



RESEARCH PAPER

Work-Life Balance: Investigating the Socio-Emotional Development of Children with Working Mothers in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to assess the impact of working mothers on their children's socio-emotional development, focusing on self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and interpersonal skills. Children face several socio-emotional development effects that are the result of their mother's employment during their early developmental years (4 to 14 years old). A descriptive design was employed to fulfill the aim of the study. This study was conducted at a selected governmental university (the University of Sargodha) in Sargodha city. I gathered data from 100 working mothers who fulfilled the criteria for purposive sampling. A structured questionnaire sheet using a 5-point Likert scale. The mother's communication style (correlation coefficient: 0.910, $p < 0.01$), method of parenting (correlation coefficient: 0.830, $p < 0.01$), and nature of work (correlation coefficient: 0.932, $p < 0.01$) all had a positive and significant effect on the socio-emotional development of the children. The findings suggest that while maternal employment poses challenges of maintaining work-life balance and managing stress, the benefits such as financial independence, role modeling, and the potential for enhanced self-esteem far outweigh the difficulties

KEYWORDS Nature of Job, Parenting Style and Empowerment, Socio-Emotional Development, Working Mother

Introduction

The primary source that humans require includes families, which are primarily made up of mothers, fathers, and children (Lewin, 2023). While each family member has a duty and function, many women nowadays play two roles: being housewives at home and working outside the home as career women (Çoban, 2022). In patriarchal societies such as Pakistan, women have traditionally been confined from working outside the home, but without women's participation in the workforce and economy, the nation cannot develop (Jabeen, Haq, Jameel, Hussain, Asif, Hwang, & Jabeen, 2020).

Globally, there has been a rise in the number of women entering the labor market; nevertheless, the rate in emerging nations is lower than in developed countries (Kabeer, 2021). Pakistan's female labor force (as a percentage of the total labor force) was estimated to be 23.18% in 2023 by the World Bank's collection of development indicators, which is put together from officially recognized sources (Baikady, Gal, Nadesan, Sajid, & Jianguo, 2024). In 2024, 52.19% of Pakistanis are expected to be employed (Bizuyayehu, Dadi, Hassen, Ketema, Ahmed, Kassa, & Bore, 2024). It is projected that Pakistan would have 82.66 million workers overall by 2024 (Mukimuddin, 2024).

A working woman's domestic duties, aside from caring for her children, constitute a full-time job in and of themselves (Finch, & Groves, 2022). Nevertheless, she is unable to properly care for the house while she is employed. Because, there are several

commitments and engagements, including those to the extended family, and these social responsibilities are very crucial to attend to (Blazi, & Awolusi, 2020).

Additionally, there is the idea of providing care for one another, which is impossible when living apart (Nguyen, Tran, & Hinton, 2021). Especially when you have others to share the load during illness and other unexpected problems. For example, it presents a serious issue for the family when an old or very ill member needs round-the-clock care. But sharing the caregiving responsibilities makes life easier when you live with someone (Carter, 2023). This facilitates the formation of a solid link and partnership.

However, there is widespread fear in Pakistani society that women who join the workforce won't be able to handle childcare and domestic responsibilities at the same time (Malik, 2021). Additionally, it is feared that working women might contribute to child neglect and underdevelopment.

One of the most significant influences on a child's growth and wellbeing is their parenting. Mothers are said to be in charge of developing favorable traits in their children as well as positive attitudes and behaviors (Brooks, 2023). Despite meeting their children's financial needs, they are unable to provide the same level of time and attention as women who do not work. This makes children independent in their daily tasks, self-assured, and capable of making wise decisions as a result (Khusnidakhon, 2021).

Those children who receive proper attention from mothers at a young age are known to have better relations with parents and experience better child development overall (Bornstein, Cote, Haynes, Hahn, & Park, 2022).

The study's main goal is to learn about working mother's perspectives on the socio-emotional development of their children aged four to fourteen years old, as well as to investigate their views and beliefs, time management, and contributions to their children's socio-emotional growth and also see how working mothers affect their children's peer attitudes, social behaviors, academic achievement, and overall health.

Literature Review

The primary source that humans require consists of families, which are formed up of mothers, fathers, and children (Elder, 2018; Berk, 2022). Every family member has a purpose and function, but many women nowadays have two roles: they are housewife who work outside the home, and they are career women (Epstein, 2022).

