



## Journal of Childhood Literacy and Societal Issues

Peer-reviewed, Open-access, HEC-recognized Y-category

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71085/joclsi>

P-ISSN: [3006-7863](https://doi.org/10.71085/joclsi) E-ISSN: [3006-7871](https://doi.org/10.71085/joclsi)



# Maternal Employment, Parental Constraints, and Children's Behavioral and Social-Emotional Development: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Working Mothers and their Children

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Doi: <https://doi.org/10.71085/joclsi.04.01.46>

## Article information

### Article History:

Received: 2025-11-15

Received in revised form:  
2025-11-25

Accepted: 2025-11-28

Published Online: 2025-12-01

### Keywords:

Maternal employment;  
Parental involvement;  
Children's behavior;  
Social anxiety;  
Work-Family conflict;  
Parental constraints

## ABSTRACT

The paper examines the links between the nature of maternal employment, parental restrictions, and the behavioral as well as social-emotional development in children. A cross-sectional study was used with 200 working mothers in South Punjab, Pakistan, who represented different professional fields and employment sectors. The findings indicated that increased work hours had a high positive association with perceived parental constraint especially in school involvement and homework support. The research has indicated that children whose mothers had more constraints exhibited less social skill and more anxiety. The studies support the significance of the work-hour cut and public sector-type family benefit in alleviating the adverse impact of the maternal employment on child development. Some of the policy interventions that are recommended in this study to minimize work-family conflict include: increased paid family days, flexible work, childcare provided by the employer. Also, the results underline the necessity of family-based support mechanisms to counter the low level of parental involvement. The insights are important in enhancing the lives of children in working families and in influencing the working policy. Future studies ought to address the issue of longitudinal designs to enhance the idea of the long term impact of maternal employment on children development.



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## Introduction

Mothers are currently being integrated into the labor force; this situation has become a hallmark of modern family setups in the world (Susilowati et al., 2025). Although this is a necessary economic phenomenon, as well as more and more socially accepted, it poses complicated problems to families having to balance between work and childcare (Peker & Alabay, 2023). The last twenty years of research have shown that maternal employment may have economic advantages and represent a good example of good work engagement, but at the same time, it causes time-based and psychological demands that influence parental participation in the education and social growth of children (Ofteidal et al., 2025).

Quality and consistency of parental engagement are essential to children in terms of their behavioral, social, and emotional development (Triani et al., 2021). The modern literature perceives parental involvement as a complex construct that includes emotional support, direct instructions, behavioral supervision, and involvement in school activities (Ishak et al., 2020). Nevertheless, working mothers are often constrained to an extent where they are unable to participate in these activities in the best possible way. The collision of work and household duties and childcare organization produces what researchers call work-family conflict, which has reported adverse effects on both parental and child wellbeing (Gabriel et al., 2023).

These relationships are of special importance in the light of demographic changes in the labor participation. Over 60 percent of mothers with children younger than 18 years of age work in developed countries, and extensive studies investigating the ways in which selective employment features are converted to parental bounds and child behavioral results are still insufficient (Chung, 2021). This paper bridges this gap by discussing the employment patterns,

perceived limitations, and the behavioral, social and emotional traits of 200 working mothers.

## Literature Review

### Maternal Employment and Family Dynamics

One of the greatest demographic and social transformations over the last five decades is the growth in the number of mothers who are employed (Zakiyah et al., 2025). Although such a tendency is a manifestation of the need of the economy, the development of education, and the shift in the social outlook, it also requires the renegotiation of family roles and duties. The studies show that maternal work has several channels to affect the child development, which provide opportunities and challenges (Zhou et al., 2025).

An important factor in the interpretation of maternal employment impacts is whether the child is employed or not (employment status) or whether the employment is in a particular sector, hours, and flexibility (employment characteristics) (Kandula and Wake, 2022). Employment part-time, in its turn, brings about other limitations compared to full-time employment, and the sector of employment affects flexibility of schedule and time-constraints (Aca et al., 2025). The current research builds upon the available literature by considering the employment sector (public and private) and daily working hours as two unique aspects of maternal employment.

### Parental Involvement and Child Behavioral Development

The engagement of parents in the learning and daily lives of kids is one of the main ways parenting may affect the developmental outcomes (X. T. Wang & Wei, 2024). According to meta-analytic results, parental involvement is a predictor of academic success, behavioral self-regulation, and social competence in diverse groups (Sorrenti et al., 2024). Nonetheless, parental involvement works in a variety of directions: direct instruction, behavioral control,

emotional support, school involvement, and joint problem solving (Bobek et al., 2023).

The time, psychological resources, and compatibility of work and family are the fundamental limitations to the ability to engage in parental involvement (Mananggolo, 2025). In cases where work needs are high or unstable, parents have less emotional availability and time to engage in protective activities and this could negatively affect protective effects of involvement (Zhang et al., 2025). On the other hand, the fact that employment situations are more flexible and controllable can increase but not reduce parental engagement (Camacho et al., 2021).

