

Work Stress and Parenting Styles: A Study of Their Interconnection and Effects on Life Satisfaction among Working Mothers

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ABSTRACT

With the increasing burden of work on people and the rising need for attention on children from mothers, the question how these both influence the working mothers' life arises. This study focuses on how work stress and parenting styles affect each other, and impact the life satisfaction among working mothers. The study's main objective is to find the relation between parenting styles and work-life balance. The target population is working mothers, and a sample size of 75 is collected. They were surveyed using questionnaires like Work-stressor questionnaire, Parenting Styles dimensions Questionnaire, and Satisfaction with Life scale for the variables Work stress, Parenting styles, and Life satisfaction respectively. Quantitative Correlational design is adopted to measure the variables. The study's results show that there is a negative significant correlation between Work stress and Life satisfaction ($\rho = -0.316$, $p = 0.006$) and a positive significant relationship between Work stress and Parenting styles ($\rho = 0.327$, $p = 0.004$). Some parenting styles like Authoritarian and Permissive are found to be associated with higher work stress among working mothers. The results also show that there is a weak negative relationship between Parenting styles and Life satisfaction ($\rho = -0.097$, $p = 0.409$).

Keywords: *Work Stress, Parenting Styles, Life Satisfaction, Working Mothers*

Many studies show that working mothers perceive a moderate to high level of stress from different components of their lives, predominantly from their employment and family responsibilities. Higher self-esteem, fewer social and emotional issues, a lower chance of going without insurance, higher vaccination rates, and improved academic achievement are just a few of the positive health and developmental outcomes that have been linked to parental employment, despite the lack of conclusive research in this area. As of 2023–2024, there were 643 million people working in India. (Statista, 2024). World Health Organisation (WHO) research indicates that almost one in four Indian workers experiences stress at work. According to a different All Management Association survey,

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53% of Indian workers experience stress as a result of their lengthy workdays and substantial responsibilities. (Potdar, 2023). Work stress, characterized by high workloads, poor work-life balance, and unclear duties, impacts cognitive, emotional, and behavioral performance. Factors like workplace conflicts, job insecurity, and insufficient support contribute to physical symptoms, burnout, and health issues. The introduction sets the stage for a multidisciplinary approach to studying stress and performance, calling for integrated research that combines psychology, physiology, human factors, and organizational science. (Driskell & Salas, 2013). Work stress is a negative reaction to workplace demands that don't match an employee's needs, influenced by organizational and personal factors. It's a growing concern, impacting employees and organizational effectiveness. Proactive stress management policies considering individual and systemic solutions are advocated. (Burman & Goswami, 2018). Work-related stress, causing health and productivity issues, is a growing global concern. In Australia, it's the second leading cause of compensation for illness or injury, with reactions varying based on job, personality, and mental health. Work stress, characterized by job expectations exceeding capabilities, can be acute or chronic, affecting cognitive abilities, physical health, and emotional well-being, necessitating early intervention and prevention. 65% of American workers experience job stress, with 83% feeling stressed and 54% affecting personal lives. OSHA provides resources to address stress, highlighting its impact on productivity and health, and aiming to reduce 120,000 deaths annually. (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, n.d.)

Parenting styles are persistent patterns of behaviors, attitudes, and methods used by parents to raise and guide their children. These styles influence a child's development, behavior, and emotional well-being. According to Darling and Steinberg (1993), a child's development is greatly influenced by the behaviours their parents use, which also affect how they see themselves and how well they can interact with others. Psychologists categorize parenting styles into four types: Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Neglectful/uninvolved Parenting. (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These styles significantly impact a child's self-perception and interaction abilities. Parenting styles include authoritative, authoritative, permissive, and neglected. Authoritative parenting involves a balanced approach with high demands and open communication, while authoritarian parenting enforces strict rules and expectations. Permissive parenting is warm and nurturing, but rarely enforces rules or limits. Neglected parenting lacks structure and discipline, leading to feelings of neglect and difficulty in forming secure emotional connections. These styles are commonly used to categorize different parenting methods and techniques. India's traditional society values respecting elders and family members. Despite nuclear families, traditional authoritarian parenting remains. Younger generations are adopting permissive parenting, reflecting a broader cultural trend towards authoritative childrearing. (Zervides & Knowles, 2007). Research shows that children's problem behaviors increase with mothers' psychological control and attachment, but only when combined with lack of control reduces external problematic behavior. (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005). Parenting style is influenced by intergenerational trauma transmission, with authoritarian parenting often resulting in toddler symptoms linked to oppositional defiant, hyperactivity, and affective disorders. (Schwerdtfeger et al., 2013)

