

FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' INABILITY TO MEET CHILDREN'S BASIC NEEDS IN KWARA CENTRAL NIGERIA

Shofiu Adewuyi Rasheed^{1*} & Isiaka Abdulaziz²

^{1,2}Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin
Nigeria

*rasheed.sa@unilorin.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: This study aimed to identify the factors influencing parents' ability to meet the physiological needs of their children in Kwara Central, Nigeria. The target population included parents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, including those with varying levels of education, income, and housing quality. Kwara Central was divided into four local government areas, and 100 respondents were randomly selected from each area, ensuring representation of different social strata. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The use of a descriptive survey design allowed for the collection of comprehensive data from a diverse group of parents, ensuring that the findings were both reliable and representative. The statistical analysis, including mean scores and t-tests, provided a clear understanding of the relationships between socioeconomic factors and parents' ability to meet their children's needs, confirming the validity of the conclusions drawn from the study. The researcher designed a 20-item structured questionnaire to collect data on socioeconomic factors affecting parents' ability to meet their children's physiological needs. The questionnaire gathered information on parental education, income, and housing quality. Data were analysed using mean scores and t-tests at a 0.05 level of significance to determine the influence of these factors. The findings showed that while parents' educational background did not significantly impact their ability to meet their children's physiological needs, income and housing quality were influential. Specifically, higher income levels and better housing conditions enabled parents to better provide for their children's basic needs. Based on these results, the study recommended that parents seek to improve their income sources to support their families better. It also suggested that the government should increase wages to help workers build wealth and create policies to support low-income earners in obtaining adequate housing.

Keywords: Socioeconomic Factors, Physiological Needs, Parental Income, Housing Quality

INTRODUCTION

Parental ability is very significant in the upbringing of their children. If it's lacking, it could be a cog in the wheel of children's social, emotional and cognitive development. Parents may be incapacitated to care for their children in view of the recent scourge of socioeconomic downturns. Mascolo (2023) observed that some parents abandon their children in the process of seeking greener pastures and thereby expose their children to be socially, emotionally and cognitively traumatised. This shows that the expression of leaving, forsaking, deserting and uncaring for a child by the parents is certainly a disconnection from the expected parental ability to meet the

physiological needs of their children. Mingzhi et al. (2020) observed that parent care is an important element in enhancing children's learning needs. This is conversely shown that parental failure to care for children's needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision, amounts to insecurity for the children. This is begging for probing into the socioeconomic status of parents to address the physiological needs of children. Zheng et al. (2023) observed that a poor nurturing environment, like a deficiency in parenting efficacy, results in negative child development. It can be deduced from this submission that low children development implies the parental inability to provide for children's basic needs such as food, housing, clothes, medical care, educational attention or supervision. The question here is whether the parent has ample opportunity to give adequate attention to their children in order to fulfil their developmental dreams. Wolfe (2021) observed that the United Nations Convention is enshrined with acts against any parental behaviour that could undermine the children's needs. Many nations the world over have started to adopt this convention in one way or the other. For example, the United States of America's constitutions are enshrined with the regulation of parental risk of losing their children's custody right if they are found guilty of jeopardizing their essential rights and needs. A similar gesture is noticeable In Nigeria's Child Acts, which provides that no child should be exposed to unjust and inhumane treatment. This points to the fact that aside from the provision of basic survival needs for the children, parents have to give them a happy and healthy life through love, warmth and consistent limits (Nasamran, 2025). Despite this, the conditions of parents to meet their children's needs are rather retrogressing from time to time. This is observable in the proliferation of neglected children, destitute children and those with many social vices around the globe. Child neglect is one of the indices of parental inability to meet the physiological needs of their children.

