

Need for Achievement between Children of Working and Non-Working Mothers

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Abstract

The present study investigated the effects of mothers' working status (working vs. non-working) on their children's need for achievement. 40 students aged 18 to 24 from different educational institutions in Karachi took part. Items selected from Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) were used to assess the need for achievement of these students. The questionnaire was administered to students on an individual basis. The results showed that need for achievement was higher among students whose mothers are working than among those whose mothers are not working.

Keywords: Need for achievement, working mother, non-working mother

Need for achievement or achievement motivation is as defined by McClelland and Atkinson (1958), is “the need to perform well or the striving for success as evidenced by persistence and effort in the face of difficulties”. Similarly, Daft (2008) stated that the need for Achievement is “the desire to accomplish something difficult, attain a high standard of success and master complex tasks”.

Need for Achievement (N-Ach) refers to an individual's desire for significant accomplishment, mastering of skills, control, or high standards. Achievement motivation or need for achievement is a variable that has been used to explain individual differences in a number of practical contexts like school, sports, and the world of work. The term was first used by Henry Murray (n.d.) and is associated with a range of actions. These include intense, prolonged and repeated efforts to accomplish something difficult and to work with singleness of purpose towards a high and distant goal and to have the determination to win.

People high in need for achievement are characterized by a tendency to seek challenges and a high degree of independence. Their most satisfying reward is the recognition of their achievements. Sources of high N-Ach include:

1. Parents who encouraged independence in childhood
2. Praise and rewards for success
3. Association of achievement with positive feelings
4. Association of achievement with one's own competence and effort, not luck
5. A desire to be effective or challenged
6. Intrapersonal Strength

People who are high on the need for achievement seek achievement and attainment of realistic but challenging goals and advancement in their academics, career and job. They also have a strong need for feedback as to achievement and progress and a need for a sense of accomplishment. While people low in achievement motivation have been found associated with the problem of school dropout, low self-esteem and stressful lifestyle (Shafi, 1990).

A working mother can be defined as any woman who works outside the home and has children. Whereas, a non-working mother is the one who has children but does not work

outside the home. Working mothers and non-working mothers affect their children in different ways because of their different dynamics.

Since working mothers spend a substantial amount of time outside home, they try to give their children quality time in which they can nurture them. It is exclusively children's time. However things are a little different for non-working mothers. They do spend more time with their children but that time is not necessarily quality time because they simultaneously have to look after the children and do the household chores. The topic of this research is to study how mother's employment or unemployment affects their children's need for achievement or achievement motivation.

Need for achievement is determined by both internal and external factors. It can be influenced by internal drive for action (intrinsic motivation) as well as pressure exerted by the expectations of others (extrinsic motivation). Working mothers serve as extrinsic motivating forces by being role models for their children. Children tend to be influenced by their mothers and they want to be like her and thus the need for achievement is high among them. Hoffman (1998) conducted a research on the differences between the children of working and non-working mothers and found out that daughters of working mothers have high academic achievement, higher achievement motivation, greater career success, nontraditional career choices and greater occupational commitment. The working-mother-as-a-role-model theory tends to explain this finding. Girls with employed mothers were more likely than girls whose mothers were full-time homemakers to indicate that women as well as men could do the activities that are usually associated with men; that is, employed mothers' daughters saw women as more competent in the traditionally male domain than the homemakers' daughters did.

A research conducted by Ahmad (2002) in Pakistan supports the idea that children of working mothers are high on need for achievement and they do better academically because of the fact that working mothers try harder to compensate for their absence and it is the quality not the quantity of the mothering that is important. There is some evidence that child rearing practices of working mothers differ from those of non-working mothers particularly in the area of independence. Working mothers encourage their children to become self-sufficient and independent at an earlier age (Hock, 1978). This early independence training might be beneficial in leading to high achievement motivation, achievement behavior and competence (Woods, 1972). Shahzad (2002) who conducted a research in Pakistan and

reported that adolescents of working mothers have high level of achievement motivation as compared to adolescents of non-working mothers.

Some studies have also reported differences in male and female children of working and non-working mothers. For example a study by Altman and Grossman (1977) showed that daughters of working mothers scored higher on career orientation than daughters of non-working mothers. Further, Aminabhavi and Hangal (2007) found out that female children of employed mothers have significantly higher need for achievement as compared to the male children of employed mothers.

Hoffman's explanation suggests that employed women have a high morale as compared to their stay-at-home counterparts and they feel a sense of empowerment which serves as a role model for their daughters who consequently aspire to achieve in their lives.

The effect of birth order has also been studied by some researchers on children's need for achievement. A research study by Sharma and Sharma (2010) states that the only child of working mothers has higher need for achievement as compared to those whose mothers were not working. Baker (1981) found out that in dual employment family, mother's occupation had a significant effect on children's educational attainment and achievement motivation.

