

## **PREADOLESCENT BOYS' AND GIRLS' ADJUSTMENT RELATED TO MOTHERS' EDUCATION, OCCUPATION AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT**

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### **Abstract**

The present study was intended to investigate the relationship between preadolescent boys' and girls' adjustment with mothers' education, occupation and marital adjustment. Sample comprised of 200 respondents; among them 100 were preadolescent students and remaining 100 were their mothers. Data were collected through the Bangla version of the "Pre-adolescent Adjustment Scale" (Khanam & Zaman, 2006) and the "Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale" (maternal marital adjustment part only; Ilyas, 1986) following purposive sampling technique. Results of the study indicate that there was a significant positive correlation between marital adjustment and preadolescent adjustment ( $r = .771, p < .01$ ) which means that mothers, having healthier adjustment in their marital relationship, influence positively the adjustment of their preadolescent child. The difference in preadolescents' adjustment scores with reference to their mothers' educational qualification ( $F = 39.674, p < .001$ ) and occupational status ( $t = 5.141, p < .001$ ) were also significant. Moreover, preadolescent children differed significantly in terms of their gender ( $t = 6.018, p < .001$ ) in adjustment scores. Boys had better adjustment score than the girls. The findings of this present study can be enormously helpful for the parents to take required actions for the ultimate betterment of their beloved children. They will get an idea about their roles in promoting and enhancing their children's welfare and adjustment proficiency.

**Key words:** *Maternal education, Occupation, Marital adjustment, Preadolescent adjustment*

### **Introduction**

Preadolescence is a period of human growth and development that begins during late childhood and ends with the beginning of puberty (Cox & Demmit, 2013) and often designated between the ages of 10-12 years in girls and 11-13 years in boys (Hatfield, 2007). A growing body of acquaintance shows that what ensues to children between the ages of 10 and 13 determines not only their current accomplishment in life, but success in upcoming life also. They view the humanity and human relationships differently.

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Physical, social, emotional and cognitive transforms throughout this period can stimulate curiosity and can form perplexity, anxiety and apparent loss of control if the children are unknown with what to expect or what is normal. This turmoil disturbs the inner stability and calmness of preadolescents' life. They may endure tantrums, occasionally leading to rash decisions regarding precarious actions. So, preadolescent adjustment is imperative as preadolescence can fetch its own challenges, hazards and risks. An increasing number of existing studies focus on number of variables affecting children's adjustment in preadolescence period.

In a study, Mattanah *et al.* (2004) found that maternal education can influence children's adjustment. Though mother is considered as the child's former educator, the extent of influence of a mother by her education level could have a considerable effect on her child's learning and nature of adjustment to family, school, surroundings etc. (Vijayalakshmi & Sequeira, 2017). Dutt (1966) mentioned that maternal education has massive influence on children and an educated mother can handle their children's actions efficiently than an unqualified or comparatively less educated mother. With the trend of women's increasing involvement in the workforce worldwide, extensive research has been conducted to study the impact of maternal employment on children in early childhood. Maternal occupational status is a key forecaster of preadolescents' wellbeing (Karyl *et al.*, 1991 and Handal *et al.*, 1998). Increasing number of researches concentrated on the effects of maternal occupational status on children's growth, behavior, mood, socio-emotional (Teng *et al.*, 2018) and psychological (Chang, 2013) wellbeing, adjustment etc. Youngblut *et al.*, (1991) stated that the effects of maternal employment on children are sometimes positive and sometimes negative.

It was reported that full time employed mothers have better relationship with their children compared to mothers who go for part time jobs or are unemployed (Nye & Hoffman, 1952). Moreover, children of employed mothers tended to be more achievement oriented than the children of home maker mothers. According to the work-family conflict theory of Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), because of limited time and energy, mothers' involvement in the workforce may escort to clash with their childrearing role, which in turn may causes children's maladjustment. However, many research evidences failed to support a direct interaction between maternal employment status and children's cognitive or emotional adjustment problems (Thompson, 1988 and Clarke-Stewart, 1989).

