
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTING SATISFACTION AND PARENTING STYLES OF WORKING MOTHERS IN A UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA

Maulida Shanti Yusuf¹, Chee Chew Sim²

¹Faculty of Education and Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris,
Malaysia

Email: maulida.yusuf66@gmail.com¹ and chee@fppm.upsi.edu.my²

ABSTRACT

The trend of working mothers is not uncommon anymore, starting from a desire to improve the economic status of the families to the desire for self-actualization, combined with the increasing number of women with higher education. Malaysian women comprise 50% of the work force, and 70% of them are married working women (Sabil & Marican, 2010). Mother and child interaction is very important for the development of the child. Each of the working mothers' parenting style chosen must be appropriate for their children, in accordance with the dual responsibilities or roles that she is juggling with. A working mother who is not able to guide and give full attention to their children might have a negative impact on the child's developmental outcomes. Thus, this study aimed to look at the relationship between parenting satisfaction and parenting style of working mothers. This study was conducted with 62 working mothers in Sultan Idris Education University who work for an average of 15-32 hours per week. They were 22-40 years old with children under 15 years old. These mothers completed the Parenting Satisfaction Scale (PSS) as a measure of parenting satisfaction and the Parenting Style Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) to measure their parenting styles. The results of this study indicated that the working mothers tended to adopt the authoritative parenting style in their parenting practice, and the majority reported moderate level of parenting satisfaction. The results also showed there were differential relationships between parenting style and parenting satisfaction in the working mothers.

Keywords: *parenting satisfaction, parenting style, working mother*

Introduction

The trend of working mothers is not uncommon anymore, starting from a desire to improve the economic status of the families to the desire for self-actualization, combined with the increasing number of women with higher education. Malaysian women comprise 50% of the work force, and 70% of them are married working women (Sabil & Marican, 2010). A lot of research has been done on the experience of working mothers ((Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Saadat, 2009). Many women want to be a working mother but find it challenging to meet the

demands between work and family, for example the number of working hours as well as getting the support from their husband.

Working mother often find it difficult to split their roles between the home and at work, such as dividing the time to take care of their own children and doing their work. At home she is expected to be a good and caring mother in raising her children, while at work she is required to be fully committed and work hard. This presents a difficult balancing act for working mothers. Stewart (2009) has argued that negative and positive effects of working mothers cannot be seen from the amount of time that mothers spend with their children, but depending on the extent to which the substitute time that mother uses it to maximum for caring their children.

Each of the working mothers' parenting style certainly has its own characteristics. Parenting style chosen must be most appropriate for their children, in accordance with the dual responsibilities or roles that she is juggling with. As the study by Bornstein and Zlotnik (2008) explains that socioeconomic status, parental education level, and mother's employment status can affect the parenting. A working mother might have feelings of guilt as they may not be able to guide and give attention to their children full time. This might make the mothers more prone to spoil their children, and this might have a negative impact on the child's developmental outcomes. Mothers with high level of social support and parenting satisfaction may also tend to adopt authoritative parenting style which is the most positive parenting style (Shields, 2008).

However, feeling of guilt for having left the children to work is inevitable. Although the mother may try to manage her time to be a good mother as well as professional workers, she may still feel she has lost much precious time with her child. The feeling of guilt and the difficulty to divide her time well between work and family may have an effect on the working mother's satisfaction in parenting.

Furthermore, the greater responsibility of a mother in caring for her children might impact negatively on her satisfaction with three important roles in her life, that as a mother, a wife, and a worker (DiAntonio, 1998). Warfield's study (2001) found that the lower the level of parenting demands experienced by working mothers, the less the parenting stress. The demand to fulfill multiple roles with quality both at home and in the workplace has implications for their sense of well-

being. A working mother has the advantage of earning her own income in addition to raising her children. This will help improve the welfare of the family, social relations, and developing her independence and self-actualization as well as increased satisfaction and self-confidence.

Thus far, there is a lack of research on parenting satisfaction and parenting style of working mothers. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the relationships between parenting satisfaction and parenting style of working mothers in Malaysia. This study could help inform specific policies for female workers who have children as well as helping to provide social support to working mothers. This might also enlighten the working mothers on their parenting practices in balancing their multiple roles that will also enhance their parenting satisfaction.

Methods

This study used quantitative approach with survey method based on questionnaire. The research design in this study used a quantitative approach that is correlational because the researcher wanted to examine the relationships among the variables, specifically parenting satisfaction and parenting styles of working mothers. The research instruments used were two different scales, namely Parenting Satisfaction Scale (PSS, Guidubaldi & Cleminshaw 1985) that is a reliable instrument for assessing satisfaction in parental role, and Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ, Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen & Hart, 2001) to measure parenting styles along the continuum of Baumrind.s (1989) typologies of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive.

