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**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Devising Coping Mechanisms for Working Mothers of School-Going Children: A Qualitative Study of Pakistan**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to amplify the voices of working mothers and provide insights for achieving a balance between work and parenting particularly improving the academic learning of their children. This exploratory study employs a Multiple Case Study Analysis with 30 in-depth interviews of working mothers of school going children (aged 6-12 years). The study focuses on the banking sector of Pakistan, where heavy workloads and long hours exacerbate the challenge of keeping a balance between work and family demands. The study found that the basic elements (drainage of energy, lack of involvement, shortage of time, and emotional burden) needed to be mitigated for enabling working mothers to contribute to better academic learning of their children. It is recommended that four coping mechanisms need to be adopted by working mothers for mitigation of each of the four basic elements. The coping mechanisms include energy-centric, involvement-centric, time-centric, and emotion-centric mechanisms. Through adoption of these mechanisms, it is expected that working mothers will be able to create the much-needed alignment between being exceptional parents and professionally ambitious.

**KEYWORDS** Children's Academic Learning, Coping Mechanisms, Work-Family Interface, Working Mothers

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**Introduction**

The increasing participation of women in the workforce in Pakistan has prompted a critical examination of the challenges faced by working mothers in managing their professional careers alongside their familial responsibilities. Of particular concern is the potential impact of maternal employment on the academic learning outcomes of children. This literature review seeks to explore qualitative evidence from the banking sector of Pakistan to understand the academic learning challenges faced by children of working mothers.

Maternal employment has become increasingly prevalent in Pakistan, driven by economic necessity and shifting societal norms. However, concerns have been raised about the potential adverse effects of maternal employment on children's academic learning. Working mothers often grapple with guilt, stress, and time constraints, which can impact their ability to provide adequate support and supervision for their children's educational endeavors.

The banking sector represents a significant segment of the Pakistani workforce, with a substantial number of women employed in various roles. However, the demanding nature of banking jobs, characterized by long hours, high-pressure environments, and stringent deadlines, poses unique challenges for working mothers in balancing their professional commitments with their children's academic needs.

Moreover, the lack of family-friendly policies and support mechanisms within the banking sector further exacerbates these challenges.

This study will potentially make several contributions to the literature with meaningful implications for policy and practice, particularly in Pakistani cultural context. So far, no studies have been conducted in the Pakistani context that explore the coping mechanisms to mitigate the adverse effects of mothers' employment on their children's wellbeing, more specifically their academic learning. This study has explored the lived experiences of working mothers regarding academic learning of their children and provides viable coping mechanisms for dealing with the challenges by working mothers for improvement of academic learning of their children. It is expected that the deliverables of this research will provide new insight about the school-aged childcare issues a mother has to deal with, that were barely studied in the past.

In conclusion, the academic learning challenges faced by children of working mothers in the banking sector of Pakistan are multifaceted and complex. While maternal employment offers economic opportunities and empowerment for women, it also presents significant challenges in managing work-family dynamics and supporting children's educational development. By understanding the qualitative evidence from the banking sector, policymakers, employers, and stakeholders can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address these challenges and promote positive academic outcomes for children of working mothers in Pakistan.

## **Literature Review**

Over the past four decades, there has been a notable surge in the global workforce participation of women (Traylor et al., 2020; Horwood et al., 2019; Hoobler et al., 2018; Geram, 2016). This trend is mirrored in Pakistan, where there has been an approximate 20% increase in female employment across various sectors (Mirza & Jabeen, 2020). However, despite these advancements, traditional gender norms persist, wherein men are predominantly seen as providers while women are expected to manage household duties and childcare (McGarry, 2020; Eisend, 2019). Consequently, working women face considerable challenges in reconciling their professional careers with their familial roles. With the growing necessity for dual-income households to sustain financial stability, women often find themselves navigating the intricate balance between motherhood and employment, underscoring the complexities inherent in contemporary work-family dynamics (Traylor et al., 2020).

The transition to parenthood significantly alters the work-family dynamic, as parenting evolves through various stages from childhood to adolescence and youth, each bringing unique responsibilities (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Research on the experiences of new parents sheds light on the challenges of parenthood and its intersection with work-family dynamics, offering insights into the complexities of balancing these spheres (Vahedi et al., 2019; Allen et al., 2019; Boreli et al., 2017). This body of knowledge is particularly pertinent in understanding how parenthood influences academic learning outcomes for children.

The increased employment of women has brought about various benefits for families and society, including enhanced productivity, income generation, and greater empowerment for women (Kamal & Zubair, 2020). However, concerns have been raised regarding the potential adverse effects on child upbringing, household management, and the academic learning of children in households with working mothers (Kamal & Zubair, 2020). This shift in the role of women in the workforce has impacted various aspects of

life in Pakistan, including work dynamics, family structures, social interactions, and societal norms (Kamal & Zubair, 2020). With more mothers joining the workforce, there has been a significant change in child-rearing practices, leading to children being raised at home in the absence of their mothers due to employment obligations, which differs from previous generations (Zhou, 2020). This demographic change has raised concerns about the potential negative effects of maternal employment on child development (Zhou, 2020).