Perkarsky (2022) observed that 3.9 million cases of child abuse were reported in the United States of America, in which 7.1 million of the children were affected, 2.1 million of the cases were investigated, and an estimated 618,000 abused and neglected children were discovered. 76.1% were neglected medically, 16.5% were abused physically, 9.4% were sexually abused and 0.22% were trafficked abuse for sex. Benson (2023) reported that in 2022, over fifty per cent of 17 states in the southern region of the United States of America had an 18.06 per cent child poverty rate. This development puts a big question mark on the adequacy of parental care for the children in the affected areas because parents' responsibility may be deficient in some ways to meet the needs of their children. The story is not different in Africa and its sub-regions such as Nigeria. Nigerian streets are the hub of many children involved in hawking, begging and, at an advanced level, perpetrating social vices such as prostitution, robbery, cultism, drug abuse, hooliganism, etc. Onyekakeyah (2024) observed that the incidence of street children in nooks and crannies of Nigerian towns and cities is on the increase, a testimony to a high level of parental irresponsibility toward their God gift kids. Abdullahi (2023) reported that in Gombe State, Nigeria, 130 human rights breaches were recorded by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). It is a fundamental human right of children to enjoy the parental ability to provide for their physiological needs, such as food, clothing and shelter.

The factors that prevent parents from meeting the physiological aspirations of their children have been viewed from different perspectives. Adebisi et al. (2022) identified socioeconomic, environmental, lack of partner's support, the negative impact of technology and lack of access to services as challenges to effective parenting. It can be inferred from this submission that issues of

broken homes, poverty, divorce, lack of family planning, bad governance, unwanted pregnancy, armed conflicts, religious and cultural beliefs, polygamy and government are related to the aforementioned identified barriers to good parenting in one way or the other which can prevent parents from adequately providing for their children's needs. Psychologically, Sreedharan (n.d) attributed the parental inability to satisfy their children's needs to issues like negative self-image, too much business drive, neglectful or hands-off parenting, marital issues and no physical affection.

In the same vein, Avdibegovic and Brkic (2020) identified parental, environmental and ecological transactional deficit models as connected theoretical bases to understand why children's needs could not be met in society. They argue that parental inappropriate care for their wards is a direct source of socio-economic upheavals such as inflation, unemployment, economic recession and a host of others on the parental duties and obligations at home. Secondly, the environmental deficit model bases its own argument on the premise that resource deprivation within the environment is the major catalyst that incapacitates parental ability towards their children's physiological needs. This implies that parents are depleted of tangible wealthy materials to cater for their children's needs. Thirdly, the ecological transactional model equally explains that a situation in which a family is overwhelmed with stress beyond the coping strategies could prevent the parents from meeting the physiological needs of their children.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (2025) opined that parents who live in poverty can develop neglectful behaviour towards their children. The poverty level of parents indeed affects their role in their offspring; this may be aggravated by hyper-economic inflation. In recent times, Nigeria's economy has exposed about 133 million parents to live below the poverty line. This thus influences them to run away from their duty to their children. Onyekakeyah (2024) mentioned that apart from parental poverty, other factors that link to parents' inability to care for the needs of their children are indiscipline, broken marriages and single parenthood. The causes of the problem range from educational to social, cultural and psychological dimensions.

The consequence of parental inability to care for their children takes numerous dimensions. Zheng et al. (2023) observed that children with poor parental roles experience difficulty in learning, low self-esteem, nightmares and bedwetting, headaches, running away from home, unwanted pregnancy, outward aggression towards others, self-harm and suicide. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (2025) observed far-reaching consequences of children who are deprived of parental role including problems with brain development, taking risks of running away from homes, using drugs and alcohol, breaking the law, getting into a dangerous relationship, having mental health challenges such as depression.

Socio-economic realities have reordered some parents' thinking towards the involvement of their children in the labour force with the hope of improving the socio-economic viability of the home. This often turns out to engage children in hawking, begging, and doing house-maid. Those who are enrolled in schools are more devastated and suffer various forms of parental inability to sustain their schooling in terms of regular payment of school fees, purchase of stationery, and provision of food. These are prevailing experiences of parents and students in Nigeria in recent times. Several

studies have been conducted on the influence of parents' socioeconomic on the children's needs, for example, Bado and Tahir (2023) investigated the influence of parents' socioeconomic status on students' academic achievement in vocational schools in Indonesia, Chinedu et al (2021) examined influence of parents' socioeconomic status on their children's academic performance in secondary school in Izzi LGA of Ebonyi State and Olabisi (2024) studied impact of parents' socioeconomic status on academic performance of secondary students in Business Studies in Kwara State. Many of the studies did not consider the children's needs but academic performance. Therefore, this study bridges the research gap and seeks to establish the factors influencing parents' inability to meet the physiological needs of their children in Kwara Central Nigeria by examining the research variables as mentioned in some related theories to this study.

