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## Parenting adolescents and preschoolers: a study of working mothers of Jammu city

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### Abstract

The present study was undertaken to assess and compare the parenting of working mothers with adolescent and preschool age children. The sample of the present study comprised of 120 working mothers (60 mothers of preschoolers and 60 mothers of adolescents) selected randomly from 28 government schools of Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir. Tools used for gathering the data was a standardised Parenting Relationship Questionnaire (Kamphaus and Reynold, 2006) and on spot observation. Analysis of the mother-child relationship reveals that this relationship tends to evolve and fortify over time. In spite of their job requirement most mothers were proficiently and efficiently able to fulfill their parenting responsibility. Most mothers shared average to above average attachment, below average to average discipline practices, average involvement, average to above average parenting confidence and average to below average relation frustration with their children. The mother-child relationship in most cases was moderate in nature with no major conflicts or frustration. Use of statistical procedure points that there are significant differences in parenting between working mothers of preschoolers and adolescents on dimensions namely, attachment, discipline, involvement and relation frustration. Mothers were most attached and involved with their adolescents; while they used more discipline with preschoolers and faced lesser relation frustration in dealing with them. The findings point to the ever evolving nature of mother-child relationship which apart from other variables is also influenced notably by the age of their children.

**Keywords:** Parenting, Working mothers, Adolescents, Preschoolers.

### 1. Introduction

With the emergence of a new economic pattern, increasing opportunities for education, rising standard of living and increased modernization, women from the middle and upper class families have also started coming out of their traditional role of home maker. The increasing number of women in work force has created a number of problems for their children and paved way for controversies regarding maternal employment and child development. There is a general feeling that maternal employment brings emotion deprivation to the school age children. When mothers enter into the employment market, their children face crisis from their early age (Khan, 2012).

Sociologists, social psychologist and educationist got interested in the field of children of working mothers to find out the problems that the children of working mothers face. A galore of studies conducted by Hoffman (1963) found that the children of working mothers appeared to be less assertive and less affective in their peer interaction. Bronfenbrenner (1985) have found that highly educated full time employed mothers described their three year old sons in especially negative terms. These boys seem demanding and non-complaint. Vijayalaxmi (2007) have found that the adolescent children of homemakers are having significantly higher emotional maturity compared to the male children of homemakers. The children of employed mothers are more socially maladjusted and lacked independence to a very highly significant level compared to the children of homemakers. Hock (2004) has revealed that there exist a positive relation between maternal separation anxiety and children's anxieties about separation from their mothers. This is perceived as a threat to the child's well being and/or to her own psychological equilibrium in feelings of worry, sadness and guilt. Koschanska (2001) has found that insecurely attached toddler show more negative emotions (fear, distress, & anger) while securely attached children show more joyfulness even in the same situation. Researches have also indicated that apart from the maternal characteristics, some factors intrinsic to the children also tend to affect parent-child relationship (Margan, 2012). Children during the early years of life tend to be more dependent on their mothers than when they are grown up.

It is in this context that the present research assumes importance. The objective of the study is to decode parenting among working mothers belonging to middle class families in context of the children’s age.

**Methodology**

**Sample Description**

The total sample for the present study consisted of 120 working mothers of which 60 working mothers were those who had at least one preschool aged child and rest 60 working mothers were those who had at least one adolescent child. All selected mothers were government teachers and belonged to middle socioeconomic status families. Also all sample mothers belonged to joint families and were at least graduates.

**Sample Locale and Sampling Technique**

The entire sample was selected from urban areas of Jammu city, J&K. Since all the sample mothers were school teachers therefore their selection was done on the basis of their schools.

The entire sample was selected randomly through multi-stage sampling. In the first stage, one zone of the Jammu out of four i.e. East, West, North and South was selected by lottery method. In the second stage, a list of government schools located in selected zone of Jammu city namely Jammu east was obtained. A total of 28 schools were identified for sample selection. Each of the school was visited personally and the principal was contacted. They were required to

provide the list of teachers who matched the sampling criteria. Then finally interactions were held with the working mothers (Teachers). They were explained the objectives before the process of data collection. Any confusion in the minds of the working mothers were laid off before data was collected.