A person's self-evaluation of their life and activities in relation to their own objectives and standards is known as life satisfaction. In contrast to transient feelings of joy, life satisfaction necessitates a consistent evaluation of one's life over a long period of time in relation to one's own standards and expectations (Diener et al., 1985). Contentment

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mechanisms are influenced by various theoretical models, including Bottom-Up, Top-Down, and Self-Determination Theory, which suggest satisfaction in areas like employment, health, and interpersonal relationships. The Set-Point Theory suggests that individuals maintain a stable level of life pleasure, influenced by stable personality traits and genetic factors, despite temporary external events. (Headey & Wearing, 1989). Life satisfaction is influenced by personality qualities, with high extraversion and conscientiousness leading to greater satisfaction, while neuroticism results in poorer satisfaction due to emotional instability. (Anglim et al, 2020). Research shows that social networks and interactions are crucial for life satisfaction, with strong ties linked to higher levels. Cultural values influence people's perception of life pleasures, with collectivist cultures emphasizing peace and cohesiveness, and individualistic societies focusing on personal accomplishments and liberty. Socioeconomic standing, wealth, and income satisfaction are also influenced by factors like age and socio-territorial norms. Working women face unique challenges in balancing work and family commitments, which affects their level of social contentment. Socio-technical techniques emphasize the importance of considering broader variables. Life satisfaction is a dynamic concept that changes over time due to changing circumstances and priorities. While it generally increases, life-altering events can lower it. Longitudinal studies show interventions improving specific aspects can lead to greater satisfaction. Studying life satisfaction, especially in working mothers, is crucial.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified challenges related to Work-related stress and parenting stress, as mothers working from home faced increased work-family conflicts and disruptions to leisure time, intensifying stress levels (Craig & Churchill, 2021).

Kadale et al. (2018) conducted a cross-sectional study to evaluate working professional moms' stress levels and risk variables related to them. According to the findings, almost 60% of women reported feeling moderate to severe stress. Shift work, a lack of family support, and the inability to nurse a kid exclusively for six months all contribute to increased stress levels. The majority of professional working mothers report feeling stressed despite the help of their families in raising their children.

A qualitative research study titled 'A Study on Parenting Stress and Coping Strategies Adopted Among Working Mothers', is conducted by N. Kavitha et al. (2022). Working mothers who have more than one child, have completed school, and are part of a nuclear family experience more stress in their parental role of caring for their children, according to the study's findings, which were derived from a sample of 300 respondents.

Parenting styles

Ningsih (2021) conducted a study examining different parenting styles and their effects on children's well-being, academic performance, and mental health. The study reveals that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and structure, effectively maintains children's emotional stability and motivation in remote learning, while authoritarian parenting leads to stress and resistance.

Agarwal and Alex (2017) conducted a comparative study to examine the differences in parenting styles between working and non-working mothers and their impact on children's temperament and behavioural problems. The study found that working mothers adopt authoritative parenting styles, promoting independence and self-regulation in their children,

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while non-working mothers display permissive or authoritarian approaches. Children's temperament also influences behavioural outcomes, emphasizing the need for balanced parenting strategies.

Mase and Tyokyaa (2016) explore how work-family conflict and gender influence parenting styles among working parents in Makurdi Metropolis. The study reveals that work-related stress and family responsibilities impact parenting behaviours, with high conflict leading to authoritarian parenting and lower conflict supporting authoritative parenting. It calls for work-life balance policies.

Life satisfaction

A study examined the connections between life satisfaction and job stress, job involvement, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment using a sample of 827 police officers. The results suggest that police administrators should work to increase job involvement, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment while lowering job stress in order to improve officers' life satisfaction. The police department, the personnel, and the community they serve should all gain from this. (Lambert et al., 2021).

Working parents who have young children report lower levels of life satisfaction, particularly when both parents are employed, according to the study "Life satisfaction amongst working parents: examining the case of mothers and fathers in Ireland." The authors propose family-friendly measures to maintain parental well-being and contend that mothers' pleasure is weakened by time constraints and a lack of support for school-age children. (Walsh & Murphy, 2021).

A study that involved 120 women between the ages of 25 and 40 and 41 and 55 was conducted to examine the disparities in life satisfaction between working and non-working moms. The findings indicate that there are no appreciable variations in life satisfaction between mothers who work and those who don't.

