



## WORKING MOTHERS AS MENTOR TOWARDS THEIR SINGLE CHILD AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF THE CHILD- AN ANALYSIS

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### **Abstract**

*India follows the age old joint family system for centuries. In recent years after India's independence the traditional joint family system has slowly got diluted due to socio economic influences. And today most of the families are nuclear type especially in urban India, for the comfortable, sophisticated and self sufficient livelihood and most of the parents in the nuclear family opt for single child generally due to the of lack elders support and care and this has become challenge for the mentorship of the child especially with working mothers. The study aims to understand the kind of mentorship provided by the Working mothers when the child is adamant, aggressive and speaks to mind, the occasion that makes the child feels lonely and attitude of the working mothers towards their child's social behavior. Primary source of data as collected through the interview schedule from 200 working mothers in educational institutions using purposive sampling method in the Coimbatore District of Tamilnadu. The results conclude that the mothers help the child to realize of what the child speaks and when the child is adamant, that they correct the child just because they want their child to excel and they should not feel guilty in front of their family members/ friends/ relatives. The mother's attitude towards the behavior of child is appreciable in terms of its social relationship both in joint and nuclear family.*

**Key Words:** *Working Mothers, Social Behaviour, Mentorship, Parental Care.*

### **Introduction**

In recent years smaller family size is the global phenomenon to control the population for any nation's sustainable development. The awareness on issues due to large family size, economic consideration, social identity, education etc., has resulted to the increase in the preference of single child in many countries. Economy becomes the great reason for the adoption of only child in many families. According to the report of the Guttmacher Institute- a leading reproductive-health research organization, 64% of women polled said that with the economy the way it is, they couldn't afford to have a baby. Forty-four percent said they plan to reduce or delay their childbearing - again, because of the economy (Lauren Sandler 2010).

Single child are often stigmatized, in western countries only children are often the subject of a stereotype that equates them with "spoiled brats". Even today, only children are commonly stereotyped as "spoiled, selfish, and bratty". In China, perceived behavioral problems in only children has been called the Little Emperor Syndrome and the lack of siblings has been blamed for a number of social ills such as materialism and crime. The latest research by Cameron et al. (2011) controls for endogeneity associated with being only children. Parents that choose to have only one child could differ systematically in their characteristics from parents who choose to have more than one child. The paper concludes that "those who grew up as only children as a consequence of the (one-child) policy (in China) are found to be less trusting, less trustworthy, less likely to take risks, and less competitive than if they had had siblings. They are also less optimistic, less conscientious, and more prone to neuroticism".

However, some of the recent studies do not support these claims, and show no significant differences in personality between only children and children in larger families and are considered as myths. Bill McKibben (1998) in his book *Maybe One*, argues that most cultural stereotypes are false, that there are not many differences between only children and other children, and where there are differences; they are favorable to the only child. Aside from scoring significantly better in achievement motivation, only children score significantly better in personal adjustment to new situations. Only children are also more likely to make outside friends, whereas children with siblings tend to be "more parochial and limited in their understanding of a variety of social roles".

Fiona Macrae (2010) observed from various research studies that only children have just as many friends as other youngsters. While growing up without brothers and sisters may leave children awkward and tongue-tied initially, by the time they start secondary school they are as socially adept as classmates from bigger families. Only children get ample opportunity to learn about getting along with others as they grow up. Participation in sports, along with membership of the Scouts, Guides and other youth groups can all help them learn the art of give and take – and of being a good friend. Child with no peer interaction at home with siblings gets a lot of opportunities to develop social skills as they go through school. Also the author found that many studies have shown that a lack of young company at home drives only children to build strong friendships



outside the family. They may also have higher self-esteem, perhaps because they do not have to deal with sibling rivalry and are made to feel special by their parents.

### **Statement of the Problem**

India follows the age old joint family system for centuries. In recent years after India's independence the traditional joint family system has slowly got diluted due to socio economic influences. And today, most of the families are nuclear type especially in urban India, for the comfortable, sophisticated and self sufficient livelihood. Most of the parents in the nuclear family go for single child where they lack elders support and care. In recent years studies have found that in the Indian family structure there is an evolutionary change in child rearing, socialization, social relationship and psychological behavior of the child. This bothers the traditional collectivist society that emphasizes family integrity, family loyalty, and family unity.

### **Methodology**

The study is confined to those working mothers in professional organizations with single child (either male or female) and aims to understand the kind of mentorship provided by the working mothers when the child is adamant, aggressive and speaks to its mind. Analysis has also been carried out on the occasions that make the child feels lonely and attitude of the working mothers towards their child's social behaviour. Primary source of data was collected through the interview schedules from 200 working mothers in educational institutions using purposive sampling method in the Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu. The information collected was restricted to first living children among the working mothers. Simple percentage and cross tabulation are the tools used to analyze the data in various dimensions towards working woman's attitude towards their child.

