

Optimism and Adjustment among Adolescent Girls of Working Mothers and Homemakers: A Comparative Study

Urvashi Singh^{1*}, Shalini Singh²

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to study the differences in Optimism and Adjustment of adolescent girls of mothers working in corporate world and homemakers. The sample consisted of 100 adolescent girls, belonging to an age group of 16-17 years and studying in XI class. Out of 100, 50 girls were those whose mothers were working in Corporate World and 50 were those whose mothers were homemakers. Optimism scale developed by Scheier and Carver (1985) and named as Life Orientation test (LOT) and Bell Adjustment Inventory (1961) were administered to measure optimism and adjustment respectively. The sample was selected from Gurgaon. Findings suggested the significant differences between these two groups. Daughters of homemakers were found high in optimism and social adjustment.

Keywords: *Optimism, Adjustment, Girls, Mothers, Homeworkers*

Adolescence is a time which is characterised by immense hormonal and physical changes (Feedman and Elliot, 1990). The word 'Adolescent' is derived from a latin word 'Adolescere' which refers to grow up Santrock (1993) defines adolescence as the developmental period of transition between childhood and adulthood that involves biological cognitive and social changes. Biological changes involves physical development; Cognitive involves language, thought, intelligence and modes of problem solving and Social changes encompass relationship with other people in emotions, in personality, values and convictions in social milieu. It is a stage of crisis, diffusion and dilemma. At this stage, the individual has to make an assessment of his or her potentials, assets and liabilities as well and how to optimally utilize them as to answer questions for themselves about where they come from, who they are and what they will become (King, 2004). At this stage of life, adolescents are expected to meet demands at both home and school, perform appropriate gender roles, to be responsible in community, develop a set of values or norms etc. These herculean tasks are possible to accomplish on the basis of positive

¹ Asstt. Professor, Draunacharya College, Gurgaon, India

² Professor, Deptt. of Psychology, M.D.U., Rohtak, India

*Responding Author

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characteristics of their personality like optimism which may play a significant role to carry out these tasks effectively. The concept of 'optimism' reflects an individual's expectation of a positive outcome in most situations (Scheier and Carver, 1985; Leitenberg, 1989). It is believed to be a faith that leads to achievement. Optimism is commonly thought of as being rather than a trivial attribute. An optimistic is thought of as someone who sees the silver lining in every cloud and views the world through rose tinted spectacles. Such people tend to take proper and planned problem solving approach. Adolescents with optimism appraise daily hassles and stress in terms of potential growth and use positive framing coping strategies. Such adolescents report not only better physical and psychological wellness but also good adjustment in different realms of life (Smith, Pope, Poulton, 1989). The term 'adjustment usually implies a smooth relationship between the individual and the environment. It is a life long process that involves stimulus response behaviour. First a person moves towards the goal and in process of achieving that goal, he might have to face various hazards that thwart upon him. In this situation, if a person is able to accept himself and that situation to face the hassels, he becomes well adjusted in life. Adolescents in this stage of adolescence have to make an adjustment in various areas. They have to show behavioural adjustment by making a balance between needs, stimuli and opportunities attempting to satisfy needs by overcoming both inner and outer obstacles.

At this stage of life adolescents have various conflicts and crisis and these are in both boys and girls. Children try to resolve them in their own but how much parents especially mother who is the major socializing and cushioning agent for a child helps to resolve this dilemma is a major objective of this investigation. In current modal family, where both father and mother are working, this question becomes more vital. Taking this bent-up in mind, the present study aimed to investigate the significance of difference in optimism and adjustment of adolescent girls of working mothers and homemakers.

METHOD

Sample

The research sample comprised of 100 adolescent girls, studying in XI class, belonging to an age group of 16-17 years and from higher middle class income group. 50 girls were selected those whose mothers were working in corporate world and have very strict working hours (more than 10-12 hours in a day). On the other hand, 50 girls belonged to group whose mothers were homemakers. Both the groups belonged to nuclear family set-up.

Tools

- ***Optimism Scale (Scheier and Carver, 1985)*** – It was used to measure optimism of the participants sampled in the study. It is a 12 item, 5 point scale questionnaire (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). It is a likert scale and its scores varies from 0-4. It gives measure on optimism vs. pessimism.