The three theories that are significant to this study include Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), the Structural functionalist theory by Talcott Parsons (1951) and the Culture of Poverty theory established by Oscar Lewis (1966). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs posited that the physiological needs of human beings are fundamental in terms of food, water, shelter and clothing. So, they must be met before human beings think of high-level needs such as security, love, esteem and self-actualization. The increased problems of joblessness, economic inflations, and other systemic issue as affected parents in Kwara Central may aggravate their responsibility to provide physiological needs as suggested by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In addition, Structural Functionalist theory suggests that society functions systematically in the sense that all the structures within are interconnected. Therefore, a family institution is a social structure in which parents are saddled with socialisation responsibilities for children.

Family, however, requires interconnection with vibrant economic, political, and social institutions to do well. However, weakness in all socioeconomic and political institutions translates to family problems, which may weaken the parents' ability to meet their children's needs. More so, the culture of poverty theory provides information on how poverty conditions may become an intergenerational issue for a family or an individual. The poor condition may stem from cultural practices or structural differences. Frequent adoption of coping strategies at home to deal with impoverishment may not enable the family to achieve a breakthrough from the shackles of poverty. This will definitely affect the needs of the children. The factors influencing parents' inability to meet the physiological needs of the children in Kwara Central Nigeria, as conceived in this study, are mentioned in the conceptual framework in Figure 1 based on the submissions of the three aforementioned theorists.

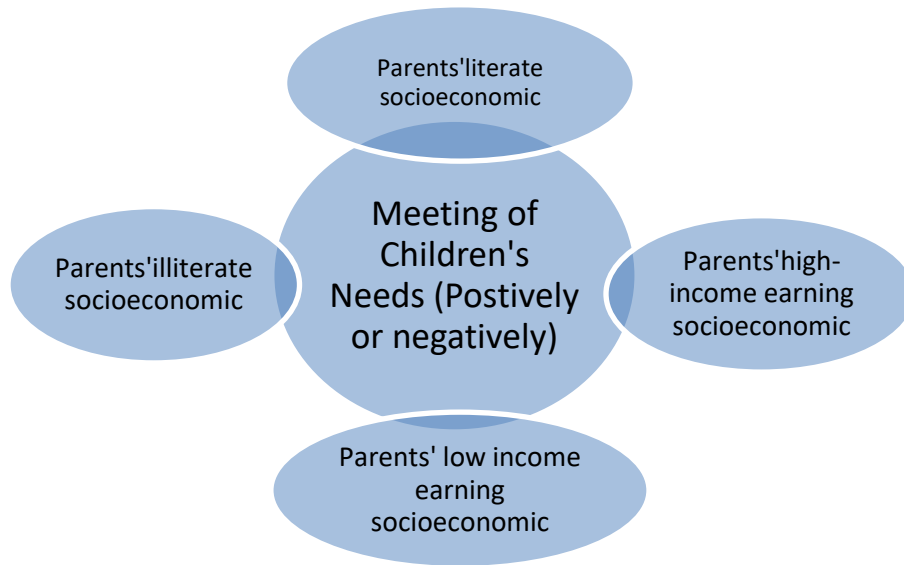


Figure 1: Conceptual framework: factors influencing parents' inability to meet the physiological needs of their children in Kwara Central Nigeria.

Source: Authors' compilation

Figure 1 illustrates how multiple factors of parents' literate or illiterate (Educational background status) and parents' high-income or low-income (economic background status) socioeconomic status influence their ability to meet their children's needs either positively or negatively.

