

Influence of Working Mothers on the Cognitive Development of their Children in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the Nigerian women have been home makers. The role of women was confined only to domestic tasks and looking after the kids and elderly people. On the other hand, men would go out to work and played the role of wage earners of the family. But in the last two decades, with the help of improved education system and social awareness, along with increasing cost of living, women have shifted themselves from home to office. Working women play a key role in development of the society and also contribute to national economy, global economy and in lowering the rate of recession as well. The purpose of this study is to analyse the influence a working mother has on the overall development of the child, which includes the aspects such as physical growth, behavioural development, educational attainment, emotional development, mental growth, economic development, cognitive development, social development, etc. The study supports that working women instill confidence, social awareness and a sense of commitment among their children with multiple monetary benefits. Working women also act as role models for the society and their children. But on the other hand, their job patterns may have long-term consequences on their children's development, as working mothers have to reduce the duration of the time to be spent with their children, moreover mothers' exposure to work-related stress negatively affects children's cognitive and behavioural development leading to jerks in their holistic growth. In contrast, a mother who takes time off from her job to spend it as quality time with her child, her job doesn't affect her personal life. The findings will help policy makers to formulate policies that favour working mothers in such a way that it reflects in better care and development of their children

Keywords: *working mother, women employment, child development, social development, mental health, cognitive development, emotional development, holistic growth*

INTRODUCTION

Women's roles in ancient times were limited to giving birth to the next generation and doing household tasks. Staying at home was vital since the woman was in charge of child bearing and child raising in the household. Mothers are the primary carers for newborns and children in every community throughout the world (UNDP, 1995). However, in the twenty-first century, women's roles have gradually advanced (Tan, J., 2013). In today's society, women fulfil various roles: at home, they are homemakers, and at work, they are labourers. In her household, the working woman takes on several roles such as wife, leader, administrator, manager of family income, and, most significantly, mother. Each of these characteristics is critical in the development of the next generation and society (UNDP, 1995).

A kid spends the most of his or her time with his or her primary carer, who is usually the mother. A mother makes significant contributions to determining the direction of her child's life, and her instructions have a powerful impact on her children's attitudes, talents, and conduct. Since birth, the mother provides her kid with love and a good atmosphere for healthy growth and development. Children that are well adjusted and successful come from households where parents have a favourable attitude towards children and a positive interaction with them (Aeri et al., 2010).

It is well acknowledged that children require the affection of their mothers the most. Due to the hectic schedules of working women, child care has become a big concern in most nations throughout the world. When a youngster spends his or her valuable time with others rather than with his or her mother, it disrupts communication and interaction between a mother and her child, which has long-term ramifications for the child's development (Kagan, 1978). Women's professional lives influence their family lives, causing various ups and downs in the family and eventually altering the sentimental parts of their relationship with children (Lee, 2003).

Increase in the number of working moms

Women were largely involved in parenting and household duties in ancient times, but as time passed, they began to join in men's job, such as agriculture and other labour force at the industrial level. With the advancement of education and social awareness, women are becoming idols and role models for society by achieving success in every field they enter.

There has been a significant difference between women's employment in the nineteenth century and women's work now in both the urban and rural sectors. According to an examination of NSSO data (1970-2018), women have primarily worked in labor-intensive, home-based, and informal jobs.

Rural women's employment in various sectors has decreased from 88.1% in 1977-78 to 73.2% in 2017-18. Conversely, the proportion of urban women employed in the service industry has expanded dramatically from 35.7% in 1977-78 to 60.7% in 2017-18. In this area, women have chosen occupations such as teaching and nursing as a source of income, with relatively limited opportunities for advancement. (Nikore, 2019).

Working mother and child's needs

The entire growth and development of children is impacted in certain ways by mothers' job. For a child's cognitive, affective, social, emotional, and psychomotor development, the first five years of life are extremely important. The bond of trust between a kid and her mother must be strengthened throughout the formative years of a child's development in order for the youngster to later be able to openly discuss any issues with her parents. (2012) Almani et al.

Mothers must spend the most of their time with their children since they cannot be replaced in a child's life as their primary carer. Breastfeeding is one of the most important parts of early infant development. WHO suggests a diet of complementary meals for the first two years of life and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.