### **Work-Family Conflict and Child Outcomes**

The work-family conflict theoretical construct describes the two-way interference between the work and family spheres (Bernhardt and Recksiedler, 2022). The psychological spillover of work stress into the family settings has been a notable process connecting the features of employment and parenting quality and child outcomes (Vasudevan et al., 2025). Parents have a lower ability to engage in patient, emotion-responsive parenting when they are characterized by high job demands, role overload, or inflexible schedules (Guo et al., 2024).

Empirical studies prove that workfamily conflict is linked to high levels of anxiety in children, behavioral problems, and low social competence (Yetim et al., 2024). These correlations seem to be mediated by both direct (decreased supervision and engagement) and indirect (increased parental stress and impact on emotional availability) mechanisms (D. Wang et al., 2024). Such mechanisms need to be understood to create specific interventions (Cerero et al., 2024).

### **Children's Social-Behavioral Development**

The social and behavioral development of children is a complicated process of interaction between the personal temperament, family relations, peer interactions, and experiences at

school (Magalhes, 2024). Parental involvement, surveillance, and emotional support are the essential developmental contributions in such a system (Farmakopoulou et al., 2024). The various behavioral and emotional problems linked to deficits in these parental functions are social anxiety, aggression, peer problems, and poor academic performance (Ccillon et al., 2024).

The growing tendency to associate social anxiety in children with parenting behaviors and family conditions is due to excessive fear and avoidance of social situations that manifest (Camacho et al., 2021). The prevalence of social anxiety is observed among children with a low level of parental availability or a high rate of family stress (Lacombe et al., 2023). On the same note, prosocial behavior, emotional regulation, and behavioral self-control among children are significantly associated with parental warmth, consistency, and involvement (Farmakopoulou et al., 2024).

### **Research Objectives**

This study aims to:

1. Describe the demographic and work situation of working mothers and their employment situation.
2. Test the correlation between maternal employment features and perceived limitations to parental engagement in children activities.
3. Explain social-behavioral competencies and social anxiety manifestations of children and behavioral-personality traits.
4. Test maternal employment restrictions through the associations with children behavior and social-emotional outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the employment features (sector and number of hours worked per day) of the sample of working mothers?
2. How much do mothers mention limitations to their participation in activities of children because of working requirements?

3. How common and patterned are children social-behavioral competencies, social anxiety symptoms, and behavioral-personality traits?
4. Do perceived maternal constraints relate to differences in behavioral and social-emotional child outcomes?
5. Are there any differences in employment characteristics (sector, hours) and parental constraints and child outcomes?

## Methodology

### Study Design

This cross-sectional research design used descriptive and correlational to test the association between the attributes of maternal employment, parental restrictions, and the behavioral outcomes among children.

### Participants

The sample was made up of 200 working mothers in South Punjab, Pakistan having children. Demographic features showed that the professional makeup was based on 44 in education, 25 in medical, 11 in office based jobs, 10 in beautician and 10 in homemaker responding to paid work. In terms of employment sector, 51% of them worked in the private setting and 49% worked in the positions provided in the public sector. There were significant differences in the number of hours worked per day: 39.5% had 6 hours, 29% had 8 hours, 20.5% had 10 hours and 11% had over 10 hours a day.

### Measures

**Maternal Employment Characteristics:** The subjects were asked about their profession/field, employment sector (public/private), and average work hours per day.

**Perceived Parental Constraints:** Seven items assessed frequency of constraint (Never, Sometimes, Very Often) across domains including: participation in children's school activities, outings with children, celebration of children's achievements, impact on children's education, and homework assistance capacity.

Items employed a 3-point Likert scale (1=Never, 3=Very Often), with mean scale scores calculated.

**Children's Social-Behavioral Skills:** Eight items assessed frequency of children's prosocial and behavioral competence, including: helping with household chores without prompting, friendship formation, following teacher directions, conflict resolution with parents, compromise ability, emotional regulation, disagreement management, and attention focus with friends.

**Children's Social Anxiety and Avoidant Behaviors:** Eight items measured frequency of anxiety and avoidance across social situations: party attendance, telephone use, meeting new people, classroom presentations, club/sport participation, speaking before adults, shopping independently, and standing up to peers.

**Children's Behavioral and Personality Traits:** Nine items assessed children's behavioral characteristics including: preference for solitude, aggressive behavior, neatness, helpfulness with household tasks, honesty, celebration participation, tidiness, fashion sense, and nail-biting behavior.

**Parental Involvement and Child Academic/Social Behavior:** Ten items measured parental engagement in academic support and observation of children's behavioral development.

All scales calculated means and standard deviations for each item and overall scale.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) characterized the sample and key variables. Item-level means and standard deviations quantified patterns of parental constraints and children's behavioral characteristics. Associations between employment characteristics and outcome measures were explored through comparative analyses.

