

MATERNAL WORK AND ITS IMPACT ON COGNITION AND PERSONALITY OF CHILDREN - A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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A Review of the literature was conducted to provide an archival resource on the cognition and personality of children of working mothers. This review combined the results of various studies and found that there was a negative effect of mothers' employment on cognition of children. However, the review indicated a mixed response between maternal employment and personality development. The review will go a long way to help the scholars and academicians as a foundation and support for a new insight that they want to contribute.

Key words: Children, Cognition, Material Work, Personality.

INTRODUCTION

In the case of every social change, there is a lag between actions and attitudes. While people may be willing to accept the idea of career women, they are not willing to excuse them from their duties as career moms. The attitude towards working women seems to be that while people have no objection in availing their talents and abilities outside the home; women are not allowed to compromise on home life. And if they do, they are made to feel the error of their ways. In the first place, the term 'working mother' is a misnomer as mothers are working round the clock even if they don't go to an office. Being a working mother is not the easiest job in the world. Some women are good at it, some don't have a choice, some choose a middle path and some don't even try it.

Parenting is a very big responsibility and the parent child interaction plays a vital role in the development of child. The behaviour, mannerism ethics and level of confidence in a child is the total reflection of the style of parenting of a child. In other words, proper parenting prepares a child to face the

word boldly and accept the challenges and opportunities in his life. The effects of a mother's employment appear to vary with the child's age, sex, race, ethnicity, family form, and socioeconomic status. Considerable research focuses on the age of the child when the mother enters the workplace. Since mothers still remain children's primary caregivers, much attention has been paid to understanding the consequences of maternal employment, especially employment during children's preschool years, on children's cognitive achievement. Studies have focused on understanding whether employment status (Desai et al., 1989; Brooks-Gunn et al. 2002; Baum 2003; Ruhm, 2004), work hours (Berger et al., 2005), timing of maternal work (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2002), and nonstandard work hours (Han 2005) relate to child development. The results of these studies show that the effects are heterogeneous. While maternal employment seems to reduce the amount of mother child interactions and hence relates to lower cognitive outcomes among children (James-Burdumy, 2003), it is also associated with an increase in income and hence, improved intellectual performance (Blau and Grossberg, 1992). Most experts believe that a child's experiences in the

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family are important for his or her personality characteristics. Child rearing practices are especially critical. All experts agree that high quality parenting plays a critical role in the development of a child's personality. When parents understand how their child responds to certain situations, they can anticipate issues that might be problematic for their child. Parents who know how to adapt their parenting approach to the particular temperament of their child can provide guidance and ensure the successful development of their child's personality. A lot of experimental evidence is available which shows that the parents-child relationship is very important in the personality growth. Sometimes the mother becomes so exhausted that she is not in a position to attend to the smaller needs of the child. Her behaviour too, sometimes, becomes irritable. Many working ladies, due to tension and worries become victim of depression and hypertension. From such mother we cannot hope very much affection and warm behaviour for the family. Some time children are sent to crèche, sometimes, they are left on the mercy of nannies and such children develop a sense of insecurity. In their later life these children remain inefficient in many ways and remain dependent on others.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Maternal Employment and Cognitive Development of Children

Brooks – Gunn, Han and Waldfogel (2002) in their longitudinal study found that three year old children of mothers who went to work before the children were nine months old had poorer cognitive outcomes than three year old children who had stayed at home with their mothers in the first nine months of the child's life. Maternal employment is thought to have negative effects on the cognitive development of children. Possible resulting problems can include deficits in reading ability, slowed language development, and impaired mathematical abilities. Ruhm (2000), used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and various cognitive tests in order to assess the effects of maternal employment on child development. This study also added the component of paternal employment. It was found that maternal employment during the first year of the child's life had a detrimental effect on language development in three

