

A Comparative Study to Assess the Emotional Problems Among Children of Employed and Unemployed Mothers Studying in Selected Secondary Schools at Puducherry

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Emotional problems in children are increasing globally and are influenced by various familial and environmental factors. Maternal employment plays a significant role in shaping emotional development and behavior in children.

Objective: To assess and compare the emotional problems among children of employed and unemployed mothers studying in selected secondary schools at Puducherry.

Methods: A quantitative descriptive comparative research design was adopted. The study was conducted among 100 children aged 12–15 years selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of demographic variables and Emotion Regulation Questionnaire.

Results: The study findings revealed that both groups demonstrated high levels of cognitive reappraisal. The mean cognitive reappraisal score among children of employed mothers was 32.16 ± 4.38 , whereas among unemployed mothers it was 34.06 ± 4.897 . The mean expressive suppression score was 13.28 ± 4.357 for employed mothers and 13.64 ± 4.174 for unemployed mothers. Children of employed mothers showed comparatively lower emotional suppression. **Conclusion:** Maternal employment status influences emotional regulation patterns in children. Early identification and parental awareness are essential to reduce emotional problems and improve child mental health outcomes.

Keywords: Emotional problems, children, employed mothers, unemployed mothers, cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Childhood is a crucial period marked by rapid emotional and psychological development. Emotional stability during this phase determines the future personality, behavior, and social adjustment of an individual. Emotional problems among children include anxiety, aggression, fear, mood disturbances, and behavioral disorders that interfere with daily functioning.

Family environment plays a central role in shaping emotional well-being. Among all family members, the mother is the primary caregiver who directly influences emotional growth, security, and coping ability of the child. In modern society, increasing numbers of mothers are employed, leading to changes in parenting patterns and time spent with children.

Children of employed mothers may develop independence and adaptive coping mechanisms, but may also experience reduced supervision and emotional interaction. Conversely, children of unemployed mothers may receive more attention but may also be exposed to financial stress and overprotection.

Globally, nearly 20% of children experience emotional and behavioral problems. In India, changing socio-economic conditions and family structures have increased the risk of such issues. Hence, comparing emotional problems among children of employed and unemployed mothers is essential for developing targeted interventions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

“A COMPARATIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS AMONG CHILDREN OF EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED MOTHERS STUDYING IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS AT PUDUCHERRY.”

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To assess the emotional problems among children of employed and unemployed mothers.

- To compare the emotional problems among the children of employed mothers and unemployed mothers.
- To associate the emotional problems among the children of the employed mothers and unemployed mothers with their selected demographic variables.

II. METHODOLOGY:

The research approach used for the study was quantitative research approach. A descriptive research design was adapted for the present study. By using purposive sampling technique among 100 children were selected for the present study. The period of data collection was one week. The total consists of demographic data, structured questionnaire too was used. The outcome of the study was evaluated by using **descriptive and inferential statistics**.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Children whose mother are willing or not willing.
- Children at the age of 13 to 15 years.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH TOOL

SECTION A – Demographic Variables

Demographic variable includes Name, Age, Sex, Mothers occupation, Fathers occupation, Type of job, Socio economic status, Type of family

SECTION B – Description of the Tool Used

Standardized questionnaires given to assess the emotional problems on the level of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression among the children of employed and unemployed mothers.

SCORING INTERPRETATION

Sl. No	Score Range (0-100)	STAGES
1.	0-33	Low Knowledge
2.	34-66	Moderate Knowledge
3.	67-100	Adequate Knowledge

Each correct response was assigned a score of **one**, and each incorrect response was assigned a score of **zero**. The total score obtained was used to determine the level of emotional problems among children of employed and unemployed mothers

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Section A: Description of demographic variables of the children of employed mothers and unemployed mothers.

Section B: Assessment of the emotional problems among children of employed mothers and unemployed mothers.

Section C: Comparison of emotional problems among children of employed mothers and unemployed mothers.

Section D: Association of the level of knowledge regarding food hygiene among the employees with selected demographic variables.

Table 1.1: Table 1.1: Distribution of children according to age, gender, birth order, religion of employed mothers.

(N=50)			
S. No	Demographic variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Age		
	a) 12-14 years	50	100
	b) 15-17 years	0	0
	c) More than 18	0	0
2	Gender		
	a) Male	21	42
	b) Female	29	58
3	Birth order		
	a) First born	21	42
	b) Middle born	18	36
	c) Last born	11	22
4	Religion		
	a) Hindu	49	98
	b) Muslim	0	0
	c) Christian	1	2

Table 1: shows that all children (100%) were aged 12–14 years. Among them, 58% were female and 42% were male. Most were first-born (42%), followed by middle-born (36%) and last-born (22%). The majority belonged to Hindu religion (98%), with 2% Christian and none Muslim.

