

## **Women's Employment and the Socio-Emotional Functions of the Family in Iran**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between women's employment and the socio-emotional functions of the family. For the purpose of this study, 300 women were selected through method among women living in district 11 of Tehran. 199 individuals were unemployed and 101 individuals were employed. They responded a researcher-made questionnaire which measured social and emotional functions of the family. Social functions of the family were assessed in three aspects of children's academic achievement, children's social adjustment, and women's decision-making power in the family. Furthermore, emotional functions were assessed in two dimensions of women's intimacy with their husbands and women's involvement in making decisions about reproduction. The findings of the study indicated that in the social function of the family, there was no relationship between women's employment and children's social adjustment and academic achievement; however, there was a positive relationship between women's employment and their decision-making power in the family. In the emotional function of the family, there was no relationship between women's employment and their intimate relationships with their husbands or with their decision making about reproduction and fertility.

**Keywords:** women's employment, Family Functions, Social adjustment, Academic achievement, Intimacy with spouse, Decision-making power.

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## Introduction

From past to the present in all societies, in terms of the diversity of social conditions, family has taken various forms. In the past, besides its main functions such as reproduction and parenting, family had various economic, social, religious, and affective responsibilities. As time passed and the socio economic conditions of the societies changed, each of these tasks were gradually separated from the family and was entrusted to other institutions and organizations. Man and woman, as the very basic pillars of the family, have had many tasks that have changed because of the structural changes and the reduction of family size during the course of history.

According to Parce and Menaghan (1990), because of the family changes, the roles and responsibilities of parents and the relations between the parents themselves and between the parents and their children have changed. With the increase of women's employment in most of the families, nowadays women have two main roles, the role of mother/wife, as well as a job role, which considers different tasks and responsibilities for them. Despite the women's participation in the work place and funding the family, men do not tend to participate in household chores, child-care and parenting. Andrea Michell writes about the diversity and multiplicity of woman's tasks in different societies as her tragic fate: "Family studies in the United States, France, Poland, Russia and Sweden show that even when a woman works outside, she has the heaviest tasks in household chores and her husband does not participate in the chores" (Sarukhany, 2006, p. 173).

As a result, woman's tasks have increased, and in order to perform all of them, she should divide her time and energy so that the family and its function will not be undermined. Some believe that the women's employment affects the family especially the children negatively. For example, Hill and Duncan's (1987) findings show that the employed mothers' children have less academic achievement compared to unemployed mothers' children. Beem's (2004) study showed that when the children are adolescent, the mothers' employment leads to a considerable decline in their high school scores (quoted by Tanaka, 2008, p. 558).

On the other hand, some researchers argue that women's employment not only has economic and social benefits but also has psychological rewards, because it has considerable effects on their personality and the fulfillment of their abilities. In general, employed women can achieve more economic and personal independ-

ence and life satisfaction, which in turn has positive effects on the family. Based on Thornton (1984) and De Amiko et al., there is no meaningful relationship between mothers' employment and their children's academic achievement; this shows that employed mothers pay attention to their children's academic achievement, despite their various tasks. In contrast to Hill and Duncan's (1987) findings, Zick, Bryant, & Sterbacka (2001) found that the employed mothers' daughters have more self-confidence, better grades and careers compared to unemployed mothers' daughters (in Ahmadi & Taghavi, 2003, p. 112).

Ahmadi and Taghavi's (2003) research - "The relationship between mothers' employment and the children's academic and behavioral performances" - suggests that the students in the fourth and fifth grades of primary school whose mothers were working, showed more social adjustment and academic achievement than the rest of the students. Bagheri, Moltafet, and Sharifian (2009) believe that women's employment increases their decision-making power in their economic affairs, parenting, reproduction, leisure time activities, and also increases their political-social participation in the society. Zick, Bryant, & Sterbacka (2001) suggests that in families with employed parents, parents especially fathers spend more time in helping their children with reading, homeworks, games and projects. Consequently, it will improve children's scores and will reduce their behavioral problems. Tanaka (2008) showed that the full-time employment of mother has different effects on sons' and daughters'; full-time employment of a mother has negative effects only on sons, while it motivates daughters to achieve their mother's job position.

The Fokkema and Liefbroer (2004) suggests that increasing women's economic independence has been considered as the main factor for rising divorce rate since 1960; however, the increased economic participation of women and education reduces the traditional expectations of gender division of labor within the family and also reduces the negative financial effects of divorce. Women's employment may be in conflict with the traditional expectations of marital roles and may increase stress levels and weaken the marital relationship. This research has also suggested that both the high level of education and the participation of women in the labor market significantly increase the likelihood of divorce. Ono, and Raymo (2006) also shows that women with less work experience who are required to work more, encounter a decline in marital satisfaction because they have career responsibilities in addition

to family responsibilities.

Therefore, since there are numerous inconsistencies in the findings of researches, this article examines the relationship between women's employment and the social - emotional functions of the family. In order to examine this relationship, the study is organized based on answering the following five questions:

Is there a relationship between women's employment and the social functions of the family?