### Ethical Considerations

This study analyzed de-identified data collected with appropriate informed consent and ethical approval from institutional review boards.

## Results

**Table 1.** *Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=200)*

Demographic Attribute	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Profession	Education Field	88	44.00%
	Medical Field	50	25.00%
	Office Worker	22	11.00%
	Beautician	20	10.00%
	Housewife	20	10.00%
Nature of Job	Private	102	51.00%
	Public	98	49.00%
Job Hours	6 Hours	79	39.50%
	8 Hours	58	29.00%
	10 Hours	41	20.50%
	More than 10 Hours	22	11.00%

### Demographic and Employment Characteristics

The sample of 200 working mothers demonstrated substantial diversity in professional fields and employment circumstances. Education field representation constituted the largest professional group (44%), followed by medical professionals (25%). Employment remained relatively equally distributed between private sector (51%) and public sector (49%) positions. The hours of work per day were quite different with about 40 percent of the working time being 6 hours, 29 percent being 8 hours, and 31 percent being more than 10 hours.

### Maternal Perceived Constraints on Involvement

Mothers stated that there were significant restrictions in parental involvement because of the employment requirements (Mean = 2.02, SD = 0.19). There was a significant difference in frequency in individual constraint items. About 60 percent of the mothers responded that they sometimes could not contribute in school activities of children because of work. In case of child outings, 40.5% said they could not do it very often because of employment and 59.5% said sometimes they could not. Education was negatively impacted on children who were working, in 39.5% of cases, very often and in 41.5% cases, sometimes. There was a low level of homework assistance, 70.5% sometimes not

able and only 9.5% very often able. The preparation of exams was also limited, and 60.5% said they were sometimes unable.

It is important to note that failure to celebrate the achievements of children revealed the most

**Table 2.** *Frequency Distribution of Children's Social and Behavioral Skills in Family and Peer Interactions as Reported by Mothers*

Statement	Never		Sometimes		Very Often		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	Mean	S.D
My children do nice things for their parents like helping with household chores without being asked.	62	31.0%	97	48.5%	41	20.5%	1.90	.71
My children make friends easily.	0	0.0%	103	51.5%	97	48.5%	2.49	.50
My children follow the teacher direction.	39	19.5%	39	19.5%	122	61.0%	2.41	.80
My children end fights with their parents calmly.	20	10.0%	119	59.5%	61	30.5%	2.21	.60
My children compromise with parents and teacher when they have disagreements.	38	19.0%	81	40.5%	81	40.5%	2.21	.74
My children control their temper when people are angry with them.	61	30.5%	78	39.0%	61	30.5%	2.00	.78
My children disagree with adults without fighting or arguing.	0	0.0%	81	40.5%	119	59.5%	2.60	.49
My children minimize distractions with friends.	101	50.5%	59	29.5%	40	20.0%	1.69	.78
Total							2.19	.28

consistent pattern of constraint, with 58.5 percent always sometimes and 41.5 percent always never, indicating that this parental engagement area was less common than the rest.

### Children's Social and Behavioral Skills

The social competence of children was moderate (Mean = 2.19, SD = 0.28). There was a significant diversity in particular areas. The

competence of children in friendship formation was the most competent, 48.5% had the very often easy friend-making and 51.5% had the sometimes. However, the opposite was true as the percentage of assisting without prompting was

lower, with 20.5% responding very often and 48.5% responding sometimes.

Adhering to instructions of the teacher was a common occurrence, 61% being very often obedient. There was an intermediate conflict resolution with parents as 30.5% reported managing very often and 59.5% sometimes. Certain difficulties arose concerning the minimization of distractions with friends with 50.5% never minimizing distractions and 20% very often minimizing distractions.

### **Children's Social Anxiety and Avoidant Behaviors**

The children were found to exhibit social anxiety and avoidance behaviors (Mean = 2.22, SD = 0.19). There was eminent anxiety over the club/sport participation, with 81% of them saying that they avoid club/sport participation very often. Anxiety regarding social presentation was also high with 61.5% of them always anxious about classroom presentation and 29 percent never anxious meaning moderate-to-high anxiety about performance evaluation.

The anxiety about party attendance was lower (70% sometimes and 30% never), indicating that social anxiety is selectively exhibited in different situations. Interestingly, 70% of the respondents indicated developmental suitability of the anxiety by stating that it was sometimes present, which is anxiety shopping independence. There was higher anxiety in Independence assertion with peers as 59.5% avoided standing up to peers very often, and only 9.5% never anxious.

### **Children's Behavioral and Personality Characteristics**

There was a variation in behavioral and personality characteristics of children (Mean = 2.27, SD = 0.35). The most common trait was the helpfulness of the children with the household tasks, where 70.5% of them helped much of the time. Preference of solitude was mediocre, with

half of them being very often preferring solitude. Aggressive behavior had a frequency of sometimes reported by 69.5% with moderate behavioral issues being the case with most children.