In Pakistan, a developing nation, women have important roles in both the public and domestic spheres (Jabeen, Haq, Jameel, Hussain, Asif, Hwang, & Jabeen, 2020). In this nation, women play a significant role in three areas of responsibility: (i) childcare and household chores; (ii) work outside the home; and (iii) taking care of the family, in-laws, other family members, and the community.

The family structure shifts when mothers work because these women fulfill many responsibilities, including those in their own homes and in the community (Cowan, 2023). In many cases, it is difficult for women to manage all their roles and decide whether to stay at home and look after the children or engage in paid work outside the home (Del Boca, Oggero, Profeta, & Rossi, 2020).

Difficulties in preserving work-life balance, the stress of job loss, transitioning to home-based work, and managing children while working from home have all added to the load on working women. (Kalsoom, 2021; Loezar-Hernández, Briones-Vozmediano, Ronda-Pérez, & Otero-García, 2023).

Pakistani mothers often face the challenge of deciding whether they should leave their employment in order to prioritize caring for their children at home (Masood, & Nisar, 2020). The number of working mothers experiencing symptoms of stress and anxiety is rising daily (Nadri, Torabi, & Pirhadi, 2024).

According to studies, women and children have the closest bond and are more dependent on another person for a safe and healthy home environment (Baunach, 2020). Nonetheless, there are a number of obstacles that women may face that make it challenging for them to give their kids the best environment possible. (Begon & Townsend, 2021).

Young children who receive adequate attention from their mothers are known to have better relationships with their parents and to develop more normally as a whole (Abdullah, Cudjoe, & Manful, 2020).

Previous studies have established that children develop gender attitudes through observation of how their parents allocate female labor, which includes both paid and domestic responsibilities (Kabeer, 2021). The gender behavior demonstrated by their offspring is influenced by the distribution of household duties (Lappegård, Neyer, & Vignoli, 2021).

Child gender attitudes, according to this theory, are influenced by the ideology of their parents and the distribution of household responsibilities (Cano, & Hofmeister, 2023). The integration of social and emotional intelligence creates socioemotional development (Carter, 2021).

They should set up time for them and give them the best care possible (Iivari, Sharma, & Ventä-Olkkonen, 2020). Their main objective after leaving the office should be to sit with children and play with them or just listen to them intently, regardless of how interesting or boring they are talking about (Csikszentmihalyi, 2020). Working mothers should devote all of their remaining energy to spending time with their children once work is finished (Cowan, 2023).

Working mothers shouldn't feel guilty about anything if they can ensure that their children are loved and receiving all of their attention (Stewart, 2021). The nurturing process itself is what needs to be considered. Whether a woman works outside the home or stays at home, she can still be a respected mother (Epstein, 2022). Furthermore, the children particularly the daughters of working mothers did not hold any views that were associated with gender stereotypes (Bertrand, 2020).

According to certain studies, children of working mothers may experience emotional instability, aggression, or increased isolation (Peterman, Potts, O'Donnell, Thompson, Shah, Oertelt-Prigione, & Van Gelder, 2020). Some studies show that working mothers can help their young children take on more responsibility and value their mother's time (Wardiyah, Rilyani, & Nirwanto, 2023).

A busy schedule that depletes their energy for giving their children the best care possible is one of the obstacles parents face, along with limited prospects for career progression and financial limitations (Dowling, 2022). Any obstacle a woman faces financial, societal, or health-related can negatively impact the child's growth (Ladak, Gallagher, Hasan, Awais, Abdullah, & Gullick, 2020).

It seems that mothers' employment has a negative impact on their children's progress. The child suffers greatly throughout the infancy stage due to the mother's business (Juffer, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Van IJzendoorn, 2023).

Anisha Nair (2018) describes both positive and negative effects of working parents on the socioemotional development of their children in her article titled "Impact of Working Parents on Child Development" (Alam, 2021). Because both parents work, they only have a few hours to spend with their children at home. This teaches children the value of time and makes them aware of how important it is (Douglas, 2023).

Working mothers make money that they can utilize to enhance the conditions in which their kids grow up and the way they are cared for (Finch, & Groves, 2022). Children of working parents learn to make their own decisions at an early age because they understand that their parents are at work and may be able to handle a particular issue. As a result, they may make decisions with greater independence and confidence (Pescetelli, Hauperich, & Yeung, 2021).

