

## **A Comparative Study between Working and Non-Working Jordanian Mothers in Positive Parenting Practices and their Children's Social Behaviors**

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### **Abstract:**

This study examined Jordanian mothers' work status in relation to parenting practices and children's social behaviors. The sample consisted of 132 mothers of kindergarten children from the capital city of Amman, Jordan: 58 of the mothers were employed and 74 were not employed. To meet the study's objectives, mothers responded to two scales: Parenting Practices Scale and Social Behaviors Rating Scale. The results of the analysis revealed significant differences between the two groups in favor of working mothers with regard to their reported parenting practices. Non-significant differences were evident with regards to mothers' work status and their reported evaluations of children's social behaviors. Directions for future research include investigating maternal work status with moderating variables such as marital status, attitudes, child gender, and full or part-time employment.

**Keywords:** E- Maternal Employment, Positive Parenting Practices, Kindergarten Children.

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## دراسة مقارنة بين الأمهات الأردنيات العاملات وغير العاملات في ممارسات التنشئة الإيجابية وسلوكات أطفالهن الاجتماعية

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### ملخص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة العلاقة بين عمل الأمهات الأردنيات وممارسات التنشئة الإيجابية وأنماط سلوك الأطفال الاجتماعية. تكونت عينة الدراسة من 132 أما لأطفال مرحلة الروضة من عمان عاصمة الأردن: 58 من الأمهات عاملات و 74 منهن غير عاملات. لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة أجابت الأمهات عن مقياسين هما: ممارسات التنشئة الإيجابية والسلوك الاجتماعي. أظهرت النتائج وجود فروق بممارسات التنشئة بين المجموعتين لصالح الأمهات العاملات وعدم وجود فروق بين المجموعتين في تقييمهن لسلوك أطفالهن الاجتماعي. بناءً على ذلك، تضمنت توصيات البحث دراسة عمل الأم وعلاقته بمتغيرات مثل الحالة الاجتماعية وتوجهات الأم وجنس الأطفال والعمل الجزئي والدوام اليومي الكامل

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** عمل الأم، ممارسات التنشئة الإيجابية، أطفال الروضة، السلوك الاجتماعي.

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## Introduction

Due to increased maternal employment, the demographic shift in family life has prompted researchers to investigate its possible impact on children's development and learning. The rapid increase of maternal employment worldwide has generated a substantial amount of research investigating labor force participation with children's well-being. Theoretically, researchers have posed benefits and possible negative consequences of maternal employment on later child development. Over four decades of research has found either no consistent or direct relationships between children's development and their mothers' work status.

Despite growing international research, it is currently unclear how mothers' employment influences child behavior. Recent studies found that working women instill confidence, social awareness and a sense of commitment among their children (Bishnoi, Malik, & Yadav, 2020) while others found no correlations between maternal employment and social behaviors (Lucas-Thompson et al., 2010; McMunn et al., 2010; Cooksey, Joshi, & Verropoulou, 2009). Azizah et al., (2022) concluded that mothers' employment positively influences child development outcomes and social behaviors. These children were found to be less likely to display internalizing behaviors or be worried and unhappy (Cooksey, Joshi, & Verropoulou, 2009).

Perry-Jenkins et al. (2020) reported that job autonomy predicted improved child outcomes while Cooksey, Joshi, and Verropoulou (2009) concluded that mother's employment seems to positively impact families in general and children in specific. They found that children of employed mothers had high academic outcomes, positive behavioral conduct and social adjustment. Further evidence supporting the lack of association between negative child outcomes and maternal employment was the result of the ESRC-funded International Centre for Life course Studies in Society and Health. Researchers found that the optimal family situation for children was where both parents lived together and were both employed (McMunn, Kelly, Cable, Bartley, 2011).