METHODOLOGY

Aim:

To study the relationship between Work stress, Parenting styles, and Life satisfaction among working mothers

Research questions

1. What is the relationship between Work stress and Parenting styles among working mothers?
2. What is the relationship between Work stress and Life satisfaction among working mothers?
3. What is the relationship between Parenting styles and Life satisfaction among working mothers?

Objectives

The study is conceptualized with the following objectives in mind:

1. To study the relationship between work stress and parenting styles
2. To find the relationship between work stress, parenting styles, and life satisfaction
3. To find if work stress and parenting styles influence life satisfaction among working mothers

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4. To study whether work stress influences parenting styles
5. To investigate how working mothers differ on variables under the study, i.e., parenting styles, work stress, and life satisfaction.

Hypotheses

To fulfil the above objectives, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- H0: There is no significant relationship between work stress and parenting styles among working mothers.
H1: There is a significant relationship between work stress and parenting styles among working mothers.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between work stress and life satisfaction among working mothers.
H2: There is a significant relationship between work stress and life satisfaction among working mothers.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between parenting styles and life satisfaction among working mothers.
H3: There is a significant relationship between parenting styles and life satisfaction among working mothers.

Variables:

- A. Work stress
- B. Parenting styles
- C. Life satisfaction

Operational Definitions:

- **Work stress:** Work stress is the harmful response, both mentally and physically, that happens when the demands of the work and the requirements do not match the capabilities of a person doing that job. Work stress can make a person feel overwhelmed and under-supported, in case of a forced need to meet unrealistic societal expectations to balance both flawlessly.
- **Parenting styles:** Parenting style is how a parent communicates their expectations with the children, provides support, and the way they respond towards their children, and how they inculcate and manage discipline in them. It plays a very important role in shaping a child's emotional well-being, social development, and personality over time. It can be warm and supportive or strict and directive, or have mixed patterns. These patterns majorly reflect parents' childhood, their experiences, and the culture in which they were raised.
- **Life satisfaction:** Life satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of one's overall quality of life based on their experience. It is influenced by one's own standards, aspirations they have for themselves, and judgment of their fulfilment in life. It is shaped by both intrinsic factors like optimism, self-esteem, and coping skills, and extrinsic factors such as societal support, financial stability.

Research Design:

The study adopted a Comparative Correlational research design, aiming to explore associations and group differences between variables like work stress, parenting styles, and life satisfaction.

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Sampling Method:

The sampling method was Stratified sampling. The sampling method ensures that different age groups and various professions are adequately, appropriately represented in the sample.

Sample Size:

The study comprised 75 married working women who had at least one child. All participants were able to comprehend and respond in English and willingly participated in the study after providing informed consent. The sample represented women from diverse professional backgrounds, including education, healthcare, corporate sectors, and government services.

Inclusion Criteria:

- i) Married women who have at least one child.
- ii) Currently employed in any occupational sector.
- iii) Basic understanding and ability to respond in English.
- iv) Willingness to provide informed consent and voluntarily participate in the study.
- v) No severe diagnosed mental health disorders (e.g., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder).

Exclusion Criteria:

- i) Unmarried, divorced, or widowed women.
- ii) Women who are not currently employed.
- iii) Women who are diagnosed with severe psychological disabilities or disorders.
- iv) Individuals who are unable to comprehend English adequately.
- v) Participants who do not complete the questionnaires fully or withdraw midway.

Procedure and administration:

Participants for the study were recruited through online platforms and professional networks. Before participation, each subject was screened based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria: they had to be married, working women with at least one child, proficient in English, willing to provide informed consent, and free from severe psychological disorders. After screening, each participant received a personalized link to the survey containing all the questionnaires. In order to guarantee that participants understood their rights, such as voluntary participation, response confidentiality, and the freedom to discontinue participation at any moment without incurring penalties, the survey started with an informed consent form.

The study's purpose was intentionally described in general terms to prevent bias in the responses. Structured and standardized instructions were provided at the beginning of each section to guide participants on how to fill out the scales.

The order of the questionnaires was as follows:

- a) Work Stressor Questionnaire (WSQ)
- b) Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ)
- c) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Participants were asked to complete all items without skipping any questions. The survey took about 20-25 minutes to complete. Participants were encouraged to respond honestly and independently, without discussing the questions with others.

Scoring was conducted keeping in mind the procedures of each scale. Precautions were taken to prevent any mistakes in the test.

