

Comparison of Social Adjustment and Attachment Styles among Female Students with Employed and Unemployed Mothers

Marzieh Zarei^{1*}, S. Reza Falahchai² and Maryam Sadegifar²

¹Department of General Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Hormozgan, Iran

²Hormozgan University, Bandar Abbas, Iran

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of mother employment on social adjustment and attachment styles on high school female students in Minab. Research method was descriptive and Causal-comparative (ex post facto) research. The research population consisted of all city high school female students in the academic year 2013 in Minab city. The sample size was 300 female students (140 students with employed mothers and 160 whose mothers were housewives) and sampling methods of this study was cluster sampling. The instruments of this study were demographic questionnaire, Bell social adjustment questionnaire and attachment style questionnaire (RAAS). Results showed that students whose mothers were housewives have higher mean and significant difference in educational and emotional adjustment in comparison of students with employed mothers. But in social adjustment there was no significant deference between two groups. The results also showed that students whose mothers were housewives have higher mean and significant difference secure attachment style in comparison of students with employed mothers. However, in avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles were not significantly different between the two groups. Additional analyzed showed there was a stronger significant correlation between attachment styles and emotional and educational adjustment among students that their mothers were housewives. In the other side there was stronger significant correlation between attachment style and social adjustment among students with employed mothers.

KEYWORDS: Social Adjustment, Attachment Styles, Female Student, Employed and Unemployed Mothers

1. INTRODUCTION

Employment specifically refers to compliance between work force and job opportunities in which there is an adjustment between number of the employees and existing activities within a society. Women are one of the most important social groups who are not only affected by quality of life but also affect this issue themselves. This large social group communicates effectively with community groups in society. Then, they not only do personal and family tasks, but also actively endeavor for social progress and sustainable development. Women are in charge of highly critical and decisive roles in society. The developing countries who seek constructive developing have realized the important fact that active and effective presence of women in society is necessary to create a healthy society. Education of women and their participation has an important role in development of country. As a result, about half of workers are women. Therefore, women play a fundamental and critical role in society. Social adjustment as the most important sign of mental health is considered as one of the issues discussed by many sociologists, psychologists and specially educators in recent decades. Having a healthy society requires healthy individuals. The higher the level of social adjustment, the higher the public health. Educational officials endeavor to be involved in comprehensive development of the country. This effort is fundamentally devoted to children and adolescents [1]. Maslow believed that the individuals with the highest level of adjustment are those who have successfully grown throughout their lives. Sroufe et al. [2] defined attachment as follows: a refuge for comfort, security for exploration and search and a source of reassurance for the child when he is distressed. Bowlby conceptualized attachment in framework of a great theory. According to Bowlby, attachment relationships always exist and are active throughout the life cycle. As a result, attachment links are created in adult life and are effective in important activities in adulthood.

According to studied conducted by Ainsworth et al. [3], parent - child relationships are classified into three groups of secure, avoidant and anxious-ambivalent. Children who are classified in the secure group swiftly seek their mother for the sake of calmness when they are distressed. Then, they quickly relax and resume their activities faster and thoroughly. Children who were classified as anxious-ambivalent have mixed reactions to presence of their mother. They fail to relax when their mother is present. Moreover, they do not resume their activities. Finally, the children classified as avoidant group ignore their mother. They are isolated and withdraw from society. They start doing certain activities to ignore their distress.

Bowlby [4] has described three attachment styles including secure, anxious/ambivalent and anxious/avoidant. The role of attachment styles in adult relationships was studied by Hazan and Shaver [5]. Attachment plays an important role in helping children to deal with social challenges; moreover, improve their

*Corresponding Author: Marzieh Zarei (MSc). Department of General Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Hormozgan, Iran; Email: zareis100@yahoo.com

social adjustment. Therefore, unhealthy attachment patterns in childhood may lead to behavioral problems, felony and social maladjustment in adolescence.

Bowlby [4] conducted extensive research on the concept of attachment. He defined attachment as follows: “stable and emotional relationship and link between two people.” Bowlby also confirmed the psychological mental perspective, which stated that early childhood experiences have an important influence on children’s growth and behavior later in life. According to this view, our primary attachment styles in childhood arise from child/caregiver relationship.