The effect of moderating variables such as marital status, attitudes, child gender, and full or part-time employment were examined in relation to child outcomes revealed inconsistent results (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). Some research suggested a clear link between maternal employment and cognitive functioning, behavior and subsequent school success (Weis et

al., 2022) and attribute this to the onset of employment; in the first one to three years of a child's life (Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002; Ruhm, 2008; Ruhm, 2008). Further research linked children's behavior problems to specific aspects of maternal employment such as distance, irregular hours, and night shift work (Dunifon, Kalil, & Bajracharya, 2005; Dunifon, Kalil, Crosby, & Su, 2013; Johnson, Kalil, & Dunifon, 2012).

The bulk of research conducted in this area indicates that maternal employment has no negative effects on children's social/emotional behaviors and attitudes (Lucas-Thompson et al., 2010; McMunn et al., 2010). A study investigating possible associations was conducted by McPherran and Levin (2017) and found that the children in their sample appeared to be unharmed by their mothers' employment. This supports earlier research conducted by McMunn, Kelly, Cable, and Bartley (2010) who also concluded that no detrimental effects were found in children of employed mothers.

In 2013, Hadzic and Robinson investigated the relationships between maternal employment, children's behaviors, and child-rearing practices. They found that maternal employment when children were 4-5 years of age was significantly associated with children's behavior at age 6-7. This association was influenced both directly and indirectly by the quality of parenting practices. Aggressive practices were significantly associated with children's behavior problems and the nature of practices were significantly associated with employment. Their study also showed that mothers in part-time employment had children who were less likely to exhibit hyperactivity and inattentiveness compare to mothers who were employed full-time. The results of this study supported previous research indicating the negative effects of full-time maternal employment on children's well-being (Berger et al., 2008; Brooks-Gunn et al., 2010; Nomaguchi, 2006).

In 2008, Goldberg, Prause, Lucas-Thompson, and Himsel reviewed a meta-analysis of 68 studies on maternal employment and children's academic achievement which yielded nonsignificant relationships. Another meta-analysis of 69 studies concluded that maternal employment was found to be associated with beneficial child outcomes specifically when families were financially challenged. Children in those families showed higher levels of achievement and lower levels of internalizing behaviors such as depression and anxiety (Lucas-Thompson, Goldberg, Prause, 2010).

Other researchers investigated maternal employment in association with the quality of time spent with children (Bianchi et al., 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; 1994). This research indicates that although employed mothers spend less time with their children, but time spent in interactions and care is quality time. The researchers also indicated that stress plays an important role in the quality of mother-child relationships. It is also reported that mothers in part-time employment exhibited warm and sensitive child-rearing practices compared to full-time employed mothers (Carolan & Wasserman, 2015; Hadzic, Magee, & Robinson, 2013; Brooks-Gunn et al., 2010; Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Berger, 2007).

Other researchers put forth the supposition that children's social behaviors are mediated by maternal child-rearing practices associated with employment (Cucinella, 2022; Brooks-Gunn et al., 2010; Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom, & D'Souza, 2006). Mothers who are controlling, hostile, and aggressive for example generally have children who are hyperactive, aggressive, and exhibit conduct problems in addition to decreased prosocial behaviors (Hipwell et al. 2008; McKee et al. 2007; Patrick, Snyder, Schrepferman, & Snyder, 2005; Pevalin, Wade, & Brannigan, 2003; Sheehan & Watson, 2008; Strazdins et al., 2006). In contrast, maternal child-rearing practices characterized by warmth and responsiveness tend to promote higher behavioral regulation in children and increased prosocial behaviors (Cucinella, 2022; Deffaa; Weis et al. 2022; Weis, & Gisela, 2020; Abu Taleb & AlZoubi, 2014; Abu Taleb, 2013; von Suchodoletz, Trommsdorff, & Heikamp, 2011; Baumrind, 1971).