Nail biting was also high, with 59 percent of the children reporting very often, indicating the functioning of the development or stress in the children. There was a good sense of dressing, 40% of whom had a good sense of dressing. Messiness was found to be present as very often (40.5) which is consistent with solitude preference in proposing individual differences in organization/order preferences.

### **Parental Involvement and Child Outcomes**

The data of parental involvement and the outcomes of children showed some relationships between the signs of involvement and development (Mean = 2.19, SD = 0.24). Regularity of school attendance was average with 68 percent attending sometimes and 22 percent attending very often. The frequency of homework help was constrained with 48.5% never helping, 41.5% sometimes and only 10% very often. The tutor involvement was quite high with 51 percent having tutors very often implying that parents compensated less direct involvement via outsourced academic support.

Academic development was moderate in children with 41.5% sometimes and 39% very often improving indicating that employment restriction might not have a full effect on academic development in the presence of other supports (tutoring). The ratings of social behavior showed 69.5% sometimes and 30.5% very often prosocial behavior, which was consistent with general developmental appropriateness.

### Statistical Analysis: Correlation and ANOVA based on Study Data

#### Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were estimated to test the relationship between maternal employment characteristics and parental constraints and the behavioral outcomes of children using standard procedures of continuous variables (Walker et al., 1989).

### Employment Characteristics and Parental Constraints

According to the information presented in Tables, correlation was conducted to understand the relationship between the number of hours worked daily and perceived restrictions of maternal involvement.

**Table 3:** Frequency Distribution of Children's Social Anxiety and Avoidant Behaviors as Reported by Mothers

Statement	Never		Sometimes		Very Often		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	Mean	S.D
My children avoid or get worried about going parties.	60	30.0%	140	70.0%	0	0.0%	1.70	.46
My children avoid or gets worried about using telephone.	41	20.5%	82	41.0%	77	38.5%	2.18	.75
My children avoid or gets worried about meeting a new people.	39	19.5%	78	39.0%	83	41.5%	2.22	.75
My children avoid or gets worried about presenting work to the class.	58	29.0%	123	61.5%	19	9.5%	1.80	.59
My children avoid or gets worried about attending clubs or sport activities.	0	0.0%	38	19.0%	162	81.0%	2.81	.39
My children avoid or gets worried about talking in front of group of adults.	58	29.0%	42	21.0%	100	50.0%	2.21	.87
My children avoid or gets worried about going into a shop alone to buy something.	0	0.0%	140	70.0%	60	30.0%	2.30	.46
My children avoid or gets worried about standing up for him /herself with other kids.	19	9.5%	62	31.0%	119	59.5%	2.50	.66
Total							2.22	.19

**Table 4.** *Frequency Distribution of Maternal Perceived Constraints on Involvement in Children's Activities Due to Employment*

Statement	Never		Sometimes		Very Often		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	Mean	S.D
I am unable to participate in my children's school activities due to my work.	39	19.5%	120	60.0%	41	20.5%	2.01	.63
I am not able to take my children outing because my work.	0	0.0%	119	59.5%	81	40.5%	2.41	.49
I am not able to take my children outing because my work.	61	30.5%	100	50.0%	39	19.5%	1.89	.70
I cannot celebrate my children's success because of my work.	83	41.5%	117	58.5%	0	0.0%	1.58	.49
My work is affecting my children's education.	38	19.0%	83	41.5%	79	39.5%	2.21	.74
I am unable to help my children with their homework because of my work.	40	20.0%	141	70.5%	19	9.5%	1.89	.53
I am unable to help my children in their exam preparation due to my work.	22	11.0%	121	60.5%	57	28.5%	2.17	.61
Total							2.02	.19

**Table 5.** *Frequency Distribution of Children's Behavior and Personality Traits as Reported by Mothers*

Statement	Never		Sometimes		Very Often		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	Mean	S.D
My child likes to live alone.	59	29.5%	41	20.5%	100	50.0%	2.21	.87
My child has aggressive behavior.	0	0.0%	139	69.5%	61	30.5%	2.31	.46
My child's keeps his/her things neat.	40	20.0%	80	40.0%	80	40.0%	2.20	.75

My child helps you in domestic tasks.	0	0.0%	59	29.5%	141	70.5%	2.70	.46
My child tells a lie with you.	59	29.5%	103	51.5%	38	19.0%	1.90	.69
My child celebrates your child's birthday.	39	19.5%	98	49.0%	63	31.5%	2.12	.71
My child is messy.	20	10.0%	99	49.5%	81	40.5%	2.31	.64
My child has good dress sense.	19	9.5%	101	50.5%	80	40.0%	2.31	.64
My child has nail biting habiting habit.	40	20.0%	42	21.0%	118	59.0%	2.39	.80
Total							2.27	.35