It is obvious from the above discussion that the spate of parental ability to care for their children is rooted in socioeconomic status. In light of this, it is hereby hypothesised in this study that in Kwara Central, parents' literate and illiterate socioeconomic status does not significantly influence the perceived factor of inability to meet the physiological needs of their children, parents' low and high-income earning socioeconomic status does not significantly influence perceived factor of inability to meet the physiological needs of their children, parent's high and low-quality housing backgrounds socioeconomic status do not significantly influence perceived factor of inability to meet the physiological needs of their children.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive correlational survey research design, because it is ideal for exploring and describing the relationship between parental socioeconomic status and their ability to meet the physiological needs of their children. The descriptive correlational design is appropriate because it allows for the examination of how variables such as socioeconomic factors are associated with outcomes like the ability to provide for children's basic needs, without manipulating any of the variables involved (IvyPanda, 2020).

A total of 400 respondents were selected from the four Local Government Areas (LGAs) that comprise the Kwara Central Senatorial District. This sample size was determined to ensure statistical power, providing a sufficient number of respondents to detect meaningful relationships and differences between variables. The selection of respondents was done using random sampling techniques, ensuring that every parent in the study area had an equal chance of being chosen. Specifically, 100 parents were selected from each LGA to form a balanced representation of the population across the four LGAs.

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the draft version of the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in Social Studies and Sociology of Education from the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin. This peer review process aimed to assess the clarity, relevance, and accuracy of the questions in capturing the intended data about parental socioeconomic status and the inability to meet physiological needs. Their feedback was used to refine the questionnaire, ensuring its content validity.

Furthermore, to ascertain the instrument's reliability, a trial test was conducted with 20 parents from Kwara South Senatorial District. The trial test was repeated twice prior to the main data collection. The data obtained was analysed using Cronbach's Alpha (α), and a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained, which indicates a high level of internal consistency. This reliability score suggested that this study instrument consistently measures the intended constructs related to parental socioeconomic status and its impact on children's needs.

The t-test statistical method was employed in this study to compare the means of different groups and determine if there are significant differences in how various parental socioeconomic factors affect the ability to meet the physiological needs of their children. The t-test is particularly appropriate because the study was to analyse differences between two or more independent groups, such as parents with high versus low income or high versus low education levels. The t-test statistical method enabled the researchers to determine whether the observed differences in the physiological needs of children are statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance. This allowed for a robust comparison across different parental socioeconomic statuses and their impact on the children's needs.

The data collection process involved distributing the structured questionnaire to the selected respondents from each of the four LGAs. The researchers ensured that all respondents fully understood the purpose of the study and provided informed consent prior to participation. The questionnaires were administered by the researchers in person, enabling them to retrieve the instruments without any hindrances.

The obtained data were systematically organized for analysis. The mean scores for different socioeconomic variables were calculated to summarize responses, and the t-test was used to analyse the differences in the scores based on the various factors. The analysis was conducted using statistical software of SPSS, and results were interpreted to draw conclusions about the relationship between parental socioeconomic status and their children's ability to meet physiological needs.

RESULTS

The presentation of the result is in accordance with the three research hypotheses for this study.

Hypothesis 1: Parents' literate and illiterate socioeconomic status does not significantly influence the perceived factor of inability to meet the physiological needs of their children.

The t-test conducted compared the perceived factor of parents' inability to meet the physiological needs of their children based on their socioeconomic status, specifically between literate and illiterate parents.

Table 1: t-test Analysis of the Parents' literate and illiterate socioeconomic status does not significantly influence the perceived factor of inability to meet the physiological needs of their children

Group Compared	Number of Respondents	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	t-tab	P=0.5
Parents literate Socioeconomic	249	45.2	7.6	398	1.54	1.98	NS
Parents illiterate Socioeconomic	151	53.1	8.1				

The t-calculated value (1.54) is lower than the critical t-value (1.96), indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups (literate parents) (45.2) and (illiterate parents) (53.1) in terms of their perceived inability to meet the physiological needs of their children. Since the calculated t-value does not exceed the critical value, the null hypothesis is not rejected, and it can be concluded that the parents' educational background (literate vs. illiterate) does not significantly influence their socioeconomic status in relation to meeting their children's physiological needs. In summary, the data suggests that socioeconomic status, as defined by parental literacy, does not play a significant role in parents' ability to fulfil their children's basic physiological needs.

