

## Impact of Maternal Employment Guilt on Children's Deviant Behavior among Working Mothers. Moderating Role of Parenting Styles

Ayesha Malik<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Arooj Mujeeb<sup>2</sup>

1. Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Social Sciences, SZABIST University; Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Riphah International University, Islamabad
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, SZABIST University, Islamabad

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71145/rjsp.v3i3.367>

### Abstract

This current study aims to investigate the impact of maternal employment guilt on children's deviant behavior and the moderating role of parenting styles among working mothers. A sample of N= 250 working mothers of 21 to 60 years of age and having children of 10 to 19 years of age were included in the study. Cross-sectional design was used. Data was collected through a purposive sampling technique. Maternal Employment Guilt Scale (Selvi & Kantas, 2019), Deviant Behavior Variety Scale (Sijtsema et al., 2010) and Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Robinson et al., 1995) were administered on the participants. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, Linear regression and Moderation analysis were used in the study. Pearson correlation revealed that maternal employment guilt has a significant positive correlation with children's deviant behavior and parenting styles. While parenting style was strongly negatively correlated with children's deviant behavior. Results of regression analysis suggested that maternal employment guilt strongly and positively predicted children's deviant behavior among working mothers. Moreover, authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles had a non-significant moderating effect between maternal employment and children's deviant behavior. Educating mothers about the impact of guilt-driven permissiveness can promote more consistent and structured parenting approaches, which are beneficial for child development. Furthermore, raising awareness within the community and among employers about the emotional challenges faced by working mothers can contribute to more supportive environments that foster healthier family dynamics.

**Keywords:** Maternal Employment Guilt, Children's Deviant Behavior, Parenting Styles, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, Working Mothers

### Introduction

The increasing prevalence of maternal employment has contributed significantly to changing family dynamics worldwide. While maternal employment can promote economic security and personal fulfillment, it often gives rise to maternal employment guilt a specific type of emotional distress rooted in the perception that one is failing to meet the idealized standards of motherhood due to work commitments (Liss et al., 2013). This guilt is not merely emotional discomfort; it has been associated with heightened maternal stress, reduced parental satisfaction, and maladaptive parenting behaviors (Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Borelli et al., 2017). Research suggests that children are sensitive to maternal emotional states, and chronic maternal guilt may negatively impact children by disrupting emotional availability and consistent parenting practices (Nelson et al., 2014). Specifically, such children may show emotional dysregulation

(Yap & Jorm, 2015), and externalizing behaviors, including disobedience, lying, aggression, and school misconduct (Hoeve et al., 2009). These behaviors may emerge as maladaptive responses to inconsistent caregiving or emotional neglect stemming from maternal psychological strain. Crucially, the impact of maternal employment guilt on children's outcomes is not uniform. One key variable that may influence this relationship is the mother's parenting style. According to Baumrind's (1967) framework, parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian and permissive shape the emotional and behavioral development of children in markedly different ways. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and firm boundaries, has been shown to foster resilience in children and may buffer the negative effects of maternal distress (Steinberg, 2001). In contrast, authoritarian or permissive parenting may amplify the risks associated with maternal guilt by either increasing control and rigidity or reducing needed structure and discipline (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Despite these insights, there remains a significant gap in the empirical literature regarding how maternal employment guilt specifically affects child's behavioral outcomes, and how parenting style moderates this relationship. Understanding this dynamic is essential for developing culturally sensitive and evidence-based parenting interventions that address both maternal well-being and child development. If maternal employment guilt is ignored, children may suffer from anxiety, depression, low self-worth, and emotional insecurity. These issues often arise from inconsistent emotional support or guilt-driven parenting and can persist into adolescence and adulthood (Yap & Jorm, 2015). Children may exhibit deviant behaviors such as aggression, lying, disobedience, and rule-breaking due to the lack of emotional connection or appropriate behavioral boundaries at home, especially when parenting is affected by guilt (Hoeve et al., 2009). Without understanding how parenting style moderates the effects of maternal guilt, parents may continue using ineffective or harmful parenting approaches (e.g., overly permissive or authoritarian), worsening the child's outcomes (Baumrind, 1967; Steinberg, 2001). Maternal guilt can lead to overcompensation, emotional unavailability, or inconsistent discipline. If these patterns are not addressed, they can become entrenched, increasing family conflict and long-term relational difficulties.

