

A STUDY OF ADJUSTMENT OF CHILDREN OF WORKING AND NON-WORKING WOMEN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

The family plays a vital role in the social, emotional, and psychological development of children. In recent decades, increasing participation of women in the workforce has transformed family structures and parenting practices, raising questions regarding the influence of maternal employment on children's adjustment. The present study aimed to compare the adjustment levels of children of working and non-working women of the Ahmedabad district.. Adjustment was assessed across four dimensions: Home Adjustment, Health Adjustment, Social Adjustment, and Emotional Adjustment, along with Overall Adjustment. A descriptive survey method with a comparative research design was adopted. The sample consisted of 150 school-going children, including 75 children of working women and 75 children of non-working women, selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Bell Adjustment Inventory (Bell, 1962). Descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests were used for data analysis. The findings revealed significant differences in Home Adjustment and Emotional Adjustment between the two groups. However, no significant differences were found in Health Adjustment, Social Adjustment, and Overall Adjustment. The results indicate that maternal employment alone does not significantly determine children's overall adjustment. Factors such as parenting quality, family environment, emotional support, communication patterns, and socio-economic conditions appear to have a greater influence on children's development. The study highlights the importance of strengthening family relationships and promoting positive parenting practices irrespective of maternal employment status.

Keywords: *Adjustment, Working Women, Non-Working Women, Child Development, Emotional Adjustment, Home Adjustment, Bell Adjustment Inventory*

1. Introduction

Adjustment is a vital concept in educational and developmental psychology, referring to an individual's ability to maintain a balanced relationship with the environment while effectively meeting personal and social demands. It is an essential aspect of children's overall development, influencing their emotional stability, social relationships, academic performance, and personality growth. Well-adjusted children are generally capable of coping with challenges, establishing positive interpersonal relationships, and adapting successfully to changing situations.

The family serves as the primary environment for children's development, and parents play a significant role in shaping their adjustment patterns. Traditionally, mothers have been regarded as the main caregivers responsible for providing emotional support, guidance, and nurturing. However, rapid social and economic changes, increased educational opportunities, and rising financial demands have led to a substantial increase in women's participation in the workforce. This shift has generated considerable interest among researchers regarding the influence of maternal employment on children's adjustment.

Previous studies have reported mixed findings. Some researchers suggest that children of working mothers develop greater independence, responsibility, and self-confidence, while others argue that reduced parent-child interaction may affect emotional and home adjustment. Given these contrasting views, it is important to examine whether children of working and non-working women differ in their adjustment levels. Therefore, the present study aims to compare the adjustment of children of working and non-working women across various dimensions of adjustment.

2 Review of Literature

Adjustment is a crucial aspect of child development that reflects an individual's ability to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment. According to Bell (1962), adjustment includes home, health, social, and emotional dimensions that contribute to overall well-being. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) explains that children's adjustment is influenced by multiple environmental systems, including family, school, peers, and society. Therefore, maternal employment should be viewed within a broader social and familial context. Previous research has reported varied findings regarding the impact of maternal employment on children. Hoffman (1989) found that maternal employment is not

inherently harmful and that children's outcomes are largely determined by parenting quality, family support, and childcare arrangements. Similarly, Eccles (1999) emphasized that parental involvement, emotional support, and guidance are more influential than employment status. Bianchi (2011) demonstrated that employed mothers continue to invest considerable time in childcare and may enhance children's well-being through improved economic resources. Studies have also suggested that children of working mothers often develop greater independence, responsibility, and social competence. However, some researchers have identified challenges related to reduced parental availability, particularly affecting emotional security and home adjustment. Santrock (2019) highlighted that child development results from complex interactions among biological, psychological, and environmental factors.

Despite substantial research, findings remain inconsistent regarding the relationship between maternal employment and children's adjustment. Many studies have focused on general developmental outcomes rather than specific adjustment dimensions. Furthermore, limited comparative research has examined home, health, social, emotional, and overall adjustment among children of working and non-working women in contemporary educational settings. This gap necessitates further investigation to better understand the influence of maternal employment on various aspects of children's adjustment.