Population in this study was 62 working mothers in Sultan Idris Education University who met the inclusion criteria. They are working mothers who work at least 15 hours per week and who: (a) had children under 15 years old; (b) had an age range between 22-40 years old. Data analysis is performed by using SPSS version 20 on descriptive and inferential analysis. Pearson correlation is conducted to examine the relationship between parenting satisfaction and parenting style.

Results

General explanations of the research data can be seen briefly in the following table:

Table 1. The Empirical Score of Parenting Satisfaction Scale

Variable	Empirical Score			
	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Parenting Satisfaction	100.0	187.0	142.45	16.66

Table 2. Categorization Level Criteria of Parenting Satisfaction of Working Mothers

Variable	Categorization Level	Empirical Score			Categorization
		Range of Value	Frequency (N=62)	Percentage (100%)	
Parenting Satisfaction	$(x < M - 1SD)$	100-125	10	16.1	Low
	$(M - 1SD \leq x \leq M + 1SD)$	126-159	43	69.4	Medium
	$(x > M + 1SD)$	160-187	9	14.5	High

Based on table above, we can conclude that the majority of working mothers parenting satisfaction are at the medium level.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Parenting Style Dimensions

	Total Authoritative	Total Authoritarian	Total Permissive
Mean	58.43	28.69	12.62
Std. Deviation	9.64	9.10	3.89

Data for parenting style in the quantitative study was collected using the Parenting Styles Dimensions Questionnaire or PSDQ. Table 3 presents mean and standard deviation for the subscales of the PSDQ. Authoritative parenting style had the highest mean ($M=58.43$, $SD=9.64$), followed by the authoritarian parenting style ($M=28.67$, $SD=9.10$), and permissive parenting style with the lowest mean ($M=12.62$, $SD=3.89$). Thus, it shows that the working mothers in Sultan Idris Education University tend to adopt the authoritative parenting style the most.

To disentangle the relationship between parenting satisfaction and parenting style of working mothers, Pearson correlational analysis was conducted. The subscales being looked at under PSS include spouse support, parent-child relationship, parent performance, family discipline and control, as well as general satisfaction. As for the PSDQ, there are three subscales, namely authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive.

Table 4.
Pearson Correlation between Parenting Satisfaction and Parenting Styles of Working Mothers

	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive
Spouse Support	.190	-.008	.032
Child-Parent Relationship	.323*	-.105	.016
Parent Performance	-.217	-.330**	-.297*
Spouse Discipline and Control	.316*	-.341**	-.304*
General Satisfaction	.396**	-.305*	-.157

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The table above shows the correlations between PSS scales and PSDQ scales using Pearson correlation analysis. There was a positive significant relationship between authoritative parenting style with three of the domains of parenting satisfaction. That is, authoritative parenting style was positively correlated with child-parent relationship [$r(60) = .323, p < .05$], and spouse discipline and control [$r(60) = .316, p < .05$]. There was also a positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and general satisfaction [$r(60) = .396, p < .05$].

There was a negative significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style with three domains of parenting satisfaction. Authoritarian parenting style was negatively related to parent performance [$r(60) = -.330, p < .05$], spouse discipline and control [$r(60) = -.341, p < .05$], and general satisfaction [$r(60) = -.305, p < .05$]. And that was a negative significant relationship between permissive parenting style with two of the domains of parenting satisfaction. Permissive parenting style was negatively related to parent performance [$r(60) = -.297, p < .05$] and also spouse discipline and control [$r(60) = -.304, p < .05$]. Hence, there are differential relationships between parenting style and parenting satisfaction in working mother in Sultan Idris Education University.

Discussions

The results of this study revealed that the majority of working mothers parenting satisfaction are at the medium level (69.4%). According to Saadat (2009), working mothers are likely to experience both positive and negative consequences. One of the negative consequences is they may become more easily stressed out at home as well as in the work place, experiencing both physical and psychological fatigue due to the extra burden to meet family and society's expectations. It may be

difficult for them to maintain a balance between job duties and their duties as mothers and as wives. In contrast, the positive consequences include developing self-confidence, talents, intellectual as well as spiritual autonomy, and developing good personality meeting their spiritual needs. The mother's additional income also can help support the needs of their children such as good quality education, healthcare, and other necessities. Logically, these positive consequences might well contribute to parenting satisfaction. Although working mothers usually have less time to interact with their children, they can help support the needs of their children. Hence, most working mothers are adaptive in their dual roles with majority of them reporting an average level of parenting satisfaction.

