

Research Paper

Guilt, Social Support, and Psychological Distress in Working and Non-Working Mothers: A Relational Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the relationships among guilt, perceived social support, and psychological distress in working and non-working mothers. As women increasingly manage both caregiving responsibilities and occupational roles, understanding the emotional and social correlates of maternal mental health becomes essential. Psychological distress, conceptualized through depression, anxiety, and stress, provides a multidimensional framework for assessing maternal well-being across employment contexts. A correlational research design was adopted, and data were collected from 110 mothers (55 working and 55 non-working) using purposive sampling. Standardized instruments included the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-42), the State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS), and the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ6). Descriptive findings indicated that the majority of participants reported normal levels of psychological distress, with a smaller proportion experiencing mild to severe symptoms. Independent samples t-tests revealed no significant differences between working and non-working mothers in depression, anxiety, stress, or guilt. However, regression analysis demonstrated that employment status significantly predicted social support, with working mothers reporting higher levels of support than non-working mothers. Although the predictive effect was statistically significant, the magnitude of explained variance was small, indicating that additional factors likely contribute to perceptions of social support. Correlation analyses further revealed strong and statistically significant positive relationships among depression, anxiety, stress, and guilt. Guilt was consistently and positively associated with all dimensions of psychological distress, underscoring its central role in maternal emotional functioning. Overall, the findings highlight the interconnected nature of guilt and psychological distress and emphasize the protective importance of social support in promoting maternal mental health across employment statuses.

Keywords: *psychological distress, guilt, social support, working mothers, non-working mothers, maternal mental health*

Motherhood is a transformative life stage characterized by profound psychological, emotional, and social changes. In contemporary society, women frequently assume multiple roles, balancing caregiving responsibilities with occupational

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commitments. This intersection of maternal and professional identities has intensified scholarly interest in understanding maternal mental health within varying employment contexts. Employment can provide financial independence, social interaction, and enhanced self-worth; however, it may also generate role overload, time constraints, and work–family conflict. Conversely, non-working mothers may experience social isolation, economic dependence, and identity-related challenges. These distinct yet overlapping experiences necessitate a deeper exploration of the relational dynamics underlying maternal well-being.

Mental health in mothers is often examined through the construct of psychological distress, which encompasses symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Psychological distress reflects an individual’s emotional response to internal and external demands and has been widely used as a comprehensive indicator of mental health vulnerability. According to the stress process model (Pearlin et al., 1981), chronic role strain and accumulated life stressors can significantly impact emotional functioning. Mothers, particularly those managing multiple roles, may encounter heightened stress due to societal expectations surrounding caregiving competence, emotional availability, and household management. These pressures may contribute to depressive symptoms, persistent anxiety, and heightened stress responses, thereby affecting overall maternal functioning and family dynamics.

Psychological Distress

Psychological distress represents a multidimensional construct involving negative emotional states such as depression, anxiety, and stress. Depression is characterized by low mood, diminished interest, and feelings of hopelessness; anxiety involves physiological arousal and apprehensive anticipation; and stress reflects persistent tension and difficulty relaxing (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). These dimensions are interrelated and frequently co-occur, particularly in populations experiencing role strain. Research indicates that maternal psychological distress can negatively influence parenting practices, marital relationships, and child outcomes. Employment status may shape exposure to stressors differently, yet both working and non-working mothers remain vulnerable to emotional burden arising from societal expectations and personal role demands. Understanding psychological distress within a relational framework allows for identification of contributing emotional and contextual factors.

Guilt

Guilt is a self-conscious moral emotion that arises when individuals perceive they have failed to meet personal or socially prescribed standards (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Unlike shame, which targets the global self, guilt is typically linked to specific behaviors and perceived shortcomings. In motherhood, guilt often emerges from internalized ideals of “good parenting,” where deviations from caregiving expectations can trigger self-reproach (Marschall et al., 1994). Working mothers may experience guilt associated with limited time spent with children or perceived emotional unavailability. In contrast, non-working mothers may report guilt related to financial dependency or perceived underutilization of personal skills. Persistent guilt may intensify vulnerability to depressive symptoms and emotional distress. Examining guilt as a relational variable is therefore essential in understanding its potential role in amplifying or mediating psychological distress among mothers.