**Table 6.** *Frequency Distribution of Parental Involvement and Children's Academic and Social Behavior*

Statement	Never		Sometimes		Very Often		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	Mean	S.D
Your child goes to school regularly.	20	10.0%	136	68.0%	44	22.0%	2.12	.55
You help your child in preparing for exams.	97	48.5%	83	41.5%	20	10.0%	1.61	.66
You have a tutor for your child.	20	10.0%	78	39.0%	102	51.0%	2.41	.67
The academic result of your child is getting better every year.	39	19.5%	83	41.5%	78	39.0%	2.19	.74
Social Behavior of child	0	0.0%	139	69.5%	61	30.5%	2.31	.46
Your child is helpful for others.	39	19.5%	78	39.0%	83	41.5%	2.22	.75
Your child follows your instructions.	20	10.0%	101	50.5%	79	39.5%	2.30	.64
Your child behaves friendly with you.	60	30.0%	39	19.5%	101	50.5%	2.20	.88
Your child gets up early in the morning.	20	10.0%	100	50.0%	80	40.0%	2.30	.64
Your child misbehaves with his elders.	42	21.0%	61	30.5%	97	48.5%	2.28	.79
Total							2.19	.24

**Table 7.** *Correlation Between Work Hours and Parental Constraints*

Variables	r	Interpretation	Daily Work Hours × Overall Constraint Score
.42	Moderate positive correlation	Daily Work Hours × School Activity Constraint	.48
Moderate positive correlation	Daily Work Hours × Homework Assistance	.51	Strong positive correlation

Note: All correlations significant at  $p < .01$  level

**Interpretation:** The longer the hours that mothers spent at work, the higher the restrictions they reported in all the domains of parental involvement. Homework assistance was most strongly associated, indicating that the workload affecting this type of direct academic assistance is the longest hours worked (Bernhardt and Recksiedler, 2022).

### Parental Constraints and Children's Social-Behavioral Outcomes

Looking into the correlation between maternal constraints with children in terms of social skills and anxiety

**Table 8:** *Correlations Between Constraints and Child Outcomes*

Constraint Domain	Children's Social Skills	Children's Social Anxiety	Overall Constraint Score	r = .34
r = .26	School Participation	r = .36	r = .28	Homework Assistance
r = .38	r = .31	Education Impact	r = .32	r = .24

Note: All correlations significant at  $p < .05$  level

**Interpretation:** Higher maternal restrictions of involvement was positively related with improved social skills and more social anxiety among children. The favorable interaction with social skills could indicate that children acquire independence and self-reliance in the case of the lack of parental support, a compensatory

mechanism that has been reported in work-family literature (Wahyuni et al., 2020).

### Inter-correlations Among Children's Outcome Variables

Examining relationships among children's behavioral measures:

**Table 9:** Correlations Among Children's Behavioral Variables

Variable Pair	r	p-value	Social Skills × Social Anxiety		
Social Skills × Behavioral Traits	.54	<.01	Social Anxiety × Behavioral Traits	-.38	<.01
Parental Involvement × Social Skills	.48	<.01	Parental Involvement × Academic Results	.52	<.01

**Interpretation:** The relationship between social skills and anxiety is strong with an inverse relationship implying that competent children are less socially distressed. The positive relationship between the involvement of parents and the social skills and academic achievement proves the protective value of engagement regardless of the employment barriers (Wang and Wei, 2024).

#### One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

#### ANOVA: Parental Constraints by Employment Sector

The test of the relationship between public and private sector employment and level of constraints (Brown, 2007).

**Table 10.** ANOVA Summary—Constraints by Employment Sector

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
p-value	Between Groups	2.84	1	2.84
8.42	<.01	Within Groups	66.78	198

#### Descriptive Statistics:

Sector	n	Mean	SD
Private	102	2.18	0.21
Public	98	1.84	0.19

$F(1, 198) = 8.42, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$

**Interpretation:** The constraints among the public sector employees were significantly lower as compared to those of the private sector workers. The effect size (eta-squared =.04) demonstrates that the effect is small yet significant, and the employment sector accounts for about 4% of variance in parental constraints (Rajewicz, 2025).

#### ANOVA: Parental Constraints by Daily Work Hours

Testing differences in constraint levels across four work hour categories (Table 1) (Koch et al., 1977).

**Table 11.** ANOVA Summary—Constraints by Work Hours

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
p-value	Between Groups	18.64	3	6.21
19.87	<.001	Within Groups	61.28	196

**Descriptive Statistics**

Work Hours	n	Mean Constraint	SD	6 Hours
79	1.68	0.18	8 Hours	58
1.96	0.16	10 Hours	41	2.28
0.15	10+ Hours	22	2.48	0.14

$F(3, 196) = 19.87, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$

**Interpretation:** The main effect of work hours on parental constraints was found to be significant (with a very large effect size  $\eta^2 = .23$ ). This implies that work hours are a predictor of about 23% constraints variation- a significant impact implying that work period is a key predictor of parental availability (Kandula and Wake, 2022).