The result of this study indicated that the working mothers in Sultan Idris Education University tended to adopt the authoritative parenting style in their parenting practice followed by authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. This finding was compatible with Bluestone and Tamis-LeMonda's study (1999) on working and middle class African American mothers that showed that parenting strategies adopted by most working mothers are characteristic of authoritative parenting. In addition, majority of participants in this study have completed bachelor's degree, it could be said most of the participant have higher education. Recent finding by Jocson, Alampay, and Landsford (2012) in Filipino mothers reported that higher education among mother predicted lower authoritarian attitudes, which in turn predicted lower reports of corporal punishment use. Other finding showed that mothers who had a high commitment to both parenting and work were likely to adopt authoritative parenting (Greenberger and Goldberg, 1989).

Correlational analysis showed that there were differential relationships between parenting style and parenting satisfaction in working mothers in Sultan Idris University Education. This study found that there was a positive significant relationship between authoritative parenting style with child-parent relationship, spouse discipline and control and general satisfaction. Authoritative parenting style has positive relationship with child-parent relationship (Baumrind (1991) maintained that authoritative parents are more effective in teaching children acceptable social behavior, which they can internalize and draw upon in later interactions with their peers. Besides that, authoritative parenting style also has positive relationship with spouse-discipline and control. Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992),

found that children with maternal and paternal authoritative parenting have high acceptance, supervision, and psychological autonomy granting. That is leads to better adolescent school performance and stronger school engagement. It's the positive impact of authoritative parenting on adolescent achievement. Higher authoritative adopted by the mother, would show a good child outcomes, so that the higher the satisfaction with spouse' discipline and control. Additionally, Lerner and Galambos (1985) studied the relationship between maternal role satisfactions and the development of children and found that the mothers who were dissatisfied with their roles also tended to have difficult child. In general, authoritative parenting style has relationship with general satisfaction.

The results also showed that there was a negative significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style with parent performance, spouse discipline and control and general satisfaction. The characteristic of parent performance in authoritarian parenting style are high critical, low attention, limited emotional support, none of the verbal give and punish disobedience without compromise (Baumrind, 1991; Arnett, 2010). Querido, Warner, and Eyberg (2002) found that children with more behavior problems came from an authoritarian home more often than an authoritative home. Therefore, the stronger characteristic of the authoritarian parenting style the lower mothers' satisfaction with their parent performance and it also affect the general maternal satisfaction. Based on study conducted by Winsler, Madigan, and Aquilino (2005) parents who have authoritarian parenting styles reported that their spouses' parenting styles with different styles. Parents' perceptions of their spouses' parenting styles may impact satisfaction with spouse 'discipline and control. Arnett (2010) said that adolescents with authoritarian parents tend to be dependent, passive, and conforming. They are often less self-assured, less creative, and less socially adept than other adolescents. These developmental outcomes on children may have an impact on general satisfaction of working mothers.

That was a negative significant relationship between permissive parenting style with two of the domains of parenting satisfaction. Permissive parenting style was negatively related to parent performance and also spouse discipline and control. Parent performance is the parent's satisfaction with the quality of her child-rearing skills that could be showed by behavior and good developmental outcomes of

children. But, according to Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, and Keehn (2007) found that adolescents with permissive/indulgent parents have a strong self-confidence but they also experience more problems with drug experimentation and misconduct in and outside of school.

Gender differences also exist in the dimensions of self-perception, as evidenced in a research by Klein, O'Bryant and Hopkins (1996) that found that fathers see themselves more authoritarian and less authoritative than mothers. This is consistent with the research by Winsler, Madigan, and Aquilino (2005) which found that fathers tended to perceive their spouses to be more authoritative, more permissive, and less authoritarian than themselves, whereas mothers only perceived themselves to be more authoritative than the fathers. Finally, the mothers tend to reduce their demandingness and increase their responsiveness that characterize the permissive parenting style. This might be to balance the high control of the spouse on their children.

Conclusions

The result on this study was found that the majority of working mothers parenting satisfaction are at the medium level. And mostly, the working mothers in Sultan Idris Education University tended to adopt the authoritative parenting style in their parenting practice. The results also showed there were differential relationships between parenting style and parenting satisfaction in working mothers in Sultan Idris University Education. Parent especially mother should be able to establish a good parenting style by understanding the needs and characters of the children. Moreover, it is very helpful if people surrounding mother at working place can give support, so mother can develop good parenting practice as well as parenting satisfaction. The results in this study may become an empirical input and new reference in the fields of science, especially in study of developmental psychology and psychology of marriage involving the formation of parenting style in relation with parenting satisfaction among working mothers.

Future research was recommended to implement different research methods such as interview, observation, or longitudinal study to get more accurate research findings. Furthermore, future research is advisable to get big sample and more big

communities than this study to get widely result. And also compare other variables such as income, working hours, number of children, and more.

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