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Social Support

Perceived social support refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the availability and adequacy of emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance from social networks (Sarason et al., 1987). The stress-buffering hypothesis posits that social support mitigates the negative impact of stressors on psychological well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). In the maternal context, support from spouses, extended family members, peers, and community networks can foster coping, resilience, and emotional stability. Social support may reduce feelings of isolation, validate maternal experiences, and enhance confidence in parenting roles. Importantly, the perception of support - rather than mere availability - is a critical determinant of its protective function. Variations in occupational engagement may influence access to and perception of support systems, making it important to examine how social support interacts with emotional experiences such as guilt and distress.

Relational Dynamics among Guilt, Social Support, and Psychological Distress

Although employment status has been widely examined in maternal mental health research, findings remain inconclusive regarding whether working and non-working mothers significantly differ in levels of distress. A more nuanced approach involves investigating the relational interplay among psychological variables. Guilt may exacerbate depressive and anxiety symptoms by reinforcing negative self-evaluations, whereas social support may act as a protective buffer against such emotional strain. Prior research suggests that higher perceived social support is associated with lower depressive symptoms and improved emotional adjustment (Thoits, 2011). However, the extent to which guilt and social support interact with psychological distress within different employment contexts remains underexplored.

Adopting a relational framework enables examination of how these constructs coexist and influence one another rather than focusing solely on group differences. Such an approach is essential in identifying potential risk and protective factors within maternal populations.

Given the increasing participation of women in the workforce alongside enduring caregiving expectations, it is critical to understand how emotional experiences and support systems contribute to maternal psychological well-being. The present study aims to investigate the relationships among guilt, perceived social support, and psychological distress in working and non-working mothers. By employing a correlational design, the study seeks to examine associations among these variables and determine whether employment status shapes these relational patterns. Insights derived from this analysis may inform targeted psychosocial interventions, counseling strategies, and support-based programs designed to enhance maternal mental health.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** There will be significant differences between working and non-working mothers in levels of psychological distress, guilt, and perceived social support.
- **H2:** There will be a significant positive relationship between guilt and psychological distress (depression, anxiety, and stress) among working and non-working mothers.
- **H3:** There will be a significant negative relationship between perceived social support and psychological distress among working and non-working mothers.
- **H4:** There will be a significant relationship between guilt and perceived social support among working and non-working mothers.

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- **H5:** Employment status will significantly predict social support among mothers.

METHOD

Research Design

The present study employed a correlational research design to examine the relationships among guilt, perceived social support, and psychological distress in working and non-working mothers. A correlational approach was considered appropriate as the study aimed to explore naturally occurring associations among variables without manipulation. In addition to relational analysis, group comparisons were conducted to examine differences between working and non-working mothers.

Participants

The sample comprised 110 mothers residing in Jammu and nearby regions. The participants were equally divided into two groups: 55 working mothers and 55 non-working mothers. Inclusion criteria required participants to be mothers and either currently employed (full-time or part-time) or not engaged in paid employment. The balanced group distribution facilitated meaningful comparative and relational analyses. The total sample of 110 participants had a mean age of 39.37 years ($SD = 7.36$), suggesting that the mothers in the study were primarily in early to middle adulthood. The Non-working mothers had a mean age of 39.53 years ($SD = 7.54$), while working mothers had a mean age of 39.22 years ($SD = 7.25$). The difference in mean age between the two groups was minimal (0.31 years), indicating that both groups were closely matched in terms of age.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who met the predefined inclusion criteria. This method allowed for targeted selection of working and non-working mothers to ensure relevance to the research objectives.

