Article:	**Issues Faced by Working Mothers in Lahore and the Impact of Job Stress on their Relationship with their Adolescent Children**

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NUMBER OF REFERENCES	NUMBER OF FIGURES	NUMBER OF TABLES
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Issues Faced by Working Mothers in Lahore and the Impact of Job Stress on their Relationship with their Adolescent Children

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by working mothers as they struggle to fulfill the tasks of parenthood and employment in effective ways and the impact of job stressors on their relationship with their adolescent children. The study is qualitative in nature. Data was collected from twenty mother-adolescent dyads; ten working mother-adolescent dyads and ten stay-at-home mother-adolescent dyads were selected from a school in Lahore. Semi-structured interviews and empirical analysis of documents were employed to collect the data. Qualitative interpretive analysis was used to analyze the data and to explore the adolescent-mother relationship and the associated factors which influence this relationship. The study concluded that there was no difference in intimacy and companionship measure of working and non-working mothers with their adolescent children. However, monitoring appeared to be minor in working mothers. The study is expected to help in creating programs and policies that improve the work-life balance of working mothers and families and foster adolescent adjustment in the society.

Keywords: adolescent children, adjustment, job-stress, working mothers.

Background of the Study

Parents create generations. They play a key role in adolescence not only for adaptation of values and acceptance of cultural norms but also for the sustenance of balanced emotional and psychological development of children required to turn them into prosperous human beings (Jongsma, Peterson, McInnis & Bruce, 2014; Erikson, 1968; Rohan & Zanna, 1996).

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Since the 1960s and 1970s, the feminist movement has brought in a noticeable increase in the number of women joining the workforce (United Nations, 2000). This number has increased further in the later 20th century and early 21st century. The workforce participation ratio of mothers with children under the age of eighteen was recorded as 47.4% in 1975, which increased to 71.3% by 2011 and was projected to reach 75.8% in 2014 (Byun, Henderson & Toossi, 2015). Feminism reached Pakistan during the 1980s and it resulted in the increased ratio of female labor force participation which was 16.2% of the total population in 2001, followed by 21.3% in 2008 and 24.3% in 2010 (Almani, Abro & Mugheri, 2012). Moreover, a closer look at women's employment in various occupations particularly in the service sector reflects that the highest employment number for women exists in the teaching field.

According to Pakistan Education Statistics 2007-08, the number of female teachers in Pakistan was recorded at 679,503 (AEPM 2009). In 2015, this number reached 773,332 which indicate the increasing number of female teachers depending upon a range of factors out of which the most dominant factor is that families recognize this profession as the most appropriate for females (UNESCO, 2013). Female teachers can devote more of their time to their families along with playing their roles as professional workers. Another leading factor is that over the years the national educational policies of Pakistan have focused on women's enrollment in teaching profession by the allocation of fringe incentives for them (Arif & Ilyas, 2012).

Working mothers contribute in supporting their family income and also their children through all the financial benefits they receive from their work but at the risk of their domestic life and especially by jeopardizing their relationship with their adolescent children. Working mothers therefore tamper with their dual roles, that is, "good mothers" and "good workers" (Turner & Norwood, 2013). The workplace demands the significance of professional duty over any other social duty (Buzzanell, Meisenbach, Remke, Liu, Bowers & Conn, 2005). Hence, the imbalance between the professional life and the domestic life causes stress and conflicts among mothers and their adolescent children. In order to deal with this stress and conflict, the status of working mothers can be remolded into non-working, but this is likely to withdraw all the financial and fringe benefits that they fetch for the welfare of their homes and families. In order to avoid this predicament, there is a need to improve the existing professional environment at the workplace through the provision of flexibilities and benefits to females not only to create but also to sustain a positive mother-adolescent relationship (Allen, McElhaney, Land, Kuperminc, Moore, O'Beirne - Kelly & Kilmer, 2003).

2. Literature Review

The existing research is focused on the mother's inevitable role in affective and psychomotor growth in early years (Waters & Cummings, 2000).

