DOI: https://doi.org/10.68064/jshe.2024.ocmfkbm0

Influence of Housing Space on the Socio-emotional and Sexual Development of Children of (6-11) Years in Zaria Area of Kaduna State

Onu, R.O., Okwori, E. Lawal, A, N & Natala, C.

Abstract

*The study assessed the influence of housing space on the socio- emotional and sexual development of children of ages six to eleven years. Three (3) specific objectives, and three (3) hypotheses were raised to give direction to the study. The study adopted a survey research design with a population of 3,597 pupils from three (3) selected primary schools in the remote area of Zaria and a sample size of one hundred and eighty (180) representing 20% of the population. A **self**-structured questionnaire with three sections A-C) and seven (7) items each was used to obtain data for the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics specifically, mean, standard deviation and t-test were used and a 2.50 decision point was set to accept or reject each question items. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents lack adequate housing space in the study area. The result showed that mean rating of access to children of housing space is x 2.5 and P value is 0.71, mean rating of the influence of housing space on the sexual development of children is x 2.5 and P value is 0.62. The mean rating of the influence of housing space on the socio emotional development of children is 2.5 and the P value is 0.05. The study further showed that inadequate housing space had strong influence on the sexual and socio-emotional development of the respondents in Zaria Area of Kaduna State. The study concludes that the respondents lacked housing spaces in the study area such as no privacy, no space for the children to keep their possessions and several of them sleeps in one room. The study recommended that parents who are planning to have a large family should endeavor to plan and provide sufficient space for all members of the family especially children putting into consideration their developmental stage. Also, parents should be discouraged from sending their female children to their neighborhood to spend the night.*

Key words: Adequate Housing Space, Privacy, Sexual Development, Middle Childhood Period

Introduction

Housing space, refers not only to the physical dimensions of the living area but also to the quality of the environment, including stability, safety and access to essential services. These elements are crucial in providing a nurturing environment that supports the overall development of children (Thomson & Petticrew, 2021). Housing significantly influences the development of children as their perception of their living environment plays a crucial role in shaping their sexual and socio-emotional development. Housing is a fundamental human need, where it is classified alongside food and water at the base level (McLeod, 2020). However, housing extends beyond the mere provision of a physical structure; it encompasses the quality and condition of the living space, which is essential for the well-being and development of its inhabitants. In the second tier of Maslow's hierarchy, the need for safety, which includes adequate housing, is emphasized as being critical for the security and positive development of children (Gore & Cross, 2021).

Adequate housing is defined as adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities all at reasonable cost (Agbola, 2011). Space is an important factor when families are choosing a home. Lack of space has been shown to have a negative effect on the basic lifestyle of various families in terms of enough space to entertain visitors, sleeping room for the children and space to keep possessions. The amount of space needed in a house depends on basic lifestyle needs and the number of people living in it. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Labor adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, recognizes that everyone has the right to a standard of living, adequate for the health and well-being of self and family. Housing should ensure therefore, structural safety and reasonable levels of decency, hygiene and comfort.

The undertaking also included a separate bed for each member of the family; adequate headroom, providing full and free movement, of not less than 203 centimeters; the minimum dimensions of a sleeping space should be at least 198 centimeters by 80 centimeters; beds should not be arranged in tiers of more than two; bedding materials should be reasonably comfortable; bedding and bed frame materials should be designed to deter vermin; separate accommodation of the sexes; adequate natural light during the daytime and adequate artificial light at night; a reading lamp for each bed; adequate ventilation to ensure sufficient movement of air in all conditions of weather and climate, (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2006).

The age which children should stop sleeping in their parent's room can vary depending on cultural norms, family dynamics, and individual needs. However, many experts suggest that children should transition to their own room between the age of 3 and 5years. (American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), 2016). This transition is often seen as an important step in fostering a child's independence, autonomy and sense of security. It can also help children develop healthy sleep habits and sense of privacy. A healthy and safe home environment is crucial for a child's growth, learning, and exploration. Conversely, a problematic home environment can have adverse effects on a child's intellectual, social, and emotional development. For instance, negative environmental conditions during early childhood have been associated with impaired development and behavioral issues (Evans, 2020; Wright & DeFilippis, 2018; Kim & Jeong, 2021).

