MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT AND SHIFTING ATTENTION ON ADOLESCENT’S EDUCATION AND HEALTH

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Abstract: Parents’ relationship and nurturing role with their children continues to be imperative during the very phase of adolescence although the relationship most often needs to be strengthened to acclimatize to the varying requirements of them. Due to ‘feminization of childhood’ in a patriarchal social setting, women are always encumbered with the tasks of home management and child-rearing, where fathers in utmost cases play the flaccid roles. Against this backdrop, this paper tries to explore different levels of maternal concern and involvement in their adolescent’s educational progress and health care in dual-career families. The fieldwork has been carried out in a small city Sambalpur, situated in the western part of Odisha, India with 120 school-going adolescent children, between ten to fifteen years and their mothers. Other than using a preliminary schedule for purposively identifying samples from three schools, interview schedules, participant and non-participant observation focus group discussion and voice recording methods are exercised for gathering relevant information from both the categories of respondents. The study portrays that maternal involvement in adolescent’s scholastic conducts and health gets certainly influenced by manifold factors when she is professionally occupied. While accomplishing the goal to estimate different levels of maternal association in various academic activities of their adolescent children, two major variables are observed playing vital roles in controlling such levels of involvement: ‘working sectors’ and ‘working hours’. The obtained responses from adolescents although reveal the overall elevated degree of maternal participation in all sorts of academic deeds, some deviations are encountered depending on their nature and schedule of the job. What is more, their health conditions are also integrally shaped by the daily context in which they grow and develop.

Key Words: Adolescent, Dual-career family, Maternal Employment, Academic Achievement, Health Problem, Health-Care system

Introduction

The act of ‘parenting’ is mutually a biological and social process, where a particular set of behaviour is involved across life in relations among members of different generation. According to American Psychological Association (2019), parenting is about accomplishing three major goals, which includes guaranteeing health and safety of their children, grooming them for the their future endeavours involving roles as productive adults and as part of cultural being diffusing values from previous generation and culture.

Adolescence is a segment of life, when children make adjustments occurring in the self, at family level, and also in the peer group. They also experience institutional changes during their shift from elementary school to higher class and need ‘supervision’ rather than ‘care’ from their parents. Parents’ relationship and nurturing role with their children continues to be imperative during the very phase of adolescence although the relationship most often need to be strengthened to acclimatize to the varying requirements of them. During this occasion, style of parenting is need to be a gradually shifted from authoritative to collaborative especially, when parents experience the harsh veracity that their child is no longer a child. Martize et.al. (2019), along this line stated that the parenting style might contribute to certain risk factors involve with the adjustment the adolescent in near future, if anything goes off beam. Furthermore children become more autonomous and no longer stay within their parental control. Feelings of distress generate amid parents, when they notice that their adolescents are no more listening to them, or can do the contrary of what they may put forward. In addition to that, most often at this age parents may have to watch their children to disregard to the morals and principals they taught especially regarding their health or future aspirations.

Due to ‘feminizaion of childhood’ in patriarchal social setting, women are always encumbered with the tasks of home management and child rearing, where fathers in utmost cases play the flaccid roles. Against this backdrop, this paper tries to explore different levels of maternal concern and involvement in their adolescent’s educational progress and health care in dual-career families.
Objective

This paper mainly revolves around two important sectors, where adolescents need prime attention from their parents, especially mothers: Education and Health. It tries to

- Unearth whether maternal attention on adolescent’s education are getting affected by their professional engagement &
- Portray maternal perception of adolescent’s health problems

Area of Study and Methods Used:

The field work has been carried out in a small city Sambalpur, situated in the western part of Odisha, India. 120 school going adolescent children, between ten to fifteen years, are located for the study through purposive sampling method from three co-education schools in the town which follow three dissimilar patterns of course curriculums. They (primary respondents) are again grouped under six broad categories on the basis of their mother’s working sectors. Those with mothers in teaching professions in different government and private schools are found to be maximum in proportion (60.83%) followed by medical professionals (both doctors and nurses) and clerical job holders at different government sectors (11.67%), faculties in colleges, technical institutes and universities (7.5%), legal professionals and police jobs (5.83%) lastly full-time workers at different NGOs (2.5%). Furthermore, for the convenience of research, they are again categorised into three groups as per the working hours of their mothers. Those, whose mother’s working hour ranges from six to eight hours have major proportion (75.83%) in the sample, followed by (18.33%) adolescents where their mothers are occupied with eight to ten hours of job. Adolescent’s, where mothers’ professional engagement is more than ten hours have the least proportion (5.83%) in the sample. Mothers play the role of secondary respondents in this study.