Nevertheless, the topic of parenting of adolescents is a lesser researched domain. Fewer studies have been conducted on the relationship of adolescents with job stressed mothers and these studies cover foreign contexts (Galvin, Braithwaite & Bylund, 2015). Moreover, empirical evidence seems to have settled in accepting that maternal employment is not associated with negative outcomes in adolescents (Hays, 1996). Mothers are still seen in a constant state of mental conflict between opting to continue with their job or to quit it because they are not sure whether it will affect their children or not. The increase in a number of negative outcomes like suicides, sexual and reproductive health issues, intentional injuries, substance abuse and eating disorders in adolescents (Bynum & Kotchick, 2006) adds up to their mothers' fear, therefore, they either cannot work or they are unable to give their full professional attention at the workplace with all these apprehensions in their mind.

Work-life balance' is the term used in literature to refer to policies that ensure greater complementarities between work and domestic responsibilities or a Family Friendly Work Arrangement (FFWA), also referred to in international literature as 'alternative work arrangements'. The problem is that either there are no such policies declared in Pakistani organizations or they are written but not implemented. Therefore, working mothers have to face a lack of supporting work-place structure (Arif, Ejaz & Yousaf, 2013) and consequently job stress which then leads to work-family conflict. Research stresses that the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood is greatly affected by the support given by families (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset & Blum, 2009). Therefore, we need to ensure that this transition remains smooth and productive.

The other factor related to a mother's job, which affects the quality of her relationship with her adolescent children, is the negative psychological spillover. Work demands the worker's time and psychological reserves, thus draining the energy resources needed for exhibiting family roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Consequently, they either show low standard work or low standard parenting. The depletion of psychological energies and the increased stress of low performance contribute to less parental companionship, intimacy and monitoring of early adolescents (Azar, Reitz & Goslin, 2008). If they focus more on work, they are left with lesser time to entertain the family and play their role in facilitating their adolescents in their metamorphosis (Coleman, 1988; Botero, 2012).

The egalitarian role of fathers is a mediating factor in this regard in developed countries but the Pakistani society is conservative. The joint family system mostly produces 'unhealthy' children because of multiple factors, one being the dispatched role of fathers (Korteweg, 2003). Even if the husband wants to help in household work or in child upbringing, his parental family

obstructs him since they still remain strong believers in elitism. A male-oriented society does not appreciate such acts.

Our study follows Chee, Cogner and Elder's (2009), and Perry and Gillman's (2000) approach towards exploring the effects of maternal employment on the parenting of adolescents in the social context of Pakistan.

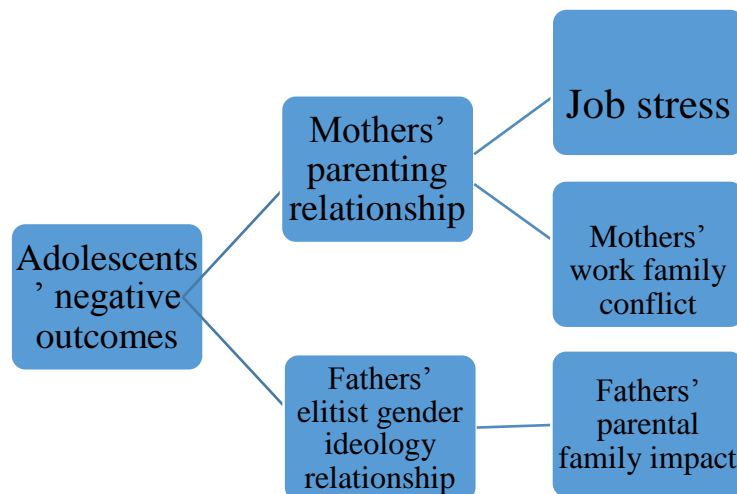### 3. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Mother's employment demands exert greater negative psychological spillover through work-family conflict which affects their relationship with adolescents (path a) rather than job stress directly (path b). The in-laws of the mother affect the father's gender ideology and therefore initiate the mother's work-family conflict as well as affecting the adolescent's upbringing directly (path c). Studies have documented this network of conflicts, role constraints and psychological spillovers (Ruhm, 2008). We suggest that many mediating factors can be practiced to reduce the stress or negative spillover of working mothers to stop the indirect negative impact on their relationship with their adolescent children and to help these adolescents groom positively.

Studies reflect that working women try to cope with work-family conflicts most of the times alone. Understanding on behalf of their own family members may help women feel less stressed and depleted. Women who can rely on others to take over domestic or caretaking responsibilities can give quality time to their adolescents (Hobfoll & Strokes, 1988).