Socio-emotional development represents a specific domain of child development. It is a gradual, integrative process through which children acquire the capacity to understand, experience, express and manage emotions and to develop meaningful relationship with others. Thus, socio-emotional development encompasses a large range of skills and constructs, including but not limited to self-awareness, joint attention, play, theory of mind (or understanding others perspectives).

When families live in poor quality housing, parents experience more psychological stress, and children show elevated levels of emotional problems, including symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as increased behavioral problems like aggression, lying, and deceitfulness (Rebekah, 2013). These issues can significantly impact a child's overall development, including their sexual development.

Sexual development is a lifelong process of physical, behavioral, cognitive and emotional growth and change as it relates to an individual's sexuality and sexual maturation. This process includes puberty, identity development, sociocultural influences, and sexual behavior. It's important to note that sexual development begins in early childhood and continues throughout life. For children aged 6-11 years, also known as the middle childhood period, several developmental characteristics are observed across various domains; Physical development, Cognitive development, Social-emotional development and Sexual development.

Globally, cultural differences can significantly influence how sexual development is perceived and addressed. For instance, in some Western countries, comprehensive sex education might start in elementary school, while in other cultures,

discussion of sexuality might be more limited or taboo. In Nigeria, the approach to sexual development can vary greatly depending on community values, religious beliefs, and local policies. Some communities might offer youth programs addressing healthy relationships and body awareness, while others might leave such education primarily to families.

When families lack adequate housing and children are forced to spend nights away from home for example, in the neighborhood, they may be exposed to certain risks such as sexual assault and other harmful influences that could negatively impact their future. Therefore, meeting these housing standards not only improve immediate living conditions but also protects children from potential long-term adverse effects. Hence, this study seeks to examine housing space on the socio-emotional and sexual development of children ages 6-11 years in Zaria area of Kaduna State.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that children are sent to neighbor's houses to sleep in the night, parent also send their children into domestic house help as a result of inadequate housing space. Boys' and girls' alike lack privacy, healthy individual space and no private personal hygiene. The consequence of poor housing leads to overcrowding and its outcomes may not be good for family values. This happened most especially in polygamous families which is prevalent in the northern part of Nigeria. In most cases both boys and girls even sleep in the same room and some of the children still sleep in the same rooms with their parents. Thus, there is no gender separation among children. This living arrangement could harm children and have adverse effects on the socio-emotional and sexual development of the growing child. Young children seem to imitate what happens between their parents trying to put it into practice among their siblings. Research has found that living in deplorable housing conditions make's children even more vulnerable than adults living in the same situation, given the negative effect it has on their development. (UN Special Rapporteur on housing 1995; Eide 2006; Nolan 2011; Malone 2015; Wilkinson 2017; Lans down 2020). Hence the need for the present study to investigate the perceived influence of housing space on the socio-emotional and sexual development of children (6-11 years) in Zaria, Kaduna State.

Objectives of the Study

1. determine children's access to housing space in Zaria Kaduna State
2. examine the negative attitude of children on the sexual development as a result of inadequate housing space of children (6-11) years in Zaria, Kaduna State.
3. determine the socio-emotional challenges faced by children of 6-11 years living in inadequate housing space in Zaria Kaduna State.

Hypotheses

The study is guided by two null hypotheses:

1. There is no significant influence of housing space on the sexual development of children of 6-11 years in Zaria Area of Kaduna State
2. There is no significant influence of housing space on the socio-emotional development of children of 6-11 years in Zaria Area of Kaduna State

Methodology

Research Design

The design for the study was a descriptive survey, descriptive research design is a design to identify and describe accurately the characteristics the perception of individuals, group, organization community, event or process over a phenomenon that seems problematic seeking for a solution. The design was considered appropriate as it will enable the researcher to clearly understand the phenomenon from participants' view point which was used for decision taking and generalization of the outcome.

