

# A Study to Assess the Impact of Parental Employment on the Behavioural Outcomes of Children Residing in the Selected Urban Community of Western Maharashtra

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**Abstract:** *The number of dual-income households in Indian cities has increased due to the country's rapid urbanisation, leading to undesirable emotional and behavioural development among children as a result of inconsistent work schedules and decreased parental availability. A quantitative descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 100 children in a selected urban community of Western Maharashtra using a structured questionnaire and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), analysed with SPSS version 29. Majority 64% of children had normal total difficulty scores; 12% borderline and 24% abnormal. Impact scores were normal in 96% of cases. Rotational work schedules showed significant association with emotional symptoms ( $p < 0.0001$ ), conduct problems ( $p = 0.001$  for mothers;  $p < 0.0001$  for fathers), and peer problems ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Time spent with children daily was significantly associated with all behavioural domains ( $p < 0.05$ ). Working hours alone did not show consistent significant associations. Parental availability and structured work schedules crucially influence children's behavioural outcomes. Promoting work-life balance, parental guidance, and early behavioural screening are essential for healthy child development in urban communities.*

**Keywords:** parental employment, behavioural outcomes, SDQ, urban community, child mental health, Western Maharashtra

## 1. Introduction

Children's physical, emotional, and behavioural development are strongly influenced by family environment and parental involvement. With rapid urbanization and changing socio-economic conditions, dual-income households have become increasingly common in India. While parental employment improves family income, it may reduce time parents spend with children, affecting supervision, emotional bonding, and behavioural guidance. Behavioural problems in childhood, if unidentified, can persist into adolescence and adulthood leading to academic difficulties, social maladjustment, and mental health disorders. In Western Maharashtra, limited community-based research addresses behavioural outcomes of children in relation to parental employment. The present study aimed to fill this gap using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

## 2. Objectives

- 1) To assess the impact of parental employment on the behavioural outcomes among children in the selected urban community of Western Maharashtra.
- 2) To identify associations between parental employment patterns and specific behavioural domains (emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, and peer relationship problems).

## 3. Review of Literature

Bezawit et al. (2022) found 19.9% of 422 children had abnormal SDQ total difficulty scores; emotional symptoms 23.2% and conduct problems 21.6% were most prevalent, with poor parent-child interaction significantly associated ( $p < 0.05$ ).<sup>3</sup> Shahidi et al. (2025) in a 10-year Canadian longitudinal study found adolescents in precarious employment families had a 0.27 SD increase in emotional symptoms ( $\beta = 0.27$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ).<sup>4</sup> Kopp et al. (2024) meta-analysis (46 studies) found full-time maternal employment linked to increased hyperactivity (OR = 2.677,  $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>7</sup> Kizuki et al. (2018) found children of late-returning parents had higher SDQ scores, with reduced parent-child interaction mediating the association.<sup>13</sup> Bhandari & Dani (2021) in Maharashtra ( $n=304$ ) reported higher anxiety, aggression, and inattention in children of working mothers.<sup>8</sup>

## 4. Research Methodology

A quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive cross-sectional design was used for the study. The research was conducted in adopted urban community under Pune Cantonment. Participants were selected through non-probability purposive sampling. The sample size was calculated using the formula ( $n = Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p) / d^2$ ;  $p = 0.60$ ,  $Z = 1.96$ ,  $d = 0.10$ ;  $n \approx 92$ ) and was finalised at 100. The inclusion criteria included dual-income parents with children

aged 4–17 years who had been residing in the community for at least 6 months. The exclusion criteria comprised children diagnosed with psychiatric or chronic medical conditions. The data was collected using a validated tool which comprised socio-demographic data, parental employment profile, parent–child interaction profile and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ-Goodman, 1997). The SDQ has 25 items across five subscales rated on a 3-point Likert scale. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee, AFMC. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. (significance at  $p < 0.05$ ).

## 5. Results

### Section I: Sociodemographic Profile

Majority 42% of children were aged 9–13 years; 52% female, 48% male. Most 60% were from nuclear families; 60% attended government schools. Mothers were primary respondents 73%. Most mothers 49% were self-employed; majority of fathers 57% were private employees. Majority families 37% had monthly income Rs. 23,870–39,829.

**Table 1:** Parental Employment Profile (n=100)

Parameter	Category	n	%
Working hrs – Mother	>8 hrs	42	42
Working hrs – Father	>8 hrs	67	67
Work schedule – Mother	Regular shift	77	77
Work schedule – Mother	Rotational shift	8	8
Work schedule – Father	Regular shift	79	79
Work schedule – Father	Rotational shift	12	12
Time with child/day	>3 hrs	50	50
Recreational freq.	Occasionally	61	61

### Section II: Behavioural Outcomes

**Table 2:** Behavioural Outcome Scores (n=100)

Domain	Normal	Borderline	Abnormal
Total Difficulty	64%	12%	24%
Emotional Symptoms	80%	11%	9%
Conduct Problems	64%	13%	23%
Hyperactivity	81%	10%	9%
Peer Problems	44%	23%	33%
Prosocial Behaviour	51%	29%	20%
Impact Score	96%	1%	3%

### Section III: Associations between Parental Employment and Behavioural Outcomes (ANOVA)

**Table 3:** ANOVA – Significant Associations (n=100)

Variable	Domain	F	p
Mother's work schedule	Emotional symptoms	11.64	<0.0001*
Mother's work schedule	Conduct problems	7.97	0.001*
Mother's work schedule	Peer problems	8.81	<0.0001*
Father's work schedule	Conduct problems	11.82	<0.0001*
Father's work schedule	Peer problems	3.59	0.031*
Time with child/day	Emotional symptoms	3.88	0.024*
Time with child/day	Conduct problems	9.23	<0.0001*
Time with child/day	Hyperactivity	8.58	<0.0001*
Time with child/day	Peer problems	6.18	0.003*

\* Statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Working hours of both parents did not show statistically significant associations with any behavioural domain.

## 6. Discussion

The study revealed 36% children with borderline/abnormal behavioural scores. Rotational shifts- affecting 8% of mothers and 12% of fathers- showed the strongest associations with emotional symptoms and peer problems. Daily parent–child interaction time >3 hours had a protective effect across all behavioural domains. These findings are consistent with Kizuki et al. (2018), who found children of late-returning parents had higher total difficulty scores, 13 and with Kamra (2025), who reported high prevalence of emotional outbursts and reduced bonding in children of dual-income parents. The high peer problem scores (56% borderline/abnormal) highlight significant social adjustment concerns, consistent with Ferreira et al. (2018), who linked parental engagement to better child social adjustment.

Working hours alone did not significantly predict behavioural outcomes, suggesting that the nature and regularity of the schedule- rather than duration- is the more critical factor.

## 7. Nursing Implications

Community health nurses should conduct regular behavioural screening using the SDQ during home visits. Guidance on structured family time and consistent parenting routines should be provided to working parents, particularly those on rotational shifts. Policy recommendations include promoting flexible working hours and strengthening school counselling services.

## 8. Limitations

Cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias. SDQ is a screening tool, not a clinical diagnostic instrument. Short study duration limits observation of long-term developmental changes.

## 9. Conclusion

Parental availability and structured work schedules significantly influence children's behavioural outcomes in urban communities. Rotational and irregular work schedules were linked with higher emotional and conduct difficulties. Increased time spent with children was associated with lower behavioural problems across all domains. These findings underline the importance of work–life balance, community-based behavioural screening, and family-centred nursing interventions for healthy child development.

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