Measures

- **Psychological Distress.** Psychological distress was assessed using the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-42; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS-42 consists of 42 items divided into three subscales measuring depression, anxiety, and stress. Participants rated their experiences over the past week on a 4-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate greater emotional distress.
- **Guilt.** Guilt was measured using the State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS; Marschall et al., 1994). The guilt subscale includes five items rated on a 5-point Likert scale assessing current feelings of guilt.
- **Social Support.** Perceived social support was measured using the Social Support Questionnaire – Short Form (SSQ6; Sarason et al., 1987). The instrument assesses both the number of available supports (SSQN) and satisfaction with support (SSQS).
- **Demographic Information.** A demographic information sheet was used to collect data on age, employment status, number of children, educational qualification, type of family, and related variables.

Procedure

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality and voluntary participation were ensured.

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After obtaining consent, the instruments were administered either individually or in small groups.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were computed to describe the sample characteristics and variable distributions. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine differences between working and non-working mothers. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of relationships among psychological distress, guilt, social support, and demographic variables. Statistical significance was determined at the conventional alpha level.

RESULTS

Table 1 Frequency analysis of levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among working and non-working mothers

	Extremely Severe	Mild	Moderate	Normal	Severe
Depression					
Non-working	4	3	8	35	5
Working	2	8	9	34	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>7</i>
Anxiety					
Non-working	10	7	10	25	3
Working	4	8	9	29	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>8</i>
Stress					
Non-working	1	4	5	39	6
Working	1	8	7	37	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>8</i>

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among working and non-working mothers.

Depression

The findings indicate that the majority of participants reported normal levels of depression ($n = 69$). Among non-working mothers, 35 reported normal levels, while 34 working mothers fell within the normal range. Moderate levels of depression were observed in 8 non-working and 9 working mothers. A smaller proportion reported mild ($n = 11$) and severe ($n = 7$) levels, while extremely severe depression was reported by only 6 participants overall. These results suggest that depressive symptoms were generally within the normal range for most mothers, with only a limited subset experiencing elevated severity. The distribution pattern appears comparable across working and non-working groups.

Anxiety

In terms of anxiety, 54 participants fell within the normal range, representing the largest category. Non-working mothers showed slightly higher frequencies in the extremely severe category ($n = 10$) compared to working mothers ($n = 4$). Moderate anxiety levels were reported by 19 participants overall, while 15 reported mild anxiety. Severe anxiety was relatively low ($n = 8$). Although normal levels were predominant in both groups, anxiety symptoms appeared somewhat more pronounced among non-working mothers in the extremely severe category.

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Stress

For stress, the majority of participants ($n = 76$) reported normal levels, indicating that stress symptoms were generally low within the sample. Non-working mothers ($n = 39$) and working mothers ($n = 37$) showed nearly identical frequencies in the normal category. Moderate and mild stress levels were reported by 12 participants each, while severe stress was observed in 8 participants. Extremely severe stress was rare, with only 2 cases overall. The distribution of stress levels was largely similar across both employment groups.

Overall Pattern

Overall, the frequency analysis demonstrates that most working and non-working mothers reported normal levels of psychological distress across depression, anxiety, and stress dimensions. Although small variations exist - particularly in anxiety severity among non-working mothers - the general pattern suggests no marked disparity between the two groups at the descriptive level. These findings align with subsequent inferential analyses indicating limited statistically significant group differences.

Table 2 Mean scores and SDs for depression, anxiety, stress, guilt, and social support among working and non-working women along with t-values

Variables	N	M	SD	t
Depression				
Non-working	55	9.76	9.125	.832
Working	55	8.40	8.041	
Anxiety				
Non-working	55	9.58	7.786	.799
Working	55	8.44	7.236	
Stress				
Non-working	55	11.84	8.852	-.581
Working	55	12.75	7.491	
Guilt				
Non-working	55	10.25	5.285	-.109
Working	55	10.36	5.229	
Social Support				
Non-working	55	29.33	8.271	-2.089*
Working	55	32.09	5.275	

* $p < 0.05$

Depression

The mean score for depression was slightly higher among non-working mothers ($M = 9.76$, $SD = 9.13$) compared to working mothers ($M = 8.40$, $SD = 8.04$). However, the independent samples t-test revealed that this difference was not statistically significant ($t = .832$, $p > .05$). This indicates that employment status did not significantly influence depressive symptoms within the sample.