Other than using a preliminary schedule for identifying samples from three schools, interview schedules, participant and non-participant observation, focus group discussion and voice recording methods are exercised for gathering relevant information from both the categories of respondents.

Results & Discussion

Maternal Employment and Level of Contribution in Adolescent’s Education

As per Eliason and Jekins (2003) a child gets only benefitted, when parents show greater involvement in his or her education. They have also added that, when parents show confidence in helping out their children to be successful in school, it always leads to better outcome in their achievements. Weis et.al. (2006) have rightly pointed out the very fact that parental participation always plays an imperative part in the cognitive and social growth of a child. Such association is much delightful in escalating their academic fineness at school (Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001). High echelon of education among the parents also motivates their children to get involved in various educational activities (Tudge et al., 2006)

Quite a lot research findings illustrated that a sustained endeavour of parental participation all the way through children’s education can easily perk up their scholastic attainments (Driessen, Smit & Sleegers, 2005; Fan, 2001; Hong & Ho, 2005) while on the contrary, failure in this sphere is always found to be linked with risky behaviours and negative outcomes among them like ‘substance abuse’, ‘delinquency’, and a range of ‘emotional’ and ‘behavioural’ quandary (Anunziata, Houge, Faw & Liddle, 2006). Studies by Hill (2001) and Wynn (2002) have verified the significance of family interfaces and association in those durations, when children enters into schools. Bryan (2005) has rightly pointed out the very fact that, when families get involved in education it is more probable that children will have higher academic achievements along with an improved behaviour. Hence parental involvements in children’s edification along with environmental and monetary aspects, shapes quite a few regions of their development like cognition, language, and social skills.

There have been limited number of studies revolving around the affiliation stuck between parental participation and scholastic attainment of secondary school learners as majority of them concentrate solely on elementary schools (Baily, Silvem, Brabham, & Ross, 2004; Marjoribanks, 2005). The changeover from
elementary school to secondary school always seems to be an awe-inspiring and as well as nerve-racking experience for those children, who are just arrived in the early phase of adolescence. Hence to analyze the above paradox, the first section of this paper tries to explore how involvement of employed mothers in the academic spheres of adolescents varies along with their varied working schedules and arena. Amazingly the study takes place in a patriarchal social setting of a small city, where fathers play passive rather than active role of ‘primary caregivers’ in families particularly when question of child rearing arises. Hence the investigation solely concentrates on the alliance of maternal employment and their level of participation in children’s academic sphere. The researchers try to make an inquiry regarding various levels of maternal involvements in the different academic activities of adolescents on the basis of the assumption that such involvement can be affected by their professional engagements which ultimately put its impact on their academic outcomes.

**Encouragement for Curricular Activities:** Academic achievement of children not solely depends on the quality of schools and teachers rather on the extent to which parents are involved in this process. Mothers of the adolescents are found to get involved in four broad strands of academic activities of their adolescents despite of their overstrained schedules. These are:

- Taking part in their school-based activities (Frequent consultation with teachers and attending parent-teacher meetings);
- Participation in their home-based educational activities (Assistance in homework and assignments);
- Direct involvement in academic activities (Monitoring of regular academic progress) &
- Indirect association in academic activities (Encouragement for availing of tuition/coaching).

