

# Parenting Styles and Satisfaction among Working Women in Kedah, Malaysia

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**ABSTRACT**— *Currently, parenting style has been considered as an important issue for the discussion as good parenting style would positively impact on children’s overall development. The study explores parenting styles and parenting satisfaction among working women in their families. The study was conducted ten villages in Kedah one of the state of Malaysia. Participants consist of working women who have children under 15 years old. A total of one hundred working women were selected as the respondents for this study using purposive sampling method. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study. Parenting style and satisfaction among working women were measured using seventeen statements. The results revealed that most of working mother follows permissive parenting styles who build warm relationship with children, responsive to children needs and low in control towards their children. The results also showed that most of working mothers are satisfied with their parenting style in terms of amount of time they spend for their children and as the outcome the behaviors they receive from their children. Furthermore, the in-depth interviews findings showed that majority of working women are satisfied to follow an effective parenting style by contributing their intellectual and financial resources to their children education, nutrition and intellectual development.*

**Keywords**— Parenting style, Parenting satisfaction, Authoritarian, Permissive, Authoritative, Working women.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the past decade there has been a dramatic increased numbers of women have entered in the workplace in the developing and developed countries. Currently, nearly 50 percent of women around the world are in the labor force (Zafiris T, 2005). Similarly, in Malaysia, the participation of women in the labour force has been increased since its independence in 1957. Women, in the developing countries including Malaysia, perform dual roles as an income generator and primary caregivers to their children in family (Glick and Sahn 1998; Glick 2002). Due to performing dual roles, it might be hard for working mother to fulfill the full commitments towards family as well as profession. Researchers are giving attention to the multiple responsibilities played by working parents. Over time, research has shown that work matters for families and family matters for work (Galinsky, 1999; Galinsky & Hughes, 1989) primarily found a negative impact of multiple work and family demands for both work and family life (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998; Hughes & Galinsky, 1989; Vanden Heuvel, 1997). Research has further shown that women are most affected; as they continue to bear primary responsibility for negotiating the demands of work and family (Bailyn, Rapoport, Kolb, & Fletcher, 1996; Hughes & Galinsky, 1999). The study examines parenting style and parenting satisfaction among working women especially those who have children. Although an interaction between mother and children is very important for the development of the children, working women usually have less time to interact with their children. Previous studies show that the interaction between mother and children in various activities such as playing with children, reading books, singing and other activities are important for social competence, language acquisition, and intellectual development of the children (Tong, Shinohara, Sugisawa, Tanaka, Maruyama, Ishi & Anme, 2009; Losoncz & Bortolotto, 2009; Saadat, 2009). But the fact that most of cases, working women’s parental style and satisfaction might be challenging especially when it involves combining with their career.

However, as mentioned elsewhere parenting style and parental satisfactions are one of the important factors for working women that might influence on the relationship with the children. In many societies, the arrangements of household work especially housework and childcare sharing are still dominated by traditional attitudes. The traditional gender division in respect of housework and childcare are viewed in many societies that lead people to consider domestic responsibilities as the women’s primary role. This attitude frees men from domestic and childcare responsibilities at home while it may increase working mothers’ challenges in their family that might effect on their parental style and satisfaction (Charles and Davies, 2000). Various studies show that social support from family especially husbands’ jointly home-oriented working attitudes would assist a working mother to follow an effective parenting style. According

to Shields (2008) social support is very important for a working mother to maintain satisfaction as well as to follow positive parenting style. Meanwhile, parenting satisfaction has reciprocal links with marital happiness (Rogers and White, 1998). Thompson and Walker (2004) also argued that parental satisfaction is the view the gratification from the parenting role. The study attempts to investigate parenting style and parenting satisfaction among working women in the selected study area.