Anxiety

Non-working mothers ($M = 9.58$, $SD = 7.79$) reported marginally higher anxiety scores than working mothers ($M = 8.44$, $SD = 7.24$). Nevertheless, the difference was not statistically significant ($t = .799$, $p > .05$), suggesting comparable anxiety levels across both groups.

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Stress

Working mothers demonstrated a slightly higher mean stress score ($M = 12.75$, $SD = 7.49$) than non-working mothers ($M = 11.84$, $SD = 8.85$). However, this difference was not statistically significant ($t = -.581$, $p > .05$). Thus, stress levels did not significantly differ between working and non-working mothers.

Guilt

The mean scores for guilt were nearly identical for non-working ($M = 10.25$, $SD = 5.29$) and working mothers ($M = 10.36$, $SD = 5.23$). The t-test result ($t = -.109$, $p > .05$) confirmed the absence of a significant difference between the two groups. This finding suggests that feelings of guilt were similarly experienced irrespective of employment status.

Social Support

A statistically significant difference emerged for perceived social support. Working mothers reported significantly higher levels of social support ($M = 32.09$, $SD = 5.28$) compared to non-working mothers ($M = 29.33$, $SD = 8.27$), $t = -2.089$, $p < .05$. This indicates that employment status may be associated with differences in perceived social support, with working mothers perceiving greater support.

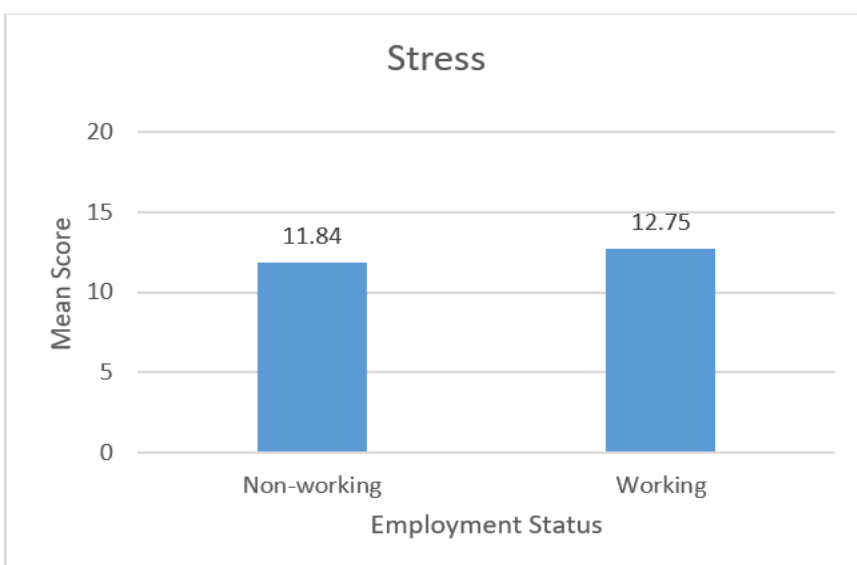
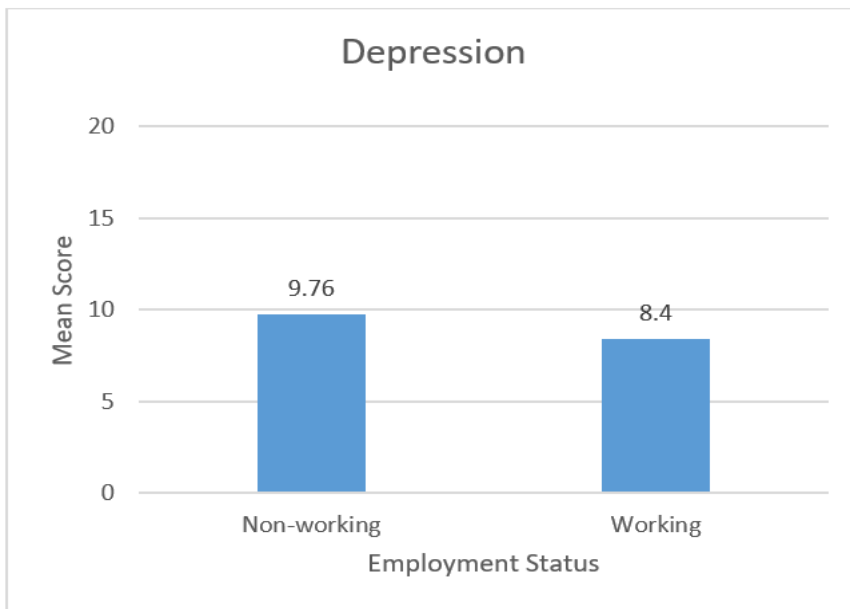
Overall Interpretation