Population

The population of the study is 3,597 which comprised of three (3) primary schools from the remote area of Zaria. The population of the study comprised of primary four (4), five (5), and six (6) was gotten from the admission register

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 180 pupils was used for the study using proportionate sampling technique. These represent 20% of the population. The primary goal of sampling is to create a representative sample in which the smaller group accurately represents the characteristics of the larger group

Method of Data Collection

A 21-item questionnaire titled Housing Space on Socio-Emotional and Sexual Development Questionnaire (AHSESDQ) structured to collect the data which has three sections. Section A, B & C of the instrument comprised of 7 items each whereby a four (4) point rating scale anchored on strongly Agreed (SA)=4, Agreed (A)=3, Disagreed (D)=2, strongly Disagreed (SD)=1. Data was collected through the questionnaire with the support of research assistants and the class teachers. Focused group discussion was done particularly with the respondents that could not speak English and necessary information was obtained. The instrument was validated by an expert from National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean(x), Standard deviation (SD) and t-test. t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A mean value of 2.50 was considered as acceptance level, while mean value below 2.4 was considered unacceptable.

Results

Table 1 shows the average mean and standard deviation response of the seven items of the cluster is ($x = 2.5 \pm 0.68$). The measures in place to determine the access of children to housing space such as there is no reading space in the house to do assignments (3.57), five to seven of us sleep in the same room (3.56), my siblings and I do not have privacy (3.56), and I do not have enough space to keep my possession (3.55). The respondents rated all the items as major influences of housing space on their development.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Access Of Children to Housing Space in Zaria Area

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard dev.	Decision
1	My siblings and I feel unsecured	3.53	0.704	Accepted
2	My siblings and I do not have privacy	3.56	0.613	Accepted
3	We do not have space for basic infrastructure in our house	3.54	0.687	Accepted
4	We do not sleep well most nights due to poor ventilation	3.50	0.713	Accepted
5	There is no reading space in our house to do assignment	3.57	0.650	Accepted
6	I do not have enough space to keep my possession	3.55	0.669	Accepted
7	Five to seven of us sleep in the same room	3.56	0.751	Accepted
	Weighted mean	**2.5**		

Table 2 shows the average mean and standard deviation response of the seven items of the cluster is ($x = 2.5 \pm 0.71$). The measures in place to determine the influence of housing space on the sexual development of school children such as; I often play with my private part (2.68), Abused children turning against other children (3.16) However, the low average mean with a high standard deviation such as; I and my sibling familiar with oral sex (2.45), and I understand what is gender role (2.47) shows that the measures in place are rejected.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of the Influence of Housing Space on the Sexual Development of School Children In Zaria Area.

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard dev.	Decision
1	I often play with my private part	2.68	0.673	Accepted
2	I understand what is gender role	2.47	0.812	Rejected
3	I often make fun play with opposite sex	2.58	0.756	Accepted
4	Abused children turning against other children	3.16	0.778	Accepted
5	I am exposed to bad boys when send to spend the night	2.74	0.869	Accepted
6	I and my siblings are familiar with oral sex	2.45	0.812	Rejected
7	I often see my parents when in relationship	3.95	0.248	Accepted
	Weighted mean	**2.5**		

In Table 3, the average mean and standard deviation response of the seven items of the cluster is ($x = 2.5 \pm 0.62$). The measures in place to determine the influence of housing space on the socio-emotional development of children such as I and my siblings are close to each other(3.35), I feel very sad every night when it is sleeping time(3.53), we do not have space to bring our friends home(3.49), and I feel depressed most times when I visit my friends that their houses are spaciously presented(3.48).The analysis equally shows that the respondents rated all the items as major influences of housing space on their socio-emotional development.