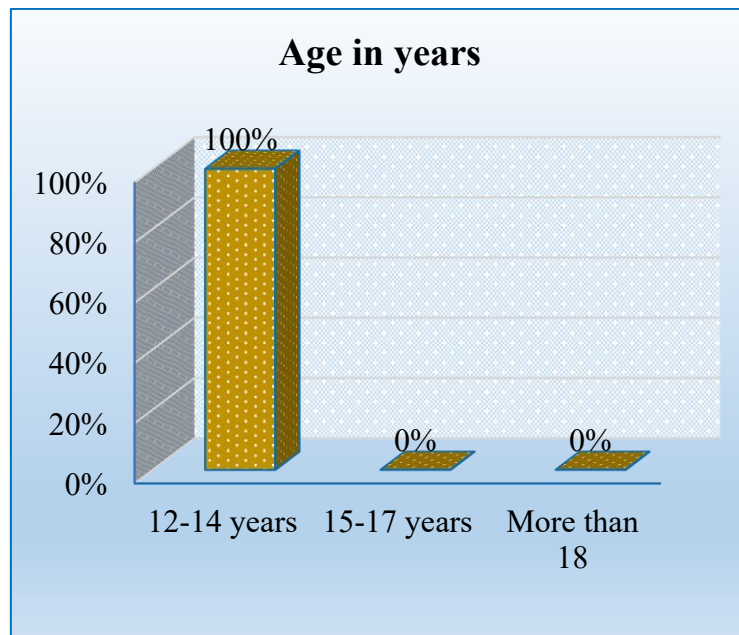


Figure 1: Percentage wise distribution of children of employed mothers according to their age.

The bar diagram shows that the percentage wise distribution of children of employed mothers according to their age, the data shows that the majority 100% were in 12-14 years.

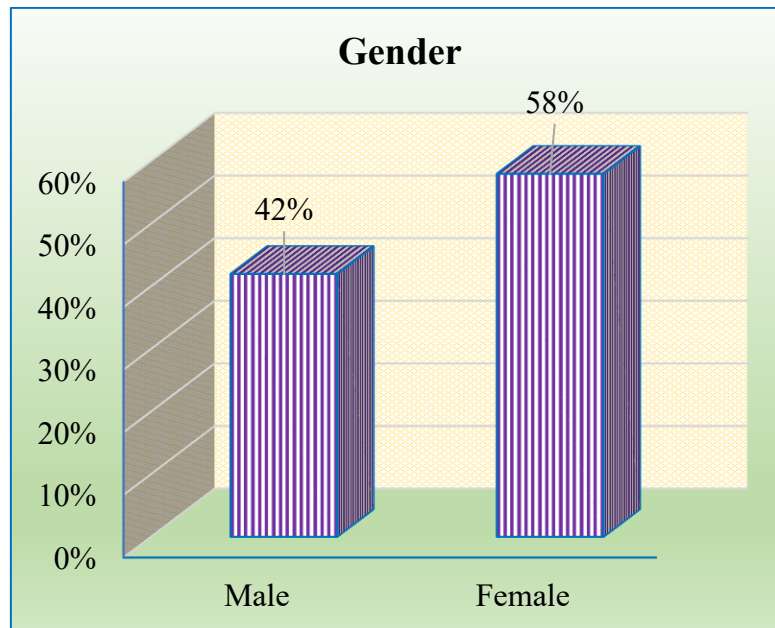


Figure 2: Percentage wise distribution of children of employed mothers according to their Gender

The bar diagram shows that, percentage wise distribution of children of employed mothers according to their Gender the data shows that majority 58% were female and 42% were male.

Table 2.2: Distribution of children according to father's education, father's job type, mother's education of unemployed mothers.

N= 50			
1.	Father's Education		
	a) Illiterate	2	4
	b) Primary School	17	34
	c) Secondary School	24	48
	d) Graduate	7	14
2.	Father's job type		
	a) Government Job	1	2
	b) Private job	31	62
	c) Agriculture	13	26
	d) Unemployed	5	10
3.	Mother's Education		
	a) Illiterate	4	8
	b) Primary School	17	34
	c) Secondary School	25	50
	d) Graduate	4	8

Table 2.2 provides the frequency and percentage distribution of additional demographic variables for children of unemployed mothers (N=50). Regarding the father's job type, 62% are employed in private jobs, 26% work in agriculture, 2% hold government jobs, and 10% are unemployed. In terms of the father's education, 4% are illiterate, 34% have completed primary school, 48% have attended secondary school, and 14% are graduates. For the mother's education, 8% are illiterate, 34% have completed primary school, 50% have attended secondary school, and 8% are graduates.