As children grow, the responsibilities of mothers evolve, presenting new challenges in balancing work and family life (Zhou, 2020; Martinengo et al., 2010; Nomaguchi, 2009). Particularly when children start school, mothers face additional demands, both at home and in managing school-related responsibilities. This transition often leads to negative work-family spillover, where work obligations hinder full involvement in their child's academic development. Gendered parenting roles persist, with mothers typically taking on the role of family planner, organizing children's academic and leisure activities (Fredriksen, 2019). The absence of mothers due to employment necessitates exploring coping mechanisms to maintain a balance between work and meeting their children's academic needs.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory was proposed by Hobfoll (1989) which suggests that four types of resources predict strain and optimal functioning: objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies. Furthermore, the theory suggests that when demands are placed on a person, the individual uses one of the four resources to cope with the demand or loss of resources (Hobfoll, 1989). The more resources people have at their disposal, the more productive coping strategies will be employed when the people are faced with demands, leading to more resources (Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993). Conversely, the less resources people have at their disposal, the more maladaptive coping will be employed when the people are faced with demands, leading to fewer resources. The role of coping is a key aspect of the COR theory. Specifically, coping should fully mediate the relationship of resources and perceptions of demands on stress and optimal functioning (Hobfoll, 1989).

In this study, the COR theory has been used to understand the influence of job of working mothers on the academic learning of children. The conflicting demands on working mothers cause stress and exhaustion, and they require appropriate coping mechanisms to deal with drainage of energy, shortage of time, emotional exhaustion, and lack of involvement with their children. By integrating insights from resource conservation theory into the qualitative analysis of working mothers' experiences in Pakistan's banking sector, the study provided valuable theoretical contributions by shedding light on the dynamics of resource conservation within the context of work-family balance. It also contributed to the general understanding of how individuals navigate multiple roles while striving to achieve personal and professional goals.

## **Material and Methods**

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this exploratory study to get an in depth, broad-based, and detailed understanding of the experiences of the participants. This methodology is chosen for unexplored or lesser investigated phenomena for its interpretive and meaning-searching characteristics (Creswell, 2007). This study sought to find appropriate coping mechanisms for addressing the challenges of working mothers to improve academic learning of their children. The study encouraged the participants for sharing their stories about the difficulties, behavioral dilemmas, and stereotyping of a working mother of school going children in Pakistan.

## Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised of working mothers, with children aging between 6 to 12 years, employed in different Banks of Pakistan having school going children. This research drew upon the findings of 30 semi-structured, in-depth interviews to give voice to working mother's experiences.

## Data Collection

The data collection began with the recruitment of participants using purposive sampling, focusing on working mothers employed in banks who had school-going children and were willing to participate. Participants known to the researcher and meeting the inclusion criteria were selected. Emphasis was placed on scheduling interviews at participants' convenience to minimize travel. Recruitment was initiated via email, followed by an explanation of the research's purpose and process to interested participants. Consent was obtained, including permission for audio recording during interviews, and participants were encouraged to ask questions or express concerns. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, guided by a set of main questions and probing inquiries aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the unique experiences of working mothers regarding their children's academic learning. The complete interview guide is provided in the annexure.

## Research Ethics

The research adhered to fundamental ethical principles, ensuring the well-being and privacy of individuals and organizations involved. Recognizing the cultural nuances of research settings in Pakistan, the study was conducted with sensitivity to local norms and contexts. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all women involved, clarifying the research's purpose and ensuring voluntary participation. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Sensitivity was maintained during interviews, with topics such as domestic responsibilities or personal issues approached cautiously and not further probed if discomfort was evident. Additionally, confidentiality was strictly upheld, with participants' responses kept confidential and not shared with others, respecting their privacy and maintaining trust in the research process.

## Inter-Coder Reliability

Initially the coding was done by the principal researcher using certain control mechanisms such as using coding guidelines and protocols, pilot testing and running regular checks. At the later stage, the services of another coder were employed to obtain inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability is a critical aspect of ensuring the reliability and validity of qualitative research. It refers to the degree of agreement or consistency between two or more coders in independently applying codes to the same set of qualitative data. High inter-coder reliability indicates that different coders are interpreting the data in a consistent manner, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings. In this study, inter-coder reliability was obtained by using these common approaches: *Independent Coding*: Both coders independently coded the same set of qualitative data without consulting each other, *Discrepancy Resolution*: Any discrepancies or disagreements between coders were identified and resolved through discussion, clarification, or consensus-building, *Consensus Meetings*: Coders met to review and discuss coding decisions, aiming to reach a consensus on ambiguous or conflicting segments of data. By employing these methods, the researchers systematically assessed the inter-coder reliability to ensure that coding decisions are

consistent, valid, and trustworthy. This enhanced the credibility and robustness of the qualitative research findings.

