

Family Functioning of Working and Non-Working Mothers in Joint Family: In Adolescents' Perspectives

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to examine the adolescent's perception of family functioning of working and non-working mothers in joint family in terms of problem-solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavior control and general functioning. The research design adopted for the study is ex-post facto research design. The sample consisted of 123 adolescent school going children. The simple random sampling was used to choose the schools, whereas the convenient sampling was used for the selection of respondents. The personal data sheet and McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD) was used for data collection. The independent sample t-test was used to analyze the data. Results indicates, based on the adolescent's perception of family functioning, there is a significant difference between working and non-working mothers of joint families in terms of adolescent's perception in problem-solving, communication, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, and general functioning. However, no significant difference were found in terms of roles and behavior control.

Keywords: Joint Family, Mother's Working Status, Family Functioning, Adolescents' Perspectives.

INTRODUCTION

A family is described as a collection of people who often reside under one roof, share property, and consume food prepared on the same hearth (Gupta, 1994). Two married heterosexual parents and their legal offspring make up a nuclear family (S.B. et al., 2014). Joint family structures, on the other hand, are interconnected through ritual, economics, physicality, and sociality. In this system, the family unit is dependent on a variety of family interactions rather than just the husband, wife, & offspring (Chandrasekhar, 1943). In a joint household, family members pool their incomes to take care of everyone's requirements. The higher socioeconomic income group has the largest prevalence of joint family families. Within joint families, there is frequently an inherent tension between the bonds and obligations that hold the individual nuclear units together and those that bind the entire family together (Wheaton, 1975). The joint family system is breaking down, and the percentage of nuclear families is rising, as a result of growing economic rationalism (Owens, 1971). As a result, the nuclear family system is today the most prevalent residential structure (Conklin, 1969). Family dinners, which are a vital routine and the most common activity in joint families, are guaranteed by these systems, which have other important advantages (Garmiene et al., 2006). Additionally, joint family structures provide more assistance than nuclear families in lowering stress as well as mental health issues (Wheaton, 1975). However, the absence of privacy and restriction of individual expression are two significant drawbacks of the joint family structure (Desai & Shah, 1983). Three things affect how a joint family is divided: the family's financial situation, the size of the habitat, and the control of an aged family member (Barkat-e-Khuda, 1985; Khalid et al., 2021).

Family size significantly affects children's development in adverse ways. Previous research shown that in a joint family structure, time spent with the partner and their children significantly decreased (Khalid et al., 2021; Mestdag & Vandeweyer, 2005). Parental roles are more important than those of any other family members in both nuclear as well as joint family structures. According to studies, children in a joint family system face more competition as well as comparison with peers of their own age than those in a nuclear family system because there is a lack of attention that can cause them to lose interest in their studies and lack confidence in their personalities when compared more with their peers (Khalid et al., 2021).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ridhi Rajgariah (2021) conducted a study to ascertain and compare the parental stress experienced by working and nonworking mothers, as well as to comprehend the coping mechanisms used to manage this stress. A self-administered, validated questionnaire was used to collect information on socio-demographic factors, parenting stress (parenting stress scale), and coping techniques (cope inventory), which were then analyzed using SPSS V.24. The sample comprised of 100 working (Joint – 33; Nuclear – 67) and 100 non-working (Joint – 70; Nuclear – 30) women, residing in Karnataka. Result reveals that parental stress was not shown to be significantly correlated with the family type (joint and nuclear family) in the study (Rajgariah et al., 2021).

Nadia Farooq et al. (2018) investigated the impact of mothers' job on how their children are raised. Whether the dual obligations of motherhood and work are truly carried out at the cost of children's welfare. Statistical analysis is performed on the data gathered for the investigation (SPSS). The Chi square test is used to examine associations. It shows that the children of working mothers likely to be more achievement-oriented than the children of unemployed mothers. The relationship between working mothers' families and non-working mothers' families' control over children was also highly significant ($P=0.000$), and the association between working women's various priorities in nuclear family structures and significance ($P=0.002$) demonstrates how joint family systems minimize working mothers' tasks and offer significant support for those who choose to work outside the home. With additional siblings, there is a significant increase in the likelihood of child delinquency ($P=0.003$) because the mother cannot devote enough time to each child.