Al-Yagon and Mikulincer [6] examined the relationship between dimensions of social adjustment whose results indicated a positive relationship between attachment style and mother - child performance and social adjustment. Aghamohammadian et al. [7] also conducted a study whose results indicated a positive relationship between child - parent attachment styles and social adjustment among children and adolescents.

In addition, studies conducted by Liebel [8] and Cassidy and Shaver [9] showed that maternal employment has a positive and significant relationship with psychotic disorder and hyperactivity, stubbornness and disobedience and developmental learning of children. In other words, these disorders in children whose mothers are housewives are less than those whose mothers are employed. Belsky and Rounin [10] found out that when mother has low level of occupational adjustment and social support, her occupation affects quality of childcare. Then, it increases the risk of poor social and emotional development in the children. The children with employed mothers often have better social adjustment and personality at school compared to children whose mothers are housewives. Noom et al. [11] conducted a study whose results showed that the children with employed mothers are more socially adapted. In other words, they work and interact better with others at school. A number of children with unemployed parents obtain significantly higher scores on a scale measuring adjustment and self-esteem. Therefore, according to above-mentioned material and the process of development, which society experience due to employment of women, this study sought the answer to the following question: does employment of women affects social adjustment and attachment of high school girls in Minab?

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is a causal- comparative or ex post facto study. The statistical population included all high school female students in 2012-2013 academic years in Minab. The total number of second grade female students, i.e. the statistical population, was equal to 1300 individuals. Statistical sample size was obtained as 296 individuals using Krejcie and Morgan Table. However, the sample size was considered as 300 individuals (140 students with employed mothers and 160 students whose mothers were housewives) to increase generalizability of study results. Non-random and available sampling method was used.

Research Tools

1. Demographic Questionnaire
2. Personal and Social Adjustment Scale (Bell)
3. Attachment Style Scale (RAAS)

A. Demographic Questionnaire: This questionnaire included several questions as follows. Maternal employment status (employed or housewives), maternal age, maternal educational status, number of children

B. Personal and Social Adjustment Scale (AISS): Personal and Social Adjustment Scale (AISS) was developed by Sinha and Singh [12]. This scale examines three areas of emotional adjustment, social adjustment, and academic adjustment of individuals. Reliability coefficients of this tool were calculated using splitting method by which 0.94 was obtained for emotional subscale, 0.93 for social subscale and 0.96 for academic subscale. However, reliability coefficient of the overall test was obtained as 0.95.

C. Collins and Read Revised Adult Attachment Scale: This scale includes self-assessment of skills referring to establishing relationships and self-descriptive method of forming close attachment styles. It consists of 18 items scored using 5-point Likert scale for each item in which score one represents it is not at all my characteristic while score five denotes that it is clearly my characteristic. This tool identifies three subscales of secure attachment, avoidant attachment and ambivalent attachment. Collins and Read [13] developed items of their scale based on descriptions provided by Hazan and Shaver Adult Attachment Scale in terms of three major styles of attachment. Subscales (A) corresponds to ambivalent insecure attachment (AM). The closeness subscale (C) is a bipolar dimension, which essentially contradicts description about secure with the one about avoidant (Finney and Noler, 1992). Therefore, closeness (C) is in accordance with Attachment (S). Then, dependency subscale (D) almost contradicts with avoidant attachment (AV) [13].

3. RESULTS

Among participants, 140 students had employed mothers while 160 students’ mothers were housewives. Among students whose mothers were housewives, 58 mothers were illiterate, 51 mothers had primary school education, 45 mothers had secondary school education and 6 mothers had high school education. Among students with employed mothers, 0 mother were illiterate, 4 mothers had primary school education, 10 mothers had

secondary school education, 29 mothers had high school education, 36 mothers had diploma degree and 61 mothers had bachelor degree and higher than BA.

The first hypothesis states there is a significant difference between overall adjustment of girls with employed mothers and social adjustment of girls whose mothers were housewives.

Table 1. Summary of F-ratio test results, the overall adjustment in two groups of students with employed mothers and students whose mothers were housewives

Source of changes	SS	df	MS	F-value	P
between groups	568.70	1	568.70	29.92	0.01
within groups	5663.47	298	19		
Total	6232.18	299	-----		

The above table shows F ratio results between two groups of students with employed mothers and students whose mothers were housewives in terms of overall adjustment. A significant difference was observed between the two groups in terms of overall social adjustment with F-value=29.92 in 0.01 alpha level.