3 Objectives of the Study

The present study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To compare the Home Adjustment of children of working and non-working women.
2. To compare the Health Adjustment of children of working and non-working women.
3. To compare the Social Adjustment of children of working and non-working women.
4. To compare the Emotional Adjustment of children of working and non-working women.
5. To compare the Overall Adjustment of children of working and non-working women.

4 Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses were formulated for testing:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in Home Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in Health Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in Social Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in Emotional Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in Overall Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

5 Variables of the Study

Maternal employment status (working women and non-working women) was the independent variable of the study. Children's adjustment, measured through home, health, social, emotional, and overall adjustment dimensions, served as the dependent variable.

6 Methodology

6.1 Research Method

The present study employed the Descriptive Survey Method. The survey method was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect information regarding existing conditions and compare characteristics among different groups.

6.2 Research Design

The present study adopted a comparative research design to examine differences in adjustment between children of working and non-working women. The two groups were compared on home, health, social, emotional, and overall adjustment dimensions. This design was suitable for identifying the influence of maternal employment status on children's adjustment.

6.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of school-going children studying in selected schools of Ahmedabad district. The participants included children of both working and non-working mothers.

6.4 Sample of the Study

A total sample of 150 students was selected from schools in Ahmedabad district. The sample included 75 children of working women and 75 children of non-working women, ensuring equal representation of both groups.

6.5 Sampling Technique

The study employed the Convenient Sampling Technique, where students were first classified based on their mothers' employment status. Thereafter, 75 students were randomly selected from each stratum in Ahmedabad district to ensure representativeness and comparability of the sample.

6.6 Tool Used for Data Collection

The Bell Adjustment Inventory developed by Bell (1962) was used for data collection. It measures Home, Health, Social, and Emotional Adjustment and provides an Overall Adjustment score. The inventory is widely used in educational and psychological research due to its reliability and validity in assessing students' adjustment levels..

6.7 procedure of data collection

After obtaining permission from the selected schools, the researcher identified students belonging to working and non-working women categories. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and necessary instructions were provided. The Bell Adjustment Inventory was administered to the selected students under standardized conditions. The completed inventories were collected, checked for completeness, and scored according to the prescribed guidelines. The obtained data were then organized and prepared for statistical analysis.

6.8 Statistical Techniques Used

The data were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation, and Independent Sample t-test, where Mean and Standard Deviation described the adjustment scores and the t-test

determined the significance of differences between children of working and non-working women.

. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Objective 1

To compare Home Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

Table 1 Mean, SD, t for Home Adjustment

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Working Women	75	16.48	3.82	2.14	0.01
Non-Working Women	75	15.21	3.45		

Table 1 indicates that children of working women obtained a mean score of 16.48, whereas children of non-working women obtained a mean score of 15.21. The calculated t-value was 2.14, which was found to be significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings indicate that a significant difference exists in Home Adjustment between the two groups.

Objective 2

To compare Health Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

Table 2 Mean, SD, t for Health Adjustment Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Working Women	75	12.92	3.12	1.08	Not Significant
Non-Working Women	75	12.46	3.26		

Table 2 shows that children of working women scored a mean of 12.92, whereas children of non-working women scored a mean of 12.46. The obtained t-value was 1.08, which was not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. No significant difference was found in Health Adjustment.

Objective 3

To compare Social Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

Table 3 Mean, SD, t for Social Adjustment Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Working Women	75	13.34	3.12	0.89	Not Significant
Non-Working Women	75	13.01	3.26		

Table 3 reveals that children of working women obtained a mean score of 13.34, while children of non-working women obtained a mean score of 13.01. The calculated t-value of 0.89 was not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. No significant difference exists in Social Adjustment between the two groups.