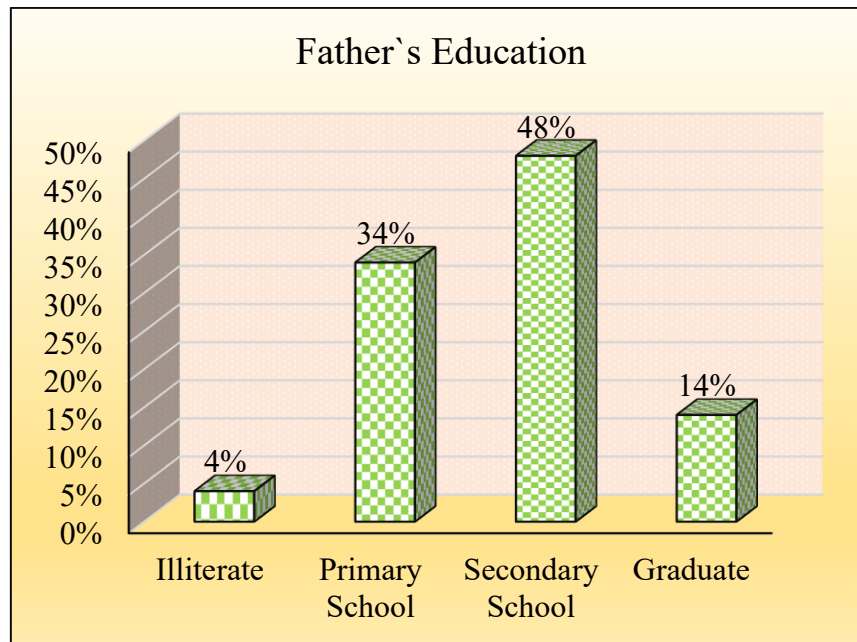


Figure 17: Percentage wise distribution of children of unemployed mothers according to their Father education

The bar diagram shows that the percentage wise distribution of children of unemployed mothers according to their Father education the data shows that the majority 48% are secondary school, 34% are primary school, 14% are graduate and 4% are illiterate.

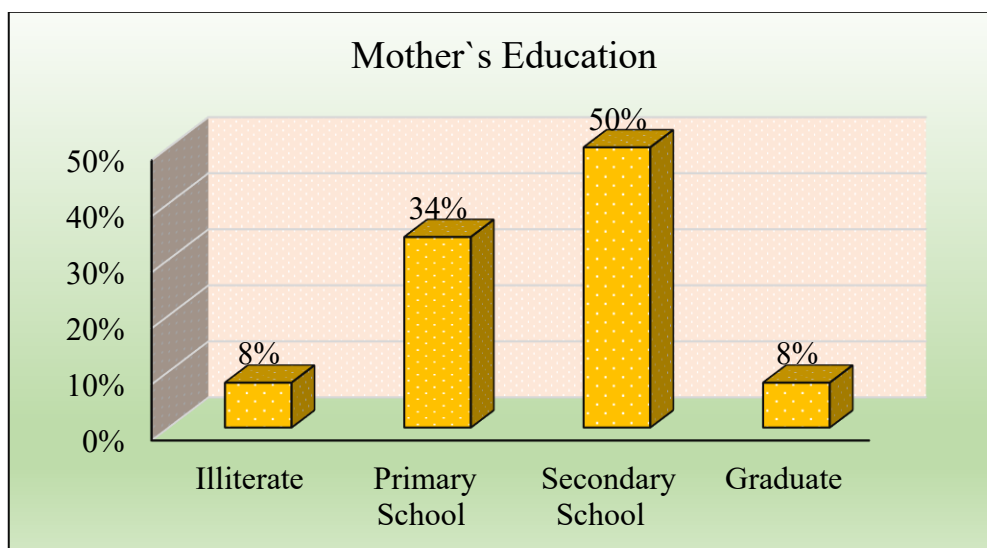


Figure 19: Percentage wise distribution of children of unemployed mothers according to their Mother's Education

The bar diagram shows that the percentage wise distribution of children of unemployed mothers according to their mothers education the data shows that the majority 50% are secondary school, 34% are primary school and 8%b are illiterate and graduate.

Table 2.3: Distribution of children according to mother's job type, family income, family structure of unemployed mothers.

N= 50			
1.	Mother's Job type		
	a) Government job	0	0
	b) Private job	0	0

	c) Agriculture	3	6
	d) Unemployed	47	94
2.	Family income		
	a) 5,000 -10,000	32	64
	b) 11,000 -20,000	13	26
	c) Above 20,000	5	10
3.	Family structure		
	Nuclear family	27	54
	Joint family	17	34
	Extended family	6	12

Table 2.3 shows that, among the children of unemployed mothers (N = 50), 94% of mothers are unemployed, while 6% are engaged in agriculture. In terms of family income, 64% of families earn between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000, 26% earn between ₹11,000 and ₹20,000, and 10% earn above ₹20,000. Regarding family structure, 54% of families are nuclear, 34% are joint, and 12% are extended.