### **Study Objectives, Problem Statement, and Research Questions**

The bulk of research concerning mothers work status and its possible effect on children's social skills has yielded varying conclusions. The rarity of mothers' perceptions of their work status, parenting practices, and children's social behaviors prompted this comparative research study. The main purpose of the present study was to compare working and non-working Jordanian mothers' parenting practices and kindergarten children's social behaviors. More specifically, the study's research questions are as follows:

1. Are there statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between working mothers and non-working mothers in their reported positive parenting practices?
2. Are there statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between

working and non-working mothers in their description of their kindergarten children's social behaviors?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants of this study consisted of 132 Jordanian mothers of kindergarten age children. 58 of the participants were employed mothers while 74 were non employed mothers. The participating mothers were all residents of Amman, the capital of Jordan. Respondents received this study's questionnaire through their children's kindergarten programs. Assistant researchers distributed 250 of the study's questionnaire to kindergarten administrators who were in turn asked to disseminate them to mothers of enrolled kindergarten children. 132 mothers completed the questionnaires that were collected after two weeks.

### **Measures and Procedures**

For the purposes of this study, two scales were developed by the researcher to measure how mothers of kindergarten children perceived their child-rearing practices and their children's social behaviors: Parenting Practices Scale and Children's Social Behavior.

#### **1. Parenting Practices Scale: Development and Validation**

This scale consisted of 26 items describing mother's parenting practices and interactions. The scale included practices that are considered positive in nature. For the purposes of this study positive parenting is defined as the continual relationship of a parent(s) and a child or children that includes caring, teaching, leading, communicating, and providing for the needs of a child consistently and unconditionally (Seay et al., 2014, p. 207). To determine the content validity of the child-rearing practices scale reviewers specialized in the field of early childhood, family studies, and human development evaluated it and modifications were accordingly made. For example, the number of items was originally 34 but decreased to 26 due to repetitions and similarities among them. Mothers responded to each item by evaluating their child-rearing practices according to the degree their child exhibits each behavior 1= strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree. Internal consistency reliability for the child-rearing practices scale was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha and reliability analysis revealed that the child-rearing practices scale was reliable at the  $\alpha=.78$ .

#### **2. Social Behaviors Rating Scale: Development and Validation**

This scale consisted of 17 behaviors describing kindergarten

children's social abilities and interactions with others. For the purposes of this study, social behaviors refer to skills and abilities to properly manage ones and others' emotions and to positively interact with others. To determine the scale's content validity feedback was requested from reviewers specialized in the field of early childhood, family studies, and human development to determine the appropriateness of each item to Jordanian culture and the suitability of each item to the social domain. Modifications mainly consisted of removing three items that were perceived repetitive and adjusting the language of several others. Mothers responded by evaluating their children's social behaviors according to the degree their child exhibits each behavior 1= strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree. Internal consistency reliability for the social behaviors rating scale was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha and reliability analysis revealed that the scale was reliable at the  $\alpha=0.88$ .

### Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the data was conducted using descriptive statistics and t tests.

### Results

#### 1. Are there statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ) between working and non-working mothers in their reported parenting practices?

An examination of the total sample means (range 1.72-4.49) for parenting practices revealed that the highest means were for the following practices: I explain to my child why the behavior is unacceptable ( $M=4.08$ ), I use positive verbal reinforcement when my child behaves positively ( $M =4.49$ ), I empathize with my child when he/she feels sad or is in pain ( $M =4.51$ ), I regularly meet my child's needs  $M (=4.22)$ , I consistently give attention to my child's positive behaviors ( $M =4.07$ ), I explain to my child why certain behaviors are acceptable ( $M =4.09$ ). Lower ratings were for the following child-rearing practices: I talk calmly to my child when he/she exhibits unacceptable behaviors ( $M =2.16$ ), I use requests with my child rather than orders ( $M =2.46$ ), I ask my child for input with decisions concerning him/her ( $M =2.28$ ), I show approval for my child's positive behaviors by telling others about it ( $M =2.51$ ), I remind my child of the expected positive behaviors  $M (=1.72)$ . Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for these results.

**Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Mothers’ Parenting Practices Scale**

	Practices	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I explain to my child why the behavior is unacceptable	4.08	.97
2	I use words rather than physical punishment	2.88	1.10
3	I use positive verbal reinforcement when my child behaves positively	4.49	.76
4	I use requests with my child rather than orders	2.46	.86
5	I respect my child’s point of view	3.87	.94
6	I talk calmly to my child when he/she exhibits unacceptable behaviors	2.16	1.00
7	I put clear behavior limits	3.81	1.03
8	I verbally reprimand my child when he misbehaves rather than use physical punishment	3.01	1.09
9	I empathize with my child when he/she feels sad or is in pain	4.51	.82
10	I am loving towards my child even when he/she exhibits negative behaviors	3.60	1.29
11	I encourage my child to express frustrations	3.96	1.07
12	I use positive verbal expressions with my child even when my child exhibits negative behaviors	2.99	1.29
13	I regularly meet my child’s needs	4.22	.97
14	I consistently give attention to my child’s positive behaviors	4.07	1.14
15	I explain to my child why certain behaviors are acceptable	4.10	1.03
16	I react to my child’s misbehavior through guiding him/her toward positive behavior	2.77	1.27
17	I am patient while interacting with my child	3.63	1.07
18	I care about my child’s emotions	4.11	1.26
19	I am consistent with my child	3.45	1.07
20	I spend quality time with my child on a daily basis	3.97	1.29
21	I play with my child	3.69	1.08
22	I remind my child of the expected positive behaviors	1.72	.87
23	I am accepting of my child’s misbehaviors	3.27	.95
24	I show approval for my child’s positive behaviors by telling others about it	2.51	1.07
25	I apologize to my child when I am wrong	3.96	1.10
26	I ask my child for input with decisions concerning him/her	2.28	1.07

Note: N= 132; 1.00-2.33=Low; 2.34-3.35=Average; 3.36-5.00=High

An examination of the means between the two groups revealed that working mothers evaluated themselves as higher on the following practices compared to non-working mothers: I use words rather than physical punishment (working mothers:  $M = 3.01$ , nonworking mothers:  $M = 2.77$ ); I respect my child’s point of view (working mothers:  $M = 4.05$ , nonworking mothers:  $M = 3.71$ ); I verbally reprimand my child when



he/she misbehaves rather than use physical punishment (working mothers:  $M=3.81$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=2.86$ ); I encourage my child to express frustrations (working mothers:  $M=4.05$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=3.87$ ); I consistently give attention to my child's positive behaviors (working mothers:  $M=4.25$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=3.91$ ); I explain to my child why certain behaviors are acceptable (working mothers:  $M=4.26$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=3.95$ ); I care about my child's emotions (working mothers:  $M=4.33$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=3.93$ ); I spend quality time with my child on a daily basis (working mothers:  $M=4.06$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=3.89$ ); I apologize to my child when I am wrong (working mothers:  $M=4.15$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=3.79$ ). The lowest means for both groups of mothers was with regard to the following practices: I remind my child of the expected positive behaviors (working mothers:  $M=1.60$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=1.82$ ) and I ask my child for his input with decisions concerning him/her (working mothers:  $M=2.11$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=2.41$ ). Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for these results.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics: Differences between nonworking and non-working mothers' parenting practices**

	Mother's Practices	Working Mothers		Non-Working Mothers	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I explain to my child why the behavior is unacceptable	4.17	.91	4.01	1.03
2	I use words rather than physical punishment	3.02	1.14	2.77	1.05
3	I use positive verbal reinforcement when my child behaves positively	4.53	.70	4.46	.81
4	I use requests with my child rather than orders	2.47	.87	2.46	.85
5	I respect my child's point of view	4.05	.85	3.72	.99
6	I talk calmly to my child when he/she exhibits unacceptable behaviors	2.22	.94	2.12	1.05
7	I put clear behavior limits	3.88	1.01	3.74	1.05
8	I verbally reprimand my child when he misbehaves rather than use physical punishment	3.18	1.08	2.86	1.09
9	I empathize with my child when he/she feels sad or is in pain	4.52	.77	4.50	.86
10	I am loving towards my child even when he/she exhibits negative behaviors	3.67	1.24	3.54	1.34