There is an argument about the connection between mother's marital adjustment and children's adjustment in preadolescence. No significant effect was found between mother's marital adjustment and child adjustment (Handal, *et al.*, 1998). Earlier studies have provided evidence of a connection among child adjustment, marital adjustment and conflict (Emery, 1982; Reid & Crisafulli, 1990). Exposure to high level of marital distress has been associated with the expansion of a wide variety of troubles in children and adolescents, including emotional and behavioral problems, social maladjustment, and

deficits in cognitive competency (Davies & Cummings, 1994 and Stocker & Young blade, 1999). The Disrupted Discipline Hypothesis (Emery, 1982) argues that problems in the marital relationship adversely affect the quality and consistency of parenting and management of child activities. Inconsistencies in parental discipline, in turn, contribute to adjustment problems in children. According to Davies and Cummings' (1994) Emotional Security Hypothesis, problems in marital adjustment can also directly undermine children's sense of security, which in turn, has an impact on child adjustment. Marital conflict has been associated with the development of a wide variety of problems in children and adolescents, such as aggression, conduct disorders, and anxiety (Emery, 1982). According to marital discord model of depression (Beach *et al.*, 1990), marital adjustment problems are associated with partners' handling of conflict in hostile and unsupportive ways; the erosion of positive elements of the marital relationship, such as couple cohesion, intimacy; and the acceptance of emotionality which in turn causes difficulties in adjustment among the preadolescents.

Preadolescents may differ in adjustment in terms of their gender (Montemayor & Clayton, 1983). It was reported that male children of working mothers experience more negative effects and female children experience more positive effects though working mothers spend less time with both sons and daughters, but mothers serve as the same sex models of proficiency and accomplishment for their daughters but not for their sons. Nelson (1974) found that the majority of adolescent females with non-working mothers had a better adjustment score than those who had working mothers. In addition, the adolescent sons of full-time employed mothers were found to become better socially adjusted than those who had non-working mothers. Fathers and teachers viewed preadolescent children's behavior as more problematic, especially daughters' behaviors, when less educated mothers had been employed (Greenberger & O'Neill, 1992). Another study reveals that daughters of home maker mothers had an intimate relationship with their fathers, perceived them as contented and experienced less anger and tension in the home (Jensen & Borges, 1986).

Preadolescence is a critical period in one's life. Growth and development of this period determines not only one's contemporary feat, but achievement in imminent life as well. Corporal, socio-emotional and cognitive transforms throughout this phase can generates nosiness, and form mystification, anxiety etc. among the preadolescents. They may face difficulties related to adjustment which may impede the internal stability and peace of their life. Although, extensive literature on preadolescent adjustment is available globally, but Bangladesh is an exception. That is why the present authors intended to carry out this study in Bangladesh in order to explore the overall impact of mothers' education, employment status and marital distress in their children's adjustment. It is hoped that the findings of this study may be helpful for counselors as well as mental health professionals to take necessary actions regarding preadolescent adjustment problem. Moreover, parents will get an idea about their roles in promoting and enhancing

their children's wellbeing and adjustment proficiency. In addition, it will add new knowledge to the existing literature. The present study was aimed at examining adjustment of preadolescent boys and girls related to their mothers' education, occupation, and marital adjustment. Specific objectives were to see the relationship between preadolescent adjustment and maternal marital adjustment; to assess whether preadolescent adjustment varies with mothers' education and occupation; and to see whether preadolescent boys and girls differ in adjustment.

## **Material and Methods**

### **Participants**

In the present study, the sample comprised of 200 respondents; 100 were preadolescent students (50 boys and 50 girls), age ranging from 10 to 13 years, and remaining 100 were their mothers. Among the mother group, 60 mothers were working women and 40 were housewives. Their educational background varied from class five to post graduation. Students were mainly selected from three schools of Dhaka city following purposive sampling technique. Participants were from middle class families.

### **Measuring Instruments**

Following instruments were used to carry out the present study-

1. Bangla version of the Pre-adolescent Adjustment Scale (PAAS)
2. Bangla version of the Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Maternal Marital Adjustment Part Only)

In addition, a personal information form was used to collect the demographic information like student's age, sex, class and mother's age, educational qualification, occupational status, etc.

#### *Pre-adolescent Adjustment Scale (PAAS)*

The original scale (Sharma *et al.*, 1971) was adapted into Bangla by Khanam and Zaman (2006) for measuring the degree of adjustment problems of preadolescents. It consists of 40 items; among them twenty were positive the remaining twenty were negative items. Positive items were rated on a five-point scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and the reverse scoring was followed for the negative items. Content and face validity were determined for the Bangla version and the test-retest reliability over a period of two weeks was .62. The score was ranged from 40 to 200. Higher scores indicate better adjustment and lower score indicate poor adjustment.