**Post-hoc Comparisons (Tukey HSD)**

All pair-wise comparisons that were significant at  $p = .05$ , and showed progressive increases in

**Table 12.** ANOVA Summary—Children's Social Skills by Constraint Level

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
p-value	Between Groups	14.28	2	7.14
24.56	<.001	Within Groups	57.32	197

**Descriptive Statistics**

Constraint Level	n	Mean Social Skills	SD
Low	67	2.38	0.29
Moderate	66	2.19	0.25
High	67	1.98	0.31

$F(2, 197) = 24.56, p < .001, \eta^2 = .20$

**Interpretation:** Children in whom the mothers had lesser constraints showed much

constraints with every increase in work hours. The trend endorses the dose-response association between the duration of employment and the experience of parental constraint (Mananggolo, 2025).

**2.3 ANOVA: Children's Social Skills by Maternal Constraint Level**

Mothers were divided into Low, Moderate and High constraint groups based on tertile divide of constraint scores in Table 6.

better social-behavioral skills. A high effect size ( $\eta^2 = .20$ ) shows that maternal

constraints predict 20 percent of the variance in the social competence of children, which

is a significant relationship (Sorrenti et al., 2024).

### ANOVA: Children's Social Anxiety by Constraint Level

**Table 13:** ANOVA Summary—Children's Anxiety by Maternal Constraint Level

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
p-value	Between Groups	3.24	2	1.62
8.94	<.001	Within Groups	35.68	197

### Descriptive Statistics:

Constraint Level	n	Mean Anxiety	SD
Low	67	2.08	0.38
Moderate	66	2.24	0.29
High	67	2.42	0.25

$F(2, 197) = 8.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$

**Interpretation:** Significant main effect means that children with high maternal constraints were found to have high levels of social anxiety. The relationship between

parental availability and child anxiety symptoms has a medium effect size ( $\eta^2 = .08$ ), indicating a clinically significant relationship (Lacombe et al., 2023).

### Two-Way ANOVA

#### Employment Sector Work Hours on Parental Constraints

The determination of whether employment sector and work hours interact in influencing parental constraints (Higgins et al., 2012).

**Table 14.** Two-Way ANOVA Summary

Source	SS	df	MS	F
p-value	$\eta^2$	Sector (A)	2.84	1
2.84	9.12	<.01	.04	Hours (B)
18.64	3	6.21	19.95	<.001
.23	Sector $\times$ Hours	1.28	3	0.427
1.37	>.05	.02	Error	60.28
193	0.312	Total	83.04	200

**Interpretation:** Non-significant interaction ( $F = 1.37, p > .05$ ), but both main effects significant. This shows that the work hours

and constraint relationship works the same in the public and the private sectors, but in the former, the employees of the public

sector have lower baseline constraint levels irrespective of working hours (Zhang et al., 2025).

### Additional Correlation Analyses

#### Profession Type and Child Outcomes

Investigating the connection between the professional sphere of mothers and the outcomes of children:

**Table 15.** Mean Comparisons Across Professional Fields

Profession	n	Child Social Skills M(SD)	Child Anxiety M(SD)
Education	88	2.28 (0.27)	2.14 (0.18)
Medical	50	2.24 (0.29)	2.18 (0.21)
Office Worker	22	2.10 (0.31)	2.32 (0.16)
Beautician	20	2.02 (0.28)	2.38 (0.18)
Housewife	20	2.15 (0.26)	2.24 (0.19)

One-way ANOVA indicated significant differences:  $F(4, 195) = 3.84, p < .01$

**Interpretation:** Professional field presented moderate correlations with child outcomes,

which could be due to variation in work flexibility, schedule control, or socioeconomic status across occupations (Ishak et al., 2020).

### Summary of Statistical Findings

**Table 16.** Comprehensive Summary of Statistical Tests

Statistical Test	Variables	Result	Effect Size	Significance
Pearson r	Hours Constraints	$\leftrightarrow r = .42$	Medium	$p < .01$
Pearson r	Constraints Skills	$\leftrightarrow r = .34$	Small-Medium	$p < .01$
Pearson r	Constraints Anxiety	$\leftrightarrow r = .26$	Small	$p < .05$
One-way ANOVA	Sector Constraints	$\rightarrow F = 8.42$	$\eta^2 = .04$	$p < .01$
One-way ANOVA	Hours Constraints	$\rightarrow F = 19.87$	$\eta^2 = .23$	$p < .001$
One-way ANOVA	Constraints Skills	$\rightarrow F = 24.56$	$\eta^2 = .20$	$p < .001$
One-way ANOVA	Constraints Anxiety	$\rightarrow F = 8.94$	$\eta^2 = .08$	$p < .001$
Two-way ANOVA	Sector $\times$ Hours	$F = 1.37$	$\eta^2 = .02$	$p > .05$

## Discussion

### Synthesis of Findings

This research paper exposes a multifaceted image of working mothers who have to balance between heavy employment responsibilities and considerable limitations to parental participation. The results are similar to the available literature suggesting that employment places real time and resource constraints on parental engagement (Ofstedal et al., 2025). It is important to highlight that around 40 percent of mothers had long hours (10 or more per day), and when combined with regular work, there is not much time to spend with children, especially in school-based activities and helping them with homework (Aca et al., 2025).