A. A. S. Azam, and F. A. Shaikh (2016) explored how family structure and mother's line of work affect the resilience of adolescent school-goers. 260 school-aged students from the Uttar Pradesh district of Aligarh were given a standardized resilience test. The voluntary participants ranged in age from 14 to 18 years, with a mean age of 16.62. There were 181 respondents from nuclear families and 79 respondents from joint families. The majority of respondents (70%) had stay-at-home mothers. To investigate the impact of type of family and mothers' employment status, a multivariate ANOVA was conducted. The findings showed that, regardless of their family kinds, adolescents whose moms were homemakers had roughly similar resilience scores (mainly high). Adolescents of nuclear families having working mothers performed better on the resilience test. Those from joint families who had working mothers, however, had very poor resilience scores. This study so sheds light on the type of influence the family system may have on the youth's choice of adversity management techniques. Working moms from nuclear families likely have stronger self-esteem and more autonomy, both of which might positively affect their children's personality development and coping mechanisms for stress. However, this is not really the scenario of adolescents from joint families and mothers who work, as the latter may need to abide by and make adjustments to child-rearing norms (Azam & Shaikh, 2016).

Kanchan Sabre (2016) conducted a study in Madhya Pradesh, and examined into how well women were adjusting to marriage with relation to the different types of families. A sample comprising 120 women (60 from nuclear families and 60 from blended families) were purposefully chosen for the study. The Marital Adjustment Scale by Pramod, K., and Kanchana, R. was the measurement tool utilized to gather data. Means, SD, and a t-test were computed to assess the data. The findings showed that women from nuclear and joint homes had significantly different marital adjustments. Women from nuclear households displayed greater level of marital adjustment than women from joint families (Kanchan Sabre, 2016).

Muddanagouda Patil (2016) investigated the stress levels of working and stay-at-home mothers in relation to the nature of their families. From the Dharwad district in the Indian state of Karnataka, 90 women's samples were collected. Participants comprised 45 working women (nuclear family $N=23$, joint family $N=22$), and 45 home-makers (nuclear family $N=22$, joint family $N=23$). A Stress Scale developed by Singh (2002) was administered to each person separately to determine their level of stress. The study's conclusions showed that women of nuclear families are much more stressed than women from joint families. Additionally, the results showed that working women of nuclear families experience much higher levels of stress compared to working women from joint families. According to the findings, there is no significant variance between homemaker women who belong to nuclear or joint families (Muddanagouda Patil, 2016).

There has been a substantial shift in family structures in recent years, with more people embracing nuclear family structures, but very few researches has been carried out in an Indian context. As they affect family cohesion and adolescent outcomes, it is crucial to recognize the disparities between working and non-working mothers' performance in the joint family system.

Objectives

To examine the adolescent's perception of family functioning in terms of problem-solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavior control and general functioning of working and non-working mothers in joint family.

Hypotheses

H₀₁ – There will be no significant difference in problem solving between working and non-working mothers of joint family

H₀₂ – There will be no significant difference in communication between working and non-working mothers of joint family

H₀₃ – There will be no significant difference in roles between working and non-working mothers of joint family

H₀₄ – There will be no significant difference in affective responsiveness between working and non-working mothers of joint family

H₀₅ – There will be no significant difference in affective involvement between working and non-working mothers of joint family

H₀₆ – There will be no significant difference in behavior control between working and non-working mothers of joint family

H₀₇ – There will be no significant difference in general family functioning between working and non-working mothers of joint family

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Ex-post facto research design has thus been considered to be the most appropriate for the present study in order to meet its requirements and accomplish its objectives.