The findings revealed that working and non-working mothers did not significantly differ in levels of depression, anxiety, stress, or guilt. Although slight variations in mean scores were observed between the two groups, these differences were not statistically significant, indicating that employment status did not substantially influence psychological distress or guilt within the sample.

However, a statistically significant difference emerged in perceived social support, with working mothers reporting higher levels of social support compared to non-working mothers ($p < .05$). This suggests that while employment status may not directly affect emotional distress or guilt, it may contribute to differences in perceived support networks.

H1 proposed that significant differences would exist between working and non-working mothers in psychological distress, guilt, and perceived social support. The results of the independent samples t-tests indicate that this hypothesis was partially supported. Specifically, differences were found only in perceived social support, whereas no significant differences were observed in psychological distress or guilt. Therefore, **H1** was partially accepted.

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Table 3 Relationship between depression, anxiety, stress, guilt, and social support in working and non-working mothers

		Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Guilt	Social Support
Non-working	Depression	1	.908**	.895**	.519**	-.259
	Anxiety		1	.843**	.441**	-.182
	Stress			1	.524**	-.205
	Guilt				1	-.216
	Social Support					1

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Working	Depression	1	.841**	.835**	.673**	-.151
	Anxiety		1	.828**	.634**	-.093
	Stress			1	.737**	-.157
	Guilt				1	-.182
	Social					1
	Support					

** $p < 0.01$

Non-Working Mothers

Among non-working mothers, depression showed a strong positive correlation with anxiety ($r = .908, p < .01$) and stress ($r = .895, p < .01$), indicating a high degree of overlap among the dimensions of psychological distress. Depression was also significantly and positively correlated with guilt ($r = .519, p < .01$), suggesting that higher levels of guilt were associated with increased depressive symptoms.

Anxiety was strongly positively correlated with stress ($r = .843, p < .01$) and moderately correlated with guilt ($r = .441, p < .01$). Similarly, stress demonstrated a significant positive relationship with guilt ($r = .524, p < .01$). These findings indicate that guilt is closely linked with multiple components of psychological distress in non-working mothers.

With respect to social support, negative correlations were observed with depression ($r = -.259$), anxiety ($r = -.182$), stress ($r = -.205$), and guilt ($r = -.216$). However, these correlations were not statistically significant, suggesting that perceived social support did not show a strong buffering effect within this subgroup at a statistically significant level.

Working Mothers

Among working mothers, depression was strongly and positively correlated with anxiety ($r = .841, p < .01$) and stress ($r = .835, p < .01$), reaffirming the interconnected nature of psychological distress dimensions. Depression also demonstrated a strong positive correlation with guilt ($r = .673, p < .01$), indicating that guilt was more strongly associated with depressive symptoms in working mothers compared to non-working mothers.

