

EFFECTS OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON MOTHERHOOD ACTIVITIES AND PAID EMPLOYMENT IN ENUGU URBAN, ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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Article Info

Keywords: Family activities, , motherhood, paid employment, socioeconomic status, working mothers

DOI

10.5281/zenodo.14870639

Abstract

This study investigates the effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on motherhood activities and paid employment using four occupational groups in the Enugu Urban Area, Enugu State, Nigeria namely; teachers, nurses, bankers and police personnel. The multistage sampling techniques were adopted and 995 respondents (aged 18-60 years) were selected using the questionnaire instrument. Qualitative data were generated by focus group discussion (FGD) with 31 participants (aged 18-60 years) not issued with the questionnaire. The quantitative data were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 and the results are presented in frequency distribution tables, percentages and cross tabulation. The hypotheses were tested using chi-square (χ^2) statistical inference. The qualitative data were analyzed in themes and verbatim quotes used to complement the results of the quantitative data. The findings revealed that among those more engaged, 28.7% of them were of low rank while 71.3% of them were of high rank ($\chi^2 = 1.1198$, $df = 1$, $p = .274$). Also, the results showed that for those less engaged in motherhood and family activities, 46.7% earned ₦800,000 per annum and below while 53.3% earned above ₦800,000 per annum. On the other hand, among those more engaged in motherhood and family activities, 52.3% earned ₦800,000 per annum and below while 47.7% earned above ₦800,000 per annum ($\chi^2 = 2.601$, $df = 1$, $p = .107$). The study therefore recommended among others; the need for a policy that will consider working mothers, especially in banking and police occupations. It is also recommended that policy makers and development partners should involve working mothers in developing policies that will help them cope with work and family life.

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Introduction

The principal reason mothers have for seeking paid employment is the same as it is for men. That is, to earn money in order to provide for themselves and any family they may have (Webb & Tossell, 2003). The past 4 decades have witnessed a significant rise in mothers' employment, particularly among mothers with children in the home (Okonkwo, 2015). The increase in participation rates of mothers in paid employment is because of the need to contribute to the family income and to achieve economic independence as well as evolving from the conviction that mothers place is in the home or kitchen (Abimbola & Ojo, 2013).

Motherhood and paid employment are two pivotal aspects of women's lives that are deeply intertwined with their socioeconomic status. In Enugu Urban, a bustling metropolis in Southeast Nigeria, women navigate the complexities of these roles in the middle of cultural expectations, economic demands, and urban pressures. Socioeconomic status, defined by income levels and societal rank, plays a critical role in determining access to resources, work opportunities, and maternal responsibilities. The concept of socioeconomic status encompasses multiple dimensions, including income, education, occupation, and societal rank (Adewale, 2022). In Nigeria, where traditional gender roles continue to influence household dynamics, SES not only dictates the financial resources available to mothers but also shapes their access to employment opportunities and support systems (Eze, 2019). For instance, high-income families often afford domestic help and private childcare, alleviating the burden on mothers and enabling greater workforce participation. In contrast, low-income mothers frequently face the dual challenge of earning a living and managing caregiving duties without sufficient support (Okonkwo, 2021).

Enugu Urban exemplifies the evolving dynamics of urbanization and its impact on motherhood and employment. As one of Nigeria's rapidly growing cities, it presents a unique blend of traditional and modern influences. On the one hand, cultural expectations continue to prioritize women's roles as primary caregivers. On the other hand, economic realities increasingly necessitate dual-income households, compelling women to engage in paid employment alongside their maternal responsibilities (NBS, 2023). The relationship between SES and motherhood activities is particularly pronounced in urban settings, where access to infrastructure, healthcare, and education is stratified along socioeconomic lines. High-income mothers often benefit from better access to quality health care and education for their children, as well as opportunities for professional development. Conversely, low-income mothers are disproportionately affected by systemic inequalities, which limit their ability to provide optimal care for their children while pursuing career aspirations (Adedokun, 2020). Middle-income mothers, meanwhile, find themselves navigating a complex landscape, striving to balance limited resources with the demands of urban life.

Gone are the days when mothers stayed home to care for their children. Onwuka and Nwosuji (2015) observed that there has been a gradual shift in this occupation pattern in recent times. Onwuka, Ndubisi and Ekebosi (2020) are of the opinion that economic necessity has been identified as the major reason for mother's participation in paid employment. Today, many mothers work outside the home due to the prevailing economic conditions and their desire to pursue personal goals. In many Nigerian households, traditional gender roles assign caregiving and domestic responsibilities predominantly to women. This cultural expectation often places additional pressure on mothers to prioritize family needs over career aspirations. For low-income mothers, this dynamic is exacerbated by financial constraints, which necessitate engagement in informal or low-paying jobs with little flexibility. High-income mothers, on the other hand, may leverage their financial resources to access paid domestic help, thereby mitigating the challenges of balancing work and motherhood (Adewale, 2022).

The economic implications of SES on motherhood are significant. Income levels determine the affordability of childcare services, healthcare, and education, which directly impact maternal caregiving practices. For instance,

high-income families in Enugu Urban can afford private schools and health care services, ensuring better outcomes for their children. However, low-income families often rely on overcrowded public facilities, which may not meet their needs (NBS, 2023). This disparity underscores the critical role of income in shaping maternal experiences and outcomes. Employment opportunities in Enugu Urban are also stratified along socioeconomic lines. High-ranking women, typically with better education and professional networks, have greater access to well-paying and flexible jobs. This enables them to achieve a more balanced integration of their professional and maternal roles. In contrast, low-ranking women are often confined to the informal sector, characterized by low wages, job insecurity, and inflexible hours (Eze, 2019). Middle-income women navigate a middle ground, striving to advance professionally while managing family responsibilities with limited resources. Onwuka, Ndubisi and Ekebosi (2020) noted that the decision for mothers to work or not to work outside the home whilst bringing up children is not an easy one; hence, many of them, due to financial constraints, do not feel that they have a choice rather than to work. This study examined the issues surrounding women in paid employment and activities related to family life in Enugu State.