![Chart-1.2: Distributions of Sample Respondents in Terms of Frequency of Mother’s Consultation with Teachers and Their Working Hours (N=120)](chart.png)
Mother’s frequent associations and consultations with teachers are always considered to be very significant constituent in term of children’s scholastic performances. Frequent maternal sessions with educators about their children’s performances are found to lay affirmative upshots on children’s school performances as also seen during the course of the present study. The study reveals that not an awe-inspiring majority but a good proportion of mothers (64.17%) of the adolescents do frequent consultation with teachers regarding their children’s scholastic performances and maximum of them are either teachers in schools (84.41%) or colleges (6.49%). Compared to them, only a few (15.83%) are found to be slightest consultative to make such inquisition about their children’s school activities and do it rarely. Phenomenally some of them (20%) fail to maintain such consultation with their children. Majority of them are from medical professions (45.83%) followed by the government officials (33.33%) and the cluster of law professionals and police officials (12.5%). Therefore it is quite evident that the regularity of mother’s consultation with school teachers varies with her respective job obligations. Mothers allied with academic professions can do it frequently than the rest (Chart-1.1).

Besides nature of jobs, hours of engagements also put impact on the frequency of such meetings. Mothers, those are affianced for six to eight hours can do recurrent consultation (96.1%) with the teachers compared to those (3.89%), who work for eight to ten hours. When such professional engagements surpass more than ten hours, such sessions get impracticable. Hence it can be assumed that frequency of consultation with school teachers varies with mother’s respective hours of professional engagement. It gets more frequent with less hours of involvement in jobs. Extended job hours create impediments for them, while conducting meetings with school teachers on frequent basis (Chart-1.2).
Parent-teacher meetings at schools are always considered as positive interactive sessions, which help to enhance the scholastic attainment of a child. School authorities arrange such scheduled meetings at a regular interval to keep a tab on their students and thus get their parents involved in this ongoing process. On the other hand, attending parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) always help the parents to monitor the activities of their children at school and as a whole their academic progress. While conducting the fieldwork the researcher came to know about an attention-grabbing fact from the narration of the mothers (secondary respondent of the study) that though the school authority request both of the parents to attend the PTMs, in maximum cases fathers don’t accompany them. Very few mothers (8.33%) among the sample report that, they can manage their husband’s presence on request if only these meetings are arranged on Saturdays. However, majority of mothers (76.66%) always linger during the parent-teacher meetings and try to remain in contacts with teachers while mothers of 12.5% of adolescents frequently and 10.83% occasionally. Every kind of learning for children always seems to begin at home through several interactions within their families. Amid those, who have attended almost all PTMs, maximum are either school teachers or lecturers. Both of these categories rarely miss such meetings, whereas mothers in other professions are found to be bit irregular in attending such meetings at various frequencies. (Surprisingly mothers working at NGOs remain present either on a regular basis (66.67%) or frequently (33.33%) as per their convenience. Therefore it is quite palpable that frequencies of mother’s presence in these meetings to some extent depend on the kind of jobs they are occupied with (Chart 2.1).

Besides all these, working hours of these mothers put effect on their presences in PTMs. Among the mothers who remain always present during such meetings, those who work for six to eight hours occupy the first position with an overwhelming proportion (94.57%). It is followed by the other two categories, where proportion gets lessened with increasing hours. Unfortunately, mother of an overwhelming proportion (85.71%) of adolescents from the third category (where working hours exceeds more than ten hour) attend such meetings on occasional basis. Mothers, who miss such meetings inform that, in rarest occurrence their absence is compensated by their husbands in those meetings and later they have to meet the class teacher separately to fulfil the gap with special request (Chart 2.2).
Adolescents during their interviews shared that they accomplish their daily tasks either ‘at their own’ or with the ‘guidance of an adult’. While being further probed, they also add to this that, such kind of help; they receive either from their mothers, private tutors or in some instance both. Fathers are reported to lend their hands only on a rare basis and if yes, then also that assistance is confined to the older adolescents. In case of doing homework and school assignment, employed mothers are most frequently found to assist their children in completing it in time. Majority (69.17%) of them facilitate their children to complete their assignments in spite of their busy job-schedules whereas few (18.33%) does that occasionally. Only a small of proportion of them (12.5%) fail to extend such help. Data reveals that maximum proportion of mothers, who are in teaching professions either in schools (84.34%), or colleges or technical Institutes or universities (7.22%) do help their children in completing their home works as compared to other professions, where mothers do it either on a rare basis or never. Some mothers doing government jobs (13.33%) or in medical (60%) or law professions and police jobs (26.67%) fail to extend such assistance to their children. Hence nature of jobs again generates obstruction for mothers while assisting their children in completing homework (Chart-3.1).
Furthermore, with reference to their hours of involvements in professional lives, majority of mothers (97.59%) with six to eight hours of job can lend their hands in accomplishing homework and assignments to their children on a frequent basis compared to those who work for eight to ten hours (2.41%). When such involvement exceeds more than ten hours, such assistance becomes unfeasible. Therefore along with nature of job, hours of involvements also create constrains for mothers in extending such backing to their offspring (Chart-3.2).