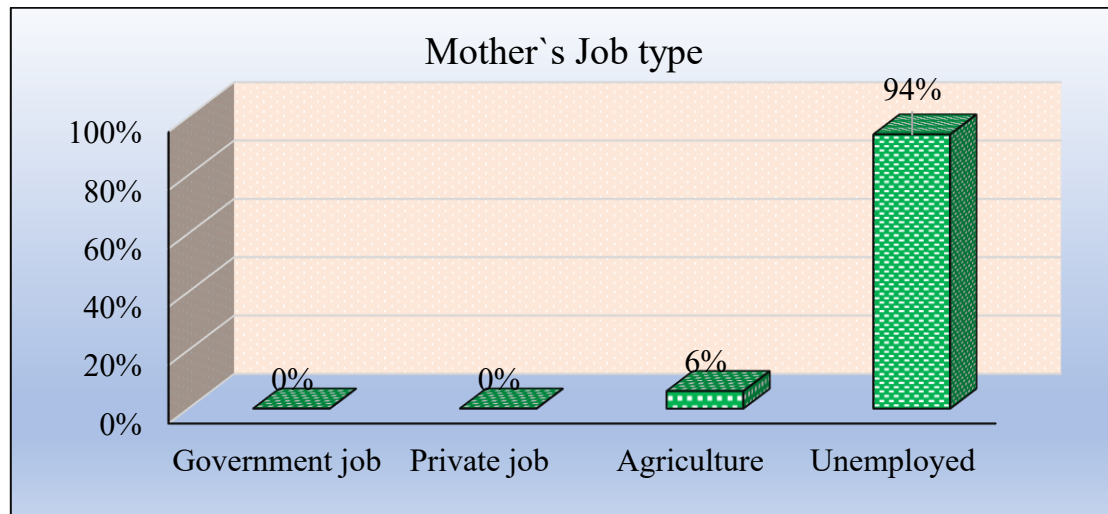


Figure 20: Percentage wise distribution of children of unemployed mothers according to their Mother's Job type

The bar diagram shows that the percentage wise distribution of children of unemployed mothers according to their mothers job type the data shows that the majority 94% were unemployed and 6% were agriculture.

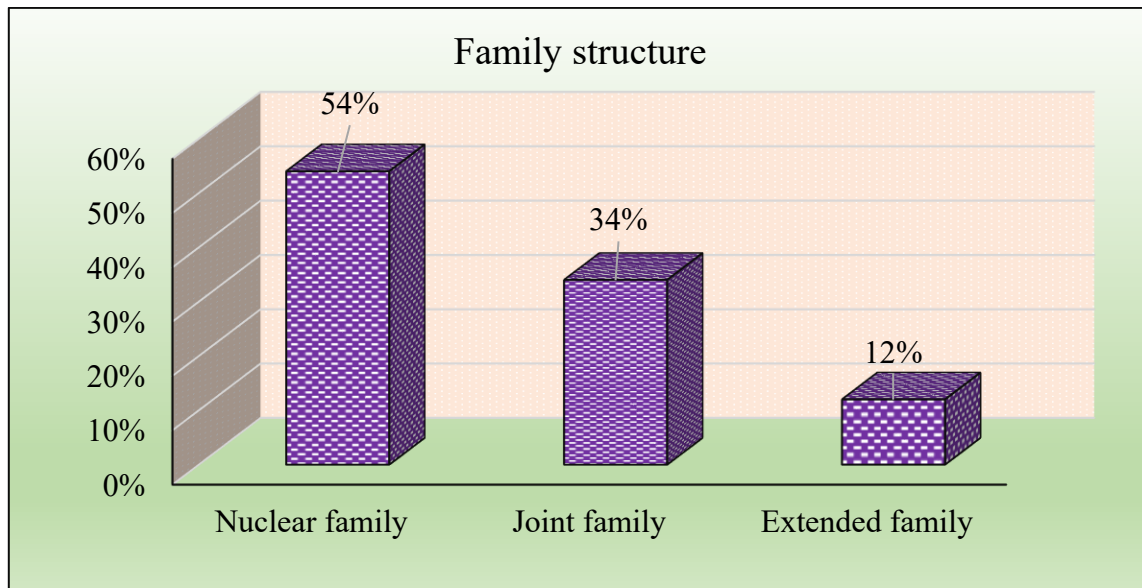


Figure 12: Percentage wise distribution of children of unemployed mothers according to their Family structure

The bar diagram shows that the percentage wise distribution of children of unemployed mothers according to their Family structure the data shows that the majority 54% are nuclear family, 34% are joint family and 12% are extended family.

Table 3.1: Level of cognitive reappraisal among children of employed mothers.

S.NO	LEVEL OF COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE %
1.	Low	0	0
2.	Moderate	17	34
3.	High	33	66

Table 3.1 outlines the frequency distribution of cognitive reappraisal levels among children of employed mothers. The results indicate that the majority of children (66%) demonstrated a high level of cognitive reappraisal, suggesting that they were largely capable of effectively reinterpreting stressful situations in a constructive manner. A smaller percentage (34%) displayed moderate cognitive reappraisal, while no participants were categorized as having low cognitive reappraisal.