Statement of the problem

Many problems have become obvious with the general increase in the participation of mothers in paid employment throughout the world. Apart from their constant office demands, mothers in paid employment play multiple roles in their families to attend to (Ering, Akpan & Emma-Echiegu, 2014). This is contrary to the expected traditional gender roles of mothers. Mothers' participation in paid employment appears most noticeable in the banking industry, teaching, medical fields, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. This development ensures that mothers enjoy the same job opportunities as their male counterparts. It is the perception of many people in our society that some occupations tend to have more problems of marital adjustment than others (Onwuka & Nwosuji, 2014).

The dual responsibilities of motherhood and paid employment present significant challenges for women, particularly in urban environments where socioeconomic disparities are pronounced. In Enugu Urban, socioeconomic status influences women's ability to effectively manage their roles as mothers and employees. This is to say that on the part of the children they feel they have been abandoned and this goes a long way to affect them psychologically. This also brings their socio-emotional feelings down and by so doing, the child's wellbeing is not taken care of (Onwuka & Nwosuji, 2015). High-income mothers benefit from access to resources that facilitate the delegation of caregiving responsibilities, such as domestic staff and private childcare. Conversely, low-income mothers who lack these resources often experience heightened stress and reduced opportunities for professional advancement (Okonkwo, 2021).

Despite the growing participation of women in the workforce, systemic barriers continue to impede their ability to balance their professional and maternal roles. Low-income mothers are disproportionately represented in informal employment, characterized by low wages and inflexible work conditions, which intensify the work-family conflict (Eze, 2019). These challenges are compounded by limited access to affordable childcare services, public healthcare, and education, further constraining their capacity to fulfill maternal and professional responsibilities (Adedokun, 2020).

In a study by Onwuka and Nwosuji (2015) in Enugu urban, it was discovered that the majority of mothers were involved in the workforce. While some were involved in paid employment, others were self-employed (trading and other small-scale businesses). However, both paid employment and self-employment took mothers away from the home for some hours of the day. As a result, mothers failed to spend enough time with their children, leading to consequences for their intellectual and social development. Onwuka and Nwosuji (2015) equally noted that working mothers in Enugu consequently had no choice other than to leave their children in the hands of others

like house helpers and babysitters, and presently they even start-up day-care for the children at the early stage of their development. However, this may lead to potential issues, such as the inability of babysitters and house helpers to fully support the child's overall development and well-being. In other words, the family is totally neglected or is inadequately taken care of. This may have serious implications for the entire family and may give rise to a communication gap (Onwuka, Ndubisi & Ekebosi, 2020).

In Enugu Urban, the lack of targeted policies to address these challenges has resulted in persistent inequalities. High-ranking women, typically with better education and access to professional networks, are more likely to secure flexible, high-paying jobs that enable them to balance their dual roles. In contrast, low-ranking women remain trapped in cycles of poverty and limited opportunity, unable to break free from systemic barriers (NBS, 2023). Addressing these disparities requires a comprehensive understanding of how socioeconomic status impacts motherhood activities and paid employment. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the experiences of mothers across different SES groups in Enugu Urban, providing evidence-based recommendations to inform policy and practice. By addressing the root causes of inequality, this research promotes a more inclusive environment where all mothers can thrive both professionally and personally.

Research questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent are women engaged in paid employment?
2. What effect does income and rank have on engaging in motherhood and family activities?
3. What strategies can be used to reduce the difficulties of handling the multiple roles of working mothers?

Study hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed in this study:

1. Those who earn more income are probably less engaged in motherhood and family activities than those with less income.
2. Those with a low rank are probably more engaged in motherhood and family activities than those with a high rank.

Review of the related literature

Socioeconomic status (SES) is widely recognized as a determinant of women's ability to manage motherhood activities and engage in paid employment. Numerous studies have examined the interplay between income, societal rank, and maternal responsibilities, highlighting the challenges faced by women in different socioeconomic strata.

The Role of Income in Shaping Maternal Experiences

Income levels are a critical component of SES, influencing access to resources that support motherhood and employment. High-income mothers often benefit from the ability to hire domestic staff, enroll their children in private schools, and access premium health care services. These resources enable them to focus on career advancement while maintaining their maternal responsibilities (Okonkwo, 2021). In contrast, low-income mothers face significant barriers, including inadequate access to affordable childcare and healthcare, which intensify the challenges of balancing work and family life (Adedokun, 2020). Middle-income mothers occupy a unique position, often striving to provide quality care for their children while managing limited financial resources. Studies suggest that these mothers are more likely to rely on informal support networks, such as extended family members, to mitigate caregiving challenges (Eze, 2019). However, the pressures of urban living, combined with limited institutional support, often result in heightened stress and reduced well-being.

Socioeconomic status has been widely recognized as a determinant of maternal roles and activities. Johnson and Green (2018) highlighted the correlation between income levels and maternal caregiving practices, emphasizing

that mothers with higher SES are more likely to access resources that enhance their caregiving capabilities. Similarly, Adebayo (2017) argues that SES influences not only the material aspects of motherhood, such as access to healthcare and education, but also the emotional and psychological dimensions, including stress management and self-efficacy.

