

Effect of Employment Status of Mothers on Conceptual Skills of Preschoolers

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ABSTRACT The present investigation was undertaken to study the effect of employment status of mothers on conceptual skills of preschoolers. The sample of the study comprised of 120 preschoolers aged 3-4 years and of both the sexes from various preschools of Faridabad city. Sample was further divided into two categories and each category consisted of 60 respondents of employed and unemployed mothers. Pandey's Cognitive Development Test for Preschoolers (PCDTP 1992) was used to assess conceptual skills. The results revealed that employment status of mothers do not have significant effect on the development of conceptual skills of preschool children.

INTRODUCTION

Development of conceptual skills in pre-school age is greatly influenced by the mother because the task of child rearing begins with mother. A mother is particularly important not because she has special skills but because she is with her children for a much greater time than any other person and her instructions have a strong impact on the attitudes, abilities and behaviour of child. Most of those children who are successful and well-adjusted come from homes where parental attitudes are favorable and a wholesome relationship existed between children and parents. Quality of time is important than the quantity of time. Employed mothers and their preschool children complain that the employed mothers have too little time to spend with their children, and the activities parent do with children changes with a mother's employment. Maternal employment may actually increase leisure time and housework time that is shared with children. It also decreases time spent in family care and supervision of children (Bryant and Zick 1996). The present study was undertaken to assess the conceptual skills of preschoolers of employed and unemployed mothers and to compare the effect of employment status of mothers' on conceptual skills of preschoolers.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out on 120 preschoolers aged 3-4 years (boys and girls pooled), 60 each of employed and unemployed

mothers residents of western Uttar Pradesh, India. The sample was selected randomly. Pandey's Cognitive Development Test for Preschoolers (1992) was employed. The respondents were classified into 3 categories as average, above average and below average with respect to the total score obtained by each respondent on PCDT for each conceptual skill. Percentage of children falling into various developmental levels was calculated for each conceptual skill across preschoolers of employed and unemployed mothers. Z-test was applied to find statistical significance of preschoolers of employed and unemployed mothers for various conceptual skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profile of the sampled preschoolers is given in table 1. The perusal of table 1 reveals that there was not much difference in the number of preschoolers of employed and unemployed mothers in performance for concept of shape, time, classification, numbers, size, texture and recognizing coins. There was no difference in the mean scores of preschoolers of employed and unemployed mothers and the difference was found to be statistically non-significant ($Z = 0.95$, $P = 0.05$). The logic behind this may be that young children are apprentice and keenly interested to explore various things around them and gradually their curiosity rises in natural things. If the environment provides the child with enough educational play material to manipulate, to explore, to classify concepts with continuous interaction of guide i.e. mother or teacher, the

Table 1: Level of conceptual skills and comparison of mean scores of preschoolers of employed and unemployed mothers.