**Tools used for Data Collection**

On spot observations were used along with PRQ (Parenting Relationship Questionnaire), instrument designed by Kamphaus and Reynolds (2006). This questionnaire is designed to capture a parent’s perspective of the parent child relationship. It assesses traditional parent- child dimensions such as attachment and also provides information on parenting style, parenting confidence, stress and satisfaction with the child’s school. The questionnaire can be used in clinical, pediatric, counseling, school, and other settings where there is a need to understand the nature of the parents-child relationship. It can be completed in approximately 10 to 15 minutes and can be administered to mothers and fathers (or care givers) of children aged 2 to 18 years.

**Results and Discussion**

The findings of the study along with their discussion are presented as under:

**Preliminary Results**

**1. Age of Sample Working Mothers**

**Table 1:** Age of Sample Working Mothers

Age (in years)	Mothers of Preschoolers		Mothers of Adolescents		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
25-30	29	48.3	1	16.7	39	32.5
30-25	11	18.3	22	36.7	33	27.5
35-40	15	25	20	33.3	35	29.2
40-45	5	8.3	17	28.3	22	18.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Mean age of working mothers of preschoolers= 32.49 ± 4.95 Mean age of working mothers of adolescents= 36.55 ± 5.32  
Overall mean age working mothers= 34.52 ± 5.56

Table 1 reveals that sample working mothers were aged between the 25-45 years. Most of them were in the age group of 25-30 and 35-40 (32.5% and 27.2%) years respectively. The mean age of working mothers of preschoolers and adolescents was 32.49 ± 4.95 and 36.55 ± 5.32 respectively.

**2. Educational Status of Sample Mothers**

Table 2 indicates that most of the sample (91.7%) working mothers were post graduates, with them having completed their masters in various subjects or having B.ed. degree as well. Rest (8.3%) working mothers were graduates only.

**Table 2:** Educational Status of Sample Mothers

Qualification	Mothers of preschoolers		Mothers of adolescents		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Graduate	2	3.3	8	13.3	10	8.3
Post graduate	58	96.7	52	86.7	110	91.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

**3. Age of Children**

**Table 3:** Age of Children

Age(in years)	Preschoolers		Adolescents		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
2-6	60	100	-	-	60	50
12-15	-	-	31	51.7	31	25.8
15-18	-	-	29	48.3	29	24.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Mean age of preschoolers= 4.03 ± 1.40 Mean age of adolescents=14.95 ± 1.91  
Overall mean age of preschoolers and adolescents= 9.475 ± 5.75

Table no. 3 reveals that the sample preschoolers were in the age group of 2-6 years (100%). On the other hand the sample adolescents were either in the age group of 12-15 years (25.8%) or 15-18 years (24.2%). The overall average age of children was  $9.475 \pm 5.75$ ; while that of preschoolers and adolescents was  $4.03 \pm 1.40$  and  $14.95 \pm 1.91$  years respectively

**Mother-Child Relationship**

The mother child relationship was assessed on five dimensions namely attachment, discipline practices, involvement, parental confidence, and relation frustration. The results obtained are discussed as follows:

**4. Attachment between Working Mothers and Children**

**Table 4:** Attachment between Working Mothers and Children

Levels	Mothers of preschoolers		Mothers of adolescents		Total	
Lower extreme	-	-	-	-	-	-
Below average	10	16.6	-	-	10	8.3
Average	32	53.3	21	35	53	44.2
Above average	18	30	35	58.3	53	44.2
Upper extreme	-	-	4	6.7	4	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2$  for attachment between working mothers of preschoolers and adolescents = 21.736\*, df= 3, table value= 11.3, \*significant at 5%.

Table 4 shows the level of attachment between the mothers and their children. Overall 44.2% each, of the mother on the whole had average or above average attachment with their respective children. Most mothers of preschoolers shared (53.3%) average attachment with their preschoolers. Another 30% scored above average and 16.6% of them scored below extreme; whereas in case of mothers of adolescents, most of them (58.3%) scored above average or average (35%).

