



## The effect of women's employment on children's quality of life

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### Abstract

Quality of life in adolescence period determines individual's future. The effect of maternal employment on children's quality of life is important and undeniable issue. This study aimed to investigate and compare the quality of life among children of employed and housewife women. In this study, the participants included selected school children's employed and housewife mothers. The tools for data collection consisted of a questionnaire which was distributed among 671 middle-high school and high school students (304 have employed mothers and 367 have housewives mothers). In this study, the level of significance was considered. Results showed that the life quality of children of employed mothers and housewife mothers in the two groups is statistically significant. Quality of life in employed mothers in the mental, physical, social relations, emotional, religious, achieve life goals, leisure time and economic dimension were higher than housewife mothers but there was not any significant different among employed mothers' children and housewife mothers' children in dimensions of relationships with parents. Girls' quality of Life was more than boys, in the teacher mothers was higher than other occupations and in the exceptional talents school was more than other schools. This study found that maternal employment has effect on children's quality of life, so employed mothers' children have high quality of life.

**Keywords:** Children, Employee, Housewives, Quality of life

### Introduction

Adolescence is a very important and crucial period of life and individual's quality of life in this period will determine person's future life. Several factors influence on quality of life in adolescents and mothers' employment is an issue among these factors which needs more study due to the increasing number of the

employed mothers. [1,2]. This situation is the result of changes in the system of values, ideas of democracy, development of public awareness, the development of civil rights, women promotion, special education and the changing social and economic structures in recent decades [3]. About half of the world's

populations are women that in European countries between 35-60% of women in 16-60 years old are employed outside of home [2]. Other reports suggest that women do 55% of the world's activities by considering their unpaid work in the home [4]. In Iran, the last survey of Statistical Center in 2014 has estimated that women do 11.8% of economic activities which show an increasing of 6.0% in comparison of the last year [5]. However, women's employment has positive effect on them, their families and society. It boosts their self-confidence and makes them independent in their making decision. But this also entails negative results which most of them affect families [3,4,6]. The results of some studies show that women's heavy schedule of work and enthusiasm and their desire to work activities, have led to the vitality and limit energy that should be devoted to family life and thus the quality of their family life is overshadowed [2,3,4,7]. The pressure of responsibilities and organizing family and career roles expectations annoy women in playing two roles at the same time and it can have spiritually, emotionally and negative effects on family's quality of life. [3] The majority of employed women send their preschool children to kindergarten and the others send them to one of their relatives or nursing homes. An issue related to older children whom may spend several hours of the day alone at home also has its place [1,6,7]. It's a fact that children, at least until their adolescence regardless of whether boy or girl, desperately need their parents' especially their mothers' loving and meanwhile sensitive and observant look. All the theories of evolution has been named mothers as the most influential in their children's life [1,8]. Numerous studies have shown that self-confidence, peace of mind, happiness, education level, extension and diversification of mother 's activities is positively correlated with mental health, intelligence and vitality of children, and in this respect, the role of the mother as more important than the role of the father. [1,2,6,9] The results of Mirzaee's study showed that employed women's quality of life is better than

the housewives and by increasing of the level of women's education and income; women's quality of life would be increased [10]. Also study of Kermansaravi showed that employed women in all the quality of life's dimensions except in physical and bodily function are better and higher than housewives [11]. Quality of life is broader concept in comparison of health which includes components of welfare components, health and safety, relationships, learning, creative expression, opportunities to help and encourage others to participate in public affairs, social, and leisure. The department of quality of life in the World Health Organization defines the quality of life as; " person's perception of his/her position with respect to the culture and value system in which the lives of the affected objectives, expectations and desired standards [12].

According to the above, and given the undeniable importance of quality of life in adolescence and its role in later life, thus, in this research, we have investigated and compared the quality of life among children of employed and housewife women as well as analyzing the affecting social factors on them.