Persistent employment guilt can lead to chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and even depression in mothers. This undermines both their well-being and their ability to parent effectively (Liss et al., 2013). Without research on how guilt and parenting styles interact, interventions remain generic. This limits the effectiveness of parenting programs, which could otherwise be designed to support working mothers facing guilt and guide them in adopting healthier parenting styles. If this issue remains unexamined, policymakers may fail to recognize the need for flexible work arrangements, mental health resources, and parenting education for working mothers, missing opportunities to promote healthier families. To effectively address the negative impact of maternal employment guilt on children's deviant behavior, several key areas of knowledge are required many of which remain underexplored in the current literature. Although maternal guilt has been recognized in the context of intensive mothering (Liss et al., 2013), there is a lack of empirical research specifically examining employment-related guilt its prevalence, intensity, and how it affects mother's emotional states and parenting behaviors over time. While there is extensive literature on maternal stress and depression influencing child development (Yap & Jorm, 2015), few studies directly link maternal employment guilt with externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression, rule-breaking) in children. There is a clear research gap in understanding how different parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) moderate the relationship between maternal employment guilt and child outcomes. While Baumrind's framework (1967) has been widely applied, it is rarely used to assess how parenting buffers or exacerbates the effects of specific maternal emotions like guilt. Most existing studies on maternal guilt are based in Western contexts. There is limited understanding of how cultural expectations, family structures, and societal gender norms shape the experience of maternal guilt and parenting practices in non-Western settings. There is currently no integrated framework that links maternal employment guilt, parenting styles, and children's deviant behavior. As a result, there is a lack of evidence-based interventions that address all three dimensions, making it difficult to create practical

support strategies for working mothers and their families.

## Theoretical Background

### Baumrind's Parenting Styles Theory

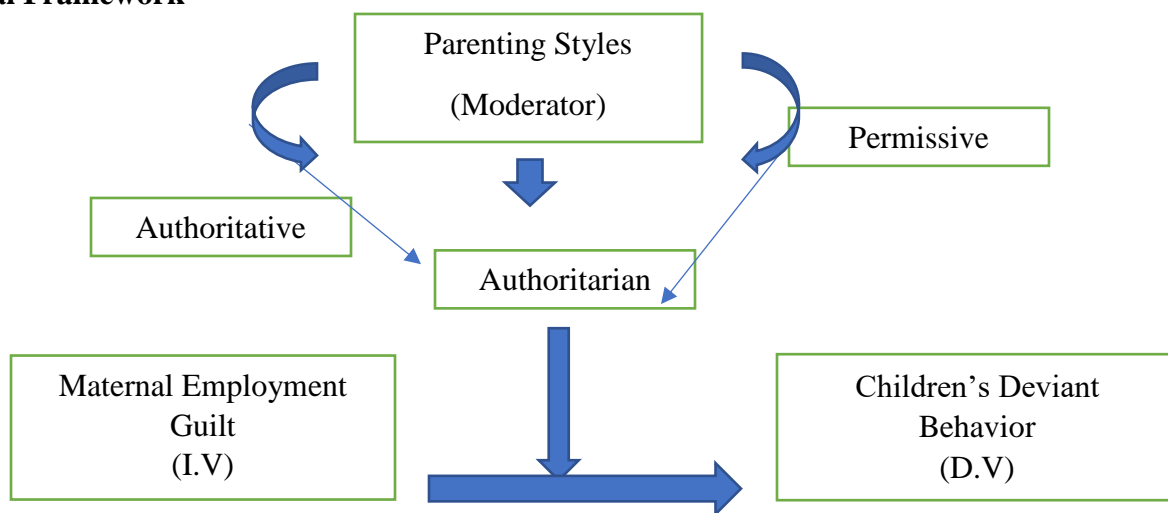
This theory was developed by Diana Baumrind (1967).

