

Are the Lions or the Lambs in Hands of Today's Children: Home Facilities Available for Children after School Activities?

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ABSTRACT The present investigation was an exploratory attempt to study the play facilities (home) available for employed and non-employed mothers children for their after school activities. A representative sample of 180 mothers (90 employed mothers and 90 nonemployed mothers having eldest child 6-9 years) belonging to nuclear families of Udaipur, Rajasthan were selected. Data were collected using self-structured Interview schedule (Child's After School Activity Schedule). The results of the study revealed that employed mothers children were having more facilities of indoor games as compared to children of non-employed mothers. The majority of games both outdoor and indoor games were falling in 'destructive' games instead being constructive or recreational games. Among computer/ video games category majority of games were falling in 'action games' in the case of both employed and nonemployed mother's children. In the book category the least number of books fall in 'educational books' category among children of employed and non-employed mothers. In toys and books category no difference was found among employed and nonemployed mothers children. Significant difference was found between facilities available for after school activities of employed and non-employed mothers' children. In the case of facilities provided at home, except toys category, significant difference was found in the entire sub aspects i.e. videogame, books, movies and games among children of employed and non-employed mothers which concludes that employment has an effect on availability of facilities for children. The significant difference was found among all the entire sub aspects of facilities i.e. videogames, books and movies and toys between boys and girls except games children have at their homes. Thus, exposure to violent media may cause children to be more aggressive; TV, movies, and video game use cause weight gain and obesity. Hence, mothers need to see critically what the play materials are available at home for betterment of children.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood is the fiery furnace in which we are melted down to essentials and that essential shaped for good.

~Katherine Anne Porter

Childhood is the most beautiful of all life's seasons. Children's development is of paramount importance for the overall development of society and the best way to develop national human resources is to take care of children so as to help them blossom their inherent potentialities. Each period is marked by basic biological and cognitive changes, as well as changes in the social surroundings where children's daily lives unfold. School-age is a period of self-discovery in which the child learns about himself in the course of engaging in a variety of academic, extra-curricular and recreational activities in relating to other people. In this stage, children's energies are redirected from the make believe of early childhood into realistic accomplishment

Middle childhood (6-9 years) is the time of

important developmental advances that establish children's sense of identity. During these years, children make strides toward adulthood by becoming competent, independent, and self-conscious individuals imbibing values and ideals from the world beyond the limits of their families. Biological and cognitive changes transform children's bodies and minds. Social relationships and roles change dramatically as children enter school, join programs, and mingle with peers and adults outside their families.

In the Indian scenario, major part of child care rest on mothers as compared to fathers. Many studies show that women have primary responsibility for the care and nurture of their children (Biernatt and Wortman 1991) and women are more likely than men to adapt their work lives to accommodate child related concerns. Some theorists have claimed that women are, by nature, more nurturing and relational than men, whereas men are, by nature, less emotional and more distant than women (Chodorow 1978).

Mothers have always been ultimately respon-

sible and expected to be the decision makers about child rearing, and matters pertaining to the house, in most cases. This is a role that is evolving with fathers accepting some of those responsibilities today (Swaminathan 2000). Mothers in the family have been shown to have an over reaching effect, leading to a wide range of positive social and personality development in children (Cournoyer 2005).

In many families, the protective influences of both unstructured play and high-quality parent-child time are negatively affected by the current trends of highly structured after school time activity pattern of children as well as maternal employment. It affects mother-child interaction to a certain degree. Breaking down of joint family into nuclear ones also has an impact on childcare. Nuclear families lack custodial care facilities and children are likely to engage in structured activities. These activities leave no time for free play.

Clements (2004) in his study revealed that non-employed mothers provide less structured activities to their children during after school time as compared to employed mothers but, the maximum time is spent on watching TV, playing videogame as compared to free play activities.

Parents influence their play directly and indirectly as they are the persons who makes available resources for children. Children of 21st century demand fast games, electronic toys and complex gadgets to play. In schools there is intense pressure on the child in terms of academic expectations. As a result this may have implications on children's play in the home context.

