

# Adjustment, Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction of Children of Working and Non-Working Mothers: A Comparative Study

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** It has been reported in several studies that working status of a mother significantly impacts the psychosocial well being of a child. However the impact is complex and depends on various factors such as maternal mental health and parent child relationship, type of family etc. **Aim:** The purpose of this study is a) to study and compare the Adjustment, Self-esteem and Life satisfaction of children of working and non working mothers and to further b) study the gender differences on Adjustment, Self-esteem and Life satisfaction of children of working and non working mothers. **Materials and Methods:** The present study is based on cross-sectional design, conducted on a sample of 100 students of working and non working mothers. Data was collected from schools of Jammu District using assessment tools Adjustment Inventory for school Students, Rosenberg's self-esteem scale and The Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS). For assessing the result of the study SPSS 20 version was used. Descriptive statistics such as mean, SD and t test were applied. **Results and Conclusion:** Significant differences were found between children of working and non working mothers on some dimensions of adjustment and self esteem whereas no significant difference found between children of working and non working mothers on life satisfaction. Similarly Significant gender differences were found on some dimensions of adjustment, life satisfaction and self esteem.

**Keywords:** Adjustment, Self-Esteem, Life Satisfaction, Children, Working mothers.

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## INTRODUCTION

The initial experiences of a child such as warmth and affection provided by a mother are deeply intertwined with a child's emotional development, fostering a sense of security, joy, and cooperation. Maternal warmth significantly contributes to the development of prosocial behaviours and emotional regulation in children (Rani 2019).

In recent decades, it has been observed that intersection of work and family life among working mothers has a significant impact on job performance, family dynamics, health, and overall well-being. While studying the impact of maternal employment status on various developmental outcomes in children, it has been found that children of working mothers may benefit from increased independence and role modelling

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(Parcel & Menaghan, 1994). But at the same time absence of a mother may negatively impact emotional closeness and behavioral adjustment (Greenberger & O'Neil, 1993) as compared to children of non-working mothers.

Keeping this literature in view the present study was planned to find out whether psychological variables like adjustment, self-esteem and life satisfaction of children of working mothers really differs from non-working mothers.

Adjustment refers to the behavioral process through which humans and other animals strive to maintain equilibrium between their various needs and the challenges posed by their environments (Searle and Ward, 1990). Lazarus (1984) further elaborates on this by stating, "Adjustment consists of the psychological process by means of which the individual manages or copes with various demands or pressures." Adjustment manifests in various aspects of life, including Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment and Educational Adjustment. Self-esteem refers to the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object" Rosenberg (1965, p. 30). He emphasized that self-esteem reflects an overall sense of self-worth or personal value. Life satisfaction represents the cognitive component of overall well-being (Riva et al., 2019), reflecting an individual's subjective evaluation of their life in relation to personal values and standards (Diener et al., 1985). It is often conceptualized as the aggregate of satisfaction across various life domains, such as work, relationships, and health (Stubbe et al., 2005).

Findings of some earlier research studies have shown no difference on self concept, level of adjustment and self-esteem among adolescents of working and non-working mothers (Rani & Kohli, 2018; Rajpal Kaur, 2021). Whereas in a research study conducted by Syed and Khan (2017) it has been found that children of nonworking mothers possess better social, emotional and home adjustment than children of working mothers who have better financial adjustment. In a recent comparative research study conducted on adjustment level of high school students, significant problems were found in emotional adjustment domain among children of working mothers as compared to non working mothers (Choudhury, 2024).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### *OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY*

- ❖ To study and compare the Adjustment, Self-esteem and Life satisfaction of children of working and non working mothers.

- ❖ To study the gender differences on Adjustment, Self-esteem and Life satisfaction of children of working and non working mothers.

## **SAMPLE**

The study was conducted on a sample of 100 students of working (50) and non working mothers (50) of government schools of District Jammu (J&K). All the participants were in the age range 13-18 years i.e students from VIIIth, IXth, Xth, XIth and XIIth grades. Total sample of 100 participants further constituted 50 male and 50 female school students. The sampling method employed was convenient.

## **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

The present study is based on cross-sectional design. In cross-sectional studies, a number of variables are measured at one point in time, and the degree of association between selected variables is examined.