Baumrind identified three primary parenting styles:

- i) **Authoritative:** High warmth, high control – leads to the most positive outcomes in children.
- ii) **Authoritarian:** Low warmth, high control – often leads to anxiety and low self-esteem.
- iii) **Permissive:** High warmth, low control – may encourage deviant behavior.

Maternal guilt might push mothers to adopt permissive parenting (to compensate) or result in inconsistent discipline. Parenting style moderates the relationship between maternal guilt and child's outcomes, protecting or amplifying its effects. This theory provides a critical lens through which to understand how maternal employment guilt may influence child outcomes such as deviant behavior. According to Baumrind, parenting styles authoritative, authoritarian and permissive vary in levels of warmth and control, and each has distinct impacts on children's development. When working mothers experience high levels of employment guilt, this emotional strain can affect their parenting behaviors. For instance, guilt may lead to permissive parenting, where mothers become overly lenient or indulgent to compensate for perceived shortcomings, potentially increasing the risk of externalizing behaviors like defiance or rule-breaking in children. Alternatively, guilt could result in inconsistent or emotionally withdrawn parenting, resembling the neglectful style, which is associated with poor emotional and behavioral outcomes. In contrast, mothers who maintain an authoritative style, characterized by warmth and firm control, may buffer the negative effects of guilt, supporting better mental health and behavioral regulation in their children. Thus, parenting style serves as a moderating factor in the relationship between maternal guilt and child well-being, shaping how maternal emotions translate into parenting practices and child development outcomes.

## Conceptual Framework



The conceptual model illustrates the relationships among parenting styles including its types/sub-dimensions i.e. authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, maternal employment guilt, children's deviant behavior. It suggests that different parenting styles, influenced by the level of maternal guilt associated with employment, may contribute to the likelihood of engaging in deviant behavior. The model underscores the interconnectedness of parental styles, emotional dynamics, and child behavioral

outcomes, highlighting the importance of understanding how maternal work-related emotions affect parenting and, subsequently, child development.

## **Methodology**

### **Objectives**

1. To find out the relationship between maternal employment guilt, children's deviant behavior and parenting styles among working mothers.
2. To determine the impact of maternal employment guilt on children's deviant behavior among working mothers.
3. To explore the moderating role of parenting styles between maternal employment guilt and children's deviant behavior among working mothers.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be a positive relationship between maternal employment guilt and children's deviant behavior among working mothers.
2. There will be a positive relationship between maternal employment guilt and authoritarian and permissive parenting styles among working mothers.
3. There will be a negative relationship between maternal employment guilt and authoritative parenting styles among working mothers.
4. Maternal employment guilt will positively predict children's deviant behavior among working mothers.
5. Parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) will act as a moderator between maternal employment guilt and children's deviant behavior among working mothers.

### **Research design**

Cross sectional design was used in the study.

### **Sample**

Data was collected from (N=250) participants who were working mothers from different organizations. Age range of the children was 10 to 19 years. Data was collected through purposive sampling technique.

### **Inclusion criteria**

1. Working mothers from different organizations including schools, colleges, universities, offices, banks and hospital settings were included in the study.
2. A full-time or part-time working mother, having at least one child aged between 10 to 19 years was included in the study.

### **Exclusion criteria**

1. Participants with physical or mental issues were not included in the study.

### **Instruments**

#### **Demographic characteristics form**

It will include **maternal demographic**: age, occupation, educational, marital status, number of children, socio-economic status, family system; **children's demographic**: age, gender, education.