Parents, with specific reference to mothers need to understand the importance of play and should provide ample opportunities for free play in a child's life. Mothers must not turn play into work and must not teach children during their play period. But due to the limited awareness of mothers regarding the significance of free play, children are deprived of their right to play and becoming a 'scheduled child' or a 'passive viewer of TV, Computers games' instead of playing freely. Secondly, the available play games are destructive in nature which inhibits child's healthy development.

Therefore, for the sake of both individual and global development, there is an emerging need to know what mothers feel towards children after school time activity pattern in their life. Hence, the present study was planned with the objective to study the home facilities available for children

after school activities by the employed and non-employed mothers.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample of the study comprised of 180 mothers belonging to nuclear families, residing in Udaipur, a city of Rajasthan state. Further, the mothers were subdivided into two groups according to employment of mothers:

- 1) 90 employed mothers
- 2) 90 non-employed mothers

The first group comprise of 90 employed mothers was further subdivided in three groups i.e. 30 mothers employed in professional jobs, 30 mothers employed in semi-professional jobs and 30 mothers employed in non-professional jobs. Further, these three groups were again divided equally, according to gender of the child i.e. mothers of 15 boys and mothers of 15 girls were selected, similarly, the second group and third group of mothers were selected according to the gender of the child i.e. mothers of 15 boys and mothers of 15 girls.

The second group comprised 90 non-employed mothers was further subdivided in two groups according to gender of the child i.e. mothers of 45 boys and mothers of 45 girls were selected.

Sample Selection

The preliminary survey was conducted on 360 (twice of sample) children ranging between 6-9 years, studying in private and government schools to obtain the information regarding their mother's education, profession and address. Then, through random sampling method, a list of final sample of mothers was prepared. Thus, it comprised of 90 employed and 90 non-employed mothers making total 180 mothers.

Tools Used for Data Collection

Selected subjects were contacted personally for data collection. Data were collected using self-structured Interview schedule (Child's After School Activity Schedule), which was prepared after exhaustive consultation of theoretical and empirical researches. The tool consisted of questions in a tabular format which was related

to home facilities available for a child after school activities.

Scoring Pattern: Mean and percentages were calculated for each sub aspect of facilities including Indoor outdoor games, books, movies, toys and computer, videogames available for children at home..

Data Analysis: The responses obtained were coded, tabulated, mean and percentages were calculated to depict the home facilities available for after school activities. The difference in the home facilities available for after school activities was measured by z –test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The time children spend out-of-school is critical to their development. The hours outside the school day comprise more than 90% of a school-age child's time in a given year, and activities during those hours can provide opportunities to learn social skills, develop new interests and competencies, and form meaningful relationships with caring adults. For many children, however, those hours are a time fraught with risks to their healthy development. What children are doing, where they are, and the quality of adult supervision they receive during out-of-school time, all affect school achievement and adult success. The facilities available for play at home are a source for children to manage their time as ideally they feel to spend and have a great impact on child's after school activities and their well-being.

1. Games

Indoor Games

It is clearly evident from table 1 that on an average, children of employed mothers were having more facilities of indoor games (65) as compared to children of nonemployed mothers (44). Because the employed mothers were more educated and financially strong to provide more indoor facilities to their children, as well as they think the more the facilities their children will have the more, it will have positive impact on their development. And the second reason can be accounted that they have more interest in playing with computer videogames instead of playing outside with peers in both cases of children,

Among both employed and nonemployed mothers boys were having (12 and 12) -destructive

games' whereas among girls of employed mother (15) having "constructive" and nonemployed mother's girls (11) having "recreational games". Because of sex stereotypes in Indian society the difference in games can be easily seen, as the boys tend to play destructive games while girls were interested in recreational and constructive games. Anne (2006) in a study on 6-11 years children found that boys and girls often gravitate to different pursuits regarding their games choices. 65.2% Boys showed interest in destructive while only 40.5% girls showed interest towards action games.