Anxiety showed a significant positive correlation with stress ($r = .828, p < .01$) and guilt ($r = .634, p < .01$). Stress was also strongly correlated with guilt ($r = .737, p < .01$). These findings highlight a robust interrelationship between guilt and psychological distress among working mothers.

Negative correlations were observed between social support and depression ($r = -.151$), anxiety ($r = -.093$), stress ($r = -.157$), and guilt ($r = -.182$); however, these relationships were not statistically significant. This suggests that while social support trends in the expected protective direction, its association with distress variables was relatively weak in this subgroup.

Overall Interpretation

Across both groups, strong and statistically significant positive correlations were observed among depression, anxiety, stress, and guilt. These findings support **H2**, indicating that higher guilt is associated with higher psychological distress in both working and non-working mothers.

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Although negative correlations were found between social support and psychological distress, these associations were not statistically significant in either group, providing limited support for **H3**. Similarly, the relationship between guilt and social support was negative but non-significant in both groups, offering limited evidence for **H4**.

Overall, the results highlight the central role of guilt in the emotional functioning of mothers, demonstrating its strong association with depression, anxiety, and stress across employment statuses.

Table 4 Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Social Support from Employment Status (N = 110)

Dependent Variable – Social Support				
	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>β</i>
Social Support	0.039	0.030	2.764*	0.197

* $p < 0.05$

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether employment status (working vs. non-working mothers) predicts perceived social support. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(1, 108) = 4.365, p = .039$, indicating that employment status significantly contributes to the prediction of social support.

The model yielded an *R* value of .197 and an *R*² value of .039, suggesting that employment status explains approximately 3.9% of the variance in perceived social support. Although statistically significant, the magnitude of the explained variance is small, indicating a modest effect.

The regression coefficient for employment status was $B = 2.764$ ($\beta = .197, p = .039$). This positive coefficient indicates that working mothers reported significantly higher perceived social support compared to non-working mothers. On average, working mothers scored approximately 2.76 points higher on the social support measure than non-working mothers. Overall, the findings suggest that employment status is a significant but small predictor of perceived social support, with working mothers perceiving slightly greater support. Therefore, **H5** was supported.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the relationships among guilt, perceived social support, and psychological distress in working and non-working mothers. The findings provide meaningful insights into the emotional experiences of mothers and the interplay between cognitive-emotional and social factors in shaping maternal well-being.

Psychological Distress Across Employment Status

Contrary to traditional assumptions that employment status significantly affects maternal mental health, the findings revealed no significant differences between working and non-working mothers in depression, anxiety, stress, or guilt. These findings are consistent with research suggesting that maternal employment alone does not determine psychological well-being; rather, contextual and relational factors play a more substantial role (Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Nomaguchi, 2009).

While working mothers often face work–family conflict and role overload (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), non-working mothers may experience social isolation, identity diffusion, or

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reduced financial autonomy (Dillaway & Pare, 2008). The absence of significant differences in distress suggests that both groups encounter distinct but comparable stressors, reinforcing the idea that psychological outcomes depend more on coping mechanisms and perceived competence than employment status per se.

However, a statistically significant difference was observed in perceived social support, with working mothers reporting higher levels of support. This finding aligns with research indicating that employment can broaden social networks and enhance access to instrumental and emotional resources (Thoits, 2011). Workplace interactions may provide an additional layer of social engagement that contributes to perceived support availability.

Role of Guilt in Psychological Distress

A key finding of the study was the strong positive association between guilt and psychological distress across both groups. Guilt was significantly correlated with depression, anxiety, and stress. This result is consistent with cognitive models of emotional disorders, which emphasize maladaptive self-evaluative processes as central contributors to psychological distress (Beck, 1976).

Maternal guilt has been conceptualized as emerging from internalized societal expectations regarding ideal motherhood (Liss et al., 2013). Working mothers may experience guilt related to perceived inadequacies in caregiving, while non-working mothers may experience guilt associated with financial dependency or unmet personal aspirations. Previous research has demonstrated that maternal guilt is significantly associated with depressive symptoms and anxiety (Borelli et al., 2017), supporting the present findings.