#### *Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Maternal Marital Adjustment part)*

The original scale (Spanier, 1976) was adapted in Bangla by Illyas (1986). The adapted scale has 29 items. Cronbach's alpha for the adapted version was .78. In the present study, maternal marital adjustment part was used to measure the scores for

preadolescents' mothers' marital adjustment. Here, first fifteen items were rated on a six-point scale ranging from 0 (all of the time different opinion) to 5 (all of the time similar opinion) and the next seven items were rated from 0 (many times) to 5 (none of the time). Item no. twenty three was rated on a five-point scale ranged from 0 (none of the function) to 4 (all of the function). Again, for item no. 24 to 27, the score procedure was ranged from 0 (none of the day) to 5 (more than one times in a day). Item no. 28 was rated from 0 (extremely unhappy) to 6 (completely happy) and item no. 29 was rated from 5 (desperately I want that our marital relation become successful) to 0 (never our marital relation can succeed). In the scale, score between 0-70 was considered as low adjustment and 70 plus as high adjustment.

### **Procedure**

At first, formal permission was taken from the authority of three renowned schools of Dhaka city in order to collect data. The data were collected only from those students who showed interest and willingness to participate in the study. For taking consent, at the beginning, each of them was briefed about the general purpose of the study and they were also assured that all information given by them would be kept confidential and would be used only for research purpose. Both written and verbal instructions were provided to them for clarification about what to do, and how to fill up all questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered in a booklet in which the cover page contained the personal information including student's name, sex, age, socio-economic status, mother's name, education, occupation etc and second page of the booklet contained instruction and the Bangla version of Preadolescent Adjustment Scale (PAAS). After completing it, they were given marital adjustment scale and were requested to take it at home and filled up the questionnaire by their mothers. Next day, they returned the scale to the author and finally, all of them were thanked for their participation.

### **Results and Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to examine preadolescent adjustment in relation to mothers' education, employment, and marital adjustment. Obtained data were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation to investigate the connection between preadolescent adjustment and maternal marital adjustment (Table 1); ANOVA to scrutinize whether preadolescent adjustment varied by mothers' educational qualification (Table 2); independent sample *t*-test to examine whether preadolescent adjustment fluctuated by respondents' mothers' occupational status (Table 4) and preadolescents' gender (Table 5). The findings are presented in the following tables:

Table 1. Correlation between Preadolescent Adjustment (PA) and Marital Adjustment (MA)

	PA	MA
PA	-	
MA	.771**	-

\*\*  $p < .01$ 

Result from Table 1 indicates a significant positive correlation between preadolescent adjustment and marital adjustment ( $r = .771, p < 0.01$ ). It means that mothers, having healthier adjustment in their marital relationship, influence positively the adjustment of their preadolescent child. This finding is consistent with the findings of other researchers (Emery, 1982 and Reid & Crisafulli, 1990). Maternal conjugal adjustment is significant in mothers' life as well as in their partners and children's life. A lesser amount of marital adjustment problems help the mothers as well as their partners to handle conflict in friendly and compassionate ways, which in turn nourish the quality and consistency of parenting and contribute to the healthy adjustment and wellbeing of their children.

Table 2. Analysis of Variance of Preadolescent Adjustment According to Mothers' Education

Education Level	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>
Class 5	16	141.50	4.017	
SSC	23	144.43	2.313	
HSC	24	146.17	3.447	39.674***
Graduate	20	149.85	2.412	
Post Graduate	17	153.00	2.622	

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ 

Table 2 reveals that the difference in preadolescents' adjustment score according to mothers' education level was significant ( $F = 39.674, p < .001$ ) and it is supported by the past findings (Mattanah *et al.*, 2004 and Vijayalakshmi & Sequeira, 2017). Preadolescence is a time when nurturing and sense of sanctuary create a strong base for future erudition. Preadolescents who have an educated mother will benefit of a supportive home environment where they feel secured and safe and it plays vital role in preadolescent adjustment. An educated mother can improve the lives of her children through empowering them. She has the ability to persuade and funnel them away from difficulties and to make their life better.

Post-hoc pair wise comparisons were carried out to see whether difference between the means of all possible pairs were significant or not in case of mothers' educational level. The results obtained by using Tukey's method are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Mean Difference in Preadolescent Adjustment According to Mothers' Education

(I) Educational Qualification	(J) Educational Qualification	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Class 5 (Primary Education)	SSC	-2.934	.976	.027
	HSC	-4.667	.967	.001
	Graduate	-8.350	1.005	.001
	Post Graduate	-11.501	1.044	.001
SSC (Secondary)	Class 5	2.935	.976	.027
	HSC	-1.732	.875	.284
	Graduate	-5.415	.916	.001
	Post Graduate	-8.565	.959	.001
HSC (Higher Secondary)	Class 5	4.667	.967	.001
	SSC	1.732	.875	.284
	Graduate	-3.683	.908	.001
	Post Graduate	-6.833	.950	.001
Graduate	Class 5	8.350	1.005	.001
	SSC	5.415	.916	.001
	HSC	3.683	.908	.001
	Post Graduate	-3.150	.989	.016
Post Graduate	Class 5	11.501	1.044	.001
	SSC	8.565	.959	.001
	HSC	6.833	.950	.001
	Graduate	3.150	.989	.016