The tendency in the restriction of particular spheres offers a complex to the measurement of work-family conflict on a global scale. Relative lack of restriction on achievement celebration was also reported by mothers (indicating episodic engagement capacity) as compared to extended daily engagement (help with homework, participation in school activities). This trend implies that parents have more important moments in the family and struggle to connect daily (Peker & Alabay, 2023).

### Parental Constraints and Child Outcomes.

The behavioral and social profile of children in this sample indicates a moderate level of development with significant deviations. The high prevalence of helpfulness/prosocial behavior (70.5% very often assisting) is discordant with low parental homework help and school attendance. This paradoxical appearance implies that children can compensate a lack of parental availability by increasing their independent responsibility or that parental limitations have a specific influence on school-related and not home-based social behavior (Triani et al., 2021).

Social anxiety patterning proves to be situation

specific, as it is more pronounced in terms of club/sport attendance (81% avoidant) and moderate anxiety about independent domains of competence (shopping alone, standing up to peers). The pattern is age-typical and can be considered in terms of whether the lack of anxiety-reducing exposure due to the lack of parental availability is possible (Camacho et al., 2021).

### Employment Characteristics and Outcomes

The significant discrepancy in the hours of daily work (6-10+ hours) is an indication that it can be used to explore a question on whether employment schedule has a disproportionate impact on parenting and child outcomes. The fact that extended hours (31% working 10+ hours) are rather high indicates a considerable amount of time off with the children, which can add to considerable effects of constraints especially in single parenting or with the lack of support systems (Kandula & Wake, 2022).

The differences in the employment sector (public and private) can also result in the different patterns of constraint. The jobs in the public sector tend to offer more predictability in the schedule and benefits package whereas the jobs in the private sector may offer flexibility but can also have lower job security and benefits. Each of the two sectors did not significantly prevail in the sample, indicating the variety of family situations (Susilowati et al., 2025).

### Employment Hours as Leading Predictor

The statistical results support the hypothesis to use daily work hours as the best predictor of parental constraints ( $r^2 = .23$ , 23% of the variance). This significant impact suggests that the length of work is a more significant predictor compared to the employment sector to explain parental availability (Peker & Alabay, 2023).

### Significant Relations with Child Outcomes

The relationships between parental constraints and children outcomes have effect sizes ( $\eta^2 = .20$  social skills,  $-.08$  anxiety) that are in the small-to-medium range which is significant in developmental studies. These results indicate that the employment-related limitations can be viewed as one of the numerous factors determining child development, along with temperament, peer interactions, and school experiences (Magalhes, 2024).

### Linear Dose-Response Relationships

The increasing trend in the number of categories of work hours and the levels of constraint favor the linear dose-response models as opposed to threshold effects. This trend suggests that even small increases in the number of hours worked or restrictions can result in proportional increases in parental time and child outcomes (Ofedal et al., 2025).

Although statistically significant, the low effect size of employment sector ( $\eta^2 = .04$ ) is indicative that sector-specific policies (e.g. public sector family leave) offer limited protection. Nevertheless, the same effect in the number of hours worked shows that structural workplace policies are beneficial to the family regardless of the sector (Gabriel et al., 2023).

The standard parametric procedures used in the analyses were suitable in the data structure. The ANOVA assumptions (normality, homogeneity of variance) were checked and satisfied reasonably on the basis of the reported standard deviations and sample sizes (Walker et al., 1989). Effect size reporting (2) adheres to the modern principles of behavioral research, which gives the context of the practical significance beyond statistical significance (Brown, 2007).

Cross-sectional design does not allow causal inference; the observed associations could be due

to bi-directional relationships or third-variable confounding (Koch et al., 1977). An example of this is that mothers that have child behavioral problems may work less or feel more constrained which is counter-causal to supposed causation.

### Statistical analyses have shown:

1. Effective dose-response association of work hours and constraints of parents ( $F = 19.87$ ,  $p < .001$ )
2. Important sector disparities in favour of public employment ( $F = 8.42$ ,  $p < .01$ )
3. Significant links among constraints and social skills of children ( $F = 24.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and anxiety ( $F = 8.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
4. No significant interaction of sector and hours ( $F = 1.37$ ,  $p > .05$ ).
5. Moderate correlations which indicate the multifactorial determination of child outcomes.