Description of the Sample

The sample consisted of 123 adolescent school going children, aged between 13 to 17. Both girls and boys of joint families were included. As per the nature of the sample, the method of sampling that has been chosen for this study is the non-probability sampling method. The simple random sampling was used to choose the schools, whereas the convenient sampling was used for the selection of respondents. Adolescent children who never gone to school, school-dropouts, and children with birth defects, developmental disorders, and disabilities were excluded from the study. Respondents were only chosen based on their willingness to participate.

Tool Used

➤ *Personal Data Sheet*

The researcher developed a personal data sheet that included both closed-ended and open-ended questions with the necessary choices to collect personal information from the adolescents who were chosen for the study. Researcher gathered information regarding the respondent's age, gender, working status of mother, and type of household they live in.

➤ *McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD)*

The McMaster Model of Family Functioning (MMFF), a clinically oriented model of families, serves as the foundation for the FAD. The model has changed since earlier research (Needham et al., 1969). It defines the family group's structural and organizational characteristics as well as the patterns of family member interactions that have been discovered to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy families (Epstein et al., 1983).

There are seven dimensions of family functioning identified by the model. They are:

(i) *Problem-Solving* - It refers to the family's capability to deal with challenges (problems that pose a danger to the family's integrity and capacity for function) to a degree that preserves efficient family functioning (Epstein et al., 1978).

(ii) *Communication* - The main concern is whether verbal signals are straightforward in the sense that they are uttered to the person for whom they are meant and clear in terms of contents (Epstein et al., 1978).

(iii) *Family Roles* - It emphasizes on how much the family has developed a set of behavioural patterns for managing a variety of family activities, such as material resources, nurturing and support, encouragement of personal development, maintenance and management of the family systems, and adult sexual gratification. It encompasses whether responsibilities are delegated to family members clearly and equally as well as if they are performed appropriately (Rado, 1961).

(iv) *Affective Responsiveness* - It is the degree to which particular family members are capable of experiencing the right emotions in response to a variety of situations. Welfare and emergency feelings are both considered (Epstein et al., 1978).

(v) *Affective Involvement* - It is focused on how much family members value and are concerned in one another's worries and interests. Families who are in excellent condition are moderately involved—neither too less nor too much (Epstein et al., 1978).

(vi) *Behavior Control* - It demonstrates how a family communicates and preserves principles for the conduct of its members. It evaluates different control patterns (flexible, rigid, laissez-faire and chaotic are considered) as well as behavior in various settings (including risky, psychological, and social ones) (Epstein et al., 1978).

(vii) *General Functioning* - It refers to overall healthy and unhealthy functioning of the family (Epstein et al., 1978).

This questionnaire's reliability is at a good level, as evidenced by the reliability test's alpha coefficient of 0.7. It has been indicated that the FAD has (a) adequate test-retest reliability, (b) low correlations with social desirability, (c) moderate correlations with other self-report measures of family functioning, and (d) differentiates significantly between clinician-rated healthy and unhealthy families. Cut-off scores with sufficient sensitivity and specificity for identifying healthy and unhealthy families were also generated (Epstein et al., 1983).

Procedure of Data Collection

At first, four schools in Ramnathapuram district of TamilNadu were approached for collection of data. Then, the adolescent children from joint family structures were approached with consent from the school's higher authorities. Informed consent was obtained from every participant prior to participation. The personal data sheet along with McMaster Family Assessment Device was administered. After filling the personal details, the participants were asked to respond to the 60 items in FAD in terms of how they feel their mother has been functioning in family.

Statistical Analysis

The data subjected to descriptive statistical analysis such as mean, standard deviation and independent sample t-test. SPSS statistical software was used to conduct all statistical analysis.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1: T-test results of adolescent's perception of family functioning of working and non-working mothers in joint family

Variables	Working n = 53		Non-working n = 70		Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Problem Solving	2.02	.533	1.82	.461	.03*
Communication	2.28	.442	1.98	.523	.001***
Roles	2.26	.374	2.11	.490	.081
Affective Responsiveness	2.34	.541	2.07	.535	.006**
Affective Involvement	2.55	.431	2.35	.407	.011*
Behavior Control	2.50	.370	2.44	.368	.372
General Functioning	2.10	.455	1.84	.436	.002**

***significant at .001 level

**significant at .01 level

*significant at .05 level

Based on the FAD manual scoring interpretation, the mean score of below 2 is interpreted as healthy family functioning, and the mean score of 2 and above is interpreted as unhealthy family functioning (Epstein et al., 1983).