Observing their parents effectively managing job and family responsibilities, children develop an enhanced feeling of respect for their parents (Darling, Cassidy, & Ballard, 2022). Youngsters pick up non-traditional behaviors from their parents, such as boys completing home duties and girls going out to work (Rodríguez-Planas, Sanz-de-Galdeano, & Terskaya, 2022).

Children's emotional, social, and cognitive development are all important, but environmental variables also have a role in their overall wellbeing (Morelli, Cattelino, Baiocco, Trumello, Babore, Candelori, & Chirumbolo, 2020). Maternal variables, like her working, are particularly significant and impactful among these (Bostic, 2023). The effects of maternal well-being on parenting may have an impact on the results of children (Coles, & Cage, 2022).

Compared to peers, teachers, and other relatives, parents have a greater influence on a child's behavioral abilities (Heyman, Poulakos, Upshur, & Wenz-Gross, 2018). According to social learning theory, children's preferences for their careers are considered to be greatly impacted by their parents' careers in addition to conduct (Alboliteeh, Grande, Berdida, Villagracia, Raguindin, & AlAbd, 2022).

Kendra Cherry, in her 2021 article "Social and Emotional Development in Early Childhood," provides some strategies that parents can employ to promote their children's socio-emotional development (Alam, 2021). Demonstrate suitable conduct observation is crucial for acquiring new knowledge and skills (Lin, Hsia, & Hwang, 2022).

A working mother who experiences a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment can serve as a positive role model for her children, inspiring them to explore their dreams and goals (Epstein, 2022). Social-emotional abilities are comprised of a number of interrelated developmental areas, including self-regulation, emotional awareness, and social interaction (Schoon, 2021). Social interaction deals with the relationships that kids have with other people, like their parents and classmates (Audley, & Jović, 2020).

Material and Methods

A quantitative research methodology has been used to conduct the study. The target population is the working mothers at the University of Sargodha who had children between 4 to 14 years of age. One hundred working mothers of University of Sargodha were selected as sample. Purposive sampling is used in research studies to select a specific group of individuals or units for analysis at the University of Sargodha. This study's questionnaire, which is used to collect data, is divided into three sections and includes questions about demographics; the second segment contains five variables, whereas the third section has four. Using a 5-point Likert scale, investigate how working mothers influence their children's views toward peers, social behaviors, academic achievement, and overall health. The options are neutral, agree, strongly agree, disagree, and strongly

disagree. The Cronbach's alpha method can be used to assess a system's credibility. In terms of dependability, the items in this study have a reliability of 0.991, indicating that they have nearly perfect internal consistency. The statistical analysis of the data was carried out using the statistical package for social science (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were employed to examine survey data on categorical variables. The responses to each question were calculated using frequencies and percentages. The study used descriptive statistics as well as bivariate techniques like correlation and regression analysis.

Ethical Consideration

After outlining the goal of the investigation, the studied sample gave their oral consent. Every participant was told that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that their names would not be included on the questionnaire sheet.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Correlation between the Communication with Kids and Socio-emotional Development of Children

Spearman's rho	CK	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.910**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	100	100
	DV	Correlation Coefficient	.910**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation data is displayed in the table above. The data in this view indicates that the significant value is 0.000, indicating that it has a significant value because it is less than the threshold of 0.01. The relationship between the independent (communication with kids) and dependent (socio-emotional development) variables is high (0.910), positive, and is 2-tailed. Therefore, this table shows that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. Previous study suggests social interaction deals with the relationships that kids have with other people, like their parents and classmates (Audley, & Jović, 2020). The preschool and kindergarten years are of the greatest significance for socio-emotional development (Gandotra, Kotyuk, Bizonics, Khan, Petánszki, Kiss, & Cserjesi, 2023).

