

Child's Behavioral Problems in Relation to Early Maternal Employment

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Abstract--*This study aimed to explore child's behavioral problems in relation to early maternal employment. The focus of this study was to examine if there is a correlation between mothers who returned to work place in the first 3 years of child's life and the behavioral problems that occur in those children when they are 4 to 7 years old. Research tool used was a two part questionnaire. First part was to obtain demographic information on the 82 participants. Second part was the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a behavioral screening questionnaire that consisted of 25 questions under 5 scales. The participants in this study were 82 mothers living in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The results were analyzed manually using the statistical analysis program SPSS. The result showed that when their child's age was less than 12 months, 61 % of mothers returned to work. In addition, the results showed no correlation between early maternal employment and behavioral difficulties.*

Keywords--*Children; working mothers; behavior; problems; maternal employment*

I. INTRODUCTION

Child parenting is influenced by numerous factors, including initial life stage development experiences faced by the child [1]. This will directly influence the behavior of the child as they grow into adulthood [2]. One of the key factors that influence a child behavior is early maternal employment [3]. Furthermore, most women with young children are currently employed and working away from home. At the point when women are working outside their home, a classic consequence of their work is non-maternal care, particularly when kids are exceptionally young [4]. The coverage between work and childcare is most noteworthy in the principal year yet diminishes as kids aged over time[5]. In addition, under certain conditions, a few children seem defenseless against early natural impacts during early stages and adolescence [5]. Maternal employment can therefore have an impact on the behavior and development of the child, as there will be a division between parenting and working life [6].

There have been a number of research papers looking into the relationship between maternal employment and child's cognitive, emotional and behavior development. Lucas- Thompson et al. [7] conducted a meta-analysis research on the early maternal employment and its impact on the child's achievement and behavioral problems and found that there a link between maternal employment and behavioral problems in children. A longitudinal study conducted by Hadzic et al. [8], which assessed children aged 4-5 years to identify the behavior outcome and found that child behaviour problems did not have a direct effect on maternal employment, although there were indirect effects linking them together. Heiland et al.[9] analyzed the influence of maternal employment on the time spent

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between mother and child and found that maternal employment did not affect the time spent, as the mothers knew the importance of managing family time and work.

Baker et al [10] examined the relationship between maternal employment and early childhood development in terms of maternity leave and found that there were no significant links between early childhood development and maternal employment.

Furthermore, Liu [11] directed an investigation to break down the association of maternal work and child's advancement, and results demonstrated that there is sure measurable connection between child's results and maternal work. sin et al. [12] analyzed if maternal employment effects the child's development and time spent with the child, with result showing that the impacts of maternal employment are vague as it rarely effects the time spent with the child. Brilliet al. [13] analyzed the effect of child care availability on maternal employment and early childhood development, and result demonstrated a positive and noteworthy impacts of child care accessibility on maternal employment condition and kids development. On the other hand, McMinn [14] analyzed the effects of maternal employment and child behavior in the UK and found that there was no proof of inconvenient impacts of maternal work in the early years on consequent kid socio-passionate conduct. Lombardi et al. [15] surveyed the connections between early maternal employment and kids' later scholastic and social abilities in Australia, and there were slight sign that additional time far from child rearing was adversely connected to child' conduct in Australia. Bono et al. [16] surveyed the connection between maternal employment and early child development and found that maternal period is a vital determinant of the child's ability and development.

Children's behavioral problems have been always a subject of research. One reason was correlated and been examined for a long time, that is when the mother leaves the child on his/her earlier years to return to work. According to Künn-Nelen et al. [17], when the mother leaves the child during infancy or early childhood, it might have negative aspects on the child's development, such as cognitive and psychological development. However, a working mother means more income to the house and maybe extra attention is paid to the child because she was away half of the day.

Parents do not always have the effective parenting style, therefore, a positivity of the mothers leaving for work is that baby will be put in a childcare facility and that facility might be more effective with the child and give him/her better skills. Mothers feel overwhelmed when they try to adapt being a new parent and at the same time juggle both work and parenthood [18].