Income plays a pivotal role in determining the quality of childcare practices among mothers. Smith et al. (2020) found that higher-income mothers often outsource caregiving tasks to professional childcare providers, allowing them to balance work and family responsibilities more effectively. In contrast, low-income mothers are frequently unable to afford such services, resulting in greater reliance on informal support systems, which may lack consistency and reliability. This disparity underscores the need for subsidized child care services to alleviate the burden on low-income families. Access to healthcare is a critical factor that shapes motherhood experiences. Mothers from higher SES backgrounds typically use private healthcare facilities, which offer better quality care but are expensive (Adebayo, 2017). Public health care services, while more affordable, are often characterized by long waiting times, inadequate infrastructure, and resource shortages, disproportionately affecting low-income mothers. Studies suggest that improving access to affordable and quality health care services can significantly enhance maternal and child health outcomes (Okafor, 2015). Mothers often hold greater prestige within the family and are more likely to have control over how their income is spent (Onwuka, Ndubisi & Ekebosi, 2020).

Time allocation is a key component of motherhood that is heavily influenced by SES. Low-income mothers often face time poverty due to the dual demands of unpaid labor and informal economic activities. According to Smith et al. (2020), these mothers dedicate a significant portion of their time to caregiving and household responsibilities, leaving little room for personal development or leisure. Conversely, high-income mothers were more likely to afford domestic help, enabling them to engage in professional and personal pursuits. Onwuka, Ndubisi and Ekebosi (2020) observed that mothers enjoy being out of the house with other people and the satisfaction of accomplishment in the public world. However, despite engaging in paid work, mothers continue to bear the primary responsibility for managing household tasks, regardless of who performs them.

Societal Rank and Employment Opportunities

Societal rank, as an indicator of SES, plays a significant role in determining access to quality employment opportunities. High-ranking women, typically characterized by advanced education and professional networks, are more likely to secure well-paying, flexible jobs that accommodate their maternal responsibilities (NBS, 2023). Conversely, low-ranking women are disproportionately represented in the informal sector, where job security, wages, and working conditions are often suboptimal (Adewale, 2022).

Socioeconomic status has long been identified as a critical determinant of maternal and child outcomes. According to Smith et al. (2019), income disparities directly influence access to essential services, including health care and education, which are pivotal for effective motherhood activities. The authors argue that income inequality intensifies disparities in child development, particularly in urban settings where access to resources is stratified. Johnson and Brown (2020) explored the relationship between occupational rank and caregiving responsibilities. Their findings revealed that mothers in higher occupational ranks often benefit from workplace policies that accommodate caregiving needs, such as maternity leave and flexible work schedules. In contrast, women in lower ranks or informal employment are disproportionately affected by rigid work environments and lack of benefits. The intersectionality of societal rank and cultural expectations further compounds these challenges. In many Nigerian households, traditional gender roles prioritize maternal duties over professional aspirations, limiting women's participation in the workforce. This dynamic is particularly pronounced for low-ranking women, who often face societal pressure to prioritize caregiving despite financial constraints (Adedokun, 2020).

Work-Family Conflict and Coping Strategies

The work-family conflict model provides a valuable framework for understanding the tensions that arise when professional and domestic responsibilities overlap. Research indicates that mothers in low-income groups experience higher levels of work-family conflict, often due to inflexible work schedules and inadequate support systems (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Middle- and high-income mothers, while better equipped to navigate these conflicts, still face challenges related to societal expectations and personal aspirations.

Coping strategies employed by mothers vary across the SES groups. High-income mothers often leverage financial resources to delegate caregiving responsibilities, whereas low-income mothers rely on community and family support. Middle-income mothers frequently adopt a combination of strategies, balancing limited resources with creative time management and prioritization (Eze, 2019). Taiwo and Ajayi (2013) found that in families where both husband and wife are working, the husband helps to bridge the gap in performing some of the domestic work. Traditionally, domestic work is solely the responsibility of the wife, but due to the changes in family structure, husbands are supporting their wives. Some husbands can decide to cook for their family in the absence of their wives; hence, gender roles are also changing.

In the views of Ejike (2013), running of one's home is the woman's responsibilities even though she may employ house help and nannies to do the cooking, washing or cleaning the house. Nwosu (2015) also gave the view that working mothers had no choice other than to leave their children in the hands of others like house helpers and babysitters, and presently they even start-up day-care for the children at the early stage of their development.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The disparities associated with SES underscore the need for targeted policy interventions. Affordable childcare services, flexible work arrangements, and public awareness campaigns can address systemic inequalities and support working mothers. For instance, subsidized child care centers in urban areas can provide essential support for low-income families, while employer-sponsored initiatives can enhance the work-life balance for middle- and high-income mothers (Okonkwo, 2021).

Societal attitudes toward gender roles must also evolve to create an equitable environment for working mothers. Challenging traditional norms and promoting shared domestic responsibilities can empower women to achieve their professional and maternal aspirations (Adewale, 2022).

Theoretical framework

The conservation of resources theory is the theoretical framework for this study. This is because it appears to be the most suitable for the study of work-family conflict and stress on mothers' involvement in motherhood activities. The conservation of resources (COR) theory is a stress theory that describes the motivation that derives humans to both maintain their current resources and to pursue new resources. This theory was proposed by Dr. Stevan E. Hobfoll in 1989 as a way to expand on the literature of stress as a construct. Hobfoll (1989) stated that people have a basic motivation to obtain, retain and protect that which they value. These things people value can be called resources.

Consequently, as the work and family responsibilities repeatedly compete for these resources, the rate of loss will likely overrun the rate of gain. This condition will lead to the process of wearing out and wearing down these women's intrinsic resources (emotional, cognitive and physical energy). Invariably, this depletion of resources will result in stress, which is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Specifically, the basic tenet of the conservation of resources theory is that the loss of resources is more critical than resource gain in the stress experience (Hobfoll, Lilly & Jackson, 1992). In a study involving two samples (student sample and community sample), Hobfoll et al (1992) measured individual reports of resource losses over the year and more recently during the prior weeks, as well as their gains of resources. The results revealed that losses were more consequential than gains. In general, greater loss was related to greater psychological distress. On the other hand, gain was virtually unrelated to distress. This theory also implies that gain is important in the context of loss. Gains help protect individuals from future losses.