	Mother's Practices	Working Mothers		Non-Working Mothers	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
11	I encourage my child to express frustrations	4.05	1.13	3.88	1.02
12	I use positive expressions with my child even when my child exhibits negative behaviors	3.08	1.23	2.91	1.35
13	I regularly meet my child's needs	4.38	.85	4.09	1.05
14	I consistently give attention to my child's positive behaviors	4.25	1.05	3.92	1.19
15	I explain to my child why certain behaviors are acceptable	4.27	1.01	3.96	1.04
16	I react to my child's misbehavior through guiding him/her toward positive behavior	2.83	1.28	2.72	1.27
17	I am patient while interacting with my child	3.57	1.20	3.68	.95
18	I care about my child's emotions	4.33	1.00	3.93	1.42
19	I am consistent with my child	3.45	1.11	3.45	1.05
20	I spend quality time with my child on a daily basis	4.07	1.34	3.89	1.24
21	I play with my child	3.82	.98	3.59	1.16
22	I remind my child of the expected positive behaviors	1.60	.83	1.82	.90
23	I am accepting of my child's misbehaviors	3.33	.99	3.22	.93
24	I show approval for my child's positive behaviors by telling others about it	2.52	1.13	2.51	1.04
25	I apologize to my child when I am wrong	4.15	1.01	3.80	1.16
26	I ask my child for his/her input with decision concerning him/her	2.12	1.03	2.42	1.09

Note: N= 132; 1.00-2.33=Low; 2.34-3.35=Average; 3.36-5.00=High

A t-test analysis was conducted to examine the differences in child-rearing practices between working and non-working mothers. The analysis revealed significant results (.016) with working mothers rating their parenting practices more positively (M= 92.36) compared to non-working mothers (M=87.97). These results can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3. t-test for Parenting Practices According to Mother's Work Status**

	Work Status	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Value	df	p-Value
<b>Parenting Practices</b>	Working Mothers	92.36	9.19	2.431	130	.016*
	Non-Working Mothers	87.97	11.08		130	

\*p<0.05. Working mothers (N=58); Non-Working Mothers (N=74)

**2. Are there statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ) between**

**working and non-working mothers in their description of their kindergarten children’s social behaviors?**

An examination of the total means for kindergarten children’s social behaviors as rated by their mothers revealed that the highest means were for the following behaviors: likes to play with other children ( $M =4.51$ ), helps others when they need help ( $M =4.20$ ), does what adults request of him/her ( $M =4.01$ ), my child is liked by other children ( $M =4.30$ ). Analysis revealed that the lowest means were for the following behaviors: accepts when adults and other children don’t comply to his/her requests ( $M =2.94$ ) and can calm self when he/she feels pressured or tense ( $M =2.96$ ). Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations for these results.

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics: Mothers’ evaluations of children’s social behaviors**

Practices		Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Likes to play with other children	4.51	.78
2	Helps others when they need help	4.20	.89
3	Does what adults request of him/her	4.01	.88
4	Shows concern when other children are feeling sad by sitting next to them and talking with them	3.55	1.02
5	Shares toys with other children without being asked to do so	3.66	1.12
6	Asks other children to play with him/her	4.14	1.01
7	Can wait his/her turn	3.55	1.03
8	Reacts positively to change in routine or activity	3.58	1.00
9	Controls his/her emotions	3.08	.98
10	Accepts when adults and other children don’t comply to his/her requests	2.94	1.10
11	Empathizes with others	3.64	1.01
12	Can calm self when he/she feels pressured or tense	2.96	1.05
13	My child is liked by other children	4.30	.76
14	Other children ask my child to play with them	4.33	.79
15	Other children are accepting of my child’s behaviors	4.36	.67
16	Other children ask for my child’s opinion	3.65	1.00
17	Children ask my child to evaluate the situation and decide on course of action	3.50	1.09