Even when given the option to choose just one of their careers or their families, women who work in professional sectors balance both of these responsibilities. They successfully balance their career and parental commitments despite carrying heavy emotional, psychological, and physical loads. It is crucial to comprehend the difficulties a working mother has in juggling her personal and professional lives.

(P. Kadle, 2018) conducted a research of professional working moms to determine their perceived stress levels and risk variables. The survey also sought to uncover issues that women encounter when they attempt to reconcile parenthood and a profession. She discovered that 56% of moms experience moderate stress.

Working women sacrifice and change their schedules to accommodate their children's and other family members' requirements. When they try to fulfil the twin roles of mother and professional woman, they are faced with that conundrum. Because they are moms and must provide for their children in a highly attentive manner, they encounter several challenges as working women (Zambrana et al., 1979). Working women' life happiness is influenced by a number of factors, including parent-child relationships, parental role conflict readiness, and parental role satisfaction (Kim, 2011).

In order to successfully strike a balance between their own demands and those of the company or organisation where they work, mothers also require a friendly and encouraging atmosphere (Almani, 2012).

The Indian government passed legislation that provides working women with maternity benefits in order to preserve their rights throughout pregnancy and after giving birth. In India, the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, which is applicable to all types of organisations with 10 or more employees, primarily governs the provision of maternity benefits. According to the 1948 Employees' State Insurance Act, factories with ten or more employees must give their female employees maternity leave. The statute was revised in 2017, and it was decided that a 6.5-month extension of the leave was permissible. 2 months might be added to this 6.5 months before birth. Additionally, the rule allowed women who had just become mothers to work from home provided it was appropriate for the job.

Working mother-child relationship

A woman must pay attention to her children and should spend time with them, whether she works or stays at home. She should also show her family members real affection and concern, since this promotes the development of lasting relationships. Because the connection in later life exclusively depends on how a mother prepares her kid for socialisation in the first three years of life, a good mother should not compromise over her child's growth with her work life. 2003 (Riters).

According to Ravnbol's 2011 analysis, women are currently in an extremely stressful condition. They have to wait till their kids enter school before beginning their careers.

The connection between mothers and their kids has been impacted by women's rising employment rates, which has also resulted in a notable rise in the emotional challenges of parent-child relationships. (Lee, 2003). Women are frequently engaged in positions or workplaces where they must work longer hours for little pay, which has a detrimental effect on their bodies and minds. In the end, they are unable to properly fulfil the roles of a mother and homemaker. Conflicting viewpoints and a family's unbalanced harmony are the outcomes of this.

Due to their heavy workloads at work, women frequently overlook their kids' fundamental requirements. When a child's mother leaves the house to go to work, the child feels alone and loses confidence. This increases their sense of insecurity and causes them to grow suspicious of their moms. (1979, Hallinan).

Mother and child relationships are characterised by intense attachment. Under ideal circumstances, it always becomes stronger between the mother and the child, but it is noticeably weaker in the case of working mothers. Most often, during the early stages of a child's growth, a stronger attachment forms, but when a working mother is absent due to work obligations, the relationship suffers. The bond between working mothers and their kids is eroding with time. (2012) Almani et al.

In the formative years of a child's development, moms leaving them to work leads to disruptive behavioural issues (Pelcovilz, 2013). The emotional and social growth of a kid is also hampered by poor quality caregiving services. The development of a child's physical and mental health may be hampered when caregiving staff members are underqualified and overworked (Metilda SJ. et al., 2015).

Working mother and development of children

A working mother's constant work demands have an impact on her child's various growth stages. Due to the direct correlation between these factors and a mother's love and support throughout the early years of a child's life, working mothers have an impact on the psychological, mental, and physical development of their children. Additionally, anytime life tests our fortitude and patience, we naturally cry in memory of our mother. And if a woman works outside all day without spending any time with her kids, her kids will grow up helpless, socially awkward, quirky, and possess an inferiority mentality. (1998, Safiri).

Early in life, when the kid is still growing and developing, the mother's work schedule may have an impact. As a result, working moms must consider both the positive and bad elements of their jobs (Ali, 2015).

children's cognitive development and working mothers

The future of a kid is significantly impacted by cognitive ability. (Heckman et al., 2006; Bernal, 2008) The primary carer in a family is a woman, who strives to balance caring for the home and having children in order to prompt the child's cognitive development at the appropriate period. (Youngberg, 2011; Stevens, 1971) Less time set aside for children tends to lessen the likelihood of contacts between mother and child and affects the cognitive growth of the kids (Blau, Grossberg, 1990; Rapoport, Le Bourdais, 2008; Stewart, 2010).