Methods

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey design to examine the effects of socioeconomic status (rank and income) on motherhood activities in Enugu Urban, Enugu State, Nigeria. A multistage sampling technique was

adopted for the selection of 995 respondents that made up the sample size of the study. This involved proportionate and purposive sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique was used to select four (4) occupational groups common to mothers in the Enugu Urban area. These were teachers, nurses, bankers and the police.

Thirty-one (31) female participants were purposively selected for the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), based on their positions occupied or responsibilities and satisfies a number of criteria namely; married with children (at least a child), living with their husbands, living with their children. Four focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted. Two instruments were used in this study. They were the questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD) guide. The questionnaire was self-administered. The study applied both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. In doing this, the quantitative data from the questionnaire were coded, computer-processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Descriptive statistics like percentages, frequency tables, etc. were used to describe and interpret the data collected from the field. Chi-square (χ^2) statistical inference was used to determine the relationship between variables in the hypotheses.

Findings

Table 1: *Respondents' perception on the extent to which mothers engaged in paid employment*

Prevalence of Occupational Group working mothers	Teachers	Nurses	Bankers	Police Personnel	Total
Very High	33(22.9%)	44(26.0%)	42(35.6%)	157(27.8%)	276(27.7%)
High	67(46.5%)	60(35.5%)	43(36.4%)	221(39.2%)	391(39.3%)
Low	28(19.4%)	41(24.3%)	18(15.3%)	113(20.0%)	200(20.0%)
Very Low	16(11.1%)	24(14.2%)	15(12.7%)	73(12.9%)	128(13.0%)
Total	144(100.0%)	169(100.0%)	118(100.0%)	564(100.0%)	995(100.0%)

Source: *Field survey, 2024*

Table 1 depicts the respondents' perception of the prevalence of working mothers in Enugu Urban. It was observed from the above table that 22.9% of the teachers perceived the prevalence of working mothers as 'very high', 19.4% perceived it as 'low' while 11.1% perceived it as 'very low'. Among the nurses, 26.0% perceived the prevalence of working mothers as 'very high', 24.3% perceived it as 'low', while 14.2% of the respondents indicated 'very low'. For the bankers, 35.6% of the respondents perceived the prevalence of working mothers as 'very high', 15.3% indicated 'low' while 12.7% perceived the prevalence of working mothers as 'very low'. Among the working police women, 27.8% indicated 'very high' prevalence, 20.0% indicated 'low' while 12.9% of the respondents indicated 'very low' prevalence. The table further revealed the level of perception among various respondents in the different groups sampled. It can be seen that a larger percentage of teachers, nurses, bankers and police officers have 'high' prevalence of working mothers. This was observed with percentage responses of 46.5%, 35.5%, 36.4% and 39.2%, respectively. This indicated that the proportion of working mothers has increased in different sectors of the economy.

In all the FGD sessions with the four occupational groups (teachers, nurses, bankers and police personnel), the majority of the participants attested that more women were now engaged in paid employment. For instance, an FGD participant from **Queens School in Enugu North** had this to say: 'it is now observed that there is a paradigm shift from men being regarded as bread winners and women as housekeepers or child bearers into women becoming bread winners as well as one who is capable of handling multiple roles.' Another participant from **the Enugu State Police Command** started thus: 'these days the number of women juggling work and family responsibilities is on the increase.'

Also, another FGD participant from **Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane** revealed thus: 'more women are venturing into areas that were traditionally dominated by men which made them now become a visible part of the workforce.'

Another FGD participant from **First Bank Plc. Okpara Avenue** branch equally revealed thus: ‘gone are the days when women’s role is in the kitchen and other living rooms but today women are now entering the workforce and pursuing careers in large numbers.’

Table 2: *Respondents’ views on whether the income level of working mothers has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities*

Response	Occupational Group				Total
	Teachers	Nurses	Bankers	Police Personnel	
Yes	75(52.1%)	82(48.5%)	76(64.4%)	293(52.0%)	526(52.9%)
No	61(42.4%)	77(45.6%)	36(30.5%)	250(44.3%)	424(42.6%)
Don’t know	8(5.5%)	10(5.9%)	6(5.1%)	21(3.7%)	45(4.5%)
Total	144(100.0%)	169(100.0%)	118(100.0%)	564(100.0%)	995(100.0%)

Source: *Field survey, 2024*

Table 2 depicts respondents’ views on whether the income level of working mothers has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. The results from the table show that the majority of respondents, 52.1% of the teachers, 48.5% of nurses, 64.4% of bankers and 52.0% of police personnel indicated that the income level of working mothers has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities, while 42.4% of the teachers, 45.6% of nurses, 30.5% of bankers and 44.3% of police personnel did not believe that the income level of working mothers has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. This implied that the income level of working mothers has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. Mothers can now use their salaries to seek the services of a nanny or house help or even purchase mechanical/electrical gadgets.

In all the FGD sessions within the four occupational groups (teachers, nurses, bankers and police personnel), the majority of the participants maintained that the income level of working mothers had an effect on their engagement in motherhood and family activities.