Parents often keep their eyes on their children’s customary academic advancement and recital at school. Such monitoring on a regular basis often helps them to sustain and excel their scholastic achievements. No one can better supervise the academic advancement of children other than their own parents. When their progress is not scrutinized at a regular interval, it can act a major de-motivating factor in the path of success. Adolescents in utmost proportion informed that, their academic progress on regular basis is monitored by their mothers more than their fathers. Rather they (fathers) act as an ‘authority-at-a-distance’ in the total process and only ask about their children’s progress on half-yearly or yearly basis. Furthermore, it is evident that mothers of maximum number (73.33%) do monitor the progress of their children in schools on regular basis, whereas small proportion of them (17.5%) does it occasionally. A still smaller proportion (9.17%) of them unfortunately fails to accomplish it. Furthermore, amid the habitual ones, maximum regular monitoring is done by the school teachers (79.55%) and minimum by the law professionals (1.14%). Therefore again nature of jobs does play a vital role (Chart-4.1).
In addition to this, working hours put major impact on these frequencies. Mothers, while working for six to eight hours can do regular monitoring of their children in very high proportion (95.45%) which is followed by the second (3.41%) and third (1.14%) categories of work schedules. Hence monitoring gets occasional, when these working hours get amplified. Astoundingly when it exceeds more than ten hours, mothers in high proportion amid them (57.14%) fail to monitor their children at all (Chart-4.2).

While conducting fieldwork, majority of adolescents are observed to obtain assistance from tuition/coaching classes other than schools. In maximum cases they go to the coaching centres and in a few cases private tutors come to their respective homes. These classes are conducted either in morning or evening hour. Pertaining to the question of mother’s encouragement for availing tuition, a significant majority (74.17%) of mothers take interest in arranging tuition for their children irrespective of the disparities in professional roles. Astoundingly some (25.83%) of them do not give any attention in arranging professional tuition or additional coaching of their children. Other than some teachers (96.77%) and a small number of lecturers (3.23%), who prefer to coach their children at their own, remaining mothers found to encourage their children for it at a greater extent (Chart-5.1).

Phenomenally though the subject of ‘diverse working hours of mother’ does not found to put any major upshot on their desires of encouraging children for availing tuition but when working hours exceed 8 hours, such encouragement level is always elevated (Chart-5.2).

Hence the above quantification clearly divulges that maternal involvement in adolescent curricular activities get rigorously affected by their nature of jobs and hours of engagement in respective professional careers. Adolescents, from dual-career family set ups, with unremitting and positive maternal involvement also reported to have excellent academic attainments by the school authorities during the course of the study. When the researcher cross-examined their acquired percentages in last annual examination at three different schools, it
supports the above stance. As the gradation system quite varies among the three schools due to following three different patterns of course curriculum, their marks are recorded in percentage for the purpose of research. The assessment reports of the students from Class V to VIII are clustered together and evaluated separately than the students from secondary classes (IX and X) as the course content gets difficult and heavy with higher classes. A gender-wise distribution also has been made to assess if there is any disparities between the school performances of adolescent boys and girls.

Amid the sample students (adolescents) from primary and upper primary classes (V to VIII), a good proportion of students (36.56%) attain marks between 85-94% and even above that (32.26%). A moderate proportion amongst them (20.43%) also gets succeeded in keeping their marks between 75-84%. Regrettably a few (9.68%) obtains between 65.74% and a nominal proportion (1.07%) even below that. Adolescents with mothers from academic background (either school teachers or faculties in college, technical institute and universities) do extremely well with respect to the rest of the sample. Pertaining to the gender-wise disparities, female adolescents performed better than the male ones irrespective of their mother’s professional background (Table-6).