According to research, a child's early successes indicate a wide range of future consequences. Therefore, children's cognitive development is hampered when working mothers do not devote much time to child care (Bernal, R. 2008). Children with working moms continue to receive stable and virtually identical grades. (2012) Almani et al.

In terms of the psychological contact between mother and child, her work has an impact on a kid's cognitive development. The contact between a mother and kid directly affects the development of the child's mind (Papalia & Martorell, 2014). 1970 Stevens).

In particular, if the mother starts working before the child is nine months old, the first year of maternal employment has a negative impact on the child's behaviour, cognitive development, mathematical skills, and learning abilities. However, if the mother begins working when the child is between two and three years old, positive results can be easily seen. Few beneficial impacts have been noted; boys improve in arithmetic and stress management, and girls have strong reading abilities (Verropoulou, 2009).

Pelcovitz (2013) looked at eight cognitive outcomes in a small sample of kids; some of them scored considerably higher than others, and it was noted that kids whose mothers worked full-time scored lower than kids whose mothers were stay-at-home moms. The magnitude of the associations at age three and first grade was nearly the same. Children of moms who worked part-time throughout their child's first year of life did not have worse cognitive scores.

On the whole, mother employment has a detrimental impact on children's cognitive development. According to a research, pupils whose moms left them at home with a babysitter or other family members before they became five years old received 1.8% less points on a class test. 2008's Bernal.

In a research to examine the potential impacts of maternal employment on child development in the early years of life (0–3 years), Stephiana, O., et al. (2019) discovered that the average mother's working hours decreased with increasing cognitive score. She came to the conclusion that a mother's presence at home and attention to the family throughout a child's formative years can enhance the quality of the child's development and growth. A woman should take maternity leave during her pregnancy so she may visit the doctor for routine checkups and receive information on the baby. These elements may appear to be extremely unimportant and broad, but they also influence how the baby's brain develops later in life. Therefore, it is a type of investment meant to

guarantee the wellbeing of children in the future. Because of this, it is customary for women to stay at home during their pregnancies and even for some time after giving birth.

Social and psychological development of children of working mothers

The most renowned researchers in the field of developmental psychology, making the findings of this research particularly worthy of attention, the National Institute of Child Health and Development initiated a comprehensive longitudinal study in ten centres across the United States in 1991 to address questions about the relationships between maternal employment, child-care experiences, and various outcomes in children. They came to the following conclusions after recently reviewing their findings: Regarding the behavioural development of newborns of middle-class or upper-middle-class moms who worked:

- Children whose mothers returned to work full-time before their child turned one had more disruptive behavioural issues than children whose mothers worked part-time until their child turned one, according to carers at age 412 years and first-grade teachers.
- moms who worked full-time tended to be more sad than moms who worked part-time, increasing the risk for behavioural issues at ages three and in the first grade. (2013) Pelcovitz.

However, when children came from intact, middle-class households that were not at danger financially, employment was linked to poor child outcomes. Early full-time employment in such households was linked to a higher risk of future behavioural issues in children as compared to women who did not work outside the home. (2013) Pelcovitz.

The emotional and social development of a kid is impacted by nursery services of inadequate quality. Children may adopt a negative attitude if women complain about their jobs at home. They can think that their family's misery is caused by her employment. Despite keeping their children's best interests in mind, mothers may neglect to give them a secure emotional outlet (Metilda, S.J. et al., 2015). According to a study, if a woman spends more time at work or in her job during the day and spends less time with her child, this could impede the child's overall development. Children are most connected to their mothers, but if the mother doesn't spend time with her kids, there's a chance the kids will pick up bad habits or hang out with the wrong crowd, which could have a negative impact on their personalities. Additionally, the youngster may begin to argue with family members about little issues and exhibit defiant and disrespectful behaviour (Almani et al., 2012).

Working women and language development of children

Children's language development is a complicated process that forms the basis of their academic success, preparedness for school, and communication abilities. Parents are regarded as a child's first teacher since they are the one who interact with newborns the most frequently. In order to influence a child's reading environment and language development, positive parenting, parent-child interactions, and improved verbal response are crucial. The first three years of a child's growth are the most intense since the brain is developing quickly and is able to learn new things throughout this time. It will be more difficult to reach the milestones as the kid grows if this crucial phase is missed without sufficient interaction and opportunities for language development (Evans, 2008; Neuman, 2008).