### **Maternal Employment Guilt Scale (MEGS)**

It is developed by Selvi and Kantas in 2019, is a 15-item one-factor structure instrument designed to assess the emotional and cognitive dimensions of guilt experienced by working mothers. Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Certainly does not reflect me) to 6 (Certainly reflect me), allowing for a measurement of guilt intensity. The scale demonstrates strong psychometric properties, with an overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.94, indicating high internal consistency and reliability in capturing the construct of maternal employment guilt.

### **Deviant Behavior Variety Scale (DBVS)**

It is developed by Sijtsema et al. (2010), is a 19-item self-report measure designed to assess the variety and engagement in deviant behaviors among individuals, particularly adolescents and young adults. The scale evaluates a broad spectrum of rule-breaking and antisocial behaviors, including theft, vandalism, aggression, and substance use, rather than the frequency of each behavior. Respondents indicate whether they have engaged in specific deviant acts, typically using a binary (yes/no) response format. The DBVS provides a cumulative score, reflecting the diversity of deviant behaviors an individual has participated in, with higher scores indicating greater behavioral variety. It has demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha reliability typically ranging between 0.80 and 0.90 in various studies. The scale demonstrates strong psychometric properties, including good reliability and validity, making it a useful tool in research on delinquency, antisocial behavior, and risk factors associated with deviance.

### **Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ)**

It is a self-report instrument developed by Robinson et al. (1995) to assess parenting styles based on Baumrind's tripartite model: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. It is a short form of the PSDQ that consists of 32-items. It is designed to measure the frequency of specific parenting behaviors and attitudes as perceived by the mothers. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). It consists of three dimensions/sub-scales: Authoritative Parenting, Authoritarian Parenting and Permissive Parenting. The PSDQ demonstrates good internal consistency and construct validity i.e., Authoritative  $\alpha = .86$ , Authoritarian  $\alpha = .82$ , Permissive  $\alpha = .64$ .

### **Procedure**

A total number of N= 250 participants including working mothers from different organizations were selected. Maternal employment guilt scale (Selvi & Kantas, 2019), Deviant behavior variety scale (Sijtsema et al., 2010) and Parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (Robinson et al., 1995) were administered on the participants. Informed consent was taken from the participants. They were debriefed about the nature and purpose of the study. No physical or psychological harm was provided to them. Confidentiality was also assured. Moreover, they were also given the right to withdraw from the study at any point if they feel uncomfortable.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, Linear regression and Moderation analysis were used in the study.

### **Results**

**Table 1** *Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Variables of study (N=250)*

<i>Demographic Variables</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Mothers Age		
21-30	67	26.8
31-40	71	28.4
41-50	64	25.6
51-60	48	19.2
Mothers Occupation		
Teacher	171	68.4
Doctor	54	21.6
Banker	25	10.0
Mothers Education		
Matric – Intermediate	83	33.2
Bachelors – Masters	89	35.6
MS/Mphil – PhD	74	29.6
Others	4	1.6
Marital Status		
Married	49	19.6
Divorced	173	69.2
Widow	28	11.2
No. of Children		
1 – 5	229	91.6
6 – 10	21	8.4
Socio-economic Status		
Upper Class	34	13.6
Middle Class	204	81.6
Lower Class	12	4.8
Family System		
Nuclear	155	62
Joint	95	38
Childs Age		
10 – 14	157	62.8
15 – 19	93	37.2
Childs Gender		
Male	140	56
Female	110	44
Childs Education	4	1.6
Upper Primary	73	29.2
Lower Secondary	173	69.2
Higher Secondary		