Outdoor Games

Table 1 reveals that in outdoor games children of employed mothers (44) have again more outdoor games as compared to non-employed mother's children (35). The reason is again the same that financial strength of employed mothers and again the parents trying to refill their parent-child time in terms of providing lots of games to play rather than spending their time with child. The major issue to think is that mothers provided many games, but they have not provided ample opportunities of free time during after school hours to use those games by child for their own sake of play.

A clear picture emerges from table 1 that in both employed and nonemployed mothers' majority of games a child have (19 and 14) were falling in "destructive games" among outdoor games. The reason behind it may be the excessive media exposure on violence. Another reason could be that in the 6-9 years of age group children like to get adventure in games, as they prefer destructive games because they seek enthusiasm and energy to accomplish.

Both the boys and girls of employed mothers' were having destructive games. The probable reason behind it might be that due to lack of supervision at home or being alone at home, the children show attention seeking behavior in front of adults. Another reason is media exposure on violent and adventurous games e.g. "jo jeeta wahi Sikender, Shaktiman, etc."

2. Computer/Videogames

Figure 1 shows that majority of games (35) were falling in 'action games' among computer/video games category in the case of both

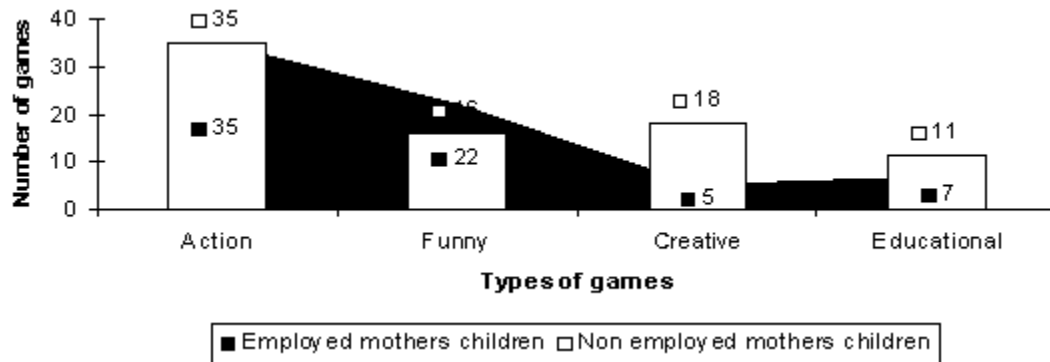
Table 1: Mean and Percentage distribution of home facilities available for child's after school activities

S.No	Activity employed mothers children (90)			Non-employed mothers children (90)		
	Boys (45)	Girls (45)	Total	Boys (45)	Girls(45)	Total
1 Games						
A Indoor						
• Constructive	8(26.66)	15(42.85)	23(35.38)	4(20)	7(29.16)	11(25)
• Destructive	12(40)	10(28.57)	22(33.84)	8(40)	4(16.66)	12(27.27)
• Recreational	7((23.33)	8(22.85)	15(23.07)	5(25)	11(45.83)	16(36.36)
• Others	3(10)	2(5.71)	5(7.69)	3(15)	2(8.33)	5(11.36)
Total	30(100)	35(100)	65(100)	20(100)	24 (100)	44 (100)
B Outdoor						
• Constructive	5 (19.23)	4(22.22)	9(20.45)	4(20)	9(60)	13(37.14)
• Destructive	11 (42.30)	8(44.44)	19(43.18)	10 (50)	4 (26.66)	14 (40)
• Recreational	9(34.61)	5(27.77)	14(31.81)	6 (30)	2 (13.33)	8(22.85)
• Others	1(3.84)	1(3.84)	2(4.54)	—	—	—
Total	26(100)	18(100)	44 (100)	20(100)	15 (100)	35(100)
2 Computer/Videogames						
• Action	30 (62.5)	5 (12.82)	35(40.22)	25(59.52)	10(35.71)	35(50)
• Funny	10(20.83)	12(30.76)	22(25.28)	9 (21.42)	7 (25)	16(22.85)
• Creative	3(6.25)	20(51.28)	5 (5.74)	3 (7.14)	15(53.57)	18(25.71)
• Educational	5(10.41)	2(4.16)	7(8.04)	5 (11.90)	6 (21.42)	11(15.71)
Total	48(100)	39(100)	87(100)	42 (100)	28(100)	70 (100)
3 Books						
• Story	12(30)	20(44.44)	32(33.68)	10(27.77)	26(63.41)	36(46.75)
• Educational	10(25)	15(33.33)	25(26.31)	6 (16.66)	10(24.39)	16(20.77)
• Sports	18(45)	10(22.22)	28(29.47)	20(55.55)	5 (12.19)	25(32.46)
Total	40(100)	45(100)	95(100)	36 (100)	41 (100)	77(100)
4 Toys						
• Electrical	18(60)	12(38.70)	30(49.18)	17(62.96)	11(33.33)	28(46.66)
• Nonelectrical	12(40)	19(61.29)	31(50.81)	10(37.03)	22(66.66)	32(53.33)
Total	30(100)	31(100)	61(100)	27 (100)	33 (100)	60(100)
5 Movies						
• Animated	7 (70)	5 (62.5)	12(66.66)	6 (66.66)	3 (60)	9 (64.28)
• Non-animated	3 (30)	3 (37.5)	6 (33.33)	3 (33.33)	2 (40)	5 (35.71)
Total	10(100)	8 (100)	18 (100)	9 (100)	5 (100)	14 (100)