Most of the studies showed no effects of maternal employment on child's behavior [19]. Contextual factors are important when looking at the effects of maternal employment and child behavior like, social economic status and the educational background of the mother. The different conclusions reached by these research findings can be attributed to the different contextual factors each of these studies was addressing. It was found that different contextual factors seem to affect the relationship in different ways.

Thus, this paper is an exploratory attempt to look into a different set of contextual factors and how it affects the relationship between maternal employment and child behaviors in the context of Saudi Arabia.

II. METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was set for this study. The hypothesis set was, ‘children age 3-7 of mothers who have worked in the first three years of their lives have high score of behavioral problems in the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)’.

Participants

The participants for this study were 82 mothers living in Jeddah and who have worked in the first 3 years of their child’s life. The first 3 years are the most important years of a child’s life because in those years the child and mother create their bond. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) that was used assessed only ages 3-16, therefore the age of the child in which the mother reported on was set to 4-7 years. Participants from all education backgrounds and age group were eligible to complete the questionnaire.

Research Tools

The tool used in the research was a questionnaire that was given in a form of an online link. Two versions of the questionnaire were provided: English and Arabic. It consisted of two parts. First part was a self-made questionnaire that provided demographic information about the participants. Examples of questions that were asked are “where was the first employment entry”. This indicated the age of the child in which the mother first returned to work. Another question was “was the child put in childcare facility” to know when the mother was away, what kind of care did the child get. The second part consisted of a parent-fill version of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a behavioral screening questionnaire developed by Goodman, that assess behavior of ages 3-16 year olds. It had 25 questions, some with negative attributes, others with positive. These attributes were divided into 5 scales with 5 items each; emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and prosocial behavior. When the five item are added together, it gives a total difficulties score. Parents reported on their children by choosing on each item whether it is “not true” “somewhat true” or “certainly true”. Finally, the outcome from the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS software.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristic

The current study is based on a quantitative study using online survey research design. The results in Table 1 demonstrate the demographic characteristic of the total 82 participants. Out of the total participants, 50 (61%) of mothers returned to work when their child’s age was less than 12 months. 6 (7.3%) of the mothers returned to work when their child’s age was less than 18 months. Furthermore, 7(8.5%) of the mothers returned to work when their child’s age was less than 24 months. In addition, 19 (23.2%) of the mothers return to work when their child’s age was less than 36 months. On the other hand, the result showed that only 8 (9.8%) mothers had a high school degree, while the majority, 74 (90.3%) had a bachelors degree and above. Furthermore, in terms of job intensity, 41(50%) of the mothers stated moderate job intensity, 31 (37.8%) of the mothers have stated normal work intensity and 10

(12.19 %) have stated extreme work intensity. On the other hand, while they were away in work, 46 (56.1%) mothers leave their child with a family member, 28 (34.1%) in day care. Based on Table 1, 36 (43.9%) of the children were 4 years old, 20 (24.4%) were 5 years old, 15 (18.3%) of the children were 6 years old and 11 (13.4%) of the children were 7 years old. In terms of gender, 30 (36.6 %) of the children were female and 52(63.4%) of the children were males.

Table 1:Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=82)

Demographics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Child's Gender		
Female	30	36.6
Male	52	63.4
Child's Age		
Four	36	43.9
Five	20	24.4
Six	15	18.3
Seven	11	13.4
First Employment Entry		
Less than 12 months	50	61.0
Less than 18 months	6	7.3
Less than 24 months	7	8.5
Less than 36 months	19	23.2
Intensity of Work		
Moderate	41	50
Normal	31	37.8
Extreme	10	12.19
Child Care Facility		
Day Care	28	34.1
Family Member's Care	46	56.1
Other	8	9.8

Correlation Analysis

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) was used and its reliability was analyzed. The reliability result is shown in Table 2. Based on Table 2, the reliability for each subscales were in the range of 0.421 to 0.792.