*Note: f = frequency, % = Percentage.*

Table 1 shows the demographics of the main study's participants. A total number of N = 250 working mothers were included in the study. Mother's age category 21 – 30 includes 26.8% , 21 – 40 includes 28.4%, 41 – 50 includes 25.6% and 51 – 60 includes 19.2%. Mother's occupation includes 68.4% teachers, 21.6% doctors and 10% were bankers. Mother's education in matric – intermediate category percentage is 33.2%, bachelors – masters is 35.6% , MS/M.Phil to PhD is 29.6% and Others is 1.6%. 19.6% women were married, 69.2% were divorced and 11.2% were widow. 91.6% children were in 10 – 14 years range while 8.4% fall in 6 to 10 years of age. Socio-economic status showed that 13.6% in upper class, 81.6% in middle class and 4.8% were in lower class. 62% mothers were in nuclear and 38% were in joint family system. Children of 10- 14 years were 62.8% and 15 – 19 years were 37.2 % . Childs gender includes more males participated in the study as there were 56% male and 44% female participants. Childs education includes 1.6% in upper primary, 29.2% in lower secondary and 69.2% in higher secondary.

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach alpha coefficients of Maternal Employment Guilt, Children's Deviant Behavior and Parenting Styles (Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive) among Working Mothers (N=250)**

Variables	k	$\alpha$	M	SD	Range		Skew	Kurt
					Potential	Actual		
Maternal Employment Guilt	15	.80	56.63	5.29	15 - 90	29 - 75	-.54	.46
Children's Deviant Behavior	19	.74	9.71	2.38	0 - 19	2 - 15	-.31	.19
Authoritative	15	.84	44.90	9.10	15 – 75	26 – 64	.13	-1.0
Authoritarian	12	.70	35.50	6.65	12 – 60	19 – 53	.11	-.39
Permissive	5	.68	13.70	3.32	5 - 25	8 – 23	.42	-.35

*Note. K = No of items,  $\alpha$  = Alpha Reliability, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, Skew = Skewness, Kurt = Kurtosis, Authoritative = Parenting Style Sub-scale, Authoritarian= Parenting Style Sub-Scale, Permissive= Parenting Style Sub-scale.*

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, skewness, and alpha coefficient values for all scales in the study. The reliability analysis reveals that the scales have a good alpha coefficients, ranging from .68 to .84 which shows that these scales were reliable to be used in the study. The table presented the number of items, reliability coefficients, and sample normality.

**Table 3 Pearson Correlation between Maternal Employment Guilt, Children’s Deviant Behavior and Parenting Stlyes (Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive)among Working Mothers (N=250)**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Maternal Employment Guilt	-				
Children’s Deviant Behavior	0.07**	-			
Authoritative	0.09**	-0.18**	-		
Authoritarian	0.07**	-0.17**	0.85***	-0.45*	
Permissive	0.19**	-0.09**	0.46**		-

Note. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

Table 3 illustrated the Pearson correlational analysis between maternal employment guilt, children’s deviant behavior and parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive). The results showed that maternal employment guilt has a significant positive correlation ( $r= 0.07^{**}$ ) with children’s deviant behavior, authoritative ( $r= 0.09^{**}$ ), authoritarian ( $r = 0.07^{**}$ ) permissive ( $r = 0.19^{**}$ ) parenting styles. While there is a significant negative correlation of parenting styles i.e. authoritative ( $r = -0.18^{**}$ ), authoritarian ( $r= -0.17^{**}$ ) and permissive ( $r = -0.09^{**}$ ) with children’s deviant behavior. Moreover, authoritative and authoritarian parenting were strongly positively correlated ( $r = 0.85^{**}$ ). Permissive Parenting was moderately correlated with both Authoritative ( $r = 0.45^{**}$ ) and Authoritarian Parenting ( $r = 0.46^{**}$ ).

**Table 4 Linear Regression Analysis for Maternal Employment Guilt on Children’s Deviant Behavior among Working Mothers (N = 250)**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	7.80	1.62		.00
MEG	.03	.02	.0	.02
R	0.7			
R <sup>2</sup>	.00			
ΔF	1.39			

Note: MEGS= Maternal Employment Guilt, B = Unstandardized Coefficient,  $\beta$  = Standardized Coefficient, SE = Standard Error, p = Significant Value, R = Correlation, R<sup>2</sup> = Variance Explained; ΔF= F statistics



In Table 4, the predicting role of maternal employment guilt on children's deviant behavior was examined using a linear regression analysis. The findings suggested that maternal employment guilt strongly and positively predicted ( $r = .02$ ) children's deviant behavior among working mothers.