Table 3: *Respondents’ views on reasons why the income level of working mothers affect engagement in motherhood and family activities*

Response	Occupational Group				Total
	Teachers	Nurses	Bankers	Police Personnel	
My partner is not extravagant in his spending of money	18(24.0%)	25(30.5%)	19(25.0%)	62(21.2%)	124(23.6%)
Ability to provide for the immediate family	21(28.0%)	19(23.2%)	24(31.6%)	94(32.1%)	158(30.0%)
My partner does not insist on me contributing a greater percentage of my salary into the family purse	16(21.3%)	15(18.3%)	12(15.8%)	58(19.8%)	101(19.2%)
My partner does not spend my hard-earned money anyhow	20(26.7%)	23(28.0%)	21(27.6%)	79(27.0%)	143(27.2%)
Total	75(100.0%)	82(100.0%)	76(100.0%)	293(100.0%)	526(100.0%)

Source: *Field survey, 2024*

The above Table 3 depicts respondents' views on reason why the income level of working mothers affect engagement in motherhood and family activities. The results revealed that 24.0% of teachers, 30.5% of nurses, 25.0% of bankers and 21.2% of police personnel indicated that their partner was 'not extravagant in his spending of money' as among the reasons why income has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. Again, 28.0% of teachers, 23.2% of nurses, 31.6% of bankers and 32.1% of police personnel indicated that 'ability to provide for the immediate family' contributed to the reasons why income has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. Furthermore, 21.3% of teachers, 18.3% of nurses, 15.8% of bankers and 19.8% of police personnel indicated that their partners did not insist on contributing a greater percentage of their salary into the family purse, which equally led to the reasons why income has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. However, a nearly equal proportion of women across all the occupational groups (26.7%, 28.0%, 27.6% and 27.0% for teachers, nurses, bankers and the police personnel respectively) indicated that their partners did not spend their hard-earned money anyhow', which also contributes to the reasons why income has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. The results indicated that working mothers' ability to provide for their immediate family is the main reason why their income level affect their engagement in motherhood and family activities.

In all the FGD sessions conducted that involved working mothers from the four occupational groups, the participants expressed similar views on reasons why the income level of working mothers is believed to have an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. For instance, an FGD female participant from **ESUT Teaching Hospital, Parklane, Enugu** had this to say: 'mothers with high income are able to outsource services such as childcare, food services, house help and nanny which may reduce their house hold activities.' Another FGD female participant from the First Bank Okpara Avenue branch, stated thus: 'mothers contributed more financially to the family which increased their overall well-being and helps them cope with their office work and family activities which lead to satisfactory family life.'

Table 4: *Respondents' views on whether rank in place of work affects engagement in motherhood and family activities*

Response	Occupational Group				Total
	Teachers	Nurses	Bankers	Police Personnel	
Yes	71(49.3%)	83(49.1%)	61(51.7%)	290(51.4%)	505(50.8%)
No	60(41.7%)	75(44.4%)	49(41.5%)	255(45.2%)	439(44.1%)
Don't know	13(9.0%)	11(6.5%)	8(6.8%)	19(3.4%)	51(5.1%)
Total	144(100.0%)	169(100.0%)	118(100.0%)	564(100.0%)	995(100.0%)

Source: *Field survey, 2024*

Table 4 depicts respondents' views on whether one's rank in place of work affects engagement in motherhood and family activities. The results from the table revealed that the majority of the respondents (49.3% of teachers, 49.1% of nurses, 51.7% of bankers and 51.4% of police personnel) indicated that rank in place of work affects engagement in motherhood and family activities, while 41.7% of teachers, 44.4% of nurses, 41.5% of bankers and 45.2% of police personnel indicated that rank in place of work did not affect engagement in motherhood and family activities. The remaining respondents (9.0% of teachers, 6.5% of nurses, 6.8% of bankers and 3.4% of police personnel) could not say whether rank in place of work affects engagement in motherhood and family activities. This implied that rank in place of work affects engagement in motherhood and family activities. One can use her salary accrued from her higher rank to cushion the effect of engagement in motherhood and family activities.

In all the FGD sessions within the four occupational groups (teachers, nurses, bankers and police personnel), the majority of the participants revealed that the rank in place of work affects engagement in motherhood and family activities.

Table 5: *Respondents' views on the effect of rank in place of work on engagement in motherhood and family activities*

Response	Occupational Group				Total
	Teachers	Nurses	Bankers	Police Personnel	
My position in the office is very sensitive, so I spend more time on job responsibilities than on family responsibilities.	21(29.6%)	25(30.1%)	17(27.9%)	93(32.1%)	156(30.9%)
I do not well participate in family activities because my position is so challenging that my spouse takes care of our children and other family activities	17(23.9%)	19(22.9%)	15(24.6%)	61(21.0%)	112(22.2%)
My income because of my rank helps shoulder certain family responsibilities	33(46.5%)	39(47.0%)	29(47.5%)	136(46.9%)	237(46.9%)
Total	71(100.0%)	83(100.0%)	61(100.0%)	290(100.0%)	505(100.0%)

Source: *Field survey, 2024*

Table 5 depicts respondents' views on the effect of rank in place of work on engagement in motherhood and family activities. The results revealed that 29.6% of teachers, 30.1% of nurses, 27.9% of bankers and 32.1% of police personnel indicated that their position in the office is very sensitive and that they spent more time on job responsibilities than on family responsibilities, which contributed to the reasons why rank in place of work has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities. Again, 23.9% of teachers, 22.9% of nurses, 24.6% of bankers and 21.0% of police personnel indicated that they do not participate well in family activities because their position is so challenging that their spouse takes care of their children and other family activities. However, a nearly equal proportion of women across all the occupational groups (46.5%, 47.0%, 47.5% and 46.9% for teachers, nurses, bankers and the police personnel respectively) indicated that their income as a result of their rank in place of work help to shoulder certain family responsibilities. This implied that when mothers are in a higher rank, their position in the office is very sensitive and they will spend more time on job responsibilities than on family responsibilities.

In all the FGD sessions within the four occupational groups (teachers, nurses, bankers and police personnel), the majority of the participants attest that their income as a result of their rank in place of work has an effect on engagement in motherhood and family activities because it helps to solve so many family responsibilities.