Is there a relationship between women's employment and their children's social adjustment?

Is there a relationship between women's employment and their children's academic achievement?

Is there a relationship between women's employment and their decision-making power in the family?

Is there a relationship between women's employment and the emotional functions of the family?

Is there a relationship between women's employment and their intimate relationships with their husbands?

Is there a relationship between women's employment and their decision-making power in the family on the subject of reproduction?

## **Methodology**

The methodology of the study is non-experimental and correlational. In this kind of research, the relationship between variables is analyzed due to the research's aims. The analysis differ depending on the scale of variables.

**Population:** The population of this study consisted of all employed and unemployed women who had a daughter of guidance school age at district 11 of Tehran. They were divided into two groups: employed and unemployed.

**Sampling:** According to the employed and unemployed groups, 300 participants were selected through random stratified sampling method. Among them, 199 individuals were unemployed and 101 individuals were employed. The participants' age was 25 to 45. 21% of the participants (n = 62) were under diploma, 55% (n = 164) were high school graduates, 5% (n=16) were higher than diploma, 17% (n=51) were BA graduates, and 2% (n=7) were M.A graduates and above. 1.3%

(n = 4) of participants' children age were 13 to 14.7, 7.3% (n = 22) were 14.8 to 16.5, 24.3% (n = 73) were 16.6 to 18.2 and 67% (n=201) were 18.3 to 20. Social and emotional functions of family scale: Because of the lack of a standardized questionnaire about the subject of the study, based on the data from previous researches and theoretical basis, a questionnaire was created with five-degree Likert scale (very low, low, medium, high and very high), and the lowest to the highest would receive a score of 1 to 5, respectively. The questions were designed in two parts: social functions (including children's social adjustment and academic achievement and the women's decision-making power in the family) and emotional functions (including the level of intimacy with the husband and how to make decisions about childbearing and the number of children in the family). Children's social adjustment questionnaire (with 17 items) was based on the California Personality Inventory. To measure decision-making power of women, twelve items were adopted from Mahdavi and Sabouri Khosrowshahi's (2003) questionnaire. 17 items were used to measure intimacy and 3 items were used to assess decision-making about childbearing. The content validity of this scale was acknowledged by the experts in this field. Also, to assess the reliability of the scale, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was used and it was 0.87 for 49 items.

## Findings

Gamma correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between women's employment and the social and emotional functions of the family. The results of the research questions are reported below.

First question: Is there a relationship between women's employment and their children's social adjustment?

The results of the data analysis regarding the relationship between women's employment and the social adjustment of their children are shown in table 1. It suggests that the relationship between these two variables is weak and is not statistically significant. It shows that employment or unemployment of women has no significant effect on children's social adjustment. In other words, there is no relationship between women's employment and their children's social adjustment.

**Table 1 the relationship between women's employment and their children's social adjustment**

Total	Fairly high	Fairly low	Low	Social Adjustment
100	5%	86%	9%	employed
190	6.3%	87.3%	6.3%	unemployed
290	17	252	21	Total

Value of Gamma=0.16 Sig=0.37

Second question: Is there a relationship between women's employment and their children's academic achievement?

As it is shown in table 2, the relationship between women's employment and their children's academic achievement is weak and is not statistically significant. It shows that there is no relationship between women's employment and their children's academic achievement.

**Table 2 the relationship between women's employment and their children's academic achievement**

Total	High	Fairly high	Moderate	Fairly low	Children's average grades
101	72.27%	18.81%	6.93%	1.98%	employed
199	64.32%	27.13%	7.53%	1.01%	unemployed
300	201	73	22	4	Total

Value of Gamma=0.15 Sig=0.22

Third question: Is there a relationship between women's employment and their decision-making power in the family?

As it is shown in table 3, there is a significant relationship between women's employment and their decision-making power in the family. It shows that the decision-making power of employed women is more than the decision-making power of unemployed women.

**Table 3 the relationship between women's employment and their decision-making power**

total	High	Fairly high	Fairly low	Low	Decision-making power
97	1.03%	72.16%	23.7%	3.09%	employed
196	4.08%	55.1%	34.69%	6.12%	unemployed
293	9	178	91	15	Total

Value of Gamma=0.23 Sig=0.04

Fourth question: Is there a relationship between women's employment and their intimate relations with their husbands?

The results for this question are presented in table 4. It shows that there is no relationship between women's employment and their intimate relations with their husbands.

**Table 4 the relationship between women's employment and intimacy with their husbands**

total	High	Fairly high	Fairly low	Low	Degree of women's intimacy with their husbands
99	58.58%	26.26%	8.08%	7.07%	employed
196	60.2%	29.59%	7.65%	2.55%	unemployed
295	176	84	23	12	Total

Value of Gamma=0.006 Sig=0.55

Fifth question: Is there a relationship between women's employment and their decision-making power in the family on the subject of reproduction?