Table 2
Correlation between the Parenting Style and Socio-emotional Development of Children

	PS		PS	DV
		Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.830**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
Spearman's rho	DV	N	100	100
		Correlation Coefficient	.830**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation data is displayed in the table above. The data in this view indicates that the significant value is 0.000, indicating that it has a significant value because it is less than the threshold of 0.01. The relationship between the independent (parenting style) and dependent (socio-emotional development) variables is high (0.830), positive, and is 2-tailed. Therefore, this table shows that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative

hypothesis accepted. They acknowledged and accepted that a mother plays a crucial role in influencing a child's personality and behavioral characteristics. Global studies also support mothers' awareness of and concern for their involvement in their children's development, particularly during their early years, between the ages of 4 and 14 (Shafie, S. M. 2024). It has been determined by numerous studies that riotous behavioral complications caused by poor socioemotional development are remarkably consistent throughout childhood and adolescence (Alam, 2021). These research findings, which indicate that specific socio-emotional skills develop and strengthen between preschool and teenage years, are supported by a wealth of data (Meroni, E. C., Piazzalunga, D., & Pronzato, C. 2022).

Table 3
Correlations between the Working Mother and their Children Socio-emotional Development

			IV	DV
Spearman's rho	IV	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.932**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	100	100
	DV	Correlation Coefficient	.932**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	100	100

The correlation data is displayed in the table above. The data in this view indicates that the significant value is 0.000, indicating that it has a significant value because it is less than the threshold of 0.01. The relationship between the independent (working mother) and dependent (socio-emotional development) variables is high (0.932), positive, and is 2-tailed. Therefore, this table shows that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The analysis of the literature reveals a complex relationship between the development of children and working mothers; even earlier research has primarily demonstrated a favorable correlation between these variables (Berniell, Mata, & Marchionni, 2021). The results of the investigation indicate a significant positive correlation between working mothers' participation and the growth of their offspring. These results match those of past research, which indicates that young infants who receive enough attention from their mothers are known to develop more normally overall and to have better connections with their parents (Juffer, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Van IJzendoorn, 2023).

Table 4
Regression analysis of the Working Mother and their Children Socio-Emotional Development

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-2.778	1.818		-1.528	.130
IV	.943	.024	.970	39.584	.000

a. Dependent Variable: DV

The table shows data regarding the coefficient value of the regression analysis. In this regard, data showed that IV (working mother) has a strong positive (.970) and significant effect (.000) on the dependent variable (socio-emotional development) of the study. It means the independent variable (working mother) has a strong positive effect (B = 0.943, $p < 0.01$, Beta = 0.970) on the dependent variable (socio-emotional development). This study found that working women have a positive impact on their children's early development. A working mother who experiences a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment can serve as a positive role model for her children, inspiring them to explore their dreams and goals (Epstein, 2022).

Conclusion

The study conducted at the University of Sargodha explores the impact of working mothers on their children's socio-emotional development, focusing on self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and interpersonal relationships. Through a comprehensive analysis of 100 working mothers with children aged 4-14, the research reveals significant insights into how maternal employment influences various facets of children's development. Key findings indicate that despite the challenges of maintaining work-life balance and managing stress, working mothers play a crucial role in shaping their children's development. The study underscores that these mothers often employ strategies that positively impact their children's self-esteem, social behaviors, academic achievement, and overall health. By being role models of independence and determination, working mothers contribute not only to their family's financial stability but also to their children's perception of gender roles and responsibilities. Moreover, the research highlights the importance of social support for working mother, particularly in navigating the demands of both career and parenting. This support network proves instrumental in mitigating stress and enhancing the overall well-being of both mothers and their children, thereby fostering healthier socio-emotional development outcomes for children in Pakistani society.

Recommendations

- **Policy Advocacy:** Encourage the implementation of laws that assist working women, such as those pertaining to parental leave, flexible work schedules, and affordable childcare. These regulations can help working women manage their stress and difficulties while successfully balancing their obligations to their families and their jobs.
- **Educational Programs:** Add into practice educational initiatives targeted at improving working women' coping strategies and parenting abilities. These courses can offer methods for reducing stress, enhancing interactions with children, and promoting socio-emotional growth.
- **Support Networks:** Increase working mothers' support systems through online forums, support groups, and community projects. These networks can exchange information, offer emotional support, and offer helpful guidance on managing the responsibilities of both a professional and caregiver.
- **Role Modeling Awareness:** Raise awareness of the beneficial effects of working mothers as ideal figures of independence, determination, and gender equity. Stress how crucial a variety of role models are in influencing how kids view gender roles and responsibilities.
- **Further Research:** Encourage more studies to explore the long-term impact of parental employment on the socio-emotional development of children in Pakistan across a range of age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds. Deeper understanding of the dynamics and long-term impacts of mother employment can be gained through long-term analysis.

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