employed and nonemployed mother's children that may effect child's behavior. "Video games are a newer medium, there is less research on them than there is on TV and movies. Studies indicates it is likely that violent video games may have even stronger effects on children's aggression because

(1) the games are highly engaging and interactive, (2) the games reward violent behavior, and because (3) children repeat these behaviors over and over as they play" (Gentile and Anderson 2003).

In a minority of games, the children of

**Fig. 1. Mean of computer, videogames available for child at home**

employed mothers (22) had creative computer games and the children of both employed and non-employed mothers had few 'educational games'. The reason behind it is that the children spend the whole day in schools and tuition centre while playing computer/ videogame he/she wishes to entertain her/him only, hence they were least interested in educational games. Buchman and Funk (1996) found that girls were more likely than boys to list educational games as favorites, but that for both boys and girls, there was a decreasing preference for educational games. MRI (2006) in a study of 6-11 year children found that the difference in boys' and girls' affinity for pastime pursuits is also apparent in the types of videogames each gender is likely to play. Boys are more likely to play action games including action, adventure, sports or war genres, while more girls gravitate towards cerebral games such as educational games.

3. Books

As clearly seen in table 1 that among Book category both the children of employed (33) and non-employed (36) mothers were having story-books on an average. The least number of books fall in 'educational books' category among children of employed and non-employed mothers. The reason behind it could be that children have a great interest in story reading and the heavy work load of academics on all of day creates no interest in educational books.

When comparison is made with boy and girl children, boys were having more "sports books" whereas girls have "story books" in employed and non-employed mothers' children category (Fig. 2). The reason could be accounted that sex stereotyped difference between girls and boys,

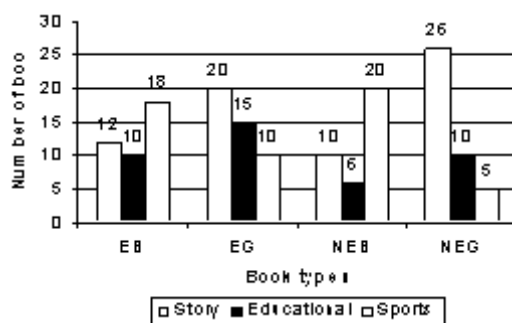


Fig. 2. Mean of types of books child have

which causes difference in choice or interest in book selection. Girls like to read more fantasy based and imaginative ideas as they like storybooks. Whereas boys like adventure hence, they tend to show their interest in sports book.