Table 3 indicates that mean differences were significant for primary and secondary level, primary and higher secondary, primary and graduation, primary and post graduation, secondary and graduation, secondary and post graduation, higher secondary and graduation, higher secondary and post graduation, graduation and post graduation education, but not significant for secondary and higher secondary level of education.

Parental education, especially maternal educational qualification plays crucial role in children's educational, social and behavioral outcomes. An educated mother has immense effect on her child's living. The care and love a mother provides, helps the children to adjust with different difficulties of lives and moulds them into the adults they are intended to become. They find the opportunity to see their empowered mother as a role model for their own lives. Young minds expand hurriedly which helps children to discover and understand the world from a dynamic perspective. It is in these early years where children who have an educated mother will benefit of a supportive and encouraging home atmosphere. Taking into account the magnitude of education in one's

life, educated mothers can nourish child's healthy adjustment quality in all spheres of life, especially in the preadolescence period.

Table 4. Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and t for Preadolescent Adjustment for Working and Non-working Mothers

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Working	60	148.72	4.001	98	5.141***
Non-working	40	144.22	4.666		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Findings of Table 4 indicates that respondents differed significantly by their mothers' occupational status ( $t = 5.141, p < .001$ ) in adjustment scores. Preadolescent adjustment was better for the children of working mothers compared to the children of home maker mothers. Nye and Hoffman (1952) also reported that full time employed mothers have better relationship with their children compared to mothers who go for part time jobs or are unemployed and this relationship influence children's adjustment positively. Working women and mothers possess a superior amount of self-sufficiency and self esteem with respect to child care skills. They are sentient of the emotional requirements of their children through endorsing positive attachment, affection and warmth on them.

Table 5. Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and t for Preadolescent Adjustment in terms of Preadolescents' Gender

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Boys	50	149.40	3.807	98	6.018***
Girls	50	144.44	4.413		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Findings of Table 5 indicates that preadolescents differed significantly in terms of their gender ( $t = 6.018, p < .001$ ) in adjustment scores. Boys had better adjustment score than the girls. In Bangladesh, gender inequality is a common phenomenon. Most of the females are discriminated by their parents at first. Father and/or mother exposed different between their boys and girls after birth. Girls are deprived from many opportunities like education, health care, family support relative to boys. They have less opportunity to go outside, visit friends and relatives. Boys and girls are evaluated differently for same activity in many families. Boys often get more privileges compared to girls. All these things may adversely affect the adjustment ability of girls. Moreover, the present study suggests that maternal education, occupation and marital distress are important predictors of preadolescent adjustment. These factors may also have different impact on preadolescent boys and girls. If we consider the previous literature, it is seen that the

preadolescent sons of employed mothers were found to become better socially adjusted than those who had non-working mothers. Fathers and teachers viewed preadolescent daughters' behaviors as more problematic, when less educated mothers had been employed (Greenberger & O'Neill, 1992). Another study reveals that daughters of home maker mothers had an intimate relationship with their fathers, perceived them as contented and experienced less anger and tension in the home (Jensen & Borges, 1986).

## **Conclusion**

Early adolescence is an episode of individuation and change in almost every area of life as well as a period of vulnerability to demanding life events. Parents play a crucial role in promoting positive adjustment and pliability for children with the demands of life. There are many parental factors like parents' education, occupation; relationship between parents etc. can persuade children's adjustment and wellbeing both positively and pessimistically. Usually, children are more allied with their mother and the present study reveals that maternal education, occupational status and maternal marital distress have an impact on children. This present study has its own merits with some limitations suggesting paths for future studies. The study was carried out with a sample of small size and data were collected only from the Dhaka city. A larger and more exhaustive sample of all over Bangladesh would be taken for more amendment results. However, future research should utilize a longitudinal design and multi-methods assessment approach to examine the mediated and moderated relations of maternal education level, employment and maternal marital distress to parenting and child adjustment. Other variables can be considered that may affect preadolescent adjustment like mothers' personality trait, self-esteem, psychological wellbeing etc. Different wellness program can be planned for mother- child in school and community level to uphold targeted policies to enable parents, children, families and society to flourish.

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