

Born to Die: The *Ogbanje* Phenomenon and its Implication on Childhood Mortality in Southern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT Despite government efforts to curb the ravaging menace of childhood diseases in Nigeria by providing health services and encouraging mothers to utilize the same, the mortality rate of children below five is still significantly high. Various scholars have observed that although the problems confronting maternal and child health are multiplex, the socio-cultural dimension seems to be overwhelming. This article is the result of a study conducted in 2004 and 2005 to investigate the cultural notion of the *ogbanje* phenomenon, which is pervasive in most parts of southern Nigeria. The paper analyzes the results of the study within the Health Belief Model and discusses how the lives of children below five hang precariously on this cultural belief.