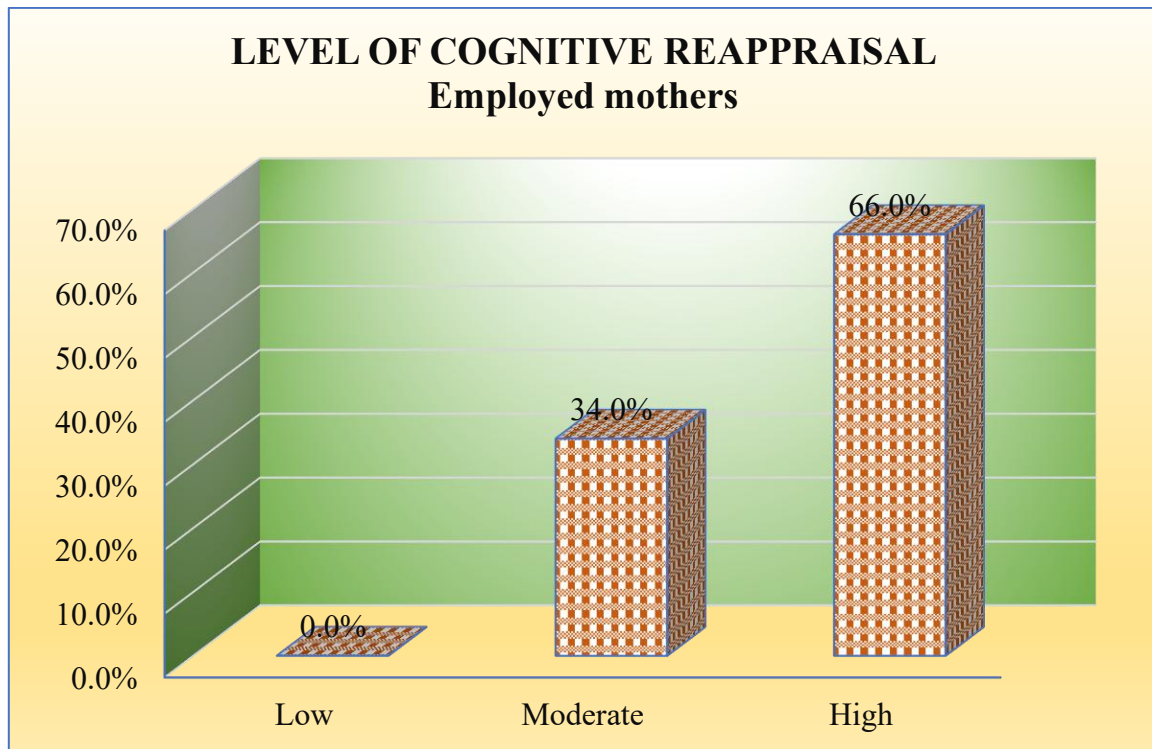


Figure 13: Percentage wise distribution of level of cognitive reappraisal among children of employed mothers.

Table 3.2: Level of expressive suppression among children of employed mothers.
N= 50

S.NO	LEVEL OF EXPRESSIVE SUPPRESSION	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE %
1.	Low	27	54
2.	Moderate	20	40
3.	High	3	6

Table 3.2 presents the frequency distribution of expressive suppression levels among children of employed mothers. A substantial proportion of children (54%) exhibited low levels of expressive suppression, indicating a reduced tendency to inhibit emotional expression. In contrast, 40% of children demonstrated moderate expressive suppression, while only 6% were classified as having high expressive suppression, reflecting a relatively lower degree of emotional inhibition within this group.