4. Method

4.1 Participants

The sample for this study consisted of twenty mother-adolescent dyads. Ten working mother-adolescent dyads and ten stay-at-home mother-adolescent dyads were selected from a school in Lahore to ensure the same context. The age of mothers ranged between 30-45 years and adolescent boys of grade 8 were selected, purposively.

4.2 Procedure

A qualitative case-study approach was adopted for an in-depth case study exploring the impact of job stressors on the relationship of working mothers with their adolescent children. The researcher first contacted the school principal asking her to provide assistance in identifying adolescents with working mothers and adolescents with stay-at-home mothers studying in the same grade. The principal assisted the researcher in approaching these mothers telephonically and getting their consent to be a part of the study. The researcher then visited the adolescents in the classrooms to inform them about the study. They received information sheets and parental consent forms. The mothers of the participating youth were requested to stay for interviews after the parent-teacher meeting was conducted at school during the same week. They signed a consent form and a parental permission form on behalf of their child participating in the research the next day. Although a minimum of three interviews are suggested by Yin (2013), only one interview was conducted due to the shortage of time allocated to complete the study project.

Triangulation of data was completed for the sake of validity and reliability by complementing it with interviews of adolescents involved in the study and the document analysis of their academic achievements. The co-researcher interviewed the adolescents separately and the result of the final examination of English, Mathematics and Science was collected from their teachers with their consent and that of their teachers and parents for identifying the differences in the academic achievements of the two groups.

5. Data Collection

Semi-structured interview protocols were used in accordance with the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) and the aim was to assess the level of companionship and intimacy as recommended by Sattin & Kerr (2000); *see Appendix 1*. The said inventory is a standardized measure of parental monitoring and it provided the baseline to identify the key themes of the study. Interviews are considered to be the most useful and proficient way of obtaining adequate information within a short time period (Kvale & Brinkham, 2009). Interviews allow the researcher to access meanings by verbal as well as non-verbal communication (Cohen, Manion &

Morrison, 2007, p.349). The researcher met with each mother individually at the school between 9:00 am and 12:00 p.m. Each interview lasted for half an hour. The co-researcher simultaneously interviewed the respective child of the dyad for the same time period.

The transcriptions were sent back to the interviewees for verification. Once the interviews were transcribed, it was easier to understand them logically (Cohen et al., 2007, p.147) and to carry out the interpretive analysis (Olson, 2016). This analysis followed the 4 step methodology recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2010) which includes 1) organizing the data; 2) generating categories, themes, and patterns; 3) testing any emergent hypotheses, and 4) searching for alternative explanations. The analysis was intended to obtain answers to the research questions keeping in view the recurrent experiences, thoughts, and attitudes and simultaneously sorting them into categories according to the central themes. Triangulation of data was completed by document analysis of the academic achievements in English, Math and Science of the concerned adolescents, who belong to different groups of mothers, in their final examination. The interview data provided access to the interviewees' understanding of the quality of their relationship with each other and helped to discover the impact of job stressors on the quality of the mother-child relationship. Moreover, keeping in view their perceptions about the mediating role of supporters to minimize job stressors while dealing closely with real people and their lives, an ethical statement (Appendix 2) was developed at the start of the research following Kvale's (1996) recommendation of an ethical protocol and Bassey's (1999) ethical guidelines. In order to ensure the anonymity of the participants, codes were assigned to the participants of interviews.

6. Data Analysis and Findings

Qualitative interpretive analysis was used to analyze the data. The first round of data analysis was based on the individual mother as the unit of analysis and the data were grouped into three categories. The second round was based on the individual student as the unit of analysis, comparing and contrasting the mother-son relationships. All mothers were coded as M1-M20 and all adolescents were coded as A1-A20 for the purpose of anonymity.

6.1 Theme No. 1: Perceptions of Mothers and Adolescents about Mothers' Employment

All the working mothers and three of the nonworking mothers were in favor of completing a paid job either for the economic support of their family, for self-satisfaction, or being inspired by the role models in their neighborhood. As M3 expressed,

"I feel more stressed at home as compared to at work ... you know where I can share my in-law's problems with my friends."

M5 said,

"Well a lot of tensions are at workplace too…with my husband's salary we can hardly make both ends meet, my children need status and good education. I am proud that I am educated and can bring up my children better than many."

Those who are not working were not satisfied either. They thought that all their efforts to achieve high degrees were wasted. Some even perceived home as a jail, with loads of responsibilities and without any acknowledgment.