Therefore, it can be stated that students whose mothers were housewives have higher social adjustment compared to students with employed mothers. Thus, the first hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. The second hypothesis states there is a significant difference between emotional adjustment of girls with employed mothers and girls whose mothers were housewives.

Table 2. Summary of F-ratio test results in terms of emotional adjustment in the two groups of students with employed mothers and students whose mothers were housewives

Source of changes	SS	df	MS	F-value	P
between groups	139.52	1	139.52	30.80	0.01
within groups	1349.71	298	4.52		
Total	1489.23	299	-----		

The above table shows F-ratio test results between two groups of students with employed mothers and the students whose mothers were housewives in terms of emotional adjustment. A significant difference was observed between the groups in emotional adjustment dimensions with F=30.80 in alpha level=0.01. Therefore, it can be stated that students whose mothers were housewives had higher emotional adjustment compared to students with employed mothers. Thus, the second hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

The third hypothesis states there is a significant difference between social adjustment of girls with employed mothers and social adjustment of girls whose mothers were housewives.

Table 3. Summary of F-ratio test results in terms of social adjustment in the two groups of students with employed mothers and the students whose mothers were housewives

Source of changes	SS	df	MS	F-value	P
between groups	0.53	1	0.53	0.17	0.67
within groups	914.37	298	3.06		
Total	914.91	299	-----		

The above table shows F-ratio test results between the two groups of students with employed mothers and the students whose mothers were housewives in terms of social adjustment. A significant difference was not observed between the two groups in terms of social adjustment with F=0.17 in alpha level=0.67. Therefore, the third hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of maternal employment on social adjustment and attachment styles of high school female students in Minab. The results of analysis of the first hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference between the two groups of students with employed mothers and students whose mothers were housewives in terms of overall adjustment (F=29.92, P<0.01). The students whose mothers were housewives had lower mean adjustment. This indicates that the students whose mothers were housewives had more appropriate social adjustment compared to students with employed mothers. Adjustment can be defined as a set of actions and behaviors, which an individual exhibits in a new situation in order to react properly to existing stimulus. These findings are in line with those obtained by Jahan Bakhsh et al. [14]. They found in their research that lack of maternal employment had a positive impact on performance and adjustment of children. In addition, maternal employment could also disrupt children's adjustment. On the other hand, these findings are not in line with those obtained by Biabangard [15] and Ahmadi [16]. They showed in their researches that maternal employment not only has a negative effect on adjustment of children, but also has a significant effect on children's desirable adjustment. This was because the children of employed mothers had higher social progress and

academic performance and self-esteem compared to children whose mothers were housewives in the former studies.

The results of analysis of the second hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference in subscale of emotional adjustment between the two groups of female students whose mothers were housewives and the students with employed mothers ($F=29.92$, $P\leq 0.01$). The students whose mothers were housewives had lower mean scores in emotional adjustment subscale. This suggests that these students had more appropriate emotional adjustment compared to students with employed mothers. Emotional adjustment includes proper mental health, personal life satisfaction and harmony between emotions, actions and thoughts. In other words, emotional adjustment refers to the mechanisms by which the individual become emotionally stable. This is ultimately represented as specific social adjustment. These findings are in line with those obtained by Becker, Ruth and Crown [17] and Harvey [18]. They found in their research that lack of maternal employment had a positive impact on performance and adjustment of children.

The results of analysis the third hypothesis showed that there is no significant difference between the two groups of female students with employed mothers and the female students whose mothers were housewives in terms of social adjustment subscale ($F=0.17$, $P\leq 0.67$). It should be noted that socialization and adjustment with society is a mutual process between the individual and society. Then, it is considered as a complex process with several dimensions. If social adjustment is viewed as a skill, social adjustment is a process, which enables the individuals to understand and predict behavior of others and control their behavior and regulate their social interactions. These findings are in line with those obtained by Al-Yagon and Mikulincer [6], Laible [8] and Hamedei [19]. For example, Hamedei [19] conducted a research on high school students and found out that performance of the family, especially the mother, has a positive effect on social adjustment of adolescents. The former is considered as a predictor variable for significance of social adjustment. The results of this study can be used by family counselors and psychologists in consultation sessions with the families.

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