Statistically there was significant difference in the attachment pattern of mothers of preschoolers and adolescents as more mothers of adolescents showed above average attachment with their children. The results point to the fact that probably with the age the mother- child relationship becomes stronger. Many mothers saw their grown up children to be a reflection of their own self and the children also tend to strappingly identify with their parents.

**5. Discipline Practices of the Working Mothers**

**Table 5:** Discipline Practices of the Working Mothers

Levels	Mothers of preschoolers		Mothers of adolescents		Total	
	n	%	N	%	n	%
Lower extreme	-	-	2	3.3	2	1.7
Below average	22	36.7	40	66.7	62	51.7
Average	38	63.3	18	30	56	46.7
Above Average	-	-	-	-	-	-
Upper extreme	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2$  for discipline practices among working mothers= 14.369\*, df= 3, table value= 9.21, \*significant at 5%

Table 5 depicts the levels of discipline practices, which reflect a general sense of the parent in the establishment of rules. Majority of the sample working mothers 51.7% (36.7% of mothers of preschoolers and 66.7% of mothers of adolescents) scored in the below extreme category on discipline. Another 46.7% scored average on discipline practices (63.3% of mothers of the preschoolers and 30% of the mothers of adolescents). None of the working mother scored above average or in the upper category of discipline practices. This indicates that most mothers were not very strict disciplinarians with their children. When inquired about discipline most mothers reported that they spend only a few hours with their children and thus there was no point in implementing strict discipline.

Statistically there was significant difference in the discipline practices of mothers of adolescents. Comparatively more mothers of adolescents had below extreme and lower extreme discipline than mothers of the other group who showed average discipline practice. Probably with young children the mothers had to use discipline to teach a few rules of life, where as with adolescents harsh discipline was not required. Mothers felt that teenage children already understand their mothers' discipline strategies and hence they were probably a little less strict with adolescents.

**6. Involvement of Working Mothers with their Children**

**Table 6:** Involvement of Working Mothers with their Children

Levels	Mothers of preschoolers		Mothers of adolescents		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Lower extreme	-	-	-	-	-	-
Below average	18	30	5	8.3	24	20
Average	41	68.3	31	51.7	72	60
Above average	-	-	22	36.7	22	18.3
Upper extreme	1	1.7	2	3.3	3	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2$  for involvement among working mothers= 31.07\*, df= 3, table value= 7.81, \*significant at 5%

As far as involvement with children was concerned most mothers (60%) showed average involvement. Between the mothers of the two groups though most showed average involvement however more mothers of adolescents fell in the above average and upper extreme categories of involvement than the mothers of preschoolers. This highlights that probably with the young children the mothers used other supports and hence showed lesser involvement. However, as their children reached teenage they showed more involvement.

Since the entire sample was selected from joint families, in almost all cases grandparents were available for the young preschool children. Also in such household paid outside resource was employed for care of young children. This trend probably leads the mothers to feel less involved with their preschool children.

**7. Parenting Confidence**

**Table 7: Parenting Confidence**

Levels	Mothers of preschoolers		Mothers of adolescents		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Lower extreme	-	-	-	-	-	-
Below average	9	15	4	6.6	13	10.8
Average	36	60	43	71.7	79	65.8
Above average	15	25	12	20	27	22.5
Upper extreme	-	-	1	1.7	1	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

X<sup>2</sup> for parenting confidence among working mothers=3.877, df= 3, table value= 7.81,\*significant at 5%

Table 7 depicts the level of parenting confidence, which refers to parents feeling of comfort, control and confidence when making parenting decisions. Most of the sample, 65.8%, of which 60% mothers of preschoolers and 71.7% mothers of adolescents had average parental confidence. Apart from these 22.5% mothers (25% mothers of preschoolers and 20% mothers of adolescents) scored significantly above average in parenting confidence.

Analysis of parenting confidence of the two groups reveals that there was significant difference in the parenting confidence between them, as mothers of adolescents showed higher levels of it than the mothers of preschoolers. Probably as mothers continued to parent their children they become more confident and sure.