**Table 5**

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	0.88	9.05	0.10	.92
Maternal Employment Guilt	0.19	0.15	1.22	.22
Authoritarian Parenting	0.17	0.24	0.73	.46
MEGS $\times$ Authoritarian	-0.00	0.00	-0.99	.32

*Moderating role of Authoritative Parenting Style in the relationship between Maternal Employment Guilt and Children's Deviant Behavior (N=250).*

*Note. B = Unstandardized Coefficient; SE = Standard Error; t = difference, p = significance*

Table 5 indicates that authoritative parenting styles has a non-significant moderating effect between maternal employment and children's deviant behavior. In this model, neither the main effects ( $p = .65$ ,  $p = .92$ ) nor the interaction ( $p = .85$ ) reached significance.

**Table 6 Moderating role of Authoritarian Parenting Style in relationship between Maternal Employment Guilt and Children's Deviant Behavior (N=250).**

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	8.08	8.55	0.95	.34
Maternal Employment Guilt	0.06	0.15	0.45	.65
Authoritative Parenting	-0.01	0.17	-0.10	.92
MEGS $\times$ Authoritative	-0.00	0.00	-0.18	.85

*Note. B = Unstandardized Coefficient; SE = Standard Error; t = difference, p = significance*

Table 6 indicates that authoritarian parenting styles has a non-significant moderating effect between maternal employment and children's deviant behavior. In this model, neither the main effects ( $p = .22$ ,  $p = .46$ ) nor the interaction ( $p = .32$ ) reached significance.

**Table 7 Moderating role of Permissive Parenting Style in relationship between Maternal Employment Guilt and Children's Deviant Behavior (N=250).**

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	11.79	7.33	1.61	.10
Maternal Employment Guilt	-0.01	0.12	-0.14	.89
Permissive Parenting	-0.30	0.47	-0.64	.52
MEGS $\times$ Permissive	0.00	0.00	0.48	.63

*Note. B = Unstandardized Coefficient; SE = Standard Error; t = difference, p = significance*

Table 7 indicates that permissive parenting styles has a non-significant moderating effect between maternal employment and children's deviant behavior. In this model, neither the main effects ( $p = .89$ ,  $p = .52$ ) nor the interaction ( $p = .63$ ) reached significance.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out the impact of maternal employment guilt on children's deviant behavior and the moderating role of parenting styles among working mothers.

A sample of N= 250 working mothers from different organizations were selected for the study. Maternal employment guilt scale (Selvi & Kantas, 2019), Deviant behavior variety scale (Sijtsema et al., 2010) and Parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (Robinson et al., 1995) were administered on the participants. Cross-sectional design was used. Purposive sampling technique was used. In Table 1, the frequencies and percentages of demographic variables were reported. In Table 2, the descriptive statistics and psychometric properties of all the study variables were found, which showed that all the scales had good Cronbach's alpha reliability. The first hypothesis of the study is that there "there will be a positive relationship between maternal employment guilt and children's deviant behavior among working mothers". The second hypothesis "there will be a positive relationship between maternal employment guilt and authoritarian and permissive parenting styles among working mothers." The third hypothesis "There will be a negative relationship between maternal employment guilt and authoritative parenting styles among working mothers. According to these above mentioned hypothesis, In Table 3 results of Pearson correlation revealed that maternal employment guilt has a significant positive correlation with children's deviant behavior, authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. While there is a significant negative correlation of parenting styles i.e. authoritative authoritarian and permissive with children's deviant behavior. Moreover, authoritative and authoritarian parenting were strongly positively correlated. Permissive Parenting was moderately correlated with both Authoritative and Authoritarian Parenting Style. According to a study conducted by Livingston & Judge (2008), working mothers who experience high levels of maternal employment guilt may become emotionally less available or inconsistent in discipline, which in turn is linked with increase in behavioral problems including deviant behavior in children. According to the fourth hypothesis "Maternal employment guilt will positively predict children's deviant behavior among working mothers". In Table 4, the predicting role of maternal employment guilt on children's deviant behavior was examined using a linear regression analysis. The findings suggested that maternal employment guilt strongly and positively predicted children's deviant behavior among working mothers. According to fifth hypothesis "Parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) will act as a moderator between maternal employment guilt and children's deviant behavior among working mothers", In Table 5, authoritative parenting styles has a non-significant moderating effect between maternal employment and children's deviant behavior. In this model, neither the main effects nor the interaction reached significance. In Table 6, the authoritarian parenting styles has a non-significant moderating effect between maternal employment and children's deviant behavior. In this model, neither the main effects nor the interaction reached significance. In Table 7, the permissive parenting styles has a non-significant moderating effect between maternal employment and children's deviant behavior. In this model, neither the main effects nor the interaction reached significance.