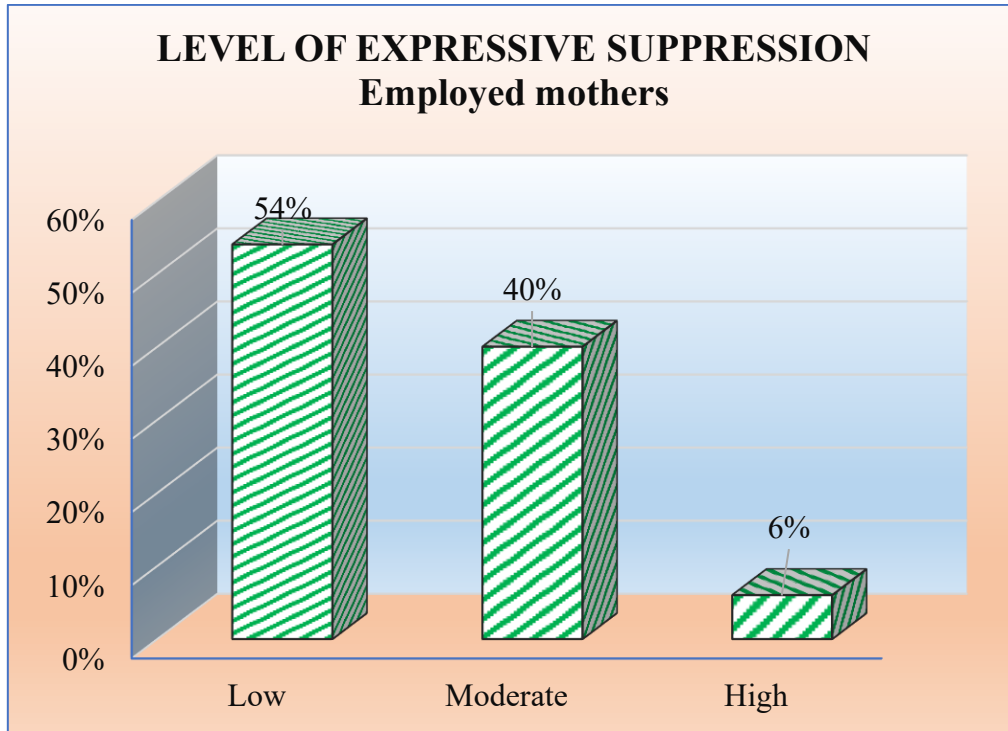


Figure 14: Percentage wise distribution of level of expressive suppression among children of employed mothers.

Table 3.4: Level of expressive suppression among children of employed mothers.

N= 50

S.NO	LEVEL OF EXPRESSIVE SUPPRESSION	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE %
1.	Low	18	36
2.	Moderate	28	56
3.	High	4	8

Table 3.4 details the distribution of expressive suppression levels among children of unemployed mothers. The findings show that a majority of children (56%) exhibited moderate levels of expressive suppression, indicating a tendency to suppress emotional expressions to some extent. Additionally, 36% of children displayed low expressive suppression, while 8% demonstrated high expressive suppression, pointing to a broader variability in emotional expression regulation among children of unemployed mothers.

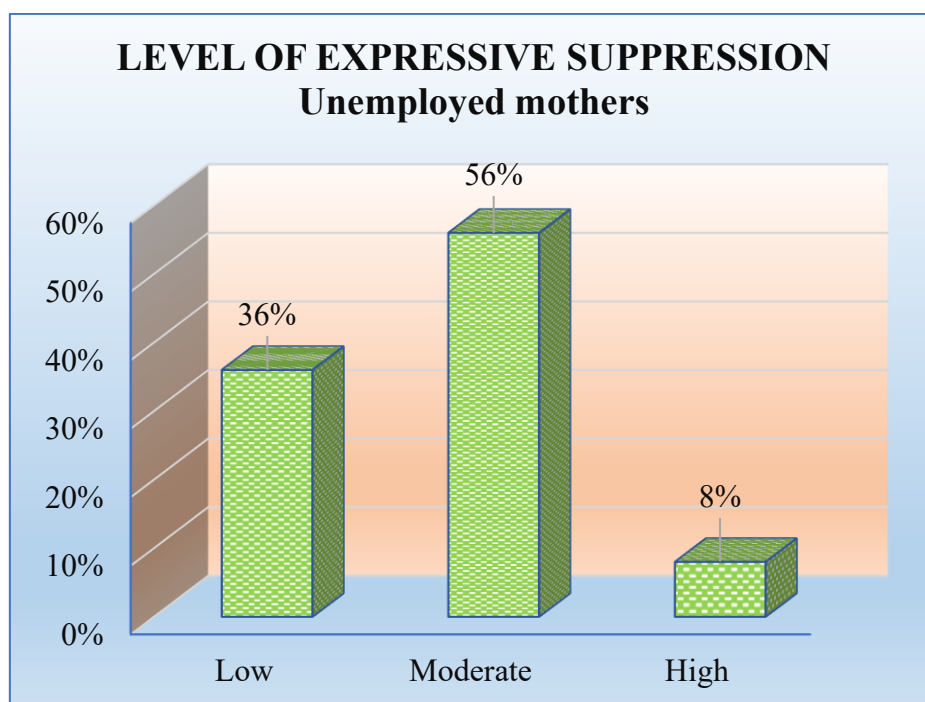


Figure 15: Percentage wise distribution of level of cognitive reappraisal among children of unemployed mothers.

Table 4: Mean and SD score of emotional problems among children of employed mothers and unemployed mothers.

S.NO	Comparison	COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL		EXPRESSIVE SUPPRESSION	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1.	Employed Mother	32.16	4.382	13.28	4.357
2.	Unemployed Mother	34.06	4.897	13.64	4.174

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation (SD) scores of emotional problems, among children of employed and unemployed mothers.