**8. Relation Frustration of Working Mothers**

**Table 8: Relation Frustration of Working Mothers**

Levels	Mothers of preschoolers		Mothers of adolescents		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Lower extreme	-	-	-	-	-	-
Below average	31	51.7	19	31.7	50	41.7
Average	18	30	36	60	54	45
Above average	5	8.3	4	6.7	9	7.5
Upper extreme	6	10	1	1.7	7	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

X<sup>2</sup> for Relation Frustration among working mothers= 12.563\*, df= 3, table value= 7.81, \*significant at 5%

Table 8 depicts the level of relation frustration which reflects the parent's level of stress or distress in relating to and controlling the behavior and effect of the child, along with the tendency to overreact and become frustrated in common parenting situation. Most of the sample working mothers 45% (30% mothers of preschoolers and 60% mothers of adolescents) had average relation frustration. Another 41.7% (51.7% mothers of preschoolers and 31.7% mothers of adolescent) scored significantly below average relation frustration. Another 7.5% and 5.8% had scored significantly above average and upper extreme respectively. This means that most mothers encountered either average or below average relation frustration in dealing with the children. Comparatively, mothers of preschoolers had lesser frustration than mothers of adolescents as statistically also this difference was significant.

Irrespective of whether mothers are employed or hands on housewives their presence and contribution to the lives of their children cannot be undermined. The quality of parent-child relationships shows considerable stability over time. Some dimensions of parenting are important in children's lives irrespective of age, especially whether relationships are warm and supportive or marked by conflict (Kiran, 2014). Warm, authoritative and responsive parenting is usually crucial in building resilience. Parents who develop open, participative communication, problem-centred coping, confidence and flexibility tend to manage stress well and help their families to do the same (Utting, 2007). Young children's relationships with their mothers typically affect their development more than father-child relationships. But teenagers' relationships with their fathers appear especially important to their development and achievement in school. Children's perspectives show that what young people 'think' is not necessarily what parents 'think they think'. Parents tend to underestimate their own influence, but are also prone to take insufficient account of children's feelings at times of emotional stress (Young et al, 1995).

**Summary and Conclusion**

Mother-child bond is the unique of all relationships by virtue of the trust and love involved in it. Mothers tend to influence their children all through their years of growing up.

Findings of the present research on the mother-child relationship reveals that most mothers shared average to above average attachment, below average to average discipline practices, average involvement, average to above average parenting confidence and average to below average relation frustration with their children. The mother-child relationship in most cases was moderate in nature with no major conflicts or frustration. Use of statistical procedure points that there are significant differences in parenting between working mothers of preschoolers and adolescents on four dimensions namely, attachment, discipline, involvement and relation frustration. Mothers were most attached and involved with their adolescents; while they used more discipline with preschoolers and faced lesser relation frustration in dealing with them. Statistically there was significant difference in the attachment pattern of mothers of preschoolers and mothers of adolescents. As more mothers of adolescents showed above average attachment with their children. The results point to the fact that probably with the age mother-child relationship becomes stronger. Comparatively more mothers of adolescents had below extreme and lower extreme discipline practices than mothers of other group who showed average discipline practices. Probably with young children the mothers had to use discipline to teach them few rules where as with adolescents harsh discipline was not required. Mothers of adolescents showed more involvement than the mothers of preschoolers. Probably as mothers continued to parent their children; they become more confident and sure. Mothers of preschoolers had lesser frustration than mothers of adolescents as statistically also this difference was significant. Safia (2010) had also noticed that with the age mother-child relationship become stronger. The present study also indicates similar findings.

The findings of the present study suggest that most working mothers irrespective of their job requirements were successfully able to fulfill their parental responsibilities. Most mothers felt comfortable in managing their teenage children than the young preschoolers. Probably while mothering their adolescents over a long duration of time they had become more attuned in managing them and hence faced lesser frustrations and conflicts. Mother-child relationship tends to evolve and fortify over time, with both mothers and their children becoming accustomed to the relationship and parenting.

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