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• *Adjustment Inventory by School Students (Sinha & Singh, 1992)* – It was used to measure the adjustment level of subjects sampled in the study. It has 60 items and 20 items each dealing with three different domains, i.e., emotional, social and educational. Higher the score, the poor is the adjustment. Low score indicates healthy adjustment.

Procedure

Both the tests were administered after establishing proper rapport with the subjects. They were given brief Instructions and were collected and scored as per manual after administration. The scores were statistically analyzed by using t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to assess and compare the level of optimism and adjustment in adolescent girls of employed and unemployed mothers. In order to study the above objective, t-test was applied and t-values of the two different groups were obtained.

Table No. 1 : Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of Adolescent girls of Working Mothers and Homemakers on optimism

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Girls of Working Mothers	50	18.56	2.58	4.48	0.01**
Girls of Homemakers	50	13.52	2.14		

** $p < 0.01$

Table No. 1 clearly shows that the mean score of adolescent girls of employed mothers was 18.56 ($\sigma=2.58$) followed by 13.52 ($\sigma=2.14$) i.e. the mean of girls of homemakers. Their t-value is 4.48 which is significant at 0.01 level. Results vividly show that adolescent girls of working mothers have higher optimism than girls of homemakers.

Galinsky (1999) reported that working mothers provide more feeling of loved, supported and understood to their daughters than of stay-at-home mothers. Han and Waldbogel (2001) also supported that working mothers being spending more time in their work set-up provide more autonomy, training to cope up stress and developing a faith to overcome any adverse situation. This enhances the optimism level in young girls. Steptoe (2006) also reported that wards of working mothers exhibit healthy behaviours and low behavioural problems.

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Table No. 2 : Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of Adolescent girls of Working Mothers and Homemakers on Adjustment (Emotional, Social and Educational)

Adjustment	Adolescent Girls of Working Mothers		Adolescent Girls of Home makers		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Emotional	11.26	2.84	11.24	2.04	1.22
Social	8.12	4.12	13.12	3.16	3.12**
Emotional	13.28	3.16	11.26	2.14	4.16**

**** $p < 0.01$**

Further Table no. 2 shows the descriptive statistics of adolescent girls of working mothers and homemakers on the variable of adjustment measuring in three different areas, i.e., emotional, social and educational. The obtained mean and SD scores on the domain of emotional adjustment of adolescent girls of working mothers and homemakers are 11.26 ($\sigma=2.04$) and 11.24 ($\sigma=2.04$) respectively. Both have not been found significant. Results show that girl adolescents do not vary much in their emotional sensitivity and adaptation even if their mothers are working or non-working. The reason behind is that mothers when go for their job, they attune their wards according to that. Though Gender differences have been found in the area of emotional adjustment (Paola, 2006). But if we minutely analyze the difference in mean scores the girls of working mothers are on lower side. The reason may be attributed to their absence from home for many hours make them to feel sometimes lonely and little difficult to control over impulses and mood swings. Further, there has been found highly statistical difference between these two groups ($\bar{X}=8.12$, $\sigma=4.12$ in working class and $\bar{X}=13.12$, $\sigma=3.16$ in non-working class). It clearly shows that girls of working mothers are more socially interactive, sociable, maintain congenial interpersonal relations with their peer group and reference group. The reason behind this may be the socialization of child. Working mothers in the corporate world groom their children in the way they are more confident, more expressive and outgoing in their social world. Fernandez (1999) found that children of working mothers are more socially invited, talkative and enjoy the pleasure of the movement. The last domain of Adjustment variable pertains to 'Education'. The obtained mean and SD for girls of working women are 13.28 and 3.16 respectively. In case of homemakers these are 11.26 and 2.14 respectively which are statistically significant at 0.01 level. It vividly shows that girls of working mothers may be having more social exposure and knowledge about various arenas but their adjustment in the realm of education, i.e. concentration, presence of mother when they need her support, just sitting beside them during exams, quality time spent with them makes them to feel and somewhere experience poor adjustment and adaptation. Thus it clearly shows that no doubt in the current era both parents need to be working to meet the demands and expenses of their own and family. But at the same time, the need of an hour rings the bell to spend a quality time, be supportive and positive in their conduct with their offsprings so that they can make them to have high sense of

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competence and achievement in their career ahead. This study would have been more meaningful if role of maternal employment would have been studied on optimism and adjustment of the above sample.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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