### **Method**

This cross-sectional study was conducted in Secondary and high schools in Gonabad (Razavi Khorasan province) in 2011. The sample size of study is calculated 367 women in housewife mothers' group (367 out of 8250 patients) and 304 women in the employed mothers group (304 out of a total 1460 patients) based on Cochran formula [13] with possible accuracy ( $d=0.04$ ) and the sampling error of 5% ( $z=96/1$ ), with the scattering of  $p=0.5$  and  $q=0.5$  and reliability ratio 95%. Participants were selected by using stratified sampling in two schools. The participants in this study were 12-18 years old students who lived with their parents. These students didn't have serious family problems such as parents' severe fighting, illness of a parent or on the verge of divorce of parents.

In this study, we used two questionnaires; one for collecting demographic information

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and the other one was the quality of life questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire was included questions about participants' demographic characteristics including age, gender, educational level, educational status, parental occupation, parental education level and the family size. The quality of life's questionnaire was researcher made questionnaire which The short Form Health Survey (SF-36), [13], Cancer-Quality of life Questionnaire (QLQ-C30) and Breast Cancer-Specific Quality of life Questionnaire [12,14] were used for its designing. The 30-items and 23-items questionnaires were chosen because of their high diagnostic value and internal stability. It is supplementary model for developing the quality of life and health indicators. In other words, in a framework of functional areas, not only mental but also physical - psychological, social, body image, relationships, roles and so on have been structured. [12] The scale of quality of life in this study has 63 items and eight subscales including: mental, spiritual, physical health, leisure time, relationships with parents, social relations, the goals of life, the religious and emotional dimension that was scored based on 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, no idea=3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1). All areas varied from zero to 100 points. In the case of functional domains and total score higher scores indicate better quality of life for people in specific areas. After scoring, the relationship between demographic variables and field variables as independent variables with quality of life's total score and functional areas as dependent variables were studied. Corrective comments of 14 experts in social sciences, psychology and health fields were used to confirm the reliability of quality of life questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of questionnaire. This means that, after designing the questionnaire, 40 patients completed the questionnaire and 20 days later the same people completed that questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha values in all aspects of quality of life were between 71.0 and 79.0. In the collection of data, researchers after obtaining the necessary

permits to visit the selected schools and school offices will select the participants were randomly. Then, if students wish to participate in the study, contact the parents' aim of the study was explained to them and written informed consent was obtained from them. Then the students were asked to complete the questionnaire in the presence of the researchers and the researchers made it clear for them if there were any ambiguity. The data were analyzed by SPSS-19. Descriptive and analytic statistics were used. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was done to determine the distribution of quantitative variables. Level of statistical significance was considered less than 0.05.

### Results

The results of the individual's characteristics of participants showed that 50.6% of them were girls and 48.8% were boys. 39.6 % were secondary school students and 60.4% were high school students. In the aspect of their families' income level, 31.4% of the students were in poor families, the family of 31.4% of them were in average level and 34.9 % of them were in high income families. Some of the other participants' characteristics are presented in Table 1.

In relation to the main goal of this study, results showed that quality of life of the children in two groups - children of employed mothers and housewives- is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), so that the quality of life in children of employed mothers was higher than housewife's' children.

Also in this study the quality of life was compared in its segregated areas. Results showed that employed mothers are at higher than housewife mothers as mental and physical health ( $p = 0.001$ ), leisure time dimension ( $p = 0.003$ ), economical dimension ( $p = 0.007$ ), social relationships dimension ( $p = 0.001$ ), reaching life goals dimension ( $p = 0.001$ ), emotional dimension ( $p = 0.001$ ) and religious dimension ( $p = 0.001$ ). But quality life of children in the relationships with parents in employed and housewife mothers was not significantly different (Table 2).

