



Child-Rearing Practices and Adjustment of Secondary School Students With Respect to Working and Non-Working Mothers

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between child-rearing practices and adjustment among secondary school students and compared students whose mothers were employed and unemployed. A survey method was used with a sample of 300 secondary school students selected from seven schools in Kottayam District. Child-rearing practices were measured using a researcher-developed Child Rearing Practices Inventory, while adjustment was assessed using the Adjustment Inventory developed by A. K. P. Sinha and R. P. Singh. The study considered overall adjustment and its emotional, social, and educational dimensions. Pearson's correlation coefficient and tests of significance of difference between means were used to examine the stated objectives. The findings reported in the original study indicated a significant positive relationship between child-rearing practices and overall adjustment ($r = .45$, $t = 8.697$, $p < .01$). Significant positive relationships were also reported for emotional adjustment ($r = .38$, $t = 7.091$, $p < .01$), social adjustment ($r = .50$, $t = 9.967$, $p < .01$), and educational adjustment ($r = .39$, $t = 4.825$, $p < .01$). Students of employed and unemployed mothers differed significantly in child-rearing practices, with higher mean scores reported for students of unemployed mothers ($M = 99.98$) than employed mothers ($M = 93.89$). Overall adjustment

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also differed significantly between the two groups, although the original study's interpretation states that the employment status of mothers did not affect adjustment. Subgroup analyses showed significant differences for boys in child-rearing practices but not adjustment, while the reported differences for girls, boys versus girls within employed mothers, and boys versus girls within unemployed mothers were not statistically significant. The findings highlight the importance of family interaction and supportive child-rearing practices in students' adjustment.

Introduction

Education is a major process through which individuals develop knowledge, attitudes, skills, values, and capacities for effective participation in family and society. The educational development of a child, however, does not occur exclusively within the school. Family relationships and parental practices constitute an important part of the child's developmental environment. The original study emphasizes that the family is a primary setting for learning and that parents play a critical role in socialization and personality development.

Parent–child interaction has long been considered important to children's emotional and social development. The quality of interaction within the family can influence children's sense of security, behavioral patterns, interpersonal attitudes, and capacity to respond to the demands of school and society. The study therefore treats child-rearing practices as an important developmental variable and adjustment as an important outcome during adolescence.

Child-rearing practices encompass the ways in which parents provide care, attention, emotional support, educational guidance, social opportunities, moral direction, and assistance in meeting children's needs. In the present study, the researcher-developed inventory covered social development, emotional development, educational development, time spent, support, attention, care felt, and moral concern. These domains reflect the study's emphasis on the quality of parental interaction rather than merely on the mother's employment status.

Adjustment is understood in the study as the process through which an individual maintains a harmonious relationship between personal needs and environmental demands. For secondary school students, adjustment has several dimensions. Emotional adjustment concerns the appropriate expression and regulation of emotions; social adjustment concerns harmonious relationships and social responsibilities; and



educational adjustment concerns students' relationship with school routines, learning, teachers, and academic demands.

The employment status of mothers provides a useful context for examining child-rearing practices because employment may influence the amount and pattern of time available for interaction with children. At the same time, maternal employment by itself does not necessarily determine the quality of parenting. The present study was consequently designed to examine both the relationship between child-rearing practices and adjustment and differences between students of working and non-working mothers.

Need and Significance of the Study

Adolescence is a period in which children experience rapid physical, emotional, social, and educational changes. During this period, supportive family relationships can help students respond constructively to school demands and interpersonal challenges. The original dissertation identifies child-rearing practices as an important influence on personality and adjustment and argues that appropriate parental care can contribute to the development of a well-adjusted personality.

The study is also significant because the social circumstances of mothers may vary considerably. Working mothers combine employment with family responsibilities, whereas non-working mothers may spend more time in household and child-care activities. Comparing these groups can help educators and parents understand whether differences in maternal employment are associated with differences in students' perceived child-rearing experiences and adjustment.

Problem Statement

The problem investigated was: "Child-rearing practices and adjustment of secondary school students with respect to working and non-working mothers."