Hypothesis 2: Parents' low and high-income socioeconomic status does not significantly influence the perceived factor of inability to meet the physiological needs of their children.

The independent t-test was conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between parents from low-income and high-income socioeconomic backgrounds in their perceived inability to meet their children's physiological needs.

Table 2: A t-test Analysis of the Parents’ low—and high-income earning socioeconomic status does not significantly influence the perceived factor of their inability to meet their children's physiological needs.

Group Compared	Number of respondents	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	t-tab	P=0.5
Parents low- income earning Socioeconomic	269	36.2	20.6	398	3.62	1.98	S
Parents high income earning Socioeconomic	131	28.3	17.1				

The results indicate that the calculated t-value ($t = 3.62$) is greater than the critical t-value ($t = 1.98$) at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$) with 398 degrees of freedom. This finding suggests a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Specifically, parents with lower income levels ($M = 36.2$, $SD = 20.6$) reported a higher inability to meet their children's physiological needs compared to parents with higher income levels ($M = 28.3$, $SD = 17.1$). The significant difference implies that socioeconomic status, particularly income level, plays a crucial role in determining parents’ capacity to fulfil basic physiological needs for their children.

Hypothesis 3: Parents’ high and low-quality housing backgrounds and socioeconomic status do not significantly influence the perceived factor of inability to meet the physiological needs of their children

The t-test was conducted to examine whether parents’ housing quality (high vs. low) influences their perceived ability to meet their children's physiological needs based on socioeconomic status.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of the Parents’ high- and low-quality housing backgrounds shows that their socioeconomic status does not significantly influence their perceived inability to meet their children's physiological needs.

Group Compared	Number of respondents	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	t-tab	P=0.5
Parents' high-quality housing Socioeconomic	202	49.3	7.9	398	2.78	1.96	S
Parents' low-quality housing Socioeconomic	198	46.2	6.7				

The calculated t-value (2.78) exceeds the critical t-value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level, indicating a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Parents' high-quality housing (49.3) and parents low-quality housing (46.2) This suggests that the quality of housing (high vs low) significantly influences the parents' perception of their ability to meet the physiological needs of their children, with parents in high-quality housing reporting a higher ability to meet these needs. The findings indicate that parents from high-quality housing

backgrounds are more likely to feel capable of meeting their children's physiological needs, potentially reflecting the impact of socioeconomic status on overall well-being.

DISCUSSION

The socioeconomic status tested was not significant in determining the parental inability to meet the physiological needs of their children's educational background. Whether parents are literate or illiterate does not show that they cannot provide essential things that their children require. Numerous parents do not attend school, yet they are able to buy food, build houses and satisfy the needs of their children. This is a departure from the submission of Zheng et al. (2023) observed that a poor nurturing environment, like a deficiency in parenting efficacy, results in negative child development. Deficiency in parent efficacy may be in terms of poor educational background, which does not mean that it can adversely affect their attention to their children's needs. In the same vein, this study reported that parental income earning is a significant, influential socioeconomic status that can determine their inability to meet the physiological needs of their children. Low or high income earning of parents is essential to enhance the well-being of children. The purchasing power of parents is required to be high or vibrant to satisfy children's basic needs. Money is required to buy food and clothes and build a house for children to be secure physically, socially, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. This is in line with the submission of Adebisi et al. (2022), which included low socioeconomic factors among the challenges that prevent effective parenting. Other authors share the same opinion with this result; the submission of Benson (2023) reported poverty as a constraint to parents' ability to meet the needs of their children. The result of this study also established that parents' quality of housing is an influential socioeconomic status that significantly determines their inability to meet the physiological needs of their children. Regardless of the low or high quality of parental housing, their children need to be sheltered. Housing is an essential basic necessity to secure the life and property of family members. If this is lacking, they are exposed to all sorts of dangers and insecurity. Many children are homeless because their parents cannot afford to build or even rent decent houses. This is buttressed by the submission of Zheng et al. (2023) that low child development is due to the parental inability to provide housing for their children