## **2. CONCEPT OF PARENTING STYLE**

Before examining parenting style and parenting satisfaction among working women, this study attempts to discuss the concept of parenting styles and its impact on children activities and behaviors. In general, there are three basic parenting styles of child rearing: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative (Baumrind., 1966, 1967, and 1991). According to Baumrind (1991) these three parenting styles can be differed in two particular aspects such as the amount of nurturing or love children receive from the parents and the way child's activities and behavior are controlled by parents. Controlling children behaviors is considered as the authoritarian style which also emphasizes his or her obedience. This type of parenting style restricts the autonomy of the children (Reitman, Rhode, Hupp & Altobello, 2002). However, authoritarian parenting is not only considered as demanding and directive, but it is also not responsive. Authoritarian parents rarely use persuasion method in dealing with their children, so they tend to be low in providing affection, praise, rewards, and the forms of rewards for motivating their children. This type of parenting style seems to be the sole regulating powers in their children life by using punishment. Even they seldom explain the reasoning behind the formulations of the rules and regulations. (Baumrind, 1991; Shield, 2008; Marwandwairy, et al, 2006).

Conversely, the permissive parent is characterized as warm, high nurturance, responsive and low in parental control. Permissive parents believe on their children's autonomy and enable them to make their own decisions and regulate their own activities. They avoid confrontation and tend to be warm and supportive (Marwandwairy, et al 2006). Permissive parenting tends to have good nurturing skills and exercise moderate parental control to allow the child to become progressively more autonomous (Baumrind, 1991; Reitman et al., 2002). Children reared in this style are not completely restricted but rather are allowed a reasonable degree of latitude in their behavior. Some studies (Baumrind, 1991; Reitman et al., 2002) stated that the parents who follow the permissive style tend to be moderate to high, whereas their control of their children is poor (Baumrind, 1991; Reitman et al., 2002). Marwandwairy et al (2006) stated that the authoritative parenting style has been associated with positive outcomes in terms of the children's psychosocial development. Numerous studies showed that children of authoritative parents have a high level of self-esteem and tend to be self-reliant, self-controlled, secure, popular, and inquisitive (Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, & Wenar, 1994). They manifest fewer psychological and behavioural problems than youth having authoritarian or permissive parents (Lamborn, Mants, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991).

The study argued that women education and work to perceive an influence on their parenting style and condition. A number of studies (Marwandwairy, et al 2006) supported to the view that maternal work conditions are expected to affect children's development indirectly through its effect on parenting styles or other aspects of family processes. A study was conducted by Marwandwairy, et al (2006) were conducted in Arab countries showed that more educated mothers were less authoritarian and controlling than less educated parents in these countries. However, some other factors socioeconomic condition also influences the parenting styles and practices. It is reported that mothers of a higher socioeconomic level tend to be more authoritative and encouraging of their children's independence than lower socioeconomic-level mothers. The study, therefore, attempts to examine parenting style and satisfaction among working women those who have high socio-economic conditions in terms of education and income.

## **3. RESARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Baling, Kedah. In Kedah, a total of ten villages have been selected for data collection. Participants consist of working women who have children under 15 years old. A total of hundred working women were selected as the respondents using purposive sampling method. Working women who work for an average of 32 hours per week and age ranged between 22-40 years old were considered as the respondents. This age range is chosen because women older than 40 years old would have a different adjustment level (e.g., Helson & Wink, 1992). In contrast, women in the early age of 20s would face difficulty in balancing the demands of multiple roles as mothers, wives and as workers (Hurlock, 1992). Data has been collected through questionnaires and the in-depth interview. Questionnaires were handed to each respondent and depth interviews were conducted directly to each respondent by the researchers. The variables were measured using 17 statements using Anchored scale ranging from 1=strongly Agree 5=Strongly Disagree. Since this was a descriptive study frequency, standard deviation, mean and percentages were largely used in this study.

#### 4. RESEULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

##### 4.1 PARENTING STYLES AND DIMENSIONS

This section denoted parenting styles and dimensions among women working women at Baling, Kedah in Malaysia. In this section questions were formulated related to responding to children’s need, encouraging children to do things from their own, allowing children to share their problem, building secure and warm relationship with children, maintaining discipline, reacting children’s good and bad behaviors, formulating physical punishment and making judgment in children’s achievement. The results (Table 1) show that majority of working women (94% strongly agree) respond to their children needs. Similarly, most of them (85% strongly agree) always take their children’s desire into consideration especially when their children want to do something from their own.