Table 6: *Distribution of respondents by occupational group and different levels of engagement in family activities by working mothers*

Activities	Occupational Group				Total
	Teachers	Nurses	Bankers	Police	
Engaging and participating in cooking meals					
Not at all	16(11.1%)	22(13%)	39(31.1%)	62(11%)	139(14%)
Minimally	24(16.7%)	53(31.4%)	40(33.9%)	173(30.7%)	290(29.1%)
Moderately	69(47.9%)	52(30.8%)	25(21.2%)	192(34%)	338(34%)
Fully	35(24.3%)	42(24.9%)	14(19.1%)	137(24.3%)	228(22.9%)
Total	144(100.0%)	169(100.0%)	118(100.0%)	564(100.0%)	995(100.0%)
Spending quality time with children					
Not at all	6(4.2%)	9(5.2%)	29(24.6%)	104(18.4%)	148(14.9%)
Minimally	15(10.4%)	18(10.7%)	25(21.2%)	161(28.5%)	219(22.0%)
Moderately	80(55.6%)	68(40.2%)	40(33.9%)	151(26.8%)	339(34.1%)
Fully	43(29.9%)	74(43.8%)	24(20.3%)	148(26.2%)	289(29.0%)
Total	144(100.0%)	169(100.0%)	118(100.0%)	564(100.0%)	995(100.0%)
Taking care of children					
Not at all	5(3.5%)	8(4.7%)	22(18.6%)	27(4.8%)	61(6.1%)
Minimally	48(33.3%)	63(37.3%)	37(31.4%)	175(31%)	324(32.6%)
Moderately	66(45.8%)	56(33.1%)	46(39%)	212(37.6%)	380(38.2%)
Fully	25(17.4%)	42(24.9%)	13(11%)	150(26.6%)	230(23.1%)
Total	144(100%)	169(100%)	118(100%)	564(100%)	995(100%)
Spending quality time with husbands					
Not at all	9(6.3%)	8(4.7%)	11(9.3%)	36(6.4%)	64(6.4%)
Minimally	26(8.1%)	54(32%)	36(30.5%)	138(24.5%)	254(25.5%)
Moderately	72(50%)	70(41.4%)	44(37.3%)	242(42.9%)	428(43%)
Fully	37(25.7%)	37(22.9%)	27(22.9%)	148(26.2%)	249(25%)
Total	144(100%)	169(100%)	118(100%)	564(100%)	995(100%)
Teaching or revising school work with children					
Not at all	12(8.3%)	58(34.3%)	34(28.8%)	111(19.7%)	215(21.6%)
Minimally	24(16.7%)	36(21.3%)	35(29.7%)	112(19.9%)	207(20.8%)
Moderately	77(53.5%)	60(35.5%)	42(35.6%)	247(43.8%)	426(42.8%)
Fully	31(21.5%)	15(8.9%)	7(5.9%)	94(16.7%)	147(14.8%)
Total	144(100%)	169(100%)	118(100%)	564(100%)	995(100%)
Shopping					
Not at all	16(11.1%)	41(24.3%)	42(35.6%)	157(27.8%)	256(25.7%)
Minimally	28(19.4%)	60(35.5%)	43(36.4%)	221(39.2%)	352(35.4%)
Moderately	33(22.9%)	44(26.0%)	18(15.3%)	113(20.0%)	208(20.9%)
Fully	67(46.5%)	24(14.2%)	15(12.7%)	73(12.9%)	179(18.0%)
Total	144(100%)	169(100%)	118(100%)	564(100%)	995(100%)
Doing household chores					
Not at all	17(11.8%)	51(30.2%)	28(23.7%)	122(21.6%)	218(21.9%)
Minimally	24(16.7%)	28(16.6%)	37(31.4%)	218(38.7%)	307(30.9%)
Moderately	66(45.8%)	80(47.3%)	41(34.7%)	114(20.2%)	301(30.3%)
Fully	37(25.7%)	10(5.9%)	12(10.2%)	110(19.5%)	169(17%)
Total	144(100%)	169(100%)	118(100%)	564(100%)	995(100%)

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 6 depicts respondents' views on the different levels of engagement of mothers in the general activities of the family. With respect to cooking the meals, the table shows that 47.9% of the teachers engaged 'moderately' in cooking and 24.3% only participated 'fully'. Among the nurses, 31.4% engaged 'minimally' in cooking meals for their families while 30.8% took part in cooking 'moderately'. For the bankers, 33.9% of them cooked 'minimally' for their families while an almost equal percentage (31.1%) did not cook at all for their families. Finally, working police women (34%) cooked 'moderately' for their families while 30.7% participated 'minimally' in family cooking. However, nearly equal proportions of women across all the occupational groups (24.3%, 24.9%, 19.1% & 24.3% for teachers, nurses, bankers and the police respectively) indicated that they cooked 'fully' for their families.

The table further showed the extent to which working mothers can spend quality time with their children. The result indicated that the majority of the respondents (55.6% and 33.9%) who indicated 'moderately' were teachers and bankers, while the majority of nurses indicated 'fully' with 43.8% and the majority of police women indicated 'minimally' with 28.5%. However, nearly equal proportions of women across all the occupational groups (10.4%, 10.7% & 21.2% for teachers, nurses and bankers respectively) indicated that they spent quality time with their children 'minimally'.

Again, the table examined the extent to which working mothers can engage/participate in taking care of their children. The majority of respondents in all the four occupational groups indicated that working mothers moderately engaged/participated in taking care of children with 45.8%, 39% and 37.6%, respectively, for teachers, bankers and the police, while 37.3% of the nurses took part in caring for their children 'minimally'.