**Table-6:** Sex-wise Distribution of Primary and Upper Primary Sample Students in Terms of Their Marks (Percentage) in Last Annual Examination and Mother’s Working Sector

[N=93]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Sector</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Marks (Percentage)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>≥95%</td>
<td>85-94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(44.44%)</td>
<td>(29.63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(43.75%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(46.67%)</td>
<td>(47.06%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(46.67%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty in College, Technical Institute and University</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Government Officials</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(8.82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Professionals</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(28.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(5.88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Professionals &amp; Police Officials</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(10.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO Workers</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(2.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>(32.26%)</td>
<td>(36.56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(30)</td>
<td>(34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Almost same state of affairs is encountered with the results of sample students (adolescents) from secondary standards (IX and X) where same proportion (33.33%) of sample students achieve their marks between 85-94% and 75-84% and some even above that (29.63%). Although an insignificant proportion of them attain between 65-74%, but no one below that. Adolescents from secondary standards with mothers from intellectual background (either school teachers or faculties in college, technical institute and universities) outshine again than the rest of the sample. On the subject of their gender-wise discrepancies in attaining marks, female students for a second time outperform than the male ones (Table 7).

Table 7: **Sex-wise Distribution of Sample Students in Secondary Section (IX and X) in Terms of Their Marks (Percentage) in Last Annual Examination and Mother’s Working Sector**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Sector</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>≥95%</th>
<th>85-94%</th>
<th>75-84%</th>
<th>65-74%</th>
<th>≤64%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(42.86%)</td>
<td>(28.57%)</td>
<td>(28.57%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(57.14%)</td>
<td>(42.86%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty in College, Technical Institute and University</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Government Officials</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(33.33%)</td>
<td>(66.67%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Professionals</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Professionals &amp; Police Officials</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO Workers</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>(29.63%)</td>
<td>(33.33%)</td>
<td>(33.33%)</td>
<td>(3.7%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hence, the rationale behind the admirable performance of sample students with mothers from educational background can be related to their elevated levels of involvement in children’s scholastic activities. Furthermore the gender-wise disparities in their performances can be attributed to the fact that adolescent girls growing up with employed mothers (especially with academic background) are more determined in excelling academic achievements than their male counterparts as they consider their mothers as their role model.

**Chart-8: Distribution of Sample Respondents in Terms of Their Mother’s Encouragement for Extra-Curricular Activities and Mother’s Working Sector (N=120)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Sectors</th>
<th>Encouragement for Extra-Curricular Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td>Some Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty in College, Technical Institute and University</td>
<td>Great Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Government Officials</td>
<td>Some Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Professionals</td>
<td>Great Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Professionals &amp; Police Officials</td>
<td>Some Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO Workers</td>
<td>Great Extent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Encouragement for Extra-Curricular Activities:** Other than classroom activities and formalized education, school children often exhibit their interest in non-academic informal social activities beyond their school curriculum, which are termed as ‘extra-curricular activities’. These activities always help to excel positive habits, ideals and conducts and all kinds of social training to children. Other than back-up from teachers, parental support and co-operation in providing children with necessary needs and encouraging them to participate in different extra-curricular activities is also equally imperative. Adolescents; report to partake in different kinds of extra-curricular activities like, ‘Annual Functions’, ‘Puja’ and ‘Science Exhibitions’ at their individual school, irrespective of age and gender. Such input also necessitates permission from either or both of their parents. While being probed, they notify that mothers more often than fathers always persuade them to play a part in those kinds of activities. The study makes it quite apparent that mothers in an overwhelming proportion (90%) do encourage their adolescent children for extra-curricular activities. Amid them though maximum are school teachers, still mothers from other professions also egg on their children to play a part (Chart-8).