There could be some possible reasons behind the non-significant moderating effects of parenting styles in the relationship between maternal employment guilt and children's deviant behavior among working mothers. Moderation analysis might require a much larger sample size to detect significant direct and indirect effects. If there is a strong, significant correlation between variables, there is a possibility that moderation will not exist. Moreover, in collectivist contexts, extended family support may override individual parenting style, weakening its moderating role on guilt-related stress.

## **Recommendations and Limitations**

1. All data were collected via self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, especially when assessing sensitive topics like parenting and guilt.
2. The study used a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to make causal inferences between maternal employment guilt and deviant behavior.
3. The findings may not be generalizable beyond the Pakistani cultural context, where extended family support and collectivist values may influence both parenting styles and maternal guilt differently compared to Western settings.
4. Parenting styles did not significantly moderate the relationship between maternal guilt and deviant behavior, possibly due to insufficient sample size to detect small interaction effects or measurement overlap between parenting dimensions.
5. Future studies should adopt a longitudinal approach to better understand how maternal guilt and parenting styles influence child behavior over time.
6. Cross-cultural studies can be conducted to compare the impact of maternal guilt and parenting styles in collectivist vs. individualist cultures.

## **Implications**

The findings of this study offer important practical implications for mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers concerned with family well-being. Although maternal employment guilt did not directly predict children's deviant behavior, its association with permissive parenting highlights the need for targeted parental support programs for working mothers. Interventions such as counseling, parenting workshops, and workplace policies that promote work-life balance could help reduce feelings of guilt and enhance parenting efficacy. Educating mothers about the impact of guilt-driven permissiveness can promote more consistent and structured parenting approaches, which are beneficial for child development. Furthermore, raising awareness within the community and among employers about the emotional challenges faced by working mothers can contribute to more supportive environments that foster healthier family dynamics.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigated the impact of maternal employment guilt on children's deviant behavior and the moderating role of parenting styles among working mothers. Purposive sampling was used to select N= 250 working mothers from different organizations. A cross-sectional research design was used. Maternal employment guilt scale (Selvi & Kantas, 2019), Deviant behavior variety scale (Sijtsema et al., 2010) and Parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (Robinson et al., 1995) were administered on the participants. Pearson correlation revealed that maternal employment guilt has a significant positive correlation with children's deviant behavior and parenting styles. While parenting style was strongly negatively correlated with children's deviant behavior. Results of regression analysis suggested that maternal employment guilt strongly and positively predicted children's deviant behavior among working mothers. Moreover, authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles had a non-significant moderating effect between maternal employment and children's deviant behavior. Educating mothers about the impact of guilt-driven permissiveness can promote more consistent and structured parenting approaches, which are beneficial for child development. Furthermore, raising awareness within the community and among employers about the emotional challenges faced by working mothers can contribute to more supportive environments that foster healthier family dynamics.

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