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that parents' socioeconomic status plays a crucial role in shaping the well-being of their children. Specifically, income level and housing quality are key determinants of parents' ability to meet their children's physiological needs. This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the interconnectedness of economic stability and living conditions in child development. It provides empirical evidence that financial capacity directly influences the quality of housing, which in turn affects children's overall well-being. By establishing the significance of these socioeconomic factors, this research offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and social workers seeking to develop targeted interventions that support families in creating a stable and nurturing environment for their children.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study it is hereby recommended that:

1. Community-based programs ought to instruct parents in sound money management, family planning, and child-rearing techniques.
2. Schools and religious institutions should hold workshops to increase understanding of the value of socioeconomic stability and parental care.
3. Government and non-governmental agencies must prioritise economic empowerment programs for parents to improve their income levels.
4. Microfinance organisations ought to provide low-interest loans to parents in low-income homes to improve their financial stability.
5. Public-private partnerships ought to be supported to create affordable housing projects that serve families in need.

Further Research

Beyond fundamental physiological needs, further research is needed to examine the long-term effects of parental socioeconomic status on children's development.

REFERENCES

- Abdullahi, M. (2023, February 7). Gombe recorded 48 cases of child abandonment in six months, says NHCR. *The Cable News*. <https://www.thecable.ng/gombe-recorded-48-cases-of-child-abandonment-in-six-months-says-nhcr>
- Adebiyi, B. O., Goldschmidt, T., Benjamin, F., Sonn, I. K., Rich, E., & Roman, V. N. (2022). Enablers and barriers to effective parenting within the first 1000 days: An exploratory study of South African parents and primary caregivers in low socioeconomic communities. *BMC Public Health*, 20(22), 793. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9019930/>
- Avdibegovic, E., & Brkic, M. (2020). Child neglect: Causes and consequences. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 32(Suppl 3), 337–342. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33030448/>
- Benson, C. (2023, December 12). Child poverty rate still higher than for older population but declining. *United States Census Bureau*. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/12/poverty-rate-varies-by-age-groups.html>
- IvyPanda. (2020). Descriptive correlational design in research. *IvyPanda*. <https://ivypanada.com/essays/descriptive-statistics-and-correlational-design/>
- Mascolo, J. (2023). Child abandonment. *FindLaw*. <https://www.findlaw.com/criminal/criminal-charges/child-abandonment.html>

- Mingzhi, M., Zijun, Z., & Haifeng, Z. (2020). The effects of parental absence on children's development: Evidence from left-behind children in China. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(18), 6770.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17186770>
- Nasamran, A. (2025). Basic needs of a child: The 2 most important things every child needs. *Atlas Psychology LLC*. <https://www.atlaspsychologycollective.com/blog/basic-needs-of-a-child>
- Onyekakeyah, L. (2024). Rising cases of abandoned street children. *The Guardian*.
<https://guardian.ng/opinion/rising-cases-of-abandoned-street-children/>
- Perkarsky, A. R. (2022). Overview of neglect and abuse. *MSD Manual, Consumer Version*.
<https://www.msdmanuals.com/home/children-s-health-issues/child-neglect-and-abuse/overview-of-child-neglect-and-abuse>
- Sreedharan, D. (n.d.). 5 reasons some parents fail to love their children. *Parent Circle*.
<https://www.parentcircle.com/reasons-why-parents-fail-to-love-their-children/article>
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). (2025). Neglect. *NSPCC*.
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/neglect/>
- Wolfe, D. (2021). Children's rights and the convention on the rights of the child. *World Vision Canada*. <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-protection/child-rights-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>
- Zheng, S., Fang, J., Bai, G., He, X., Hua, M., Zhu, B., Chen, W., Dong, W., Wang, L., Huang, X., Huishan, W., & Shao, J. (2023). The association between parental risks and childhood development: Findings from a community-based survey in East China. *BMC Public Health*, 23, 878. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15702-y>