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

The study is pertained to mothers who are working professionals with graduations and support their family with their income. These working mothers have either single male or single female child. In the study there are 111 female children and 89 male children and found that they are unmarried. The mean age of the male child of the working mothers is 4.3 years and female child is 6.4 years. The educational status varied for both male and female child. The mean educational status of the male child is 1.2 years of schooling and 3.9 for female child. Family type was observed that as high as 63.5 per cent of the children live in nuclear family and the remaining 36.5 per cent of them live in joint family.

The parental care for the child differs to individual mothers who are influenced by time, space and social set up. In the study since the respondents are working mothers the above said factors could influence them much. Keeping those in state, kind of relationship the working mothers have towards their child was probed and the characters of mothers raised are friendly, strict, flexible and jovial. The analysis in table 1 inferred that out of total 200 working mothers 79 persons said that they are friendly with their child. Out of which in the nuclear family 49 person stated that they are friendly towards their child and among 73 working mothers in Joint family as high as 30 persons stated that they are friendly towards their child. In another 50 total women who stated that they are flexible towards their child 25 each of them are from nuclear and as well as in joint family. Followed by in nuclear family another 23 women stated that they are friendly, strict, flexible and also jovial towards the child since they are the only mentors at home which was not so in joint family. The chi square test shows significance at .002 per cent level in the kind of relationship that the mothers have towards the child in nuclear family and in joint family.

Behavior of the child is built based on its family and social relationship. An analysis was done to understand the kind of mentorship provided by the mother when the child is aggressive and speaks to its mind. In table 2 it was inferred that when the child speaks to her mind, among total 200 working mothers 80 persons stated that they help the child to realize of what the child speaks; out of which more than three fourths (81.2 per cent) of the women are from nuclear family and 18.8 per cent of them are from joint family. Another 41 working mothers stated that they correct the child just because they should not feel guilty in front of their family members/ friends/ relatives. Among those 51.2 per cent are from nuclear family and 48.8 per cent of them are from joint family. Similar difference is found in all the other characters too and shows a significant difference.

Mothers reaction towards the child differs based on their emotion, time and space. Table 3 gives the information on reaction of the working mothers' viz. they stop the child at once by fulfilling its need, convince the child, and leave the child to husband, and never bother and leave the child on its way. It was inferred that in both the nuclear and joint family as high as 68.5 per cent of them convince the child when the child goes adamant and there is no significant difference among the nuclear and joint family.



The single child in a family with no siblings or cousins feel lonely and have longing for companion during various occasions to share their emotions is explained in table 4. It was observed that during festival or in any family gatherings the working mothers in 31.0 per cent of the total cases expressed that their child feels lonely on such occasions, among those 37.0 per cent of them are in nuclear family and 20.5 per cent of them are in joint family. In another 25.5 per cent of the total cases the respondents stated that the child feels lonely in most of the days when the child comes back after the school at home in the evenings. This was found high in nuclear family with 32.3 per cent. In the 19.5 per cent of the cases women stated that the child feels lonely while the family goes for purchases for the child and in 14.5 per cent of the total cases the child feels lonely when it finds the neighborhood children with siblings and here too it is high in nuclear family with 18.9 per cent. Thus there is a significant difference between the joint family and nuclear family, in the nuclear family the child craves for its siblings or friends during the celebrations and while they come back from schools.

Being the single child in a family, the child's social behavior differs not only with their friends, but also with relatives, neighbours and towards the society. In general, in the Indian society mother is considered to be the vital person in mentoring the child and she is the prime person in the family to observe the behavior of the child in various aspects. The table 5 indicates the attitude of the mother towards the child behavior in various social conditions both in nuclear and joint family. In the nuclear family among 127 respondents nearly half of the working mothers (42.5 per cent) agree towards the statement that their child is friendly with the neighbours, among the 73 working mothers in joint family almost 74.5 per cent of them strongly agrees towards the statement and there is a significant difference at .00 levels. For the statement the child makes lot of friends in school and at home, the attitude of the mother towards the child behavior evidenced that 61.4 per cent in nuclear family and 46.6 per cent in joint family strongly agrees towards the statement and shows the significant difference at .02 levels. Only in 9 cases the working mothers in the nuclear family disagreed to the statement. Similarly the attitude of the mother towards the statements child adjust with her friends, child never shares things with her friends and child try to imitate its friends behavior shows the significant difference among nuclear and joint families. Though there is a significant difference among nuclear and joint family, the mother's attitude towards the behavior of child is appreciable in terms of its social relationship both in joint and nuclear family.

### Conclusion

In the present Indian scenario parenting a single child has become common among families, the studies have shown that the child becomes nostalgia and isolated in many situations and mentorship of a single child with a socially acceptable behavior by many parents becomes challenging. In the study both in nuclear and in joint family the working mothers are friendly, flexible and also jovial towards their child and thereby encouraging the child to have better relationship with them. They are also strict sometime to control and regulate the deviant behavior. In both nuclear family and joint family the kind of mentorship provided by the mother when the child is aggressive and speaks to its mind is that they help the child to realize of what the child speaks and they correct the child just because they should not feel guilty in front of their family members/ friends/ relatives. When the child is adamant working mothers in both nuclear and joint family convince the child. It is concluded that in the nuclear family the child craves for its siblings or friends during the celebrations and also while they come back from schools. When it comes to the mother's attitude towards the behavior of child in terms of its social relationship felt appreciable both in joint and nuclear family.