**Maternal Employment and Attention on Adolescent’s Health**

Close relationship between parents and adolescent, good parenting skills, shared activities in family and positive parent role modelling always put deep impact on adolescent health and development. These are the areas, where parent can make choices to make affirmative changes for them (Hair et al., 2005). Hence involvement of families in health-related issues play a major role in the prevention of diseases and physical and mental wellbeing among grown up children successfully and satisfactorily. The literatures available on parental awareness on children’s health related issues suggest that parents are usually conscious of health threatening behaviours and problems like ‘substance use’, ‘psychological problems’, ‘sexuality’ and ‘nutrition’ among the adolescent population. But they possibly undervalue the degree to which their own adolescent children may be caught up in them (Williams, McDermitt, Bertrand, David, 2002). Nevertheless, parents, most often try to support their adolescent and better address their health care needs in every way possible than anyone else (Ford, Davenport, Meier, McRee. 2009; Joyner, Jones 2007). In addition to this, parents always expect their adolescent children to discuss with them directly about their health problems (Cohall et al., 2004).

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1 Worship of Hindu God and Goddess
This explicit finding is entirely based on eight successive focus group discussions along with the mothers where the researcher played the role of a facilitator and initiated different health-related issues to amass their discernments. Those discussions were completed within two months with eight sessions and different groups of mothers (not uniform in numbers), congregated on the basis their availabilities.

**Adolescent Health Problems and Maternal Insight:** Mothers during these discussions shared their perceptions and anxieties about the health challenges confronted by their adolescent children. Being asked about the most important health-related problem faced by their grown-up children, synchronized mood swings, preponderance of acne, other hormonal problems, menstruation related problems, cough and cold, indigestion and gastric problems, head-rolling and in some cases, accidents and injuries during unsupervised hours, tobacco and alcohol abuse and mental health problems are hugely talked about in those Focus Group Discussions. Mothers also shared how the heavy contents in the course curriculum are responsible for nervous breakdown for many of their adolescents during the time of examinations. They also expressed their concern about their adolescent children who are left in complete ‘home alone’ condition with a potentially risky and harmful arrangement. Mothers having adolescent girls mentioned about difficulties their children face during their menstrual days like vomiting tendencies or having crumps in their whole body. Some of them also shared a few incidents, when their adolescent girls attended their puberty for the first time and they were out of home for their professional obligations. After getting phone calls, when they returned home on urgent basis, found their daughters quite nervous and depressed regarding the whole occurrence. Employed mothers expressed their concern that harmful influences about sexuality, drugs and alcohol are omnipresent nowadays even in small cities outside the home environment, near schools, in the neighbourhoods, on television, and among their peer groups. Some of them opined that, their children many times are exposed to peer pressure and other influences that persuade them to make detrimental choices. One of the participants of the FGD stated that:

“I think the problem of any kind of substance use comes in with the peer pressure. Children sometime find difficult to get away from it. Even if you’re trying to keep your children out of all these but how can you keep them away from school friends?”

(Mrs. S, Medical Professional, Age 43 years).

The above narration clearly reveals how despite of being in medical profession Mrs. S feels helpless due to the mounting pressure of substance use among children. She feels that peer group is primarily responsible for developing such bad habits by adolescent children.

In every FGD, mothers correlate drug and alcohol abuse unswervingly to peer pressure and socializing. A few of them in diverse assemblages cite that peers initiate teens to fresh drugs and also made it accessible for them.

Many of the working mothers spoke about mental health as a difficulty for the adolescents, laying emphasis on especially on gloominess and fretfulness. They showed their concern that when mothers are professionally engaged for longer period of time, adolescent children from those families face more tough situations at a gentle age with a number of health-related problems. Further they opined that they never confronted with those problems during the adolescence phase of their life. A range of stressors are brought up during discussion, viz. relationships with partners, confusion about sexual orientation, lonely home environment, changing hormones, and pressures at school, etc. which most often put impact on their mental well beings. Some mothers in those FGDs expressed their anxieties about the physical and emotional impact of aggression at schools and within groups.

Some mothers also mentioned that, their children’s unwillingness to take healthy food and lack of their physical activity are major reasons, which affect their children’s health. They further shared that following the current fashion trends and showing inclination towards weight loss through poor diets, their children often suffer from some health-related problems like indigestion, lack of appetite, joint and back pains, hair loss and skin problems. One of the mothers shared her experiences as follow:

“My daughter is on diet for past couple of months. She is bit healthy but not fatty at all. She tells me that getting slimmer is the current fashion trend and she doesn’t want to be called Ms. Fatty by her friends.”
(Mrs. L, School Teacher, Age 39 years)

The above narration portrays Mrs. L’s concern regarding the health degradation of her daughter. She clearly expresses her annoyance on the current fashion trend among children which severely puts detrimental impact on their health.