**Table 1: Parenting Styles and Dimensions among Working Women**

Statement		Strongly agree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
I always response to my children needs.	F	94	3	3	100	1.09	0.379
	%	94.00	3.00	3.00	100.0		
I always take my children’s desire into consideration when they want to do something by their own.	F	85	8	7	100	1.22	0.561
	%	85.00	8.00	7.00	100.0		
I always encourage my children to discuss about his/her problems.	F	78	9	13	100	1.35	0.702
	%	78.00	9.00	13.00	100.0		
I always respect my children’s opinion.	F	72	12	16	100	1.44	0.756
	%	72.00	12.00	16.00	100.0		
I have a warm and secure relationship with my children.	F	73	7	20	100	1.57	0.868
	%	73.00	7.00	20.00	100.0		
I optimistic about the choices that made by my children.	F	56	26	18	100	1.62	0.776
	%	56.00	26.00	18.00	100.0		
I always follow discipline among my children.	F	82	15	3	100	1.21	0.478
	%	82.00	15.00	3.00	100.0		
I always give the reason to my children about they should to follow discipline.	F	58	30	12	100	1.54	0.702
	%	58.00	30.00	12.00	100.0		
I always explain on how I feel about my children’s good and bad behaviors.	F	50	32	18	100	1.68	0.764
	%	50.00	32.00	18.00	100.0		
I always use physical punishment if my children do not follow discipline.	F	58	20	22	100	1.64	0.823
	%	58.00	20.00	22.00	100.0		
I always explore anger toward my children.	F	49	29	22	100	1.73	0.802
	%	49.00	29.00	22.00	100.0		
I always slap your children when they misbehave.	F	46	29	25	100	1.79	0.820
	%	46.00	29.00	25.00	100.0		

Even a large number of working women (78% strongly agree) respect their children’s opinion. This is due to fact that working women always encourage their children to be independent. A recent study was conducted by Sultana, A. M., & Zanariah, N. (2012) on the impact of mother’s employment on their children. The authors stated that working mothers always encourage their children to become independent so that their children can do everything from their own.

However, most of working women (73% strongly agree) are able to mange secure and warm relationship with their children. Previous study (Sultana, A. M., & Zanariah, N. 2012) also supported that although working mothers were not able to spend longer time with their children, they could manage secure and warm relationship with them. A similar study was conducted by Tracey et al (2003) on mothers’ employment on family relationship. The authors stated that mothers’ employment had important beneficial effects on their relationships with their children and with their partner. Mothers’ employment is seen as helping them to meet their children’s emotional, developmental, social and material needs. Moreover, in this study most of working women (83%) follow discipline in dealing with their children. The possible reason is that discipline is an effective tool for working mother to manage their children, family and responsibility. Even it is also noted that a moderate number of respondents (58% strongly agree) make physical punishment if their children do not follow discipline. Some respondents (49% &46% strongly agree respectively) explore anger and slap toward their children when children misbehave. The possible reasons for such type of situation can be explained the multiple role that played by working women. In general, working women face difficulty and stress in balancing the demands of multiple roles as mothers, wives and as worker. In some cases, these might be explored as the anger towards their children.

#### 4.2 PARENTAL SATISFACTION

This section assessed parental satisfaction among working women using a total of six statements. Results are presented in Table 2 revealed that majority of the working women (86 strongly agree and 14 percent strongly disagree respectively) satisfied with the amount of time they spend for their children. Mean and standard deviation for this statement are found 1.14 and 0.349 respectively. Similarly, in the second statement, a large number of respondents (79% strongly agree and 10 % strongly disagree respectively) are satisfied since they feel that their children always contribute to their happiness. Mean and standard deviation for the second statement are recorded 1.32 and 0.665 respectively. Whilst a moderate number of respondents (63% strongly agree and 6% strongly disagree respectively) believe that their children always obey them. From the results discussed above, indeed to say that most of working women were satisfied with the amount of time they spent for their children and as well as the satisfactory behaviors they received from their children.