Objectives

1. To determine whether child-rearing practices are significantly related to overall adjustment.
2. To determine whether child-rearing practices are significantly related to emotional adjustment.
3. To determine whether child-rearing practices are significantly related to social adjustment.
4. To determine whether child-rearing practices are significantly related to educational adjustment.



5. To determine whether students of employed and unemployed mothers differ significantly in child-rearing practices.
6. To determine whether students of employed and unemployed mothers differ significantly in adjustment.
7. To determine whether boys of employed and unemployed mothers differ significantly in child-rearing practices.
8. To determine whether boys of employed and unemployed mothers differ significantly in adjustment.
9. To determine whether girls of employed and unemployed mothers differ significantly in child-rearing practices.
10. To determine whether girls of employed and unemployed mothers differ significantly in adjustment.
11. To determine whether boys and girls of employed mothers differ significantly in child-rearing practices.
12. To determine whether boys and girls of employed mothers differ significantly in adjustment.
13. To determine whether boys and girls of unemployed mothers differ significantly in child-rearing practices.
14. To determine whether boys and girls of unemployed mothers differ significantly in adjustment.

Hypotheses

The study originally formulated null hypotheses corresponding to the objectives. In the present article, the hypotheses are retained in concise statistical form: (a) there is no significant relationship between child-rearing practices and overall, emotional, social, or educational adjustment; and (b) there are no significant differences between the specified employed/non-employed maternal groups and gender subgroups in child-rearing practices or adjustment.

Review of Related Literature

The theoretical review in the source study draws on several perspectives concerning the influence of early family experiences on personality and adjustment. Adler's individual psychology emphasizes the importance of early experiences and family context in the development of an individual's style of life. Horney's work highlights the importance of affection and approval, while Rogers emphasizes a positive interpersonal climate and unconditional positive regard. Bandura's social learning perspective emphasizes



observational learning, suggesting that children acquire behavioral patterns partly by observing significant adults, especially parents.

Baumrind's work on parenting styles is also relevant to the study. The source discusses authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful or uninvolved patterns. The authoritative pattern, characterized by warmth together with appropriate control and clear expectations, is presented as being associated with positive developmental outcomes. These theoretical perspectives support the assumption that the quality of parental interaction may be associated with children's adjustment.

The research review summarized in the dissertation includes studies concerning maternal employment, family environment, parent–child relationships, child-rearing practices, and adjustment. Several studies cited in the source reported relationships between parental involvement, family environment, child-rearing attitudes, and children's personality or educational outcomes. Other studies reported differences in family environment or academic achievement between children of working and non-working mothers, whereas some reported no significant difference in overall adjustment. This mixed pattern in earlier research provided a rationale for examining the issue in the Kottayam context.

Method

Research Design

The original study adopted a descriptive survey approach. Interrelationship analysis was used to examine the relationship between child-rearing practices and adjustment, while a comparative approach was used to examine differences between groups. The study was conducted among secondary school students in Kottayam District.

Participants and Sampling

The population comprised secondary school students in Kottayam District. A sample of 300 Grade 9 students was selected from seven schools in the urban area. The schools included aided and unaided institutions and schools following ICSE, CBSE, and aided-school systems. The source states that random sampling was used.

Group	n
Students of employed mothers	126



Students of unemployed mothers	174
Total	300

Measures

Two instruments were used. First, the researcher developed a Child Rearing Practices Inventory. The final instrument contained 40 positive statements rated on a three-point scale: Always, Sometimes, and Never, scored 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The final items represented eight dimensions: social development, emotional development, educational development, time spent, support, attention, care felt, and moral concern. The source describes expert review, try-out, item analysis, and retention of 40 items.

Second, the Adjustment Inventory developed by A. K. P. Sinha and R. P. Singh was used. It contained 60 items with Yes/No responses and covered emotional, social, and educational adjustment, with 20 items in each area.

Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from school authorities and administered the instruments personally in seven schools. Students were given instructions and sufficient seating arrangements to complete the inventories. The reported administration time for both instruments was 45 minutes.

Data Analysis

The source reports the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were used to summarize scores, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine relationships, and independent-samples t tests were used to examine differences between groups. The original report used critical values of 2.58 at the .01 level and 1.96 at the .05 level for the reported tests.

Results

Relationship Between Child-Rearing Practices and Adjustment

Variables	n	r	t	Significance
Child-rearing practices and overall adjustment	300	.45	8.697	$p < .01$

Child-rearing practices and emotional adjustment	300	.38	7.091	$p < .01$
Child-rearing practices and social adjustment	300	.50	9.967	$p < .01$
Child-rearing practices and educational adjustment	300	.39	4.825	$p < .01$

The reported results indicate statistically significant positive relationships between child-rearing practices and overall adjustment and between child-rearing practices and each of the three adjustment dimensions. The strongest reported correlation was with social adjustment ($r = .50$), followed by overall adjustment ($r = .45$), educational adjustment ($r = .39$), and emotional adjustment ($r = .38$). The corresponding t values exceeded the reported critical value at the .01 level.

Comparison by Mother's Employment Status

Outcome	Group	n	M	SD	t	Result
Child-rearing practices	Employed mothers	126	93.89	7.45	7.24	Significant, $p < .01$
Child-rearing practices	Unemployed mothers	174	99.98	6.75	7.24	Significant, $p < .01$
Adjustment	Employed mothers	126	41.31	6.89	4.625	Significant, $p < .01$
Adjustment	Unemployed mothers	174	44.84	5.98	4.625	Significant, $p < .01$

The reported t test showed a significant difference in child-rearing practice scores between students of employed and unemployed mothers, with the higher mean reported for students of unemployed mothers. The overall adjustment scores also differed significantly between the two groups, with the higher mean reported for students of unemployed mothers. The source's narrative summary, however, subsequently states that maternal employment status did not affect adjustment. Because the numerical table reports a

statistically significant difference, the present article preserves the statistical result and flags the inconsistency rather than silently changing the source data.

Gender-Specific Comparisons

Comparison	Outcome	Group 1 M	Group 2 M	t	Result
Boys: employed vs. unemployed mothers	Child-rearing practices	92.36	95.11	2.298	Significant, $p < .05$
Boys: employed vs. unemployed mothers	Adjustment	43.02	43.23	.220	Not significant
Girls: employed vs. unemployed mothers	Child-rearing practices	92.03	94.62	1.87	Not significant
Girls: employed vs. unemployed mothers	Adjustment	43.62	44.18	.58	Not significant
Employed mothers: boys vs. girls	Child-rearing practices	92.96	93.80	.53	Not significant
Employed mothers: boys vs. girls	Adjustment	41.12	41.22	.08	Not significant
Unemployed mothers: boys vs. girls	Child-rearing practices	93.21	94.52	.615	Not significant
Unemployed mothers: boys vs. girls	Adjustment	41.35	42.65	1.16	Not significant



The subgroup results show that boys of employed and unemployed mothers differed significantly in child-rearing practice scores, whereas their adjustment scores did not differ significantly. For girls, neither child-rearing practices nor adjustment differed significantly by mothers' employment status according to the reported *t* tests. Within the employed-mother group, boys and girls did not differ significantly in either outcome. Similarly, within the unemployed-mother group, the gender difference was not statistically significant for either child-rearing practices or adjustment.

Discussion

The central finding is the positive association between perceived child-rearing practices and students' adjustment. The reported correlation of .45 with overall adjustment suggests that students who reported more favorable child-rearing experiences also tended to report better adjustment. The positive relationships with emotional, social, and educational adjustment further indicate that child-rearing practices may be relevant across multiple areas of students' school and interpersonal functioning.

The social adjustment correlation was the largest of the three dimensions ($r = .50$). This result is consistent with the theoretical emphasis in the source study on family interaction, modeling, support, and social learning. Children learn patterns of interaction partly through their experiences with parents and other significant adults. Supportive communication, attention, encouragement, and opportunities for social participation may therefore be relevant to students' ability to establish harmonious relationships in school and society.