A stay at home mother (M7) articulated,

"How lucky are they to work and have their own money and freedom."

M9 shared that

"I wish I could do a job but my husband doesn't allow me. Many years ago, I was faced with the dilemma of what to do with my life after I had my baby. But then he said no one else can take care of the babies like you".

Therefore, the practices of everyday motherhood bring joy but also create a struggle for working and non-working mothers alike and they still are caught up in the decision of whether to work or not. Nevertheless, the data indicate that the trend is towards opting for a paid job. Therefore, serious efforts should be done to bring work-life balance into the lives of the working women.

Adolescents, on the other hand, had quite different opinions. Some were proud of their moms; some were shy to tell anyone where their mom was working. Others understood why mom should work and how they should feel about it. Adolescent (A1) expressed,

"Mama needs to work, coz she will get bored at home."

Another boy (A5) said,

"I feel comfortable when mama is in good mood, but most of the times on weekdays when we get back home together (mother is teacher at the same school) I pre-empt she will be in a bad mood when dadi (grandmother) will tell her how difficult it had been for her to watch 'Kam Walians (house maids)' the whole day."

Boys do not like fuss at home, whether the mother is working or not, and they acknowledge that mothers understand their needs and feelings better than anyone else in the family. They do feel that their mothers are more aware of modern trends if they work, especially, if they are tech-savvy adolescents.

6.2 Theme No. 2: Mothers' Relationships with Adolescents

The theme covers the reflections of mothers and adolescents about how close they are to each other. Most of the mothers and adolescents claimed that

they have no obstacle in sharing their feelings and daily events with each other. The reasons are either that the adolescents have greater empathy for their moms or the mothers accommodate this intimacy and companionship into their schedules as related by (M2),

"We talk a lot while driving back home".

However, a few exceptions were also noted, as told by one mother (M3),

"I prefer to stay alone rather than sitting with my children most of the time. I am so tired after a long day of work at the office and at home."

An adolescent (A3) reflected the same in his words,

"I don't dare disturb my mom when she sleeps after coming back from office even if I have an important issue to discuss… I wait for her good mood to ask about buying a new item or permission to go to a friend's house."

Obviously, job related or family related tensions do have an impact on the mother-child relationship and these tensions must be minimized for ensuring the mothers' full productivity at work and for their full satisfaction at home. Less monitoring was reported by working mothers and by their children as compared to stay-at-home mothers and their children. M4 shared that

"I have to rely more on my children for everyday chores, otherwise I get fatigued… many times my son does grocery alone or attends a family function on my behalf and I feel relief."

Full-time monitoring by stay-at-home moms was an irritable thing for their adolescents, as reported by an adolescent (A10),

"Uff! I'm fed up with 'jasoosi'(spying) activities of my family and hate to answer the bombardment of questions by all elders, whenever I have to attend any event is there at school."

6.3 Theme No. 3: Social Support

The theme covers the working mothers' views on social support by family members, friends, and colleagues about the role they play and the role they can play to help them more. Complying with the needs of ever increasing job demands on their attention and time, employed mothers wanted help from fathers in minimizing their own time demands from them and making their in-laws realize the psychological strains of their work pressure. They vowed for the moral support by the family (M4),

"I don't ask my in-laws to do chores at home but at least they just don't show me moods when I enter home"

Everyone at home demands time and energy without realizing the depletion of both after work. Sometimes, some women do not even want the available help around them. As exclaimed by M5,

"I always thought of a daycare for my children ....Why should I beg for anyone's help."

Not all families do so; there is evidence where mothers feel obliged to their supportive relatives for their own career success. (M2) who is a teacher said that

"I have a good repute at school because I invest a lot of time in my professional development......my husband and my mother takes good care of me and my children when needed… my colleagues give me moral support when things go wrong sometimes."

Participants were enthusiastic about achieving excellence in their careers and at the same time did not want to beg for help from anyone around them. They hoped that they would surmount the task with their constancy of purpose and continuous struggle.

6.4 Difference in Achievement

The grades of all adolescents were compared in three basic subjects including English, Mathematics, and Science, but no remarkable difference was observed. However, working mothers' children were found to be more independent and responsible. They had greater awareness of their social contribution to family and society. The stay-at-home mothers' children were prone to conformity and to an obedient attitude.