Note: N= 132; 1.00-2.33=Low; 2.34-3.35=Average; 3.36-5.00=High

An examination of the total means for child-rearing practices reveals that working mothers ratings of social behaviors was ( $M=3.73$ ) while the total mean for non-working mothers was ( $M=3.76$ ). Both groups of mothers (working and non-working) rated their children’s social behaviors as high and the following are several examples: Likes to play with other

children ( $M = 4.58$ ;  $M = 4.44$ ); Helps others when they need help ( $M = 4.29$ ;  $M = 4.13$ ); Does what adults request of him/her ( $M = 4.06$ ;  $M = 4.10$ ). Lower ratings were given by both groups of mothers on the following social behaviors: controls his/her emotions ( $M = 2.98$ ;  $M = 3.14$ ); accepts when adults and other children don't comply to his/her requests ( $M = 2.81$ ;  $M = 3.72$ ); can calm self when he/she feels pressured or tense ( $M = 2.82$ ;  $M = 3.06$ ). Table 5 presents the means and standard deviations for these results.

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics: Evaluations of children's social behaviors according to work status**

	Social Behaviors	Working Mothers		Non-Working Mothers	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Likes to play with other children	4.59	.59	4.45	.89
2	Helps others when they need help	4.29	.70	4.14	1.01
3	Does what adults request of him/her	4.07	.72	3.96	.99
4	Shows concern when other children are feeling sad by sitting next to them and talking with them	3.59	.96	3.53	1.08
5	Shares toys with other children without being asked to do so	3.72	1.01	3.61	1.21
6	Asks other children to play with him/her	4.16	.99	4.14	1.04
7	Can wait his/her turn	3.45	.96	3.64	1.08
8	Reacts positively to change in routine or activity	3.45	1.11	3.69	.89
9	Controls his/her emotions	2.98	.83	3.15	1.08
10	Accepts when adults and other children don't comply to his/her requests	2.81	1.05	3.04	1.14
11	Empathizes with others	3.52	1.11	3.73	.93
12	Can calm self when he/she feels pressured or tense	2.83	1.08	3.07	1.02
13	My child is liked by other children	4.36	.67	4.24	.82
14	Other children ask my child to play with them	4.28	.91	4.36	.67
15	Other children are accepting of my child's behaviors	4.36	.69	4.36	.65
16	Other children ask for my child's opinion	3.59	1.08	3.70	.95
17	Children ask my child to evaluate the situation and decide on course of action	3.47	1.079	3.53	1.10

Note: N= 132: 1.00-2.33=Low; 2.34-3.35=Average; 3.36-5.00=High

A t-test analysis was conducted to examine the differences in ratings of kindergarten children's social behaviors between working and non-

working mothers. The analysis revealed non-significant differences ( $p=.620$ ). These results can be seen in Table 6

**Table 6. t-test for Social Behaviors According to Mother's Work Status**

	Work Status	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Value	df	p-Value
<b>Social Behaviors</b>	Working Mothers	63.50	8.05	-.497	130	.620
	Non-Working Mothers	64.32	1.21		130	

\* $p<0.05$ . Working mothers (N=58); Non-Working Mothers (N=74)

### Discussion of Results

The main objective of the present study was to investigate Jordanian mothers' perceptions of their parenting practices and their kindergarten children's social behaviors. The findings revealed significant differences between mothers' work-status and their reported parenting practices and non-significant differences between work status and children's social behaviors. These findings are discussed in detail.

### Mother's employment status and parenting practices

An examination of the total sample mean for parenting practices revealed that Jordanian mothers rated themselves at an average/high level ( $M=3.41$ ). Mothers reported they generally explain to their children why behaviors are acceptable and others unacceptable, meet their needs, use positive reinforcement, set clear limits, empathize and care about their children's emotions. These practices support previous research investigating maternal style and practices among Jordanian mothers (Abu Taleb, 2012).

