing that business potentials play a significant role in driving social and economic well-being, it is recommended that services and workshops be organized for the residents of the area to enhance their exposure to such potentials during social welfare service activities.

iii. Addressing the issue of low income generation, particularly in third-world countries like Nigeria, should be prioritized. Further strategies and interventions should be implemented to uplift income levels among the population.

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