4. Toys

In the toys category as seen in table 1 predicts that on an average employed and non-employed mother's children have non-electrical toys i.e. 31 and 32 as major group of toys whereas on an average, electrical toys were used by children 30 and 28.

5. Movies

On an average both employed and non-employed mothers children were having animated movies. The reason is that animated movies have more colors, adventures, language and child based themes liked by children.

In the case of facilities provided at home, table 2 reveals that except toys category, significant difference was found in the entire sub aspects i.e. videogame, books, movies and games among children of employed and non-employed mothers. The reason accounted is that again the dual earner parents are more economically sound and could provide more facilities e.g games, books etc. rather than single earner families. In single earner family, major provider has lots of responsibilities to take care of their family members so it lessens the focus on facilities for children. The reason could be that employed mothers provide more facilities to their child as they are more financially stable compared to non-employ-

Table 2: Difference between the employed mothers' children (boy and girls) with nonemployed mothers' children (boy and girls) regarding their facilities available at home (N = 180)

S.No.	Facilities	Mean in number		Z value
		Employed mothers children (90)	Non-employed mothers children (90)	
1	Videogame	43.46	34.98	4.576 **
2	Books	42.50	38.50	3.410**
3	Toys	30.39	29.83	.432 NS
4	Movies	9.10	7.08	3.317 **
5	Games	54.23	39.42	8.915 **

** Significant at 5% level of significance

NS- Nonsignificant

ed mothers. Secondly they are more aware regarding technological advancements, and tried to put these in child's life due to more exposure and high education. "Parents with higher educational levels and more income tend to influence their children to participate in educationally beneficial activities and can pay for more enrichment lessons than can parents with lower education and less income. However, some parents living in inner-city neighborhoods expend great amounts of energy to seek out resources for their children (Hofferth and Jankuniene 2001).

As table 3 clearly predicts that a significant difference was found among the entire sub aspects of facilities i.e. videogames, books and movies and toys between boys and girls except games children have at their homes. This may be due to that boys tend to show more interest in videogames as compared to girls because boys seek adventure and they feel adventure in destructive games of videogames. Whereas girls have more interest in books as they love to play imaginative games. Numerous researches have reported gender differences in the level of physical activity in children's play as they indicate that boys are more vigorous and more physically active in their indoor and outdoor play than girls Rubin et al. 1983).

Table 3: Difference between the boys (employed and non-employed mothers') with girls (employed and non-employed mothers') regarding their facilities available at home (N = 180)

S.No.	Facilities	Mean in number		Z value
		Boy (90)	Girl (90)	
1	Videogame	45.08	33.36	6.697 **
2	Books	38.00	43.00	4.343 **
3	Toys	28.21	32.01	3.031 **
4	Movies	9.56	6.62	4.985 **
5	Games	47.69	45.97	.864 NS

** Significant at 5% level of significance

NS- Nonsignificant

Mankody (2005) concluded that gender differences were evident in kinds of play materials children used. Another study reported that developmental play level and activities also varied according to children's sex and boys engaged in more exploratory play, girls engaged in more symbolic play (Suizzo and Bornstein 2006). The reason might be the difference of interest of boys and girls in books, videogames and toys etc. Tee (2004) found that gender difference is seen in toy preferences and interactions with the toys as

males and females grow in different environment with different socialization.

CONCLUSION

Children's development is of paramount importance for the overall development of society. They need to blossom physically, mentally, socially and emotionally. Children are spending a great deal of time with violent video games, computer games, movies, games, and books. But these entire games majority were dealing with action and destructive types of games. Parents have an important role to play. Researches have found that when parents limit the amount of time as well as the types of games their children play, children are less likely to show aggressive behaviors. Active parental involvement in children's media usage-including discussing the inappropriateness of violent solutions to real life conflicts, reducing time spent on violent media, and generating alternative nonviolent solutions to problems-all can reduce the impact of media violence on children. Exposure to violent media causes them to be more aggressive; TV, movies, and video game use cause weight gain and obesity. Hence, mothers need to see critically what the play material are available at home and how the children use it for their better development.

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