**Table 1. Working Mother's Kind of Relationship with their Child**

Characteristics	Nuclear Family		Joint Family		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Not Answered	20	71.4	8	29.6	28	100.0
Friendly	49	62.0	30	38.0	79	100.0
Strict	5	50.0	5	50.0	10	100.0
Flexible	25	50.0	25	50.0	50	100.0
Jovial	5	50.0	5	50.0	10	100.0
All	23	100.0	--	--	23	100.0
	Chi Square Value		19.56; .002			



**Table 2. Working Mother's Reaction When Child Speaks its Mind**

Characteristics	Nuclear Family		Joint Family		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Not Answered	--	--	5	100.0	5	100.0	
Accept as the child is small	17	54.8	14	45.2	31	100.0	
Fear & try to change her mind	10	66.7	5	33.3	15	100.0	
Correct them so that other don't feel bad	21	51.2	20	48.8	41	100.0	
Help the child to realize	65	81.2	15	18.8	80	100.0	
All	14	50.0	14	50.0	28	100.0	
		Chi Square Value		25.51; .000			

**Table 3. Working Mother's Reaction When the Child is Adamant**

Respondent's Reaction	Nuclear Family		Joint Family		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Stop at once by fulfilling the need	8	6.3	5	6.8	13	6.5	
Convince the child	87	68.5	50	68.5	137	68.5	
Leave the child to husband	10	7.9	5	6.8	15	7.5	
Never bother and leave the child on its way	22	17.3	13	17.8	35	17.5	
Total	127	100.0	73	100.0	200	100.0	
		Chi Square Value		.093; .993			

**Table 4. Various Occasions that the Child Feels Lonely**

Various Occasions	Nuclear Family		Joint Family		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
During festival/gatherings	47	37.0	15	20.5	62	31.0	
Neighbours with sibling	24	18.9	5	6.8	29	14.5	
When child comes back from school	41	32.3	10	13.7	51	25.5	
While purchase of dress or toys for child	5	3.9	34	46.6	39	19.5	
None of the above	10	7.9	9	12.3	19	9.5	
Total	127	100.0	73	100.0	200	100.0	
		Chi Square Value		59.15; .000			

**Table 5. Attitude of the Respondents towards the Child's Social Behavior**

Social Behaviour of the Child	Nuclear Family					Joint Family				
	SDA*	DA*	No Opinion	Agree	SA*	SDA*	DA*	No Opinion	Agree	SA*
Friendly with neighbours	8 (6.3)	4 (3.1)	13 (10.2)	54 (42.5)	48 (37.8)	---	5 (6.8)	9 (12.3)	5 (6.8)	54 (74.0)
Chi Square Value: 38.082; .000										
Makes lot of	---	9	5	35	78	---	---	10	29	34



friends in school and at home		(7.1)	(3.9)	(27.6)	(61.4)			(13.7)	(39.7)	(46.6)
	Chi Square Value: 15.03; .002									
Teacher complaints often due to naughty and adamant	---	52 (40.9)	29 (22.8)	19 (15.0)	27 (21.3)	---	30 (41.1)	20 (27.4)	14 (19.2)	9 (12.3)
	Chi Square Value: 2.948; .400									
More friendly to teachers	----	19 (15.0)	23 (18.1)	52 (40.9)	33 (26.0)	---	9 (12.3)	10 (13.7)	30 (41.1)	24 (32.9)
	Chi Square Value: 1.549; .671									
Child adjust with her friends	----	5 (3.9)	14 (11.0)	85 (66.9)	23 (18.1)	---	---	15 (20.5)	30 (41.1)	28 (38.4)
	Chi Square Value: 18.605; .000									
Child never shares things with her friends	--	99 (78.0)	24 (18.9)	4 (3.1)	---	---	25 (34.2)	25 (34.2)	19 (26.0)	4 (5.5)
	Chi Square Value: 46.79; .000									
Child try to imitate its friends behaviour	--	84 (66.1)	19 (15.0)	14 (11.0)	10 (7.9)	---	34 (46.6)	25 (34.2)	14 (19.2)	--
	Chi Square Value: 18.795; .000									
Shares to mother about the day or interactions with friends	--	--	19 (15.0)	56 (44.1)	52 (40.9)	--	5 (6.8)	15 (20.5)	24 (32.9)	29 (39.7)
	Chi Square Value: 11.025; .012									

Note: Percentages are in the parenthesis

\* SDA – Strongly Disagree, DA- Disagree, SA-Strongly Agree,

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