## **TOOLS FOR THE DATA COLLECTION:**

- ❖ Adjustment Inventory for school Students (Sinha and Singh, 1993). Adjustment inventory has been designed for use with school students of age group 14-18 years (class IX to XI). The inventory contains 60 items, 20 items in each area of adjustment. High scores indicate unstable emotion. The split half and test retest reliability of the scale includes 0.95 and 0.93.
- ❖ Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965): The 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale assesses global self-esteem. Each item is rated on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The higher the score obtained in the RSE scale, the greater the levels of self-esteem.
- ❖ The Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS) (Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003) is a five-item measure in which each item denotes one of the five life satisfaction domains i.e., family, school, friends, self, and living environment as well as global life satisfaction. Seven response options include "terrible," "unhappy," "mostly

dissatisfied,” “mixed”, “mostly satisfied,” “pleased,” and “delighted.” The five items are summed to obtain a total life satisfaction score.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20. Descriptive statistics such as Mean, SD and Inferential statistics t-test were used to analyze the results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table No. 1. Mean, SD and Independent t-test results showing differences on areas of adjustment among children of working and non working mothers.**

VARIABLES	CHILDREN OF WORKING MOHERS (N=50)		CHILDREN OF NON-WORKING MOHERS (N=50)		T
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Emotional adjustment	9.08	3.13	7.72	2.65	2.34*
Social Adjustment	12.52	1.84	11.0	2.67	3.31**
Educational adjustment	11.22	2.34	11.38	1.91	.384

**Note.** Statistical significance: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01

**Table No.1** shows the mean, standard deviation (SD) and t-values on areas of adjustment among children of working and non working mothers. T value on educational adjustment (t=.384) shows no significant difference between children of working and non working mothers. Whereas T value on emotional adjustment (t=2.39\*\*) and social adjustment (t=3.31\*\*) shows significant difference between children of working and non working mothers. Further analysis of mean differences shows that children of working mothers have higher means scores on emotional adjustment and social adjustment as compared to children of non working mothers. Because higher scores on this adjustment scale show poor adjustment, this indicates children of working mothers have poor emotional and social adjustment as compared to children of non working mothers. Similar findings have been reported by Mody & Murty (1988) who found that children of working mothers to be careless and slightly emotionally unstable in early years compared to non working mothers. Ora, Einaya & Ehlas (2006) have found that children of working mothers were having more difficulties and being less adjusted to kinder garden. Their adjustment to day care was also poorer.

**Table No. 2. Mean, SD and Independent t-test results showing differences on Self-esteem among children of working and non working mothers.**

VARIABLES	CHILDREN OF WORKING MOHERS (N=50)		CHILDREN OF NON-WORKING MOHERS (N=50)		T
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Self-esteem	18.86	2.76	19.32	2.35	2.80**

**Note.** Statistical significance: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .000

**Table No. 2** shows the mean, standard deviation (SD) and t-values on Self-esteem of children of working and non working mothers. T value on Self-esteem scale (t=2.80\*\*), shows significant difference between children of working and non working mothers. Further analysis of mean scores on Self-esteem scale shows that children of non-working mothers have little higher mean scores compared to children of working mothers. Similar study has been reported by Hungal and Aminabhavi (2007) conducted on self-concept, emotional maturity and achievement motivation of adolescents. The study evidenced that the adolescent children of home makers have significantly higher-self-concept than children of employed mothers.

**Table No. 3, Mean, SD and Independent t-test results showing differences on areas of life satisfaction among children of working and non working mothers.**

VARIABLES	CHILDREN OF WORKING MOHERS (N=50)		CHILDREN OF NON-WORKING MOHERS (N=50)		T
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Satisfaction with family	6.05	1.06	6.02	1.07	0.105
Satisfaction with Friendship	6.1	.95	6.27	.90	0.841

Satisfaction with School experience	6.2	.917	5.82	1.25	1.55
Satisfaction with Myself	5.57	1.05	5.2	1.32	1.39
Satisfaction with Where I live	5.34	1.13	5.62	1.15	1.22
Overall life Satisfaction	4.56	.97	4.50	1.07	0.293

**Note.** Statistical significance: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table No.3** shows the mean, standard deviation (SD) and t-values on life satisfaction scale of children of working and non working mothers. T values on all the dimensions of life satisfaction scale was found to be non-significant which shows no significant difference between children of working and non working mothers on life satisfaction.