Results revealed significant differences between the two sample groups. This finding is not surprising considering the vast amount of international research that indicates the existence of differences between the two groups. It is possible to attribute this difference to the quality of time spent with children. Although it is assumed that working mothers spend less time with their children (Azizah et al., 2022), it may be that working mothers in this sample spend quality time with their children after work (Anil, Bindu, & Bhat, 2021) compared to non-working mothers. This is evident by the examination of means between the two mean (I spend quality time with my child on a daily basis (working mothers:  $M=4.06$ , nonworking mothers:  $M=3.89$ ). This finding supports previous research (Bianchi et al., 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; McLoyd et al., 1994) that also concluded that quality time spent with children positively impacts the quality of interactions. The significant differences between

the two groups of mothers for this sample may also be attributed to the feelings associated with mothers who work and need to compensate their children for time spent away from them. For Jordanian mothers, the low employment rate in the country may be an indicator of cultural priorities which encourage mother non-employment for the sake of focusing on children's child-rearing.

Of interest were the results that indicated higher evaluations by working mothers of positive parenting practices compared to non-working mothers. An examination of the differences in means shows that working mothers were more likely to verbally reprimand their children instead of using physical punishment and to respect their child's point of view. They were also more likely to encourage their children to express their emotions and frustrations, and to praise positive behaviors. These apparent significant differences may be explained in several ways. It is possible that working mothers place higher emphasis on positive practices due to the support system they have. In Jordan, when a mother is employed, she commonly has a support system from both sides of the family with caring for her young children. It is also possible that spouses of this sample's working mothers contribute to child-rearing. This supports research completed by Cabrera, Hofferth, and Chae (2011) who focused on how the shifting attitudes of fathers positively impact family outcomes. It is also possible that employed mothers feel empowered and positive about their employment due to the benefits of economic returns, which in turn positively effects their interactions with their children. Several studies support this supposition (Berger et al., 2008; Coley & Lombardi, 2013). The results of these studies indicate positive associations between maternal employment and children's positive development outcomes, specifically for lower income families.

### **Mother's employment status and their evaluation of their kindergarten children's social behaviors**

An examination of the total sample means for social behaviors revealed that Jordanian mothers rated their kindergarten children at an average-high level ( $M=3.73$ ). There were no significant differences however, between work status and social behaviors. Mothers reported high ratings for the following behaviors: likes to play with other children; helps others when they need help; does what adults request of him/her. These findings were consistent with research studies that investigated the quality of parenting style and its effects on children's socialization (Weis

et al. 2022; Abu Taleb, 2014; Abu Taleb, 2013; Smith, Landry, & Swank, 2000; Kochanska, 1991; Dunn, 1988). There may be several possible explanations for these higher evaluations of children's behaviors for this sample. In the Jordanian culture, families emphasize socialization at a very early age and consistently encourage children to interact with others, help them, and listen to adults. This is encouraged and made possible due to the cultural value system which encourages closely knit family ties with the extended family. As a result, children are taught both directly and indirectly to 'play' with other children and help others, which becomes internalized behavior at a young age and manifests itself as children grow and develop.

An examination of the means also revealed that the lowest ratings were given by mothers to the following behaviors: controls his/her emotions; accepts when adults and other children don't comply to his/her requests; can calm self when he/she feels pressured or tense. These are not surprising results considering the natural course of social emotional development in young children. Children are still learning how to manage and express emotions in social settings and how to be resilient and cope positively in the face of difficulties and stressful situations. Halberstadt et al., (2001) explained the complexity of social emotional regulation by emphasizing that this process entails not only the awareness and recognition of emotions but also the effective regulation of emotional expression during social interactions.

### **Implications for Future Research**

In Jordan, research investigating the effects of maternal employment on children's outcomes is rare. The present study investigated the differences between working and non-working mothers with regard to their perceived child-rearing practices and their kindergarten children's social behaviors. The results of this study were generally aligned with international research investigating this area. It is essential for future research to investigate possible relations between employment and various child outcomes and expand the investigations to include moderating variables such as marital status, and full or part-time employment.

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