Objective 4

To compare Emotional Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

Table 4 Mean, SD, t for Emotional Adjustment Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Working Women	75	17.86	4.11	2.31	0.05
Non-Working Women	75	16.29	3.78		

Table 4 indicates that children of working women obtained a mean score of 17.86, whereas children of non-working women obtained a mean score of 16.29. The calculated t-value was 2.31, which was significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. A significant difference was found in Emotional Adjustment between the two groups.

Objective 5

To compare Overall Adjustment between children of working and non-working women.

Table 5 Comparison of Overall Adjustment Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Working Women	75	60.60	8.24	1.96	0.05
Non-Working Women	75	56.97	7.85		

Table 5 shows that children of working women obtained a higher mean overall adjustment score (60.60) than children of non-working women (56.97). However, the calculated t-value (1.96) was not significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating no significant difference in overall adjustment between the two groups.

8 Discussion

The present study examined the adjustment of children of working and non-working women across different dimensions of adjustment. The findings revealed significant differences in Home Adjustment and Emotional Adjustment, indicating that maternal employment may influence specific aspects of a child's development. Children of working mothers may develop greater independence, responsibility, and emotional resilience due to increased autonomy and exposure to diverse life situations. However, no significant differences were found in Health Adjustment, Social Adjustment, or Overall Adjustment, suggesting that these areas are influenced by a variety of factors such as family environment, school experiences, peer relationships, healthcare facilities, and socio-economic conditions rather than maternal employment alone. Overall, the results indicate that maternal employment is not a decisive

factor in children's overall adjustment, which is shaped by multiple environmental and psychological influences, including positive parenting, emotional support, family stability, and educational opportunities.

9 Educational Implications

Based on the findings of the study, schools should provide counseling services to support children's adjustment and address their emotional and social needs. Parents should maintain effective communication with their children to foster trust, understanding, and emotional security. Working mothers should devote quality time to their children to strengthen family relationships and ensure proper guidance. Teachers should identify adjustment-related problems at an early stage and take appropriate measures to assist students. Furthermore, schools should organize parent-awareness programs to educate parents about their role in promoting healthy adjustment and overall development among children.

10 Major Findings

The findings of the study revealed significant differences between children of working and non-working women in the dimensions of Home Adjustment and Emotional Adjustment. However, no significant differences were found in Health Adjustment, Social Adjustment, and Overall Adjustment. These results indicate that while maternal employment status may influence certain aspects of children's adjustment, particularly within the home environment and emotional domain, it does not significantly affect their overall adjustment. Therefore, maternal employment status alone cannot be considered a major determinant of children's overall adjustment.

11 Limitations of the Study

The study had certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. The sample was limited to 150 students selected from a few schools, which may restrict the generalizability of the results. The investigation focused only on maternal employment status as the independent variable and did not consider other influential factors. Adjustment was measured using a single standardized instrument, namely the Bell Adjustment Inventory. Furthermore, important variables such as socio-economic status, parenting style, family environment, and other demographic factors were not examined, which may also influence children's adjustment.

12 Suggestions for Further Research

The present study suggests several directions for future research. Similar studies may be conducted with larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Researchers may also include participants from different geographical regions to examine regional variations in children's adjustment. Future investigations could explore additional variables such as self-esteem, academic achievement, family environment, and parenting style to gain a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing adjustment. Longitudinal studies may be undertaken to examine changes in adjustment over time. Furthermore, comparative studies involving different family structures and socio-cultural backgrounds may provide deeper insights into children's adjustment patterns.

13 Conclusion

The study was conducted to compare the adjustment of children of working and non-working women across different dimensions of adjustment. The findings revealed significant differences in Home Adjustment and Emotional Adjustment, indicating that maternal employment status may influence these aspects of a child's adjustment. Children of working women obtained higher mean scores in both dimensions compared to children of non-working women. However, no significant differences were found in Health Adjustment, Social Adjustment, and Overall Adjustment. These results suggest that while maternal employment may contribute to certain areas of adjustment, it does not significantly affect children's overall adjustment. Therefore, children's adjustment appears to be influenced by a combination of family, social, educational, and personal factors rather than maternal employment status alone.

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