In problem solving, there found to be a significant difference between working and non-working mothers of joint families ($p < .05$). Consequently, the mean score of working mothers ($\mu = 2.02$) is interpreted as unhealthy functioning whereas non-working mothers ($\mu = 1.82$) is interpreted as functioning healthy in relation to problem solving. Hence, the null hypothesis H_{01} stated "There will be no significant difference in problem solving between working and non-working mothers of joint family" is rejected. It is evident that adolescents view working mothers to be less capable of resolving concerns and problems that could endanger their family's integrity and functional capacity than non-working mothers in joint families (Wenniger et al., 1993). Possible reasons include a lack of flexibility in joint families and the older generation's dominance over decision-making (e.g., grandparents or elder-male) in these households. Few studies claimed that results from joint families, as opposed to nuclear families, demonstrated that non-working women made independent and joint decisions regarding social activities, however working women only made independent and joint decisions regarding health-related matters. Child concerns are one instance where the sole husband makes decisions. In addition, compared to non-working mothers, working mothers are more content to share the decision-making process than doing it alone (Maral & Kumar, 2017).

In communication, mothers of joint families who work and those who don't were found to differ significantly ($p < .001$). Likewise, the mean score of working mothers ($\mu = 2.28$) is interpreted as unhealthy functioning whereas non-working mothers ($\mu = 1.98$) is interpreted as healthy functioning. Thus, the null hypothesis H_{02} "There will be no significant difference in communication between working and non-working mothers of joint family" is rejected. It indicates that, non-working mothers in joint family communicates well with their adolescent children than non-working mothers. It might be because children of working mothers are more likely to spend the majority of their time with other family members in joint families (like grand-parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.). Therefore, when a youngster spends their valuable time with others rather than their mother, this impacts the interactions and communication among a child and her mother and has an impact on the children's growth over the long term (Kagan et al., 1977).

In family roles, there found to be no significant difference between working and non-working mothers. The mean scores of both working ($\mu = 2.26$) and non-working mothers ($\mu = 2.11$) of joint family are interpreted as unhealthy functioning. There, the null hypothesis H_{03} "There will be no significant difference in roles between working and non-working mothers of joint family" is accepted. It indicates, both working and non-working mothers of joint family are poorly managing family tasks and responsibilities with their children. Perhaps as a result of, a traditional sort of role-conflict exists between female employees who were residing in joint family system over the expectation of the in-laws that they devote the same amount of time to work and family. Ridhi Rajgariah (2021) found that both working & non-working mothers felt parental stress as a consequence of trying to live up to the expectations of the older generation as well as other members of the joint family system. As a result, role-conflict arises between parent and children. Additionally, working women were more likely than non-working mothers to experience parenting stress (Rajgariah et al., 2021).

In affective responsiveness, significant difference exists between working and non-working mothers of joint family ($p < .01$). Here, the mean score of both working ($\mu = 2.34$) and non-working ($\mu = 2.07$) are interpreted as unhealthy functioning. So, the null hypothesis H_{04} stated "There will be no significant difference in affective responsiveness between working and non-working mothers of joint family" is rejected. It indicates that, both working and non-working mothers

is joint family does not seem to be responsive with the emotional expressions of adolescent children. According to Nilufer Ozabaci (2006), larger families with a greater number of children and/or extended family members living with them are believed to divide their resources widely among several children. These restrict the amount and quality of emotional interactions between children and their parents, which may have an impact on some adolescents' personalities (Ozabaci, 2006).