Table 3: Mean ratings of the influence of housing space on the social-emotional development of children

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard dev.	Decision
1	I am always aggressive because of how we are in our house	3.45	0.586	Accepted
2	I feel depressed most times when I visit my friends that their houses are spacious	3.48	0.546	Accepted
3	I and my siblings are close to each other	3.35	0.664	Accepted
4	We do not have space to bring our friends home	3.49	0.635	Accepted
5	I and my siblings fight for space to put our individual belonging	3.47	0.634	Accepted
6	I have low self-esteem among my friends	3.47	0.634	Accepted
7	I feel very sad every night when it is sleeping time	3.53	0.616	Accepted
	Weighted mean	**2.5**		

Ho_1: There is no significant influence of housing space on the sexual development of school children of (6-11) years in Zaria Area of Kaduna State.

Table 4. shows that the P-value ($p<0.05$) is 0.037 level of significance. This evidence rejects the null hypothesis and states that there is a significant influence of housing space on sexual development of school children.

Table 4: T-test analysis of influence of housing space on the sexual development of school children

Age	N	Mean	Standard Dev.	t-cal.	P. value	Decision
8 -9	43	0.86	1.23	1.97	.037*	Significant
10 – 12	129	2.95	0.49			

Ho_2: There is no significant influence of housing space on the socio-emotional development of school children of (6-11) years in Zaria Area of Kaduna State.

Table 5. shows that the P-value ($p<0.05$) is 0.026 level of significance. This evidence rejects the null hypothesis and states that there is significant influence of housing space on the socio-emotional development of school children of ages 6-11 years in Zaria area of Kaduna state.

Table 5: T-test Analysis of influence of housing space on the social-emotional development of school children

Sex	N	Mean	Standard Dev.	t-cal.	P. value	Decision
Male	47	1.23	1.62	1.98	.026	Significant
Female	125	3.54	0.48			

Discussion

The research question one revealed that children are faced with the problem of inadequate housing space in Zaria area of Kaduna State. All the seven (7) items have been agreed by the respondent. This finding goes contrary with the standard of adequate housing according to the global strategy which revealed that adequate housing as adequate privacy, adequate, adequate space, adequate basic infrastructure with regard to work (Agbola, 2011).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Labour adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations also recognizes that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including that housing which should ensure "structural safety and reasonable levels of decency, hygiene and comfort". According to Lanza, et al (2011), overcrowding is a risk factor in children's development. crowding tends to reduce the quality of the caregiving environment, and it can affect children even during their later years.

The research question two revealed that inadequate housing space has influence on the sexual development of children in Zaria area of Kaduna State .out of the seven (7) items, five of the items were agreed where by two (2) of the items were rejected. Agbola (2011), opined that space is an important factor when families are choosing a home because lack of space has been shown to have a negative effect on the basic of various families in term of enough space to entertain visitors, sleeping room for the children and space to keep their possessions. This have huge impact on their well-being.

The study further revealed that very young children could be exposed to negative external influence when sent to spend the night with neighbors because of lack of adequate space. In some instances, children may be sexually molested and harassed throughout the night. Early exposure to sexual exploits may affect socio-emotional adaptation in later life adjustments. Rebekah (2023) reports that when families lived-in poor-quality housing, parents experienced symptoms of depression and anxiety and this can contribute to children having elevated behavior problems like aggression, lying and deceitfulness.

Also, the respondents hardly bring their friends home because of lack of space to play around with them. The situation also influence relationship with others which is part of their development process. The result contradicts the study of Cohen, (2005) who revealed that socio-emotional development is a gradual integrative process through which children acquire the capacity to understand, experience, express and manage their emotions and develop meaningful relationship with others. The respondents hardly go out to interact with other children because almost all of them have similar challenge, no place to play with their friends or relax freely.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that lack of housing space can influence children's socio-emotional and sexual development respectively. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made

1. Space is needed for large families and indeed all families, government should carefully implement its' housing schemes to accommodate members of the community that are not on government employment.
2. Parents should be trained by professional Home Economics extension workers on space management and should secure living arrangement for the children.
3. Class teachers should counsel children on sexuality and social relationships even among siblings.

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