ABSTRACT

Family is the basic and universal social institution, which helps a child acquire the attributes of a social being. Since children spend the early formative years with parents, especially, with mothers, the responsibility of the mother in moulding the young into an integrated and socially competent individual cannot be understated. Conclusive evidence as to whether mother's employment will influence her parenting style and the social competence of her children is very much lacking in India. The present study filled Social Competence of Children and Parenting Styles of Employed and Unemployed Mothers was taken up to meet this research need.

The objectives of the study were: (i) To find out the factors influencing parenting style of mothers, (ii) to identify the factors influencing social competence in children, (iii) to describe the relationship between parenting style of mothers and social competence of their children and (iv) to compare the social competence of children of mothers engaged in different kinds of employment. The major hypotheses tested were: 1. Parenting style of mothers affects the social competence of children. 2. Maternal employment influences social competence of children and 3. Social competence of children is influenced by mother’s education, age of mother, income, place of residence, type of family, sex and birth order of children.
The participants of the study included 451 children, 451 mothers and 23 teachers. The tools for data collection included a Parenting Style Inventory and a Social Competence Rating Scale.

Results showed that among the three parenting styles, the most common style prevalent among mothers was authoritative (49%). However, there were almost equal number of mothers who reported permissive style (48%). Authoritarian mothers were comparatively very few in number (3%). Among the employed mothers, there were more authoritative mothers and among the unemployed, there were equal percentage of authoritative and permissive mothers. Also, it was found that the kind of employment and education of the mother and type of family influenced parenting style.

As for the relationship between social competence and parenting style, it was seen that high social competence was more related to permissive parenting style than to other styles. Social competence was also influenced by mother's occupation, educational level of the mother, the income of the family and place of residence. The age of the mother, type of family, sex of children and birth order did not influence social competence.

However, introduction of a control variable altered the original relationship. On the basis of trivariate analysis it was concluded that parenting style influenced social competence only when these two were directly related and that social competence was influenced by not just one variable, but a number of variables.