For cognitive reappraisal, the mean score for children of employed mothers was 32.16 (SD = 4.382), while the mean score for children of unemployed mothers was slightly higher at 34.06 (SD = 4.897).

In terms of expressive suppression, the mean score for children of employed mothers was 13.28 (SD = 4.357), whereas the mean score for children of unemployed mothers was 13.64 (SD = 4.174). Although the mean scores for expressive suppression were quite similar between both groups indicating a slightly greater tendency to suppress emotional expression.

Overall, these results indicate that while the mean scores for cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression were relatively close between children of employed and unemployed mothers, children of unemployed mothers showed slightly higher levels of cognitive reappraisal and marginally more expressive suppression.

Table 5.3:: Association of the Level of Expressive Suppression among children of employed mothers according to their selected demographic variable.

N = 50

S.No	Demographic Variables Unemployed	Level of Expressive Suppression						X ² value
		High		Moderate		Low		
1	Age in years	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	X ² = 1.619 Df =2 P= 0.445 (NS)
	a) 12- 14 years	2	4	11	22	21	42	
	b) 15-17 years	2	4	7	14	7	14	
	c) More than 18	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2	Gender							X ² =5.193 Df =2 P= 0.075 (NS)
	a) Male	0	0	9	18	7	14	
	b) Female	4	8	9	18	21	42	
3.	Birth order							X ² =6. 293 Df =4 P= 0.178 (NS)
	a) First born	1	2	10	20	11	22	
	b) Middle born	0	0	5	10	9	18	
	c) Last born	3	6	3	6	8	16	
4	Religion							X ² = 0.802 Df =2 P= 0.670 (NS)
	a) Hindu	4	8	18	36	27	54	
	b) Muslim	0	0	0	0	1	2	
	c) Christian	0	0	0	0	0	0	
5	Father's Education							X ² = 3.780 Df =6 P= 0.706 (NS)
	a) Illiterate	0	0	0	0	2	4	
	b) Primary School	2	4	5	10	10	20	
	c) Secondary School	2	4	9	18	13	26	
	d) Graduate	0	0	4	8	3	6	

p<0.05 - Significant; p<0.01 - Highly Significant

The above table shows that there is no significance association of age, gender, birth order, religion, father's education with Level of Expressive Suppression among children of employed mothers according to their selected demographic variable

Table 5.3: Association of the Level of Expressive Suppression among children of employed mothers according to their selected demographic variable.

6	Father's job type							X ² = 13.647 Df=6 P= 0.034 (S)*
	a) Government Job	0	0	0	0	1	2	
	b) Private job	1	2	16	32	14	28	
	c) Agriculture	3	6	2	4	8	16	

	d) Unemployed	0	0	0	0	5	10	
7	Mother's Education							$X^2 = 6.734$ Df=6 P= 0.346 (NS)
	a) Illiterate	0	0	0	0	4	8	
	b) Primary School	2	4	7	14	8	16	
	c) Secondary School	1	2	9	18	15	30	
	d) Graduate	1	2	2	4	1	2	
8	Mother's Job type							$X^2 = 0.326$ Df = 2 P= 0.849 (NS)
	a) Government job	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	b) Private job	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	c) Agriculture	0	0	1	2	2	4	
	d) Unemployed	4	8	17	34	26	52	
9	Family income							$X^2 = 1.956$ Df=6 P= 0.924 (NS)
	a) 5,000 -10,000	3	6	10	20	19	38	
	b) 11,000 -20,000	1	2	5	10	7	14	
	c) Above 20,000	0	0	3	6	2	4	
10	Family structure							$X^2 = 8.188$ Df = 6 P= 0.225 (NS)
	a) Nuclear family	1	2	9	18	17	34	
	b) Joint family	2	4	6	12	9	18	
	c) Extended family	1	2	3	6	2	4	

***p<0.05 - Significant; p<0.01 - Highly Significant**

The above table shows that there is significance association of father's job type with Level of Expressive Suppression among children of employed mothers according to their selected demographic variable.

Table 5.4: Association of the Level of Expressive Suppression among children of Unemployed mothers according to their selected demographic variable.

N = 50

S.No	Demographic Variables Employed	level of Expressive Suppression						X ² value
		High		Moderate		Low		
1	Age in years	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	K
	a) 12- 14 years	3	6	20	40	27	54	
	b) 15-17 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	c) More than 18	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2	Gender							X ² = 6.935 Df =2

	a) Male	3	6	5	10	13	26	P= 0.031 (S)*
	b) Female	0	0	15	30	14	28	
3.	Birth order							X ² = 1.065 Df=4 P= 0.900 (S)*
	a) First born	1	2	9	18	11	22	
	b) Middle born	1	2	8	16	9	18	
	c) Last born	1	2	3	6	7	14	
4	Religion							X ² = 1.531 Df=2 P= 0.465 (NS)
	a) Hindu	3	6	19	38	27	54	
	b) Muslim	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	c) Christian	0	0	1	2	0	0	
5	Father's Education							X ² = 6.813 Df=6 P= 0.338 (NS)
	a) Illiterate	0	0	1	2	2	4	
	b) Primary School	1	2	7	14	2	4	
	c) Secondary School	2	4	11	22	19	38	
	d) Graduate	0	0	1	2	4	8	

***p<0.05 - Significant; p<0.01 - Highly Significant**

The above table shows that there is significance association of gender, birth order with Level of Expressive Suppression among children of unemployed mothers according to their selected demographic variable.