Employed mothers also added at the end that professional commitments and lack of time on their part often make them over-concerned about their children’s health and nutrition.

Maternal Understandings and Initiatives Regarding Attaining Care for Adolescents: Replying to the question as to whether they are competent to provide health care for their adolescent children, majority were of the opinion that they are able to do in most of the cases. Even fathers act a support system while admitting their children to hospital during emergency. Mothers in legal and medical professions added that some time they have to depend on their husbands (if they are available at home) or alternative caregivers for taking their children to doctors due to their extremely busy schedule and shifting duties. Otherwise they report to hold a favourable position than others in obtaining health care for their children because of their pre-established rapports with the health care providers.

A mother from nursing profession voiced her feelings like this,

“The greatest challenge in my life is my odd duty hours. I have no complaintowards my job other than those shifting hours. Only for this, some time I have no other option than to depend on my husband and mother-in-law to take my son for doctor’s check-up, otherwise I know many doctors personally, as I am in an allied profession and I can provide best Medicare to my childwhen he is sick”

(Mrs. P, Medical Professional, Age 35)

The narration cited above, visibly depicts the job obligation of Mrs. P which stands as an obstacle in her duties towards her child. For her shift duty she has to depend on other family members for her son’s medical check-up. Despite being in an allied profession, she fails to do it for her child.

Maternal Responsibilities for Ensuring Care: Working mothers in all FGDs admitted that it is their prime responsibility to keep their children’s healthy and provide utmost care for them in family. Many mothers acknowledge that their children often failed to receive the care they needed because of their extended working hours and official trips. One of them voiced her experie

ences like this,

“I get depressed when my daughter gets ill. She does not keep good health. Sometimes I have to attend meetings even after usual office hours. I cannot find any way to escape from my professional responsibilities. It makes me feel guilty as a mother. Sometime I feel that I fail to do my maternal duties properly”

(Mrs. M, Government Officials, Age 45 years)

The above narration clearly reveals the helplessness of Mrs. M due to her professional compulsion. According to her, despite of her concern towards her child, she fails to fulfil her maternal duties.

All mothers approved that open conversations and frankness with adolescents regarding their health problems are crucial for their safety. Several of them converse about the significance of engaging their children in talks on health, school, and peer inconveniences.

Many mothers in each focus group mentioned that despite of their professional engagements they always try to make appointments with health care providers and take their children for checks ups as and when needed. Some mothers in the focus groups reported that they find it challenging to take proper care of their physically unwell children during weekday hours.
Boundaries of Mother’s Involvement: Mothers, when asked if they allow their grown-up children to make appointments with doctor and go to them by himself or herself, all groups informed that they never allow such situations to come as still they want their children to be dependent on them their father or other family members (during non-availability of both of the parents) for the health-related issues. Most groups suggested that as their children are below 18 years of age, they cannot allow them to go to the doctor unaccompanied. In fact, some mothers also mentioned that if a child is a girl and have already reached 18, even then she should not go alone for any treatment without parental consent. Some also added to this, even during their extended working hours or being at official trips they always try to monitor their children’s health status over phone or through messages with a certain interval. One of them recounted like this,

“Even if I am at my workplace or outside hometown due to some official trips, I keep telephoning my maid or husband about my children especially when I left them in ill condition. As my parents-in-laws are not staying with us, still I know my husband or maid will take care of them. But as a mother it’s my prime duty to know about the wellbeing of my children”

(Mrs. R, Law Professional, Age 40 years)

The narration cited above depicts how Mrs. L tries to keep a tab on her children despite of her job commitments. She always tries to monitor the well-being of her children even after being physically distant from them.

