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## Impact of Maternal Employment on Children's Adjustment: A Comparative Study of Working and Non-Working Mothers

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### Abstract

Children's academic success and psychological well-being are closely associated with their capacity for adjustment within school and social environments. Family conditions, particularly parental involvement and emotional support, play a decisive role in shaping this adjustment. Maternal employment has often been perceived as a factor influencing children's development, either positively through economic stability or negatively due to reduced parental time. The present investigation examines differences in academic, social, and emotional adjustment among children of working and non-working mothers. The study sample comprised 100 school-going children, including 50 children of employed mothers and 50 children of non-employed mothers, selected from urban and semi-urban settings using purposive sampling. Children's adjustment was assessed using a standardized Adjustment Inventory for School Students. Statistical analysis involved the computation of Mean, Standard Deviation, and independent sample t-tests. The results indicate that while differences exist in certain domains of adjustment, maternal employment alone does not determine overall adjustment. The findings emphasize that the quality of parenting, emotional availability, and family support systems are more influential than mothers' employment status in promoting healthy child adjustment.

**Keywords:** Maternal Employment, Child Adjustment, Academic Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment, Family Environment

### Introduction

Adjustment is a fundamental psychological process through which individuals adapt to environmental demands and interpersonal expectations. In the context of childhood, adjustment reflects the child's ability to manage academic responsibilities, maintain social relationships, and regulate emotional responses effectively. Successful adjustment during school years contributes significantly to mental health, academic performance, and later life competence.

The family serves as the primary socializing unit for children, where parenting practices, emotional warmth, and discipline patterns shape behavioural and emotional outcomes. Traditionally, mothers have been regarded as central caregivers responsible for nurturing, supervision, and emotional bonding. However, social transformation, urbanization, and increased participation of women in the workforce have altered traditional family roles, raising questions about the impact of maternal employment on children's adjustment.

Employment may enable mothers to provide better educational resources, financial security, and role modelling for independence and self-reliance. Conversely, occupational stress and time limitations may affect the amount and quality of parent-child interaction. In contrast, non-working mothers may offer greater time and direct supervision, though economic constraints and limited social exposure may also influence the family environment. Contemporary research increasingly suggests that children's adjustment outcomes are determined not by employment status itself but by the quality of emotional support and parenting practices within the family.

### Review of Literature

Empirical studies examining the relationship between maternal employment and children's adjustment have yielded varied conclusions. Hoffman (1989) observed that maternal

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employment does not inherently impair child development, provided that children receive adequate emotional support and supervision. Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective (1994) emphasized that children's development is influenced by multiple interconnected systems, including family, school, and socio-economic conditions.

Indian research by Desai and Jain (1994) [7] demonstrated that children of working mothers did not exhibit poorer adjustment when stable caregiving arrangements were present. Rao and Rao (2004) [20] reported that emotional security and parental involvement were more strongly related to children's adjustment than the employment status of mothers. Belsky (2001) [11] argued that adverse outcomes are more closely associated with economic stress and low-quality childcare than maternal employment itself.

More recent findings suggest that responsive, consistent, and supportive parenting promotes positive adjustment regardless of family income or maternal employment (Lamb, 2012) [13]. These studies collectively highlight the need to examine maternal employment within a broader psychosocial context rather than viewing it as an isolated factor.

### Rationale of the Study

With the increasing number of working mothers in Indian urban and semi-urban areas, traditional assumptions regarding the negative impact of maternal employment on children require systematic examination. Given the inconsistent findings in existing literature, the present study aims to explore whether children of working and non-working mothers differ significantly in academic, social, and emotional adjustment, thereby contributing empirical evidence relevant to contemporary Indian society.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine differences in academic adjustment between children of working and non-working mothers.
2. To compare social adjustment among children belonging to working and non-working mother households.
3. To assess differences in emotional adjustment between the two groups of children.
4. To analyze overall adjustment differences between children of working and non-working mothers.

### Hypotheses

1. Children of working and non-working mothers will differ significantly in academic adjustment.
2. A significant difference will be observed in social adjustment between the two groups.
3. Emotional adjustment will significantly differ between children of working and non-working mothers.
4. Overall adjustment will show a significant difference between the two groups.

### Methodology

#### Sample

The study sample included 100 school-going children enrolled in Classes VI to IX from urban and semi-urban schools. The sample was equally divided into two groups:

- 50 children of working mothers
- 50 children of non-working mothers

Gender representation was kept approximately equal across both groups.

### Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling combined with incidental selection was used to identify participants based on maternal employment status.

### Research Tools

1. A self-prepared Personal Information Schedule
2. Adjustment Inventory for School Students (standardized Indian tool)

### Research Design

A comparative research design involving two independent groups was adopted.

### Variables

- **Independent Variable:** Maternal employment status
- **Dependent Variables:** Academic, social, emotional, and total adjustment scores

### Statistical Analysis

Mean, Standard Deviation, and independent sample t-tests were employed to analyze group differences.

### Results

**Table 1:** Distribution of Sample According to Demographic Variables

Variable	Category	N	Percentage
Gender	Boys	50	50%
	Girls	50	50%
Residence	Urban	56	56%
	Semi-urban	44	44%
Family Type	Nuclear	62	62%
	Joint	38	38%

**Table 2:** Mean, SD and t-value for Academic Adjustment

Group	Mean	SD	t
Children of Working Mothers	58.42	6.18	
Children of Non-working Mothers	55.10	6.94	2.52*

**Table 3:** Comparison of Social Adjustment Scores

Group	Mean	SD	t
Working Mothers	56.88	5.74	
Non-working Mothers	57.96	6.02	1.02 (NS)

**Table 4:** Comparison of Emotional Adjustment Scores

Group	Mean	SD	t
Working Mothers	54.20	6.85	
Non-working Mothers	58.34	6.12	3.12**

**Table 5:** Comparison of Overall Adjustment Scores

Group	Mean	SD	t
Working Mothers	169.50	14.22	
Non-working Mothers	171.40	13.68	0.69 (NS)

### Discussion

The results suggest that children of working mothers demonstrated comparatively better academic adjustment, possibly due to structured daily routines, educational aspirations, and exposure to achievement-oriented environments. On the other hand, children of non-working mothers showed higher emotional adjustment, which may be

attributed to increased emotional availability and supervision.

The absence of a significant difference in overall adjustment supports previous research indicating that maternal employment alone is not a decisive factor in determining children's adjustment. Instead, emotional warmth, consistency in parenting, and family support emerge as critical determinants of healthy adjustment.

## Conclusion

The present study concludes that maternal employment status does not exert a uniform influence on children's adjustment. Although domain-specific differences were observed, overall adjustment appears to depend more on the quality of parenting and emotional climate within the family. These findings challenge traditional assumptions and underscore the importance of supportive home and school environments for all children.

## Educational and Practical Implications

- Schools should strengthen counseling services to address academic and emotional needs of children from diverse family backgrounds.
- Parents should be guided regarding effective parenting strategies that promote emotional security and balanced development.
- Family-friendly workplace policies may help employed mothers manage work and family responsibilities more effectively.

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