Other results showed that the quality of

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**Table 1** Demographic information of participants

Demographic information		N(%)
Type of school	Governmental	314(46.8)
	Non- Governmental	74(11)
	Shahed	89(13.3)
	Exceptional talents school	103(15.4)
	Talayedaran	91(13.6)
Mothers' education	Under diploma	256(38.1)
	Diploma	123(18.4)
	Collegiate	276(41.1)
Fathers' education	Under diploma	207(30.8)
	Diploma	147(21.9)
	Collegiate	307(47.7)
Number of family's member	3	203(30.2)
	4	255(38)
	5 and more	211(31.4)

**Table 2** Comparing the mean and standard deviation of quality of life in children of employed and housewife mothers

Dimensions Quality of life	Children of housewives	Children of working mothers	p-value
	Mean $\pm$ SD	Mean $\pm$ SD	
Mental health, mental and physical dimension	23.42 $\pm$ 3.85	24.41 $\pm$ 3.57	p= 0.001
Leisure dimension	25.62 $\pm$ 4.56	26.70 $\pm$ 4.88	p= 0.003
Economic dimension	3.44 $\pm$ 1.30	3.72 $\pm$ 1.33	p= 0.007
Social relations dimension	89.09 $\pm$ 11.21	93.15 $\pm$ 12.04	p= 0.001
Achieve life goals dimension	7.23 $\pm$ 1.83	7.75 $\pm$ 1.82	p= 0.001
Emotional dimension	33.73 $\pm$ 6.60	35.60 $\pm$ 6.64	p= 0.001
Religious dimension	24.41 $\pm$ 3.57	24.41 $\pm$ 3.57	p= 0.001
The relationship with parents dimension	25.56 $\pm$ 4.80	26.08 $\pm$ 5.31	p= 0.019
Quality of life	21.67 $\pm$ 25.46	223.58 $\pm$ 28.79	p= 0.001

life for girls was significantly higher than boys ( $p=0.021$ ). According to the results of analysis of variance test; students' quality of life based on their mothers' professions were significantly different ( $p=0.004$ ) and Post Hoc multiple comparison test showed that children of educators mothers has higher quality of life in comparison of other jobs. According to one-way analysis of variance, homogeneity of variances tests and t-test (welch), mean of quality of life in the higher education levels ( $p=0.04$ ), college-educated parents ( $p=0.001$ ) and government employed fathers ( $p=0.001$ ) was higher. According to the study, students' quality of life become more favorable by increasing family's income ( $p=0.001$ ), and quality of life would be decreased by increasing of number of family's members ( $p=0.001$ ). There is a direct

and significant relationship between academic performance and quality of life ( $p=0.001$  and  $r=0.19$ ), and also there is significant inverse relationship between the family's dimensions and quality of life ( $p<0.001$  and  $-r=0.16$ ).

### Discussion

Findings of the study showed that the quality of life in employed mothers' children were slightly higher than the children of housewife mothers. The difference was statistically significant. A study by Naseri showed that one of the consequences of maternal employment is favorable effect on some dimensions of family members' quality of life especially children. [2] This study revealed that the quality of life of employed mothers' children s in the physical, economical, leisure time,

goals in life dimensions, is more favorable. Naseri's research also showed that students with employed mothers in quality of life's objective dimension have better condition. [2] In order to explain these findings we can state that the mother's employment increases the income and thus it changes the nutrition, health and family welfare [2,6]. In other words, the higher economic level of families makes the more opportunities to access to equipment and technology and according to the hypothesis that quality of life is associated by average income, it could be said that improvement of the families' financial situation would be increased access to facilities so the students have more welfare [3,4,6]. In this study the quality of life of employed mothers' children in social relations, emotional and psychological dimensions were higher than the children of housewife mothers, but the children' quality of life in the relationships with parents in both groups were not significantly different. Whereas, the Naseri's study showed that students of housewife mothers have a slightly better situation than the children of employed mothers in the mental dimension, also Naseri believed that the reason of this dissatisfaction comes from playing mother and professional role at the same time and he says that mothers' employment have negative effect on spiritual and emotional dimension of their children. [2] Another study showed that the average social relations and social participation of housewife mothers' adolescents is slightly more than the employed mothers' adolescent s. In fact, the presence of the mother at home has positive effect on social relations and participation of their children [2]. The Platonic's research in Kerman showed that emotional and psychological problems such as sleep disorders, anxiety, sadness and disobedience in children of employed mothers were significantly more than housewife mothers' children [15] In this study, employed mothers' children in the religious dimension had more favorable situation than housewife mothers' children. In this regard, Naseri has reported conflicting results as mean score of religion in housewife