Some studies have tried to unearth the reasons behind the high need for achievement in children of working mothers as compared to children whose mothers are non-working. For example, Powell (1963) in his study obtained achievement orientation scores and maternal employment data for subjects and found that children of employed mothers have high achievement motivation at each age level. Powell offered two explanations for this finding. First, employed mothers reflect their own need for achievement in the concern for their family getting ahead. There is a possibility that these attitudes acquired are reflected in their children as well and they develop a stronger need for achievement than those whose mothers are not employed. Secondly, a working mother is exposed to new ideas, varying experiences of widening interests which in turn leads to a cultural enrichment in their family environment and provides opportunities for the development of skills which is essential for the development of achievement orientation.

Thus the purpose of the current study is to investigate whether working mothers enhance the need for achievement of their children as compared to non-working mothers.

Since there have been researches in the past that emphasize the negative effects of mother's employment on their children, this research might present a different side of the picture; how mother's employment can be a positive influence on their children's need for achievement.

Based on the above observation and literature review, the following hypothesis is proposed; Need for achievement would be higher in students whose mothers are working as compared to those students whose mothers are non-working.

Method

Participants

For this study, a non-probability purposive sample of 40 students was selected. Among them 20 students were those whose mothers were working or have worked in the past for at least 5 years and 20 those whose mothers were non-working. Equal numbers of male and female subjects were selected. The students were selected from different educational institutions of Karachi within the age range of 18-24 years. The educational institutions included Institute of Business Administration, Bahria University Karachi Campus, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Iqra University and Dow University of Health Sciences.

Measures

In order to collect data a questionnaire was designed using items from Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS, 1959). There was a demographic form to obtain information such as gender, age and number of siblings. In the questionnaire items that were related to need for achievement were taken from Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS). In the original test, forced choice technique is used. The questionnaire that was prepared for the current research was based on a likert scale and had four categories of response from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered individually to the participants of the research in their educational institutions. Their consent was taken before administering the questionnaire. The participants were briefly told about the purpose that it is a research on the children of working and non-working mothers. After giving informed consent, each participant completed a demographic form to collect information such as age, gender, whether their mother is/was working or non-working and the duration of mother's work. They were told to read the questionnaire carefully and follow the instructions. The researcher was available and they could ask if any confusion arose.

Results

Table 1

Showing t-scores of Need for Achievement between Children of Working Mothers and Children of Non-Working Mothers

	n	M	SD	SEM	t	df	P
Children of Working Mothers	20	37.75	4.051	0.906			
Children of Non-Working Mothers	20	29.00	4.634	1.036	6.358	38	.000

The difference between the mean scores of children of working mothers and non-working mothers is 8.75

Discussion

The result shows that the need for achievement is higher for children of working mothers than children of non-working mothers. Thus verifying the hypothesis that need for achievement is higher in students whose mothers are working as compared to those students whose mothers are non-working. There could be several explanations for the higher need for achievement in children of working mothers as compared to the children of non-working mothers.

Since the relationship with mother is the most significant relationship, it has the power to influence individuals strongly in many areas of life. Also in our culture and religion mother is highly regarded and we are inclined to follow in the footsteps of the mother. Therefore the higher need for achievement in the children of working mothers can be explained with reference to the mother-as-a-role-model theory (Hoffman, 1998). That is, the children of working mothers see their own mothers as their role models and in an attempt to be like her they have a higher need for achievement. They aspire to be like their mothers by being better at academics, succeeding in their careers and they also set their goals higher and work hard to achieve them. However for children of non-working mothers, their mother-as-a-role model in terms of career is absent.

Another reason for the higher need for achievement in children of working mothers can be explained by the idea that a working mother's own need for achievement is translated into her children's higher need for achievement. That is employed mothers reflect their own need for achievement in the concern for their family getting ahead. There is a possibility that these attitudes are acquired and reflected in their children as well and they develop a stronger need for achievement than those whose mothers are not employed (Powell, 1963).

Quality of mothering is another factor that might contribute to the high need for achievement in children of working mothers. Working mothers might encourage their children to become more self-sufficient and independent at an earlier age and this early independence training may be translated into high need for achievement and competence (Ahmad, 2002). In our culture and country since traditionally men work outside home and mothers stay at home, so the working-mother-as-a-role model theory can be used as an explanation to explain the results of this study. Children of working mothers tend to see their mothers as role models and thus have a higher need for achievement. Also working mothers tend to give their children quality time and parenting which might affect their need for achievement. They might be more actively involved in their children's academic activities.

Overall, the results of the study confirm the hypothesis that maternal employment affects the children's need for achievement positively with the children of working mothers having a high need for achievement as compared to children of non-working mothers.

Conclusion

From the present study it can be concluded that the need for achievement in children of working mothers is higher as compared to the children of non-working mothers. This comparatively high need for achievement in children of working mothers can be attributed to several factors that have been discussed.

Recommendations

Additional research can be conducted to study the effects of maternal employment on the children's need for achievement and other factors that might be contributing to the children's need for achievement can be studied.

A study along the same lines can be conducted which can also study parenting style of mother and how it influences the child's need for achievement for a better understanding of

the variables operating behind the need for achievement of children of working and non-working mothers.

Limitations

The sample size is not large enough to generalize the results

A detailed and psychometrically sound questionnaire can be used to assess the need for achievement which could measure the various dimensions of the construct of need for achievement and would allow a more insightful analysis.

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