In affective involvement, there found to significant difference between working and non-working mothers of joint families ($p < .05$). However, the mean score of both working ($\mu = 2.55$) and non-working mothers ($\mu = 2.35$) are interpreted as unhealthy functioning. Thereby, the null hypothesis H_{05} stated "There will be no significant difference in affective involvement between working and non-working mothers of joint family" is rejected. Perhaps as a result of, due to a variety of professional responsibilities, working mothers often do not spend as much genuine quality with their children as a non-working mother does. It was also noticed that full-time working mothers of adolescents checked homework less frequently, knew very few parents of their children's friends, had fewer media controls, and participated in school volunteering at a lower rate than part-time working mothers or mothers who did not work (Sultana & Noor, 2012).

In behavior control, no significant differences were found between working and non-working mothers of joint families. Also, the mean score of both working ($\mu = 2.50$) and non-working mothers ($\mu = 2.44$) were interpreted as unhealthy functioning. And thus, the null hypothesis H_{06} stated "There will be no significant difference in behavior control between working and non-working mothers of joint family" is accepted. Generally, in a joint family system, everyone who lives there is accountable for their actions, whereas in a nuclear family, only the parents are (Conklin, 1969). To agree with the in-laws, sometimes parents pressurize children and gets confused on what to do and what not to do. Additionally, under a joint family setup, children experience more competition as well as comparison (Khalid et al., 2021). Like working mothers, stay-at-home mothers indicate that it is harder for them to maintain control over their children and that they are less secure in their abilities being mothers (Hoffman, 1989). A child from a non-nuclear household was specifically predicted to be seen as having more unfavorable traits (such as a sense of insecurity, aggressive behaviour, behavioural issues, feeling of anxiety, sadness, and withdrawing behaviour) (Corner, 2001).

In general family functioning, there found to be significant difference between working and non-working mothers of joint family ($p < .01$). The mean score of working mothers ($\mu = 2.10$) is interpreted as unhealthy functioning, whereas non-working mothers ($\mu = 1.84$) is interpreted as healthy family functioning. Hence, the null hypothesis H_{07} stated "There will be no significant difference in general family functioning between working and non-working mothers of joint family" is rejected. It represents that, adolescents seem to perceive non-working mothers of joint family operates their family in a healthy way than working mothers. The results support earlier findings that non-working mothers of joint families are more engaged with their children than are working mothers (Manimekalai et al., 2019). Perhaps as a result of working mothers generally experiencing higher levels of stress than non-working women. Additionally, compared to working mothers, mothers who do not work are better at supervising their children (Sultana & Noor, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study reveals that adolescents perceive both working and non-working mothers in joint family operates their family in an unhealthy way to some extent. It might be as a result of, in a joint family system, maintaining a healthy and pleasant connection with one's in-laws is one of the numerous obstacles faced by married women who work and those who do not. This involves overburdening themselves with family responsibilities, and thus it reflects on their behavior towards children.

Working women have a strong belief that their in-laws may not allow them to continue working if they don't please them with their work at home (Kinman G & Jones F, 2008). According to Indian research, working women may have at least one disadvantage: their employment may have a negative impact on young children's survival (Basu & Basu, 1991). Women's personal life are impacted by their profession, which leads to ups and downs in the family and eventually affects the emotional aspects of children's relationships (Lee, 2003).

Therefore, working and non-working mothers in a joint family household should make a greater effort to make up for their absence because quality parenting is more significant than quantity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adolescents' perceptions of how well their families work may be influenced by variables other than family structure. These elements should be identified in subsequent studies so that mental health practitioners may take corrective action to get rid of them.

Additionally, the current study had a small sample size because it only included people from middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds and did not focus on the working hours or geographic locations of participants.

In a joint family system, there is a need to research on parenting practices, mother-child connection, and the socialization of children. Also, the consequences of mothers' outside employment and its connection to their children's wellbeing need to be studied further.

Finally, a more complete understanding of family functioning can be achieved by incorporating both parent and adolescent viewpoints.

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