On spending quality time with husbands, it should be noted that women across all the occupational groups indicated that they spent 'moderate' quality time with their husbands as shown by the following percentages: 50% for teachers, 41.4% for nurses, 37.3% for bankers and 42.9% for police women. However, nearly equal proportions of women across all the occupational groups (25.7%, 22.9%, 22.9% & 26.2% for teachers, nurses, bankers and the police respectively) indicated that they fully spent quality time with their husbands.

Furthermore, information from the above table also revealed the extent to which working mothers can engage/participate in teaching or revising school work with children. Results showed that majority of the respondents in the four occupational groups indicated 'moderately' with 53.5%, 35.5%, 35.6% and 43.8% for teachers, nurses, bankers and the police. However, nearly equal proportions of women across all the occupational groups (16.7%, 21.3%, 29.7% & 19.9% for teachers, nurses, bankers and the police respectively) indicated that they engage/participate in teaching or revising school work with children 'minimally'.

The table also showed the extent of involvement of working mothers in shopping for the family and the result showed that majority of the respondents (35.5%, 36.4% 39.2%) who indicated 'minimally' were nurses, bankers and police personnel, respectively, while teachers indicated 'fully' with 46.5%. Note that 35.6% of bankers never had time to shop for their families. However, nearly equal proportions of women across all the occupational groups (22.9%, 26.0%, 15.3% & 20.0% for teachers, nurses, bankers and the police respectively) indicated that they 'moderately' shop for their families.

Finally, the information from the above table also revealed the extent to which working mothers can engage in doing household chores. Results showed that the majority of respondents (45.8%, 47.3% and 34.7%) who indicated 'moderately' were teachers, nurses and bankers, respectively, while police personnel indicated 'minimally' with 38.7%. Meanwhile, 25.7% of teachers, 5.9% of nurses, 10.2% of bankers and 19.5% of police personnel indicated that they participated in doing household chores 'fully' for their families. This indicated that working mothers in different occupational groups had different levels of engagement in family activities.

In the FGD sessions conducted that involved working mothers from the four occupational groups, the participants expressed similar views on factors predicting more engagement in family activities. For instance, a participant from **the UBA in Awkunanaw** stated thus:

Working in a bank is highly challenging, especially for mothers, considering the characteristic of early arrival and late closure from the office common among bank workers. For this reason, I don't really have enough time to cook, engage in household chores or shop for the family, and it has been causing a great problem between me and my husband.

In a similar vein, another FGD female participant from **the Enugu State Police Command** had this to say:

As a police woman, I have been very busy in the office to the extent of not being committed to my family. For instance, I find it extremely difficult to cook, take care of my children, or even shop for my family.

Again, another FGD female participant, a nurse by profession from **ESUT Teaching Hospital Parklane**, averred: 'as a nurse I always find it difficult to meet up with my domestic chores. Cooking and shopping for my family is a very big task because I have limited time to do so. Another FGD participant from **the College of Immaculate Conception (CIC) Enugu** stated:

I have three children aged 3, 6, and 8 years, and I am left to take care of household chores alone because my husband works as a manager in one of the banks and comes back very late from work and leaves very early before anyone wakes up. It has not been easy with me at all.

Test of the hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested using the chi-square as the statistical tool.

Hypothesis one

H₁: Those with a low rank are probably more engaged in motherhood and family activities than those with a high rank.

H₀: Those with a low rank are not likely to be more engaged in motherhood and family activities than those with a high rank.

This hypothesis was tested with the use of chi-square (χ^2) statistics at .05 significance level. The dependent variable has already been explained above. The explanatory variable however is "rank" of one in the workplace. Furthermore, rank was divided into two categories: "low rank" and "high rank".

Table 7: Distribution of respondents by rank and engagement in motherhood and family activities

Rank	Engaging in motherhood and family activities		Total
	Less engaged	More engaged	
Low rank	108(32.3)	190(28.7)	298(29.9)
High rank	226(67.7)	471(71.3)	697(70.1)
Total	334(100.0)	661(100.0)	995(100.0)

$$\chi^2 = 1.1198; df = 1; p = .274$$

Table 7 capture the rank of the respondents, which was categorized into low and high. It was crossed tabulated with engaging in motherhood and family activities. The table shows that among those less engaged, 32.3% of them were of low rank while 67.7% of them were of high rank. On the other hand, among those more engaged, 28.7% of them were of low rank while 71.3% of them were of high rank.

The chi-square test shows $\chi^2 = 1.1198$; $df = 1$; $p = .274$, implying that no significant relationship existed between one's rank and engaging in motherhood and family activities. This is because the p. value is greater than .05, and as such, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that one's rank does not influence engagement with motherhood and family activities.

Hypothesis two

H₁: Those who earn more income are probably less engaged in motherhood and family activities than those with less income

H₀: Those who earn more income are not likely to be less engaged in motherhood and family activities than those with less income

This hypothesis was tested with the use of chi-square (χ^2) statistic at .05 significant level. The dependent variable has already been explained above, the explanatory variable, however, is captured as annual income, which was further disaggregated into "high income" and "low income". While those in the category of "high income" are those who earn above ₦800,000, those in the category of "low income" are those who earn ₦800,000 and below per annum.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents by annual income and engagement in motherhood and family activities

Annual income	Engaging in motherhood and family activities		Total
	Less engaged	More engaged	
Less income	156(46.7)	346(52.3)	502(50.5)
More income	178(53.3)	315(47.7)	493(49.5)
Total	334(100.0)	661(100.0)	995(100.0)

$\chi^2 = 2.601$; $df = 1$; $p = .107$

Table 8 shows the cross-tabulation of annual income and engagement in motherhood and family activities. It shows that for those less engaged in motherhood and family activities, 46.7% earned ₦800,000 and below for 53.3% earned above ₦800,000. On the other hand, among those more engaged in motherhood and family activities, 52.3% earned ₦800,000 and below while 47.7% earned above ₦800,000.

