ABSTRACT

The study was designed to investigate the role of Maternal Employment, Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Age on Cognitive Development and Academic Achievement of Primary School Children. Each of the variables (Maternal Employment, SES and Age) had two levels each, yielding 8 Cells with \( n = 25 \) Per Cell. The sample consisted of 200 Primary School Children of both the sex-aged 6 to 8 years of Grade-II and 9 to 11 years of Grade-IV belonging employed and unemployed mothers' of high and low SES groups, selected to complete a 3 Factor, \( 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8 \) Cell design. Subjects came from different Oriya Medium Schools in the city of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri. Initially, 600 students were contacted and information regarding their Maternal Employment Status, SES and Age of Parents were collected, and subsequently, parental monthly income and Maternal Employment Status were arranged in a frequency distribution order. The cut off point for high SES group was decided to be above 75th percentile of the income distribution and for the low SES group. The cut off point was chosen to be below 25th percentile of the income distribution. The criteria for maternal employment status stipulated that the mothers have been working at full time.
children's Cognitive abilities were measured using tests of Digitspan (Forward and Backward), Free-Recall, Serial-Recall, Raven's Coloured Progressive Matrices, Figure Copying and Clustering administered to all children. It was hypothesized that the children of employed and unemployed mothers', of high SES and low SES families, and of younger and older age levels would differ significantly. Further, it was hypothesized that a better interrelationship of the Cognitive abilities and academic achievement measures would be indicated in case of older high SES employed mothers' children. These hypotheses were tested using ANOVA and Correlations. The interaction effects were subjected to Scheffe tests for non-orthogonal multiple group comparisons. The results revealed that the children of employed mothers' performed significantly better than the children of unemployed mothers' only in respect of academic achievement measures. But on measures of Cognitive abilities performance of children of employed mothers did not differ significantly from their unemployed counterparts. The low SES children were found to be significantly lagging behind their high SES counterparts in respect of all the Cognitive ability and academic
achievement measures. It was also revealed that maternal employment contributed positively to all the measures of academic achievement, whereas the SES of the family contributed positively to all the measures of Cognitive abilities and academic achievement. Simultaneously, the developmental changes were observed in respect of Cognitive ability and academic achievement measures with the increase of age. A better relationship between the Cognitive and academic achievement measures was also obtained in case of older high SES employed mothers' children.

The findings and implications of the study for the care and education of the children of employed mothers' have been discussed and directions for further research on the role of maternal employment have been suggested.