**Table 2: Parental Satisfaction Scale**

Statement		Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am satisfied with the amount of time I give to your children.	F	86	14	0	100	1.14	0.349
	%	86.00	14.00	0.00	100.0		
I am satisfied since my children always contribute to my happiness.	F	69	13	18	100	1.68	0.920
	%	69.00	13.00	18.00	100.0		
I am satisfied that my children always obey me.	F	63	6	31	100	1.39	0.549
	%	63.00	6.00	31.00	100.0		
I am satisfied the way I train my children to follow discipline.	F	64	33	3	100	1.56	0.858
	%	64.00	33.00	3.00	100.0		
I am satisfied as my children consider me as a good parent.	F	56	32	12	100	1.64	0.882
	%	56.00	32.00	12.00	100.0		

In general, due to heavy workload , working mothers may face difficulty in managing time for their children, but the present study found a highest number of respondents being satisfied with their spending time for their children. However, following discipline by working women can be considered as the effective tools that assist them to manage quality of time for their children despite their heavy workload. A recent study was conducted by Sultana, A. M (2012) on stress and work family conflict among married women in their families supported this view. The study showed that highest numbers of working women follow discipline as the effective step in balancing both work and children affairs. This can be noted in the next statements. Most of working women (64% strongly agree) were satisfied the way they train their children to follow discipline. Even some working women (56% agree) were satisfied since they are considered as the good parents by their children.

#### 4.3 PARENTAL STYLE AND PARENTING SATISFACTION AMONG WORKING WOMEN: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

In order to examine parenting style and parenting satisfaction among working women, the in-depth interviews were conducted with a small number of respondents. Majority of working women believed that they contribute to their children’s development by their earning salaries. However, in the depth interview respondents were asked, “Do you think that you are able to follow an effective parenting style by contributing your money to your children’s education, nutrition and other investment?” One participant stated the following statement:

*“As a working woman I am satisfied as I contribute my earnings to my children’s future. I’m satisfied with my salary that helped me to support my family as well as to follow an effective parenting style.”*

Participant two shared the following statement:

*“I think my employment as a teacher has a positive impact on my parenting style. I started my teaching when I was pregnant. I feel that my son’s IQ is quite different from other children in the same age. He can do many things by his own. He acts like an adult and tries to help his friends. I think my employment has an impact on my sons advance development.”*

Similar opinion was noticed in the third participant. The participant said,

*“Most of my friends are lecturers. When my child demonstrates certain behavior I would consult them. Myself from the counseling department, and some of my friends from special education and early childhood education, I’ve learnt a lot from them how to handle my child. I would ask them if I don’t know about something. Sometimes, we do share information about interesting places that we should visit with our family.”*

From above statement it can be said that working women follow disciplines that help them to manage family as well as job responsibility. Moreover, this has an important impact on their parenting style as children of these parents are organized and independent.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study examined parenting styles and parenting satisfaction among working women in their families. The results showed that most of women follow permissive parenting style in dealing with their children. They believe on children's autonomy and enable them to do many things from their own. They do not follow completely restricted style in rearing their children. Therefore, they are able to build a secure and warm relationship with their children. Moreover, the findings showed that despite the heavy workload, working women are satisfied with the time they are able to spend for their children. The in-depth interviews findings also showed that majority of working women were satisfied to follow an effective parenting style by contributing their intellectual and financial resources to their children education, nutrition and intellectual development. The study suggests that women contribute in various ways to child development. Given the importance and demands of maternal work that help them to follow an effective parenting style, especially among low-income mothers, the study suggests the implication of family friendly policy and its practice that supports the involvement of working women in their children's development. Furthermore, the study was limited to working women at Kedah state of Malaysia only; therefore, the results of this study could not be generalized to a broader scope.

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