An essential factor in a child's language development is parent-child contact (Safwat, 2014). In a research, moms emphasised that whether mothers worked or stayed at home, there were no changes in the language development of the kids. Teachers said that even daughters of working moms performed better on various language examinations that included reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Students argued that although while working moms are frequently absent from their homes, this does not have an impact on their children's language acquisition since kids pick up language from others who care after them and from their surroundings. If the person caring for the kid does not speak the child's native tongue, it will have an impact on the child's language learning (Almani et al., 2012).

Numerous studies also suggest that early language and learning in children are significantly influenced by the quality of parent-caregiver interactions. In fact, one of the best indicators of a child's early language development is the volume and kind of language parents use while speaking to their offspring (Hart, 1995; Evans, 1999; and Weizman, 2001).

Working women and emotional development of children

Building a child's individuality is another duty of parents (Ajayi, 2000). Poor quality time spent with a kid may result from a mother's job stress, excessive hours, and lack of sleep (Gordon, 2007).

The amount and quality of care a kid receives is crucial to their growth (Love, 2003). Working women provide for all of their children's basic requirements, but they are rarely accessible to play and have fun with them. While many working mothers spend less time with their kids, they give it their all when they do (Tong, 2003).

The goal of attachment is to make a kid's life safe and secure. Attachment is one particular component of the connection between a child and their parents. Insecure relationship with mothers increases a kid's risk of behavioural issues later in life. On the other side, a lack of attachment causes a youngster to experience anxiety, despair, anger, and violence. Benoit (2004) came to the conclusion that early connection between a mother and infant contributes to later development of a stronger emotional tie.

due to behavioural issues brought on by insecure bonding. Development of the mind and language may potentially be impacted (Huston, 2005).

Both a mother and her kid experience emotional discomfort when they are apart for an extended period of time. A mother feels guilty when she feels distant from her kid, and the youngster suffers as a result. Mothers emphasised that a child's attachment to his or her mother becomes stronger under normal circumstances, but that this attachment is severely harmed by early, protracted separation. Students who agreed with the notion said that having children is essential for a woman if she wants to be a mother in the truest sense. However, working women find it difficult to provide their kids the attention they need. If the mother works all day, when she gets home she is exhausted, unresponsive, and abusive. According to Almani et al. (2012), this mother's actions have a detrimental impact on the mental and emotional growth of her children.

Conclusion

Mother's care and attention is vital in early years of childhood. But in recent times, due to financial benefits; working of women outside the house, along with men is very common. Though it has lots of advantages, it also threatens the healthy growth of the children sometimes.

Mothers should be more careful in child's infant period of life because this period suffers the most. The child should not be taken as a burden or stress. They should not rely totally on baby sitters or nannies, rather they should involve themselves in basic tasks such as giving a shower, feeding meals, assisting in motor developmental activities etc. Children should be kept away from electronic gadgets such as laptops, T.V, mobile phones while interacting with them. The parents should not discuss their working or professional life in front of their children.

The mother should take maternity leave for 6 months after the baby's birth; the father should also assist and support the mother in any way he can. The babysitter should be replaced with maids, as child development is more important than domestic chores.

The mother must keep this in mind that the infant gets attached strongly with the person who interacts the most with him/her and moreover, this attachment or connection would ultimately lead to the development of the cognitive, social, emotional, language, and behavioural aspects. After all, to watch her child grow is the greatest joy for a mother and this joy cannot be felt until she herself looks after her child and keeps all other things aside. Mothers should be given the opportunity to be involved in remote jobs, that is working from home through virtual means. Creche' or day care centres should be established in the workplaces to make it easy for mothers to cater for their babies especially during the formative years of their lives.

Working mothers should make out time to attend P.T.A meetings in their children's school and also to meet with their children's class teachers so that they can have an idea of their child's or children's performance in school and make necessary input or suggestion to help their child or children do better in school.

Working mothers should make out time to go through the books and bags of their children to see how they are doing academically, where such children need encouragement, encourage them and where you think they need improvement in their classwork you can help out.

Working mothers can install CCTV camera in their homes to monitor what is going on in their absence.

Working mothers should also make effort to buy small phones for their children for effective communication between them and their children or child in their absence.

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