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Tools for assessment

- 1. Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ):** It assesses authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles through 62 items with validated internal consistency. Originally developed by Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, and Hart (1995). The PSDQ was created to provide a detailed and multidimensional assessment of Baumrind's parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. It has been widely used in parenting research and was revised to a shorter, validated 62-item version for practical use without losing psychometric strength. The tool has shown Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.72 to 0.84, and test-retest reliability as 0.69 to 0.84.
- 2. Work Stress Questionnaire (WSQ):** A self-administered tool validated for early identification of individuals at risk of stress-related sick leave, originally tested among women and men. It was developed by Frantz Åslund and Karin Holmgren. The WSQ was initially designed to detect early signs of work-related stress, primarily among women at risk for sick leave. It was later validated among male workers as well, confirming its reliability and face validity across genders. It helps identify stress factors related to organizational and psychosocial work conditions. It utilizes a 5-point Likert-scale: 1 – Never, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Occasionally, 4 – Usually, 5 – Constantly. Overall score ranges from 55-275, with each area ranging from 5-25.
- 3. Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS):** The SWLS is a self-report questionnaire with five items designed to gauge life satisfaction's cognitive rather than emotional components. SWLS tries to capture a wider and reflective judgement that allows one to measure various components of life according to their personal criteria of what a good life means. This test was developed by Ed Diener, Robert A. Emmons, Robert J. Larsen, and Steven Griffin in 1985. It is one of the most widely used instruments to measure global life satisfaction.

RESULTS

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Age and Number of Kids

| Variable | Normal | Mean | Median | Standard deviation | Range |
|----------------|--------|------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| Age | 75 | 44.6 | 44 | 9.09 | 23-7 |
| Number of Kids | 75 | 1.63 | 2 | 0.588 | 1-3 |

This table provides basic demographic details of the sample: The mean age of participants is 44.6 years, with a range from 23 to 72, showing a diverse age group. The average number of children is 1.63, with most mothers having 1 to 2 kids.

Table 4.1 presents key demographic details of the participants, specifically their age and number of children. The sample includes mothers aged 23–72 years, with an average age of about 45 years. This wide age range reflects a diverse and multifaceted class that includes individuals at various stages of their personal and professional development. In turn, this variation may have a significant impact on how these moms perceive their general quality of life, cope with stress at work, and adjust to their new duties as parents. Additionally, the results indicate that the majority of participants had an average of fewer than two children, suggesting that working mothers in the sample may be increasingly adopting smaller families. Presumably, this would alleviate some of the everyday stressors that parents face, enabling a more fair integration of work and family responsibilities and enhancing their overall wellbeing.

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Table 4.2 Frequencies of Number of Kids

| Number of kids | Count | % of total |
|----------------|-------|------------|
| 1 | 32 | 42.75% |
| 2 | 39 | 52.0% |
| 3 | 4 | 5.3% |

This table categorizes the number of children each mother has: 52% have 2 kids, 42.7% have 1 kid, and only 5.3% have 3 kids. It highlights that most mothers manage either one or two children, which may influence how they experience parenting stress and life satisfaction.

Further detail on family structure is provided in *Table 4.2*, which shows that the majority of respondents were raising either one or two children. This change also reflects contemporary family planning, especially in urban and semi-urban areas where having a modest family is frequently a sensible and doable option. The easier daily responsibilities of parenthood might help moms manage their time and energy in constructive ways when they are able to care for fewer children. As a result, this can raise their degree of life satisfaction and their ability to adapt their parenting style to suit various parenting circumstances.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Work Stress, Parenting Styles, and Life Satisfaction

| Variable | Normal | Mean | Standard Deviation | Range |
|-------------------|--------|------|--------------------|-------|
| Work stress | 75 | 1.31 | 0.464 | 1-2 |
| Parenting styles | 75 | 1.71 | 0.851 | 1-3 |
| Life Satisfaction | 75 | 5.44 | 1.57 | 1-7 |

This table shows the average scores and variability of your three key variables:

Work stress: Mean = 1.31,

Parenting styles: Mean = 1.71,

Life satisfaction: Mean = 5.44 on a scale of 1–7. It describes the overall trends in the main study variables, helping to understand the baseline levels among participants.

Table 4.3 summarizes the key variables studied in the study. These results suggest that while job obligations may exist, many moms may not find them to be too much to handle. A modest mean score indicated that no single parenting style was recommended, and a variety of parenting styles were voiced by the participants. Surprisingly, participants were typically pretty happy with the lives they created, despite the challenges that still accompany juggling children and international professions.