**Table No. 4, Mean, SD and Independent t-test results showing gender differences on areas of adjustment.**

VARIABLES	MALE (N=50)		FEMALE (N=50)		T
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Emotional adjustment	7.32	3.09	8.78	2.27	2.687**
Social Adjustment	11.80	1.88	12.11	2.27	.479

<b>Educational adjustment</b>	11.22	2.24	11.38	1.95	.381
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**Note.** Statistical significance: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

**Table No.4** shows the mean, standard deviation (SD) and t-values of gender differences of children of working and non working mothers on adjustment. T values on emotional adjustment ( $t=2.687^{**}$ ) scale shows significant difference between the male and female of children of working and non working mothers. Whereas on social and educational adjustment no significant gender differences were found. Further analysis of mean scores on emotional adjustment scale shows that female students have higher means scores on emotional adjustment as compared to male students. Because higher scores on this adjustment scale show poor adjustment, this indicates male children have better emotional adjustment as compared to female children. These findings are consistent as well as in contradiction with some of the existing studies which could be due to the methodological differences in different researches. Chauhan (2013) found significant gender difference in adjustment of higher secondary school's students; female students had good adjustment level compared to the male students. Makwana and Kaji (2014) found no significant gender difference in Home, School and Emotional adjustment of secondary school students. However significant gender difference in Social adjustment was found indicating boys are better in Social adjustment than girls.

**Table No. 5, Mean, SD and Independent t test results showing gender differences on Self-esteem.**

<b>VARIABLES</b>	<b>FEMALE (N=50)</b>		<b>MALE (N=50)</b>		<b>T</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	
<b>Self-esteem</b>	18.04	2.89	19.16	2.28	2.147*

**Note.** Statistical significance: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .000$

**Table No. 5** shows the mean, standard deviation (SD) and t-values on Self-esteem scale of gender differences of children of working and non working mothers. T value on Self-esteem scale ( $t=2.147^*$ ), shows significant difference between male and female children of working and non working mothers. Further analysis of mean scores on Self-esteem scale shows that males have little higher mean scores compared to females. These findings are in line with some of the previous findings of Moksnes et al 2010 & Derdikman-Eiron et al. 2012. Baldwin & Hoffmann, 2002 reported that girls to a greater extent than boys report decrease and fluctuations in self-esteem. However, a study by Erol and Orth (2011) found no significant gender differences in the level of self-esteem.

**Table No. 6, Independent t test results showing gender differences on life satisfaction scale**

VARIABLES	MALE (N=50)		FEMALE (N=50)		T
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Satisfaction with family	6.05	1.06	5.96	1.07	0.548
Satisfaction with Friendship	6.08	.94	6.26	.92	0.965
Satisfaction with School experience	6.2	.917	5.82	1.25	1.55
Satisfaction with Myself	5.57	1.05	5.2	1.32	1.39
Satisfaction with Where I live	5.22	1.25	5.74	0.91	2.31*
Overall life Satisfaction	4.47	.96	4.67	1.11	0.882

**Note.** Statistical significance: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

**Table No.6** shows the mean, standard deviation (SD) and t-values of life satisfaction scale of male and female children of working and non working mothers. T value on life satisfaction scale was found to be significant on only Satisfaction with where I live sub scale. T value on Satisfaction with where I live sub scale (t=2.31\*), shows Significant difference between male and female children of working and non working mothers. Further

analysis of mean scores on Satisfaction with where I live sub scale shows that females have little higher mean scores compared to males. Similar findings has been given by Mahanta and Aggarwal (2013) where they found that female university students have a higher satisfaction with life as compared to male university students.

## LIMITATIONS

### *THE STUDY HAS SOME LIMITATIONS.*

- ❖ Use of convenient sampling rather than using random sampling.
- ❖ Findings of this study are limited to army schools of district Jammu of Jammu and Kashmir, which means they lack generalizability.
- ❖ The present study is quantitative and utilized structured questionnaires.
- ❖ Another limitation to the study is the cross-sectional design.
- ❖ The sample size, although larger than some earlier studies, is modest and came from just two schools.

## CONCLUSION:

In the present research it has been found that maternal employment status significantly impacts the adjustment and self-esteem of school students, with non-working mothers' children exhibiting more favorable outcomes. However, life satisfaction appears unaffected by maternal employment. Gender significantly impacted all these three variables.

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Nil.

## DATA AVAILABILITY

The datasets analysed for the current study are available from the 1st and corresponding author on reasonable request.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.



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