The significant difference in child-rearing practice scores between students of employed and unemployed mothers indicates that maternal employment status was associated with differences in students' reported experiences of child-rearing. The higher mean for students of unemployed mothers suggests that, within this sample and measurement framework, these students reported more favorable child-rearing practices. This result should not be interpreted as establishing that maternal employment causes poorer parenting. The study did not experimentally manipulate maternal employment and did not control for other potentially relevant variables such as socioeconomic status, family structure, occupation type, working hours, parental education, or quality of parent–child communication.

The adjustment comparison requires particular care because the source contains an internal inconsistency. Table 4.6 reports $t = 4.625$, which the original report interprets as statistically significant at the .01 level, and the two group means are different. Yet the later major-finding narrative states that employed and unemployed mothers' children do not differ significantly in adjustment. The article therefore



reports the numerical result as significant while explicitly acknowledging the inconsistency in the source. This transparent treatment is preferable to changing the reported data without evidence.

The subgroup analyses provide a more differentiated picture. Boys differed significantly in child-rearing practices by maternal employment status, but not in adjustment. Girls did not differ significantly in either outcome by maternal employment status. Moreover, boys and girls did not differ significantly within either maternal employment group. These findings suggest that gender did not consistently moderate the relationship between maternal employment status and the measured outcomes in the sample.

Implications for Educational Practice

Teachers and school counselors can recognize the importance of students' family environments when supporting adjustment. School-based programs may include parent orientation, communication workshops, and guidance on constructive forms of attention, encouragement, academic support, and emotional communication.

Parents may benefit from guidance emphasizing the quality of interaction rather than simply the amount of time spent with children. The dimensions represented in the inventory—support, attention, emotional understanding, educational encouragement, social development, and moral concern—provide useful areas for parent education.

Schools can also strengthen communication between parents and teachers. Regular parent–teacher interaction may help identify students experiencing difficulties in emotional, social, or educational adjustment and may allow coordinated support between home and school.

Finally, maternal employment should not be treated as a simple indicator of parenting quality. Educational interventions should avoid stigmatizing working mothers and should instead focus on supportive family relationships, effective communication, and practical strategies for balancing work and family responsibilities.

Limitations

The study was limited to 300 students from seven schools in the Kottayam educational context, which restricts generalizability to other districts, age groups, school systems, or cultural settings.

The study relied on students' responses to self-report inventories. The source itself notes that child-rearing practices were not observed directly in actual life situations.



The study considered maternal employment as a major grouping variable but did not report statistical control for potentially confounding variables such as socioeconomic status, parental education, family size, type of employment, work schedule, or father's involvement.

The reference list in the original dissertation contains incomplete bibliographic information for several sources. Accordingly, the APA 7 reference list in this converted article has been standardized only to the extent supported by the supplied document; missing publication details have not been invented.

Conclusion

The study provides evidence of significant positive relationships between child-rearing practices and students' overall, emotional, social, and educational adjustment. It also reports differences in child-rearing practices according to maternal employment status and significant differences in some subgroup comparisons. The overall pattern indicates that supportive child-rearing experiences are associated with better adjustment among secondary school students. At the same time, the findings should be interpreted within the limits of the sample, measures, and nonexperimental design. The inconsistency between the numerical adjustment test and the narrative conclusion regarding maternal employment should be resolved by checking the original data and statistical calculations before publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies may use larger and more geographically diverse samples across Kerala to improve generalizability.

Researchers may examine the effects of type of maternal employment, working hours, occupational stress, and work–family balance rather than using employment status as a simple employed/non-employed category.

Longitudinal studies may help clarify how child-rearing practices and adjustment influence one another over time.

Future research may combine student reports with parent reports, teacher ratings, and observational measures to reduce reliance on a single source of data.

Further studies may use multivariate statistical techniques to control for socioeconomic status, parental education, family structure, and other relevant variables.

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