7. Conclusions

Pakistan is a developing country where males and females both need to work to stabilize the economy. Women are getting education and opportunities for jobs in multiple professions. The current study supports the findings that although family and workplace support women, yet they are not supported wholeheartedly, and in case of unfortunate incidents in the family, it is the women who are expected to compromise their career (Arif, 2012). Often they are blamed for the deficiencies of training and grooming of their young children. These negative outcomes are supposed to appear due to their commitment to their job. The study, however, denies any such finding. The work-family conflict did not influence the nurturing involved in the parenting style of mothers. There was no difference found in the intimacy and companionship measure between working and non-working mothers with their adolescents. The school achievement record showed that the boys' achievement profile in Math, English, and Science had no significant difference. Although monitoring was reported lesser in the case of working mothers, that too was affiliated with the positive outcomes of autonomy and responsibility in adolescents. In some cases, negative spillover effects from work to home were observed, but these too can be buffered by flexible work arrangements by the employers (Arif & Ilyas, 2012) and by creating awareness

of supporting relations within the family and community. Many organizations are providing flexible work arrangements (FWAs) in order to resolve the conflict between work and life (Azar, Khan & Van Eerde, 2018).

8. Discussion

This paper examined the impact of psycho-social stressors on women's career / work experience and on the quality of their relationship with their own adolescent children. Adolescence is the age of formation of identity (Knox, Funk, Elliott, & Bush, 1998) and physical, cognitive, and social changes take place in adolescence which affect how individuals perceive themselves and how others perceive them (Molina, Schmidt & Raimundi, 2017). Adolescents' constructs of self-concept and self-esteem predict their relationships with their family, peers, teachers, and community. They determine their life goals; therefore, any factor that may affect this relationship should not be ignored.

On the other hand, the trend of mothers' employment and the need of women in the workforce has often been amplified in Pakistan over the past decade. Home and the family are still the 'pulling factors', while work and the workload are 'the pushing factors' regarding autonomy, self-efficacy, and self-esteem of women who are engaged in part-time or full-time work (Russo & Waters, 2006). In order to achieve a desired career and positive grooming of adolescents, women need appropriate social positioning and for that purpose more social support. Failure in doing that will result in work-life imbalance and in aimless youth.

The findings provide valuable information that the perceptions of women in Pakistan who are positive about playing their role in the workforce of the country. However, the conflict between 'mothering mother' and 'working mother' identities is causing unrest and stress. Moreover, job stressors make the struggle more pathetic. There is a sheer need to boost the confidence of working mothers in order to prevent them from quitting their jobs under stress and to increase the productivity of the human capital of the country.

9. Implications

Workplace will continue to affect peoples' lives and work experience will remain psychologically stressful in the current economic and cultural climate. This paper affirms the findings of Coleman (1998) that work does not affect the mother-child relationship directly, yet it has a great indirect effect via work and family related tensions. Consequently, more attention should be paid to neutralize these stressors. This study suggests that social support networks can play an influential role in promoting working mother's well-being and adolescents' family experiences. Fathers' active participation in their adolescents' training and in the household chores in nuclear families, as well as in moderating adverse attitudes of in-laws in joint family systems, can play a crucial role. Structural and cultural support at the workplace can provide

psychological relief to working women. Policymakers should arrange work environment with minimum stress in the workplace so as to facilitate working mothers and to utilize female potential to the maximum.

Working mothers can adopt various coping mechanisms to compensate their absence from home for long hours such as asking for help from available persons in the family or in the neighborhood. They can stay close to their children by ensuring the quality of time spent with them rather than its quantity.

A lot of focus is placed on the needs of children and on their attachment particularly with their mothers, since it is important for their social and psychological development and it embeds trust and safety, so it remains necessary for adolescents' exploration of advanced life (Aughinbaugh & Gittleman, 2004). This, in return, demands intensive mothering. Reframing the role of adolescents in the social construct can minimize maternal job tensions and develop a positive mother-adolescent relationship.

10. Limitations

This study also has some limitations. A longitudinal research is needed to observe the changes in mothers' experience of work and family demands and to locate these changes in their psychological and social resources over the period. Moreover, the current study involved adolescent boys only. Valuable information may be obtained while working with adolescent girls. Similar studies in different cities can further increase the depth of the study.

11. Suggestions

Research can be conducted to figure out the impact of maternal job stress on adolescent relationships sector-wise and contrastively at various job positions in urban versus suburban areas of Pakistan.

12. Acknowledgments

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