Table 1:Reliability of the 5 subscales in SDQ

Subscales	Number of Items	Reliability
Emotional Problems Scale	5	0.623
Conduct Problems Scale	5	0.702
Hyperactivity Scale	5	0.577
Peer Problems Scale	5	0.421
Pro-social Scale	5	0.792

Table 3 shows the mean and significance in first employment entry and prosaically scale. Based on the result in Table 3, this ANOVA analysis shows that in first employment entry and the subscale prosaically, those who returned to work in less than 12 months scored significantly higher than 24 months in the prosaically scale with 0.022 significant and a mean of -0.605.

Table 2:Mean and Significance in First Employment Entry and Prosocial scale.

Dependent Variable	(I) First Employment Entry	(J)First Employment Entry	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std Error	significance (Sig.)
Prosocial	Less than 24 months	Less than 12 months	-0.605	0.205	0.022

Table 4 shows the results for level of education with emotional, peer and prosocial scales. Based on Table 4, ANOVA analysis shows that in the emotional subscale, high school had higher score than Bachelor with a mean of 0.958 and 0.014 significant. Furthermore, result showed that in the peer subscale, high school had higher score than postgraduate with (mean -0.975, significance 0.024). Finally, in the prosocial scale, postgraduate had a significant higher mean than Bachelor (mean 0.491, significance0.045).

Table 3: Mean and Significance in First Employment Entry and Prosocial scale.

Dependent Variable	(I) First Employment Entry	(J)First Employment Entry	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std Error	Sig.
Emotional	High School	Bachelors	0.958	0.331	0.014
Peer	Post Graduate	High School	-0.975	0.365	0.024
Prosocial	Post Graduate	Bachelors	0.491	0.202	0.045

Overall Discussion

This study aimed to explore child's behavioral problems in relation to early maternal employment. The focus of this study was to examine if there is a correlation between mothers who returned to work place in the first 3 years of their child's life and the behavioral problems that occur in children aged 4 to 7 years old. The results showed no correlation between the two variables which were early maternal employment and child behavioral problems. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. The outcome of this is inline with the previously report works. Work by Hadzic, et al. [8], which assessed children aged 4-5 years to identify the behavior outcome and found that child conduct problems did not have a direct effect of maternal employment. Furthermore, Hsinet al. [12 showed that the impacts of maternal employment are vague as it rarely effects the time spent with the child. In addition, work done by McMunn et al. [14] also found that there was no proof of inconvenient impacts of maternal work in the early years on consequent kid socio-passionate conduct. Also, the outcome was supported by Lombardi et al. [15]who stated that there were minimal sign that additional time far from child rearing was adversely connected to child's conduct in Australia.

Early maternal employment was represented by first employment entry (the age of the child when the mother first returned to work) and child behavioral problems was represented in total difficulties score, that is that the added up score of the 4 scales; emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention and peer relationship problems. Although there was no correlation, there were other significant findings. Children if mothers who returned to work when they were less than 12 months scored significantly higher in the prosaically subscale than those who retuned in less than 24 months. Furthermore, the result showed that in terms of education, children of mothers with a higher education background exhibited better behavioral characteristics.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study investigated child's social issues in connection to early maternal employment. The focal point of this investigation was to inspect if there is a connection between mothers who came back to work place in the initial 3 years of child's life and the social issues that happen in children matured 4 to 7 years of age. Result showed that there was no connection between the two factors: early maternal employment and child behavioral development. The hypothesis was therefore rejected. Behavioral problems presented are only for mothers who returned to work after the child's birth by 3 years. It is recommended for future researches to collect a bigger sample of both mothers who returned to work and mothers who did not and compare the results of the child's behavior. Nevertheless, due to the low number of samples, the findings reported in this research cannot be generalized. In addition, the questionnaire was given only to mothers living in Jeddah. This analysis should therefore be carried out in the other regions of Saudi Arabia for future work. This will allow the results of the analysis to be generalized and a concrete relationship can be established.

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