These results suggest that guilt functions as an amplifying cognitive-emotional mechanism that intensifies vulnerability to depression, anxiety, and stress regardless of employment status.

Social Support as a Protective Factor

Although perceived social support was negatively correlated with depression, anxiety, stress, and guilt in both groups, these relationships were not statistically significant. The direction of the correlations is consistent with the stress-buffering hypothesis, which proposes that social support protects individuals from the adverse effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The relatively weak associations observed in the present study may indicate that the effectiveness of social support depends more on its quality, emotional closeness, and contextual appropriateness rather than mere availability (Lakey & Orehek, 2011). Cultural norms surrounding motherhood may also influence how support is perceived and utilized, particularly in collectivistic societies where role expectations remain strong.

Interconnected Nature of Psychological Distress

The extremely strong correlations among depression, anxiety, and stress observed in the present study align with previous findings suggesting substantial overlap among these constructs (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). This supports the conceptualization of psychological distress as a multidimensional but highly interrelated construct. The findings imply that interventions targeting one domain of distress may simultaneously reduce symptoms in related domains.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined differences in psychological distress (depression, anxiety, and stress), guilt, and perceived social support among working and non-working mothers, and explored the interrelationships among these variables. The findings provide meaningful insights into the emotional experiences of motherhood across employment statuses. The results indicated that working and non-working mothers did not significantly differ in levels of depression, anxiety, stress, or guilt. This suggests that employment status alone does not determine maternal psychological distress, and that both groups experience comparable levels of emotional challenges, possibly shaped by differing role demands and contextual pressures. However, regression analysis demonstrated that employment status significantly predicted perceived social support. Working mothers reported significantly higher levels of perceived social support than non-working mothers. Although the predictive effect was statistically significant, the proportion of variance explained was small, indicating that employment status contributes modestly to perceptions of support and that other psychosocial factors are likely influential. Across both groups, strong positive correlations were observed among depression, anxiety, stress, and guilt, reinforcing the interconnected nature of psychological distress. Guilt emerged as a central emotional variable, showing significant positive associations with all dimensions of distress. This highlights the important role of guilt in shaping maternal emotional well-being. Although social support was negatively associated with psychological distress, these relationships were not statistically significant within groups. This suggests that while support may function as a protective factor, its buffering role may depend on additional variables such as quality, accessibility, or individual coping styles. Overall, the findings indicate that maternal psychological well-being is influenced more strongly by internal emotional processes, particularly guilt, than by employment status itself. While working mothers report slightly higher perceived social support, employment alone does not substantially alter psychological distress levels. The study underscores the need for interventions aimed at addressing maladaptive guilt, enhancing coping strategies, and strengthening meaningful and accessible support systems for mothers irrespective of their work status.

Limitations and Future Directions

The cross-sectional and correlational design of the study limits causal interpretation. Longitudinal research is recommended to explore how guilt and perceived social support influence psychological distress over time. Future studies may also examine mediating or moderating variables such as coping strategies, marital satisfaction, work flexibility, or cultural beliefs about motherhood.

Implications

- Maternal guilt should be a primary focus in psychological interventions, as it shows strong associations with depression, anxiety, and stress.
- Cognitive-behavioral strategies can be used to challenge unrealistic role expectations and reduce self-critical thinking patterns.
- Psychoeducation programs should normalize the emotional challenges of motherhood and promote balanced, flexible role identities.
- Self-compassion training may help mothers manage internalized pressure and reduce maladaptive guilt.
- Since employment status significantly predicts perceived social support, targeted efforts are needed to strengthen support systems, particularly for non-working mothers.

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- Structured peer-support groups, parenting circles, and community engagement programs can enhance social connectedness.
- Creating accessible and meaningful support networks may contribute to improved maternal psychological well-being across employment statuses.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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