(3) and four (4) year olds and on the mathematical abilities of five (5) and six (6) year olds. The first year of a child's life may be one of the most developmentally important. Lack of stimulation, interaction, or bonding with the mother at this stage in life many times leads to cognitive difficulties in the child. Maternal employment separates mother and child, thus providing a possible venue for cognitive problems. When considering paternal employment, however, the opposite was found. The more time fathers spent at home and unemployed, the more negatively affected were the children's cognitive and behavioural development. It was inferred that this occurred because the fathers were not spending time with their children out of choice, as they were when they were employed full time. Blau (1999), determined that income was not as important a variable with respect to cognitive development in children as other familial aspects are. It was found that permanent income, that is income from a permanent career oriented position, is slightly significant. However, changing the families' income level has no significant effect. Children in different economic classes do seem to be on different cognitive levels. However, this does not seem to be caused by income, but rather by familial variables. These variables include the mother's race, her education level, and the marital status of the parents. These factors are interrelated in various ways. The mother's race may affect her education level, which then affects parenting skills. Also, Harvey (1999) examined the effects of maternal employment on cognitive development using many of the same testing apparatuses as the previous studies mentioned. Maternal employment was found to be beneficial to children in low-income families. Perhaps these children receive more stimulation or education in their day care system than they would if they were at home. It can also be inferred that mothers of low-income families are also less educated, thus having poorer parenting skills. The children of low-income families with employed mothers scored higher on the cognitive tests and had less behavioural problems than children of low-income families where the mother was not employed. However, it was also determined that children in traditional, high-income families suffered as a result of maternal employment. Perhaps the standard of care received at the day care being provided paled in comparison to the child's home life. It can be inferred from these findings, that positive effects on child development are felt if

maternal employment is a significant necessity to the family. If maternal employment is not a necessity for maintaining a certain level of socioeconomic status then the children seem to be at a greater risk for developmental problems if the mother works outside of the home. Lefebvre and Merrigan (1998), used the data of the Canadian NLSCY (National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth) partly as a replication of the two last research papers. Their results suggest: first, that parental work and maternal employment does not have direct effects on cognitive outcomes of 4- to 5-year-old children; second, that maternal full-time work is associated with higher levels of negative behavioural outcomes for 4- to 11-year-old children, the effects remaining small relative to the effects of the other co-variables. The most important predictors of cognitive scores and behavioural scores were the child's personal characteristics as well as maternal characteristics and the spouse's education.

On average, children's cognitive development scores are not dramatically different whether their mother is strongly or weakly attached to the labour market. The exceptions were children with a lone mother weakly attached to the labour market who score significantly lower than children in other type of families. Other results confirm the hypothesis that the effect of work is biased positively (i.e. that work positively influences child outcomes) if proper controls are not included in the regression analysis. Also, Hill and O'Neill (1994) analyse cognitive achievement among young children, addressing selectivity issues with respect to the mother's fertility status and hours worked while controlling for time, since giving birth, spent in a household participating in welfare. They also adjust the regression procedure for the presence of family fixed effects. They find a significant negative association between a mother's hours at work and her child's cognitive skills after controlling for family income and the mother's human capital, suggesting the negative effects of a mother's working hours may outweigh the positive effects of higher money income. Finally, their results show that a mother's long-term welfare participation is detrimental to the acquisition of cognitive skills among young children. Their study is the only one where a relatively strong negative effect of work on cognitive scores is detectable with the data. Blau and Grossberg (1992), addressing, not very successfully, the selectivity issue of the labour force participation decision of mothers, found that maternal employment during the child's first

year of life has a negative effect on cognitive skills, but employment in second and later years has positive effects, so that the net effect over the first three to four years is close to zero. They suggest that the indirect effect of the increase in family income when mothers work plays an important part in producing the positive total effect of maternal paid work in the second and later years. In the same manner, the impact for children of being raised in female-headed families is not significant when family income is included in the model. However, the estimated parameters of the labour supply effects obtained with instrumental variables methods that control for the endogeneity of the labour supply have very large standard errors.

Therefore, their model does not convincingly address the possible biases that plague the ordinary least squares results on which their conclusions are based. Specifically, Baydar and Brooks-Gunn (1991) investigated the relationship between the time mothers returned to work and the cognitive development of children. The second and third quarters of infancy seem to be significant periods for the formation of secure attachments between mother and child, and interruptions in this process can lead to detrimental effects on the child's development. This study focused on the cognitive outcomes of 3 and 4 year olds, as measured by various tests and surveys. It was found that there were significant negative effects on cognitive developments of 3 and 4 year olds when the mother returned to work

Maternal Employment and Personality Development in Children

Ora et. al., (2006) studied that the children of working mothers were having more difficulties and being less adjusted to kindergarten. Their adjustment to day care was also poorer. Aizer (2004) has found that the children without adult supervision are more likely to engage in anti-social or risky potentially dangerous behaviour. Brackett et al., (2004) found that high emotionally intelligent individual would less likely to engage in self destructive or negative behaviours. Hock et al., (2004) also revealed that there existed a positive relation between maternal separation anxiety and children's anxieties and separation from their mothers. This is perceived as a threat to the child's well being and/or to her own psychological

equilibrium. Such anxiety may be reflected in feelings of worry, sadness, or guilt. Hill (2001) showed that when a child's mother works in the first year of life it can have a negative effect on the child's later development. Koschanska (2001) studied that insecurely attached toddlers show more negative emotions (fear, distress and anger) while securely attached children show more joyfulness, even in the same situation. Propper (1972), completed a questionnaire study of 229 Canadian high school students from lower-class families with working and non-working mothers. She found that parent-child disagreements were more common in the working-mother group than in the non-working mother group. Nevertheless, perceptions of parental interest help with school and personal problems and degree of closeness to parents were similar for both groups. Nelson (1971) administered the Minnesota Counselling Inventory to over 500 ninth grade students from intact middle-class families whose mothers were full-time employed, part-time employed, or not employed.

