



ASSESSMENT OF COMMON BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN AMONG WORKING AND NON-WORKING MOTHERS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY.

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Abstract

Background: Behavioural problems among school-age children are an important public health concern that may affect emotional, social, and academic development. Maternal employment status has been considered a possible factor influencing children's behavioral outcomes. **Objectives:** 1. To assess and compare common behavioral problems among school-age children of working and non-working mothers. 2. To determine the association between behavioral problems and selected demographic variables. **Methods:** A quantitative descriptive comparative study was conducted among 50 mothers (25 working and 25 non-working) of school-age children aged 6–12 years in Sirugumi village, Thiruvallur district, Tamil Nadu. Non-probability purposive sampling was used. Data were collected using a structured demographic questionnaire and a modified Child Behavior Checklist. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. **Results:** Among children of working mothers, 80% had low behavioral problems and 20% had moderate behavioral problems. Among children of non-working mothers, 84% had low behavioral problems and 16% had moderate behavioral problems. The mean behavioral problem score among children of working mothers was 20.64 ± 9.85 , while among children of non-working mothers it was 19.72 ± 9.67 . The independent t-test showed no statistically significant difference between the groups ($t = 0.333$, $p = 0.741$). No significant association was found between behavioral problems and demographic variables. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in behavioral problems among school-age children of working and non-working mothers. Parenting quality and family environment may play a greater role than maternal employment status alone.

Keywords: Behavioral problems, school-age children, working mothers, non-working mothers, child behavior, maternal employment.

INTRODUCTION

Children are considered the most valuable assets of society. Healthy emotional and behavioral development during childhood is essential for overall well-being and future adjustment. School-age children, especially those between 6 and 12 years, are vulnerable to various behavioral problems such as aggression, hyperactivity, lying, anxiety, inattentiveness, and social withdrawal.

Behavioral problems may arise due to several factors including parental neglect, poor supervision, family conflict, and inadequate emotional support. Mothers play a significant role in shaping children's behavior because they are usually the primary caregivers. With the increasing participation of women in the workforce, concerns have emerged regarding the influence of maternal employment on children's behavioral outcomes.



Several studies have reported conflicting findings. Some studies suggest that children of working mothers may experience behavioral issues due to reduced parental supervision, while others report that maternal employment promotes independence and social maturity among children. Therefore, understanding the relationship between maternal employment and behavioral problems among school-age children is important for planning effective interventions and parental guidance programs.

Need for the Study

Behavioral problems among school-age children are increasing globally and can negatively affect academic performance, emotional health, and social relationships. The rapid social and economic changes in modern society have resulted in increased maternal employment, which may influence parenting practices and child behavior. Although previous studies have examined behavioral problems among children, limited research has specifically compared children of working and non-working mothers in rural settings of Tamil Nadu. Understanding these differences can help healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers develop supportive strategies for families and children.

Objectives

1. To assess and compare common behavioral problems among school-age children of working and non-working mothers.
2. To determine the association between behavioral problems and selected demographic variables.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no statistically significant difference in behavioral problems among school-age children of working and non-working mothers.

H02: There is no significant association between behavioral problems and selected demographic variables.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A quantitative descriptive comparative research design was adopted for the study.

Setting

The study was conducted in Sirugumi village, Thiruvallur district, Tamil Nadu.

Population

The target population included working and non-working mothers of school-age children aged 6–12 years.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 50 mothers participated in the study, including 25 working mothers and 25 non-working mothers. Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used.

Inclusion Criteria

- Mothers having children aged 6–12 years
- Mothers willing to participate
- Mothers able to understand Tamil

Exclusion Criteria

- Mothers unavailable during data collection
- Mothers working part-time or from home

Tool for Data Collection

Data were collected using:

1. Demographic questionnaire
2. Modified Child Behavior Checklist consisting of 30 items scored on a 3-point scale.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used. Inferential statistics including independent t-test and chi-square test were applied.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

Most working mothers (48%) and non-working mothers (44%) belonged to the age group of 21–25 years. The majority of mothers in both groups had higher secondary education. Most participants belonged to middle-income families and lived in concrete houses.

Level of Behavioral Problems

Among children of working mothers:

- 80% had low behavioral problems
- 20% had moderate behavioral problems

Among children of non-working mothers:

- 84% had low behavioral problems
- 16% had moderate behavioral problems

No participant reported high behavioral problems.

Comparison Between Groups

The mean behavioral problem score among children of working mothers was 20.64 ± 9.85 , whereas among children of non-working mothers it was 19.72 ± 9.67 .

The independent t-test revealed:

$t = 0.333$

$p = 0.741$

The findings indicate no statistically significant difference between the two groups.



Association with Demographic Variables

No statistically significant association was found between behavioral problems and selected demographic variables such as age, education, occupation, family income, type of family, religion, or type of house.

DISCUSSION

The present study found that most school-age children had low levels of behavioral problems irrespective of maternal employment status. The difference between children of working and non-working mothers was not statistically significant.

These findings are consistent with studies conducted by Kim and Kim (2021), which reported that maternal employment alone does not determine behavioral problems and that parenting quality and socioeconomic factors are more influential.

However, some previous studies have shown higher behavioral problems among children of working mothers due to reduced parental interaction and increased parental stress. The present study suggests that employment status alone may not be sufficient to predict children's behavioral outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there was no significant difference in behavioral problems among school-age children of working and non-working mothers. Maternal employment status alone may not directly influence behavioral

problems. Supportive parenting practices, family environment, and emotional bonding may contribute more significantly to healthy child behavior.

Nursing Implications

Nursing Education: Nursing students should be educated regarding behavioral problems among children and methods for early identification and management.

Nursing Practice: Community health nurses can conduct awareness programs for parents regarding healthy parenting practices and behavioral management strategies.

Nursing Administration: Healthcare administrators should organize training programs and workshops related to child behavioral health.

Nursing Research: Further large-scale studies can be conducted to explore behavioral problems among children in different settings and populations.

Recommendations

- Similar studies can be conducted with larger sample sizes.
- Comparative studies may be conducted in urban and rural settings.
- Experimental studies can be carried out to evaluate intervention programs for parents.
- Longitudinal studies may help identify long-term behavioral outcomes among children.

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