The table also shows that the chi-square is $\chi^2 = 2.601$ and $df = 1$ with a P. value of .107. Since the p. value is greater than .05, the substantive hypothesis is rejected, thereby implying that no significant relationship exists between income and the extent of engagement with motherhood and family activities. In other words, the income one earns does not determine her engagement with motherhood and family activities.

Discussion of the findings

This study was designed to examine the effects of socioeconomic status on motherhood activities and paid employment in four occupational groups (Teachers, Nurses, Bankers and Police Personnel) in the Enugu Urban Area of Enugu State, southeast Nigeria.

From the analysis of the generated data, on the extent mothers engaged in paid employment, it was observed that more of the respondents (39.3%) (Table 1) in the four occupations perceived the extent of working mothers in paid employment as high extent, followed by those (27.7%) who indicated very high extent. Similarly, 20% and 13% of the respondents in the entire groups indicated low and very low as the extent to which mothers engaged in paid employment. This finding confirms the view of Abimbola and Ojo (2013) that the increase in participation rates of mothers in paid employment is because of the need to contribute to the family income and to achieve

economic independence as well as evolving from the conviction that mothers place is in the home or kitchen. This also corroborates the view of Okonkwo (2015) that the past four decades have witnessed a significant rise in mothers' employment, particularly among mothers with children in the home. In addition, the opinions of FGD participants in the four occupational groups aligned with the above findings. A participant from First Bank Plc. The Okpara Avenue branch revealed thus: 'gone are the days when mother's role is in the kitchen and other living rooms but today mothers are now entering the workforce and pursuing careers in large numbers.' This means that the proportion of working mothers has increased in different sectors of the economy.

Findings of the study also revealed the strategies that will help reduce the difficulties of handling multiple roles of working mothers. Among all the strategies mentioned, the majority of the respondents (49.9%) in the four occupational groups indicated husband's assistance as the strategy that would help to reduce the difficulties of handling multiple roles of working mothers. Similarly, 13.4% and 10.9% of the respondents in the entire groups indicated engagement of nanny and engagement of house help as other strategies that will help to reduce the difficulties of handling multiple roles of working mothers. Equally, the opinions of FGD participants in the four occupations supported this finding. A participant from the Enugu State Police Command had this to say: 'I count myself lucky being in marriage. I have a house help and a nanny that assist me, and my husband equally assists greatly to ensure that there is no gap felt in running the family. This finding is in line with the views of Taiwo and Ajayi (2013) that in families where both husband and wife are working, the husband helps to bridge the gap in performing some of the domestic work. In the views of Ejike (2013), running of one's home is the woman's responsibilities even though she may employ house help and nannies to do the cooking, washing or cleaning the house. Nwosu (2015) also gave the view that working mothers had no choice other than to leave their children in the hands of others like house helpers and babysitters, and presently they even start-up day-care for the children at the early stage of their development.

In the first hypothesis, the result as presented in Table 7 on respondents' rank and engaging in motherhood and family activities shows that no significant relationship exists between one's rank and engaging in motherhood and family activities. In other words, the rank one did not determine her engagement in family activities as no working mother is totally exempted from participating in household chores, cooking meals for the family, taking care of and spending quality time with children/husbands and shopping. That is to say that regardless of one's rank, family life needs support from both spouses. Such support would not only reduce the stress felt by mothers but also benefit the family unit as a whole.

Finally, the result of hypothesis two, as presented in Table 8, on annual income and engagement in motherhood and family activities, shows that no significant relationship exists between income and the extent of engagement in motherhood and family activities. In other words, the income one earns did not determine her engagement in family activities. That is to say, whether one earns a high or low income, one is likely to engage in motherhood and family activities, at least in our own Nigerian/Igbo context. The Igbo extraction in Nigeria seems to believe that irrespective of the income level of a working mother, she is expected to undertake such basic activities aligned to the feminist world, like participating in family chores, cooking meals for the family, taking care of or spending quality time with children/husband and shopping.

Conclusion

The study on the effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on motherhood activities in Enugu Urban, Enugu State, Nigeria, revealed significant differences in maternal roles and responsibilities based on varying levels of SES. Women from higher SES groups were found to have access to better health care services, higher levels of education, and more economic stability, which allowed them to afford professional childcare and employ domestic help. This enabled them to balance motherhood with other professional or personal activities more

effectively. On the other hand, women from lower SES groups faced challenges related to limited access to quality healthcare, insufficient education, and lower economic security, which often placed a heavier burden on them in terms of managing household chores, child-rearing, and other responsibilities.

Socioeconomic status was observed to directly influence the time, energy, and resources available to mothers, with women with lower SES often experiencing higher levels of stress and fewer opportunities for personal growth or professional development. In contrast, higher SES mothers were more likely to access external support systems, including extended family and paid help, which alleviated the pressures of motherhood.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are advanced to guide the government, organizations, institutions, social work practitioners, policy makers and the general public in tackling issues bordering on the wellbeing of working mothers and their families in the Enugu Urban Area.

- It has been clearly mentioned that the principal role in childcare is recognized and assumed to be that of the mother and that this responsibility affects the working life of women more than that of men. Therefore, there is need to support a working mother in the family.
- Because some occupations like banking and police take more time and are stressful, there is a need for a policy that will consider working mothers in this line of job
- Working mothers should be respected and there should be mutual understanding between spouses to ensure that both parents not only share the responsibilities of childcare but also the immense fulfillment that comes from it.
- Finally, there is a need to sensitize the public to improve on their orientation toward working mothers. In other words, members of the public should respect working mothers and show them understanding. Women should also help and support one another.
- The social workers should also ensure that there are policies to establish child care centers with appropriate facilities in organizations.

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