Table 4.4 Inferential Statistics between Work Stress and Parenting Styles

| Variables | Sperman’s rho | Sig (2- tailed) |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Work stress | 1.000 | |
| Parenting styles | 0.327** | 0.004 |

A significant positive correlation ($\rho = 0.327$, $p = 0.004$) was found.

The analysis of *Table 4.4* revealed a notable positive association between occupational stress and unintended variation in parenting style. In summary, the quality of parenting is adversely affected by one's work-related stress. Mothers who experience high levels of emotional weariness and time strain are less able to parent with patience and consistency. These results support the first hypothesis and highlight the growing need for workplace

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regulations and support networks that acknowledge the conflicting demands faced by working mothers and seek to lessen them.

Therefore, Hypothesis H1 is accepted.

Table 4.5 Inferential Statistics between Work Stress and Life Satisfaction

| Variables | Spearman's rho | Sig (2- tailed) |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Work stress | 1.000 | |
| Life satisfaction | -0.316** | 0.006 |

A significant negative correlation ($\rho = -0.316$, $p = 0.006$) was observed.

As shown in *Table 4.5*, people who are more stressed at work have a strong negative correlation to being satisfied with life overall. This implies that jobs with greater stressors contribute to diminished life satisfaction, highlighting the need to mitigate job stressors to promote improved life satisfaction among working mothers. Excessive emotional exhaustion and a short time. In simple terms, these mothers with higher stress in the office will have lower life satisfaction. This supports our second hypothesis and is in line with past data that shows. When the pressures of work-related stress spiral out of control, they have grave impacts on physical and mental health, a burden on interpersonal relationships, and a decrease in overall quality of life.

Therefore, Hypothesis H2 is accepted.

Table 4.6 Inferential Statistics between Parenting Styles and Life Satisfaction

| Variables | Spearman's rho | Sig (2-tailed) |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Work stress | 1.000 | |
| Life satisfaction | -0.097 | 0.409 |

The correlation was not statistically significant ($\rho = -0.097$, $p = 0.409$).

According to *Table 4.6*, there is no statistically significant relationship between parenting styles and life satisfaction. Rather, these results imply that life satisfaction does not depend upon how a mother chooses to bond or engage with her children. This does not support the third hypothesis and suggests that working mothers' life satisfaction would depend upon factors such as spouse support, financial security, or mental health. It indicates that maternal happiness is not simple and is probably generated by a multitude of personal and environmental influences operating collectively.

Therefore, Hypothesis H3 is rejected.

Thus, this study contributes to a better understanding of the connections among working moms' life happiness, parenting style, and work stress. Work-related stress was strongly associated with both parenting style and life contentment, even though parenting style alone wasn't a reliable indicator of life satisfaction. These results highlight the challenging daily line that working women must walk and suggest serious consequences for families, businesses, and mental health.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study "Work Stress & Parenting Styles: A Study of the Interconnection & Effects on Life Satisfaction" was to look at the connections between working moms' life satisfaction, parenting practices, and work-related stress. The study also looked to investigate how the variable is interconnected and if certain parenting styles and work stress

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would be significant predictors of life satisfaction. The study included seventy-five participants who were working mothers with varying backgrounds. With an approximate mean age of 45, the participants were Indian mothers ranging in age from 23 to 72.

The study assessed the connection between parenting practices and work-related stress. The two variables were shown to have a strong positive association with one another. Parenting style changes were more common among mothers who reported higher levels of work-related stress. The consequence is that the ability to maintain a consistent, patient, and good parenting style tends to decline as work-related stress grows. This demonstrates the significance of workplace rules that promote working mothers' emotional well-being and validates the first premise.

The study also looked into how life satisfaction and work stress relate to one another. When examining job stress and life satisfaction, a significant inverse relationship was observed: as work stress rose, working mothers' life satisfaction fell. This demonstrates the detrimental effects of work-related stress on a mother's overall well-being and lends credence to the second hypothesis. Reduced life satisfaction among mothers has been linked to high levels of emotional weariness and time constraints.

The study investigated the connection between life happiness and parenting practices. The findings indicated there was no substantial relationship between the two variables. This did not support the third hypothesis, and indicates that parenting style may not influence a mother's satisfaction in her life directly. Other factors at play could be family economic status and social support, along with mental health factors and how they can alter a mother's satisfaction rating

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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