	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Mean scores</i>	<i>Z score</i>
<i>Concept of Shape</i>					
Employed mothers	25 (41.5)	18 (30)	18 (30)	2.533	0
Unemployed mothers	24 (40)	17 (28.5)	18 (30)	2.533	
<i>Concept of Colour</i>					
Employed mothers	39 (65)	10 (16.6)	11 (18.4)	2.95	0.274
Unemployed mothers	35 (58.4)	12 (20)	13 (21.6)	3.083	
<i>Concept of Time</i>					
Employed mothers	15 (25)	31 (51.6)	14 (23.4)	1.433	0.684
Unemployed mothers	15 (25)	30 (50)	15 (25)	1.533	
<i>Classification</i>					
Employed mothers	22 (36.7)	19 (31.7)	19 (31.7)	1.833	0
Unemployed mothers	21 (35)	19 (31.7)	20 (33.3)	1.833	
<i>Concept of Numbers</i>					
Employed mothers	30 (50)	15 (25)	15 (25)	2.866	0.129
Unemployed mothers	28 (46.6)	16 (26.7)	16 (26.7)	2.833	
<i>Concept of Seriation</i>					
Employed mothers	22 (36.6)	19 (31.7)	19 (31.7)	0.833	5.687*
Unemployed mothers	26 (43)	17 (28.5)	17 (28.5)	0.850	
<i>Concept of Weight</i>					
Employed mothers	23 (38.3)	18 (30)	19 (31.7)	0.933	0.083
Unemployed mothers	23 (38.3)	33 (55)	4 (6.66)	0.951	
<i>Concept of Size</i>					
Employed mothers	21 (35)	19 (31.7)	20 (33)	1.916	1.041
Unemployed mothers	22 (36.6)	19 (31.7)	19 (31.7)	1.966	
<i>Concept of Texture</i>					
Employed mothers	18 (30)	24 (40)	18 (30)	1.70	0.128
Unemployed mothers	17 (28.5)	26 (43)	17 (28.5)	1.716	
<i>Concept of Coins</i>					
Employed mothers	28 (46.6)	16 (26.7)	16 (26.7)	2.450	0.057
Unemployed mothers	26 (43)	17 (28.5)	17 (28.5)	2.433	

*Significant difference at 5 percent level.

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

child would understand clearly the concept of shape, time, classification, numbers, size, texture and recognizing coins. Unemployed mothers are present all the time when a child needs guidance and employed mothers put their children in crèches, kindergarten, day care centres etc. during their working hours and they themselves make their children aware of environmental phenomena during free time. Hence, mothers either employed or unemployed postulate various concepts and other natural things in respect to satisfy child's curiosity and make them aware of environmental phenomena.

Further, preschoolers of employed mothers perform better than preschoolers of unemployed mothers for concept of seriation and significant difference was evident between the two groups. Seriation is the ability to arrange things systematically in sequence as per a particular rule. Young children have trouble with seriation. They have difficulty in putting things from shortest to

longest. Employed mothers tend to put their children in kindergarten, crèches etc. and their children get exposure, resources and more opportunities to play with toys, learn in enhancing atmosphere from teachers and peers. Moreover at home, they are more likely to maintain an active interest in learning and also attain better attention of fathers. All these people eventually made him savant of seriation skills. Karen (1987) examined the verbal interaction of employed and unemployed mothers and their young children. Results revealed employed mothers emphasized verbal interactions with their children more than activities requiring a quality of time (watching and discussing television with their child). In contrast, data for the unemployed mothers indicated their emphasis was more evenly distributed across the variables. In a study by Levy (1986), parent interactions were observed and self-report of parental feelings and perceptions were assessed twice. Mothers engaged in more care giving,

talking, holding during initial contacts. Fathers consistently surpassed mothers in playing and stimulating the child. It could be the reason that preschoolers of employed mothers perform better than preschoolers of unemployed mothers.

Proportion of preschoolers of unemployed mothers was marginally higher with regards to concept of colour than preschoolers of employed mothers and difference was statistically non-significant for concept of weight and colour. Preschoolers usually learn through their experiences, reinforcement, motivation but children learn some concepts through understanding. At this stage preschoolers judge weight mainly by size but gradually, learn from their experiences that weight of an object is independent of size and learn to differentiate between heavy and light objects. During 3-4 years of age, children have less understanding of colours. Children begin to name primary colours at two and know them well by the age of 4 years. 3-4 years old children prefer colour red. Colour naming seems to be independent of colour discrimination and colour preference.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the findings of the present study, following conclusions are drawn:

1. There was not much difference in the performance of preschoolers of employed and unemployed mothers with regards to concept of shape, time, classification, numbers, size, texture and recognizing coins.
2. Preschoolers of employed mothers perform better than preschoolers of unemployed mothers for concept of seriation and weight.
3. More number of preschoolers of unemployed mothers perform better with regards to concept of colour.

Hence, employment status of mothers does not have significant effect on the development of conceptual skills of preschool children.

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