The results showed that for girls maternal employment status was unrelated to scores on all MCI (Mild Cognitive Impairment) scales including family relationships, social relationships, emotional stability, and conformity, adjustment to reality, mood, and leadership. Boys whose mothers worked full-time made better adjustment scores on all MCI scales than did boys whose mothers worked part-time or not at all. Banducci (1967), using a questionnaire, examined educational aspiration and expectations of 3000 high school seniors whose mothers were either full-time employed or non-employed. He found that in general there was a tendency for children of working mothers to have higher educational aspirations and expectations than did children of non-working mothers. The exception was found in those boys with mothers in the professional social class who tended to have low educational aspirations. Banducci found that lower-class children tended to have higher academic aspirations than children in the middle or upper-class. Whitmarsh (1965), employing the Money Problems Checklist, studied seventy five 16-18 year old white girls from intact families with either full-time employed mothers or mothers who were full-time home makers. He found that daughters of employed mothers reported fewer total problems and fewer home related problems than did daughters of home makers. McCord et al. (1963) compared 149 lower-class boys of working and non

working mothers. These boys were observed for five years during the 1930's when they were between the ages of 10 and 15 years. McCord suggested that in a stable home environment, maternal employment was related to a son's increased sexual anxiety because of the equalization of the status between the sexes. He found that in an unstable home environment, maternal employment was related to increased criminality and dependency. McCord suggested that this might be the result of the son's interpretation of his mother's working as a form of rejection. Hoffman (1974) reported that juvenile delinquency and maternal employment are positively related only in the middle-class. Roy (1961), in his study of rural and urban high school students found that children of employed mothers were as socially active as those of non-employed mothers. Results indicate a rural-urban difference and a difference between the sexes with regard to school activities. Children of working, and non-working mothers in the rural sample participated more in "out of school" activities than those in the urban sample. Sons of employed mothers participated more often in school activities than did sons of mothers who were not employed. Daughters of employed mothers, however, participated less than did daughters of mothers who were not employed. Glueck and Glueck (1957), studied attitudes of delinquent and non-delinquent sons of full-time and part-time employed mothers and full-time homemakers. They found no significant differences in attitudes between the two groups. They did find, however, more boys with defensive attitudes among non-delinquent sons of full-time employed mothers than among non-delinquent sons of homemakers.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this review paper was used to identify and appraise published and unpublished reviews systematically and reporting of systematic reviews. The process of identifying and appraising all published reviews allows researchers to describe the quality of evidence base, summarise and compare the review's conclusions and discuss the strength of these conclusions.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

After collecting the literature review it was concluded

that maternal employment had a negative effect on the cognitive development of children and maternal employment separates mother and child, thus creating cognitive problems but when paternal employment was considered, the opposite was found because the fathers were not spending time with their children out of choice, as they were when they were employed full time. Income was not an important aspect with respect to cognitive development in children. Maternal employment was found to be beneficial to children in low-income families. Also negative association was found between mothers working hours and child's cognition, suggesting the negative effects of a mother's working hours may outweigh the positive effects of higher money income.

Taking personality in consideration it was found that the children without adult supervision were more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour. Also, emotionally intelligent child was less likely to engage in self destructive or negative behaviours. Maternal separation anxiety was an important factor

contributing in child's anxiety level. However there was no difference in social development between children of employed mothers and those of non-employed mothers. Moreover, insecurely attached toddlers showed more negative emotions like fear, distress and anger while securely attached children showed more joyfulness, even in the same situation. In addition, it was found that in general there was a tendency for children of working mothers to have higher educational aspirations and expectations than did children of non-working mothers.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that maternal employment causes separation anxiety in children, thus creating cognitive problems in them. Also children without adult supervision are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour. So steps should be taken to promote the culture of mobile crèches. Though the educational aspirations and expectations of children of working mothers are higher than children of non-working mothers so they should be encouraged more to achieve excel in academics.

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