mothers' adolescents is more than the mean of employed mothers' adolescents. For explaining this conflict he has stated that the mother's presence in the home with their children and monitoring their behaviors and having more intimate relationship with their children can provide more religious context. Otherwise the employed mothers may have less time to attend in religious events [2]. In this study, also the relationships between some important variables that affect the adolescents' quality of life were studied. The results of the study about the relationship between gender and the quality of life showed that the girls' quality of life was significantly higher than boys [2]. Previous studies have also reported that the daughters of employed mothers have higher educational achievement, professional achievement and professional commitment [13,16,17]. But study by Nickaizin showed that boys are better than girls in physical and mental well-being dimension relation with parents, family life, social support and peer and self-determination. This difference in findings is due to the measurement devices (focus on aspects of physical and mental health or satisfaction). By using tools that focus on mental attributes cannot find a difference between boys and girls. [18] In the Ahmadi's research influence of mothers' employment on social adjustment and educational achievement of children was the same for both sexes. [19] This study also showed that the parents' high level of education and children's quality of life showed significant and positive relationship. Kavosyan believes that the father's education and mother's employment are effective in the formation of their self-concept [19] and it should be noted that students' self-concept is component of quality of life. The results of study by Nickaizin showed that having social status (higher parents' education) and economic (higher income, number of rooms and having computer and so on) makes better relationship of the children and adolescents with their parents and family life. Access to financial resources and absence of stress

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from parents and environment to children and adolescents with high socio-economic status are some of the factors that increases the physical and mental well-being of this group [18] Parallel results of Barriuso-Lapresa confirm these findings [20].

In this study, significant relationship was observed between the students' quality of life and type of their school, so that the students' quality of life in public schools' (exceptional talents school) was better than the others. Jirojanakul et al also emphasized that the income and educational level of parents, the type of school, the way of going to school and the length of time that children spend in the educational and confirmatory classes are the variables which affect the children's quality of life [21]. Regarding relationship between kind of job and quality of life in the present study, we concluded that the quality of life in employed mothers' children in Education (mother was teacher) is better than other professions. Ahmadi's study also showed the effect of maternal employment on children's social adjustment and educational achievement. The students whose mothers worked in low-level jobs (services) had the least social adjustment and educational achievement and the children of mothers in top jobs (Education and management) in both school and home had the best educational and behavioral function. In addition, there was the highest job satisfaction among women who had worked in top jobs [17]. Comparative measurement of quality of life and the lack of complete attention of some of the students in answering the questions were some of the limitation of this study.

It is suggested that the questionnaire would also be completed by the parents to compare the perceptions of parents with their children and adolescents and relate with child-parent relationships and find out their evaluation of the quality of life to achieve the more objective and accurate results. Another limitation of this study is that of quality of life issue is being completely subjective and largely depends on the individual's culture and environment so the generalizability of results of this study to the

other societies is very low. It is suggested that similar studies carried out in other societies.

### **Conclusion**

The overall results of this study showed that the mothers' occupation has effect on their children's quality of life, as quality of life is higher in employed mothers' children. The positive and negative consequences should be considered in the women's employment issue. The positive results of survey should be supported and we must try to reduce and eliminate negative results by identifying and explaining them. The fact is that employed mothers should be accepted, but this issue needs to further review, revise and organizing.

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### **Contribution**

Study design: RGH, MA, BS

Data collection and analysis: RGH, NB, FD

Manuscript preparation: RGH, NB, FD, MA, BS

### **Conflict of Interest**

"The authors declare that they have no competing interests."

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