Table 5.4: Association of the Level of Expressive Suppression among children of Unemployed mothers according to their selected demographic variable.

6	Father's job type							X ² = 5.799 Df=6 P= 0.446 (NS)
	a) Government Job	0	0	2	4	1	2	
	b) Private job	3	6	14	28	24	48	
	c) Agriculture	0	0	4	8	1	2	
	d) Unemployed	0	0	0	0	1	2	
7	Mother's Education							X ² = 13.136 Df=6 P= 0.041 (S)*
	a) Illiterate	1	2	0	0	1	2	
	b) Primary School	0	0	7	14	3	6	
	c) Secondary School	2	4	9	18	19	38	
	d) Graduate	0	0	4	8	4	8	
8	Mother's Job type							X ² = 4.172 Df= 4 P= 0.383 (NS)
	a) Government job	0	0	2	4	0	0	
	b) Private job	3	6	16	32	22	44	

	c) Agriculture	0	0	2	4	5	10	
	d) Unemployed	0	0	0	0	0	0	
9	Family income							
	a) 5,000 -10,000	2	4	8	16	13	26	$X^2 = 5.737$ $Df = 4$ $P = 0.220$ (NS)
	b) 11,000 -20,000	0	0	8	16	13	26	
	c) Above 20,000	1	2	4	8	1	2	
10	Family structure							
	a) Nuclear family	3	6	20	40	21	42	$X^2 = 5.808$ $Df = 4$ $P = 0.214$ (NS)
	b) Joint family	0	0	0	0	4	8	
	c) Extended family	0	0	0	0	2	4	

***p<0.05 - Significant; p<0.01 - Highly Significant**

The above table shows that there is significance association of Mother's education with Level of Expressive Suppression among children of unemployed mothers according to their selected demographic variable.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The majority of children in both groups demonstrated a high level of cognitive reappraisal, indicating better emotional adjustment abilities.
- Children of employed mothers showed lower levels of expressive suppression compared to children of unemployed mothers, suggesting better emotional expression among them.
- Children of unemployed mothers exhibited moderate levels of emotional suppression, indicating a tendency to internalize emotions.
- The mean cognitive reappraisal score among children of employed mothers was 32.16, whereas it was slightly higher (34.06) among children of unemployed mothers.
- The mean expressive suppression score was 13.28 among children of employed mothers and 13.64 among children of unemployed mothers, showing minimal variation between the groups.
- There was a significant association between age and level of cognitive reappraisal among the selected demographic variables.
- Other demographic variables such as gender, religion, parental education, occupation, and family income showed no significant association with emotional problems.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from 100 children were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to assess and compare the emotional problems among children of employed and unemployed mothers studying in selected secondary schools at Puducherry.

The demographic profile revealed that the majority of children of employed mothers were in the age group of 12–14 years, with a higher proportion of females. Most belonged to the Hindu religion and nuclear family structure. Parental education levels were predominantly at the secondary level, and the majority of employed mothers were engaged in private sector jobs.

Similarly, among children of unemployed mothers, a majority were also in the 12–14 years age group with a higher proportion of females. Most families had moderate income levels and belonged to nuclear family systems.

The findings showed that both groups exhibited high levels of cognitive reappraisal, indicating that children are capable of regulating their emotions effectively. However, differences were observed in expressive suppression, where children of employed mothers demonstrated lower suppression levels compared to children of unemployed mothers.

Statistical analysis revealed that age had a significant association with cognitive reappraisal levels ($p < 0.05$), while other demographic variables did not show significant association.

These findings suggest that maternal employment status influences emotional expression patterns in children. Children of employed mothers may develop better coping mechanisms due to exposure to independent environments, whereas children of unemployed mothers may have more controlled emotional expression.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that children of both employed and unemployed mothers exhibit good cognitive emotional regulation; however, differences exist in expressive suppression levels. Children of employed mothers tend to express emotions more openly, whereas children of unemployed mothers show moderate emotional suppression.

Maternal occupation plays a significant role in shaping the emotional behavior of children. Early identification and proper guidance are essential to promote healthy emotional development.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct awareness programmes for parents regarding emotional development of children.
- Implement school-based mental health screening and counseling services.
- Educate working and non-working mothers about effective parenting strategies and emotional support.
- Conduct similar comparative studies with larger sample sizes and in different settings.

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