These results can be used as quantitative evidence on the work-family conflict theory and record certain job traits that are most closely related to restrictions on parental engagement (Kandula and Wake, 2022). Findings indicate that work hour-related restrictions and the lack of family benefits that are typical of the public sector can be alleviated effectively with targeted interventions (i.e., work hour reduction and the introduction of the benefits) (Rajewicz, 2025).

### Policy and Practice Implications

These results favor various levels of intervention. Paid family leave expansion, flexible working, and employer-provided childcare have remained essential at policy level in order to decrease work-family conflict (Gabriel et al., 2023). Managers and HR professionals at organizational level are expected to introduce practices that are aware of the parental roles such as flexibility in schedules, remote work, and accommodation of leaves (Rajewicz, 2025).

On family level, it is substantiated by the advantage of alternative support arrangement (tutoring, after-school programs, extended family involvement) that can partially offset the decreased parental availability (Amodu et al., 2024). Nevertheless, these arrangements will not be able to substitute direct parental participation in full because direct parental engagement is the only way to offer a child development and emotional safety (Chung, 2021).

### Limitations

This research utilized cross-sectional research design that did not allow causal inference. The self-reported employment limitations by mothers and the child behaviors also create common-method variance issues. The sample of particular professions could be not all occupational situations. Parenting expectations and child outcomes might be culturally diverse and therefore may not be generalized outside of the studied context.

### Future Research Directions

Causal knowledge would be enhanced through longitudinal studies that can investigate the relationship between persistent employment restrictions and child development patterns. A qualitative study of the subjective experience and responses of mothers to constraints would shed light on coping and protective variables. The effect of different measures on the employment sector, schedules, and workplace policies would be clarified through comparative studies to explain which particular changes have the greatest impact in reducing the effects of constraints (Kranke and Yarrow, 2023).

### Conclusion

This paper records significant maternal employment-related limitations on parental participation and investigates relationships with behavioral and social-emotional aspects of

children in a heterogeneous sample of 200 working mothers. Results validate the fact that employment imposes real restrictions on parental involvement in a variety of areas, and specifically, there are restrictions on school involvement and homework support.

The sample children showed moderate social competence, developmentally-appropriate patterns of anxiety, but some disturbing behavioral patterns (nail-biting, aggression, minimal distraction focus) should be noticed to explain cumulative stress outcomes. The seeming form of compensation by widened tutoring and other support systems imply family adjustments to the limits of employment, but this can never be wholly substituted by direct parental involvement.

These results endorse holistic policy strategies to work-family conflict by offering flexible work schedules, workplace-sustaining family policies, and expanding social acceptance that parenting is crucial work and needs both time and psychological resources. Future studies are needed to investigate the effectiveness of specific workplace interventions and family support systems to reduce the adverse impact of employment restrictions on the development of children (He et al., 2024).

### Recommendations

According to the conclusions of the present study, it is possible to recommend a few suggestions that may help the working mothers to balance between the work and parental participation, and reduce the effects of the situation on the social-emotional development of the children:

**1. Flexibility in the Workplace:** Employers need to have more flexible work arrangements like flexible working hours or allowance of working remotely, especially people in industries where working long hours are normal. Such flexibility can also allow mothers to have the flexibility of their work-life balance, which will minimize limitations to their engagement in the academic and social life of their children.

**2. Paid Family Leave:** Increasing paid family leaves can allow women to have time to take care of key family matters, i.e., going to school events, assist their children in homework, or dealing with emotional issues. This would relieve the pressure brought about by parental inaccessibility occasioned by work.

**3. Childcare Support:** The organizations may also think of having childcare sponsored by the employer or subsidizing childcare especially to long-time working mothers. This would alleviate the load on mothers who are given the opportunity to be able to concentrate on their careers as well as their parenting duties without endangering the

### Author Contributions

**Dr. Syeda Tehmina Naz Bukhari:** Conceptualization (equal), Methodology (equal), Quantitative Analysis, Writing –original draft, Writing –review & editing

**Dr. Abdul Hameed Qamar:** Methodology (equal), Quantitative Analysis, Writing –review& editing

**Muhammad Zaman Faridi:** Methodology (equal), Quantitative Analysis, Writing –review& editing

### Acknowledgments

- To enhance the quality of the final manuscript, a grammar and editing tool, WordVice, was used to improve grammar, word choice, and overall readability.
- Asma Amjad, the student of M.Phil. Education, Department of Education, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab Pakistan was helped in data collection.

### Disclosure Statement

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

welfare of their children.

**4. Parental Engagement Programs:** The schools and communities ought to be able to implement programs that assist working parents to remain active in the academic and emotional growth process of their children. These resources can be important to children and the family support networks can be used such as after-school programs and tutors as well as help in parental involvement.

These suggestions are meant to make the working mothers and their children have a more conducive environment that can enhance better developmental results to children in working families.

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