Several groups also strongly expressed that they ultimately want their children to be sovereign, become capable at health care by themselves, which would eventually authorize them to build up their individual vigorous preferences. Mothers in all groups expressed assorted outlooks concerning their children’s connection in sexual and reproductive health care. Some mothers in the FGDs expressed their understanding as to how their girls often feel uncomfortable to share with them about their sexual health problems. Mothers in every group assumed that if their daughters want them to attend them while going for reproductive health problems to medical practitioners, they would definitely accompany them.

Understanding Mother’s and Adolescent’s Standpoint: The outlook of mothers, observed during focus group discussions, when matched up with the perspectives of adolescents, a remarkable degree of consistency is found. Both mothers and their adolescents are found to be in agreement about the major health issues confronted by children during this very phase, where both of them emphasize on ‘sexuality’ and ‘mental health problems’. Though both talked about peer pressure with regard to drug and alcohol use, mothers expressed far more concern about those issues compared to children. Both mothers and adolescents also articulated analogous aggravations regarding the difficulties in attaining timely health care often due to the busy schedule and professional engagements of the mothers. Adolescent in maximum numbers also reported that they always want their mother to get involved in their health care process compared to any other members in family including father. While having a serious health problem they feel more comfortable with their mother’s involvements. One of such statement given by a child is cited below:

“When I am not well physically or mentally, I always expect my mother to be present with me. Her presence during those times of distress gives me utmost comfort”

(Miss R, Age 14 years, Sri Aurobindo Institute of Integral Education and Research, Class IX).

The above narration of Miss R depicts her expectations from her mother. She clearly expresses how maternal presence during the time of anguish makes her feel quite comfortable and happy.

Adolescents with mothers in medical and legal professions also report that their mothers most often try to get involved in their health care in spite of their busy professional engagements. They also further added that they like such associations and desire their parents to pay more attention to their physical and mental health problems and provide them best possible health care treatment, as and when required.
Concluding Remarks

Hence, maternal involvement in adolescent’s scholastic conducts and health gets certainly influenced by manifold factors when she is professionally occupied. While accomplishing the goal to estimate different levels of maternal association in various academic activities of their adolescent children, two major variables are observed playing vital roles in controlling such levels of involvement: ‘working sectors’ and ‘working hours’. The obtained responses from adolescents although reveal overall elevated degree of maternal participation in all sorts of academic deeds, some deviations are encountered depending on their nature and schedule of job. These dissimilar extents of provide different sorts of input in adolescent’s scholastic achievements. The study unearths the very fact that mothers with intellectual professional backdrop can afford enhanced contribution than those who are in non-teaching professions especially in medical or legal jobs. The study discloses that when working schedule ranges between six to eight hours of time, mothers can provide elevated extent of association in their children’s school conducts, which gets lessened along with increasing professional hours.

But by and large, the study reveals that, mothers of utmost sample respondents, (though with altering proportions) are reasonably caught up in their children’s academic deeds despite of their busy working schedules. Respectively adolescent almost in the same proportion also exhibit improved academic attainments in their school exam.

Furthermore, adolescents cannot ever mature in vacuity. Every day their health and maturity are influenced by countless social and environmental exchanges from the immediate surroundings (e.g. daily contact with peers, parents, and teachers). Parents (especially mothers) play significant role (though not preeminent) in providing health care to their children to the best of their ability. Working mothers despite of their responsible professional roles usually try to maintain proximity with their adolescent children than anyone else, when they are physically or mentally not well. From among the family members, mother roles still seem to be centrally important for shaping the health and wellbeing of their adolescent children even though they live in a dual-career family.

Mothers even after being employed consider themselves as the sole caregivers for their adolescents and always try to make them available at the time of their health related needs. To fill up the gap during their physical absence, they also keep proper tracking of their children’s health status from the alternative caregivers. Mothers of adolescents also reported to enjoy health related open discussions with their children and thus make them aware about the harmful effects of substance use and risky behaviours.

In a nutshell, the health conditions of adolescents are integrally shaped by the daily context in which they grow and develop. Transformation in family living arrangements and restricted or non-availability of mothers often left them with an unattended condition where either they have to depend on alternative care takers or wait patiently for their parents. Though mothers and in some instances fathers act as a support system in those circumstances and always try them to provide best medical facilities still their paucity of time has brought some alterations in the health care system.
References