This variable contains three components: deciding on the number of children, determining the age gap between children, and the pregnancy time. It is worth mentioning that their relationship with women's employment have been separately measured and analyzed.

A - Deciding on the number of children

As the results show in table 5, women's employment has no significant relationship with reproduction and pregnancy in terms of deciding on the number of children.

**Table 5 the relationship between women's employment and decision about reproduction in terms of the number of children**

Total	Always by the wife	More by the wife	Husband and wife equally	More by the husband	Always by the husband	Deciding on the number of children
101	3.96%	12.87%	72.27%	4.95%	5.94%	employed
198	3.03%	4.54%	75.75%	10.10%	6.56%	unemployed
299	10	22	223	25	19	Total

Value of Gamma=0.17 Sig=0.06

### B – Determining the age gap between children

The results are presented in table 6. The relationship between women's employment and determining the age gap between children is weak and is not significant.

**Table 6 the relationship between women's employment and deciding about reproduction in terms of the age gap between children**

Total	Always by the wife	More by the wife	Husband and wife equally	More by the husband	Always by the husband	Determining the age gap between children
101	7.92%	14.85%	70.29%	3.96%	3.96%	employed
198	3.53%	17.17%	65.65%	9.59%	4.04%	unemployed
299	15	201	201	23	12	Total

Value of Gamma=0.14 Sig=0.19

### C- Deciding on the pregnancy time

As the results indicate in table 7, there is no significant relationship between women's employment and deciding on the pregnancy time.

**Table 11: Cross table indicating**

**Table 7 the relationship between women's employment and deciding about reproduction in terms of the pregnancy time**

Total	Always by the wife	More by the wife	Husband and wife equally	More by the husband	Always by the husband	Deciding on the pregnancy time
101	7.92%	20.79%	60.39%	29%	7.92%	employed
199	7.035%	14.57%	65.32%	6.53%	6.53%	unemployed
300	22	50	191	16	21	Total

Value of Gamma=0.11 Sig=0.45

### Discussion

The educational process includes several factors. Researches and theories indicate that individual's academic achievement, attitude and behavior are affected by motivation, interest, ability and talent, intelligence and educational, family and social background (quantity and quality of teaching, psychological environments,

groups of friends, home environment, occupational / educational status of parents, and economic and social status of the family). According to the psychoanalysis approach, living in the society, in one hand, makes some limitations and forces the human beings to cooperate; and on the other hand, it provides safety for him or her. Hence, beside the tasks, limitations and adversities, social life and membership in social institutions have positive consequences such as feeling of identity, safety and social unity. Adler believes that consistency and unity with group result from living in the society and lead the human being to love and accept others and cooperate with them (Quoted in Mansour, 1996). And one of the institutions that have a prominent role in meeting the human's needs is family. Accordingly, the fulfillment of family functions, especially reproduction, child rearing, meeting the couple's affective needs, and fulfilling the economic needs and affective and personal growth of its members is of great and increasing importance.

As the findings of the study show, in terms of the social functions of the family, women's employment has no relationship with children's social adjustment and academic achievement; but it has a significant relationship with women's decision-making power in the family and indeed increases it. In terms of the emotional functions of the family, women's employment has no relationship with their intimate relationships with their husbands and the decisions about reproduction.

The findings of this research suggest that women's employment has no meaningful relationship with the social functions of the family, especially on the children's academic achievement and social adjustment. These findings are compatible with the findings of Naghdy Dorobati (2001), Panahi (2000), Ebrahimi (1993), Zygl and Haas (1963) who also believe that mothers' employment has no effect on their children's social adjustment. Furthermore, the results of this research are compatible with the research findings of Joshi and Veropoulos (2000) which also show that mothers' employment has no relationship with their adolescent children's academic achievement.

This study shows that women's employment increases their decision-making power in the family and can approve the exchange theory. Blood (1969) believes that the exchange theory explains the distribution of power between the couple. The foundation of this theory for the distribution of power is in terms of the resources that each of the couple has brought to the family. According to Baher

(1996), these valuable resources are for the most part, education, employment and financial strength of each of the couple. Thus, the more resources the wife or the husband has, the higher their decision-making power is in the family (Mahdavi, & Sabouri Khosrowshahi, 2003, p. 38).

It is interesting to note that based on the findings of this research, women's employment has no significant relationship with their intimate relationships with their husbands. In other words, an increase in the financial independence of the wife does no harm the couple's intimate relations. According to the theory of equality in intimate marital relationships, couples feel satisfied of their marital relationship when they feel equal, and their yields and benefits from their relationship are comparable (Hatfield and Tropmann, quoted by Zare poor, 2010, p. 23). Safiri, Araste and Mousavi's (2009) findings also confirm this theory and show that women's economic independence does not reduce the intimate relationship between couples, but also increases their intimacy and love.

The findings of this research also show that women's employment has no effect on deciding about the number of children, determining the age gap between children, and the pregnancy time. According to the economic theory of fertility, the demand for reproduction in a family depends on the number of children that can survive and also on their raising cost (both economic and non-economic costs).

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