CHILD CARE AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT
IN URBAN NIGERIA

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Several factors influence female employment in most societies. They include family economic pressures, employability, earning potential, labor market environment and family composition. Several studies have been done on the influence of all factors but the last, family composition, that is, whether the mother has a baby-sitter. If the answer is a "yes," then the probability that she will engage in an economic activity increases.

This article addresses the question of the role of the child-care on female employment. The results show that the influence of child-care on female employment in Lagos depends on the nature of such help.

Attempts continue to be made to adapt the economic theory of the household in examining time-allocation behavior of households of Third World Nations. Since the pioneer work by Gary S. Becker and Reuben Gronau, time allocation patterns of women from less-developed nations have received special attention. This increased attention raises two serious issues: the first relates to what motivates or governs their time allocation decisions, that is, whether their decisions are governed by economic constraints or exclusively by noneconomic constraints such as religious practices and customs. The noneconomic theory, as opposed to the economic theory of the household emphasizes that powerful local norms of female seclusion restrict women severely from engaging in any form of economic activity outside the family. The second issue relates to the choice that women face in the Third World nations.

There is a need to identify appropriately the choice structure that women face in any given society, but that by itself is quite incomplete in explaining time-allocation behavior of Nigerian urban women. To fully understand the reasons behind the time-allocation behavior of Nigerian
urban women requires more precise measurements of the economic and noneconomic variables; especially the role of parental surrogates need to be carefully examined. This study examines exclusively the role of parental surrogates (sometimes referred to as family composition) in explaining the time-allocation behavior of Nigerian urban women.

Several factors influence female labor force participation (FLFP).* They include family economic pressures, employability and earning potential of the family, market environment and family composition. A family’s economic pressure is often measured by the husband’s income. The probability that a woman would want to work in Nigerian society decreases if the husband’s income is high, implying that the higher the income of the husband, the lower the probability that the wife will engage in formal work. Employability refers to a woman’s ability to perform certain tasks for which there is a demand. A woman with some occupational skills is more likely to be employed. Earning potential is somewhat related to employability. If a woman can earn a high income, she is more likely to work. In this study, wife’s potential income (WPI) and the number of years of schooling are used as proxies for earning potential and employability respectively.

Another factor mentioned above that may influence FLFP is the labor market environment. If the job market is such that it is not difficult to find a job, more women may choose to work and if the job market is bad, married women usually fall out of the labor force in Nigerian society. The last factor, family composition, is quite important in influencing mothers’ employment rate. Family composition refers to whether the woman concerned has young children or not, whether she has a paid baby-sitter or a

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**EXHIBIT 1**

**DEFINITIONS**

BSH—babysitting help from a relative
EW—wife’s educational level measured in years of preschooling
FLFP—female labor force participation rate
MCA—multiple classification analysis
OLS—ordinary least squares
PBS—paid babysitter
PHDW—percentage of hours of daily work
PWYW—percentage of years worked since marriage
WPI—wife’s potential income
YW—wife’s income
HDW—hours of daily work

*See Exhibit 1 for list of abbreviations.