## **Results and Discussion**

The researcher utilized QSR NVivo for data organization and transcription. The thematic analysis of data involved familiarization, theme identification, and code creation, incorporating both deductive and inductive approaches. The text emphasizes the use of coding families and hierarchical organization of data to enhance reader comprehension. NVivo facilitated data management and analysis, allowing for flexibility and systematic exploration of patterns. It is worth noting that the research findings primarily draw upon the participant's narratives. Themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews of working mothers are explained below.

### **Theme-1: Situational Determinants of Coping Mechanisms**

Coping mechanisms and strategies adopted by mothers enables them to pull along employment demands and the dictates of academic learning of their children. Coping mechanisms cannot be adopted in isolation without taking into cognizance the interlinked and interdependent domestic, social, financial and relational factors. These situational determinants can vary from one individual to the other and effect the decision to adopt or discard a particular coping mechanism. Major situational determinants indicated by respondents are Affordability, Family structure, Availability and willingness of neighbors for help, Availability of reliable maid/servant, Type of house/accommodation being used by family - rented/owned, Assistance from organization, Availability and willingness of colleagues for help, Availability and quality of day-care and after school coaching centers, Assistance from Spouse, Availability of good home tutors, Attitude of teachers, Overall community environment, Availability and use of modern technology, Distances between home, office, and school.

Depending upon the situational determinants, a working mother can adopt suitable coping mechanism (consisting of one or more strategies) to make up the deficiencies created by job. The respondents pointed out that major deficiencies and problems created by employment of a working mother which affect academic learning of children are: 1) Lack of time to monitor and supervise academic learning of children; 2) Lack of energy due to exhaustion, mental and physical fatigue; 3) Reduced involvement with children's academic learning; 4) Emotional sensitivity creating addition psychological strain on the mother and child. The coping mechanisms/strategies need to address these four deficiencies therefore, the coping mechanisms/strategies have been discussed in the same four classes. This study proposes following model for choice and adoption of coping mechanism extracted from the responses of participants based on their lived experiences.

### **Theme-2: Time Centric Coping Mechanisms**

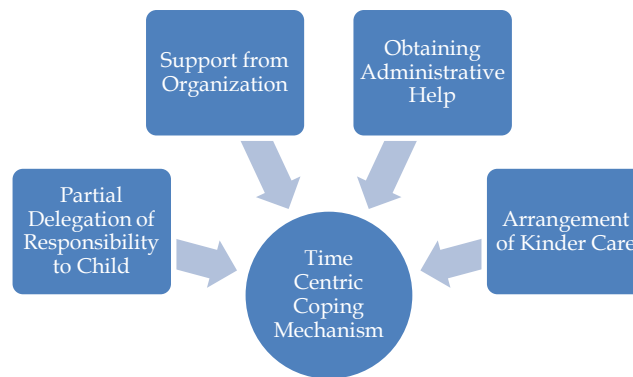


Figure 1 Theme 2 and its Categories

### Arrangement of Kinder Care

The study found that the most challenging time for working mothers to manage childcare was between school closure and the time they reached home from work. Schools typically closed around 2:00 PM, while offices closed around 5:00 PM. Bank employees, whose workday extended until around 6:00 or 7:00 PM, faced a gap in childcare between 2:00 PM and their arrival home. During this time, when both parents were at work and there were no extended family members available for childcare, some working mothers used kinder care arrangements for their children. Specifically, out of 30 cases studied, 4 married couples living as nuclear families utilized kinder care services during this time. Interestingly, no divorced single mothers used kinder care, as they typically lived in joint family setups with their parents. Additionally, none of the married couples living in joint families employed kinder care services.

### Obtaining Administrative Help

The study found that administrative assistance for working mothers primarily included pick and drop services for their children, as well as providing breakfast and lunch. Out of the 30 cases studied, 17 working mothers either personally dropped off or picked up their children from school, while 13 utilized paid pick and drop services. Among those using paid services, 4 were divorced women, and 9 were married couples. Regarding meals, most children were given homemade breakfast and lunch, although in some cases, children were provided money to purchase food from school shops. Interestingly, none of the schools provided lunch. The distribution of responses indicated that pick and drop services were a major concern for working mothers, with approximately half opting for commercial services despite the financial burden. However, this expense was deemed necessary to save time and avoid commuting stress. Conversely, providing breakfast and lunch was less significant, as children often preferred not to eat in the morning and could easily find food at school cafés or canteens.

### Support from Organization

In Pakistan's banking sector, there is a lack of official support or facilities for female employees regarding family-friendly policies. Instead, support and facilities are typically provided at the local level, depending on the behavior and approach of colleagues and branch managers. Respondents highlighted various forms of support, including slight relaxation in timings, assistance from peers to complete end-of-day formalities, and allocation of less busy desks. Specifically, 7 working mothers mentioned

receiving facilitated through relaxed timings by a few minutes, 14 were assisted by peers to leave the office early, and 4 were given comparatively less busy desks.

### Partial Delegation of Responsibility to Child

Partial delegation significantly saves time and energy for working mothers. They can delegate tasks such as getting ready for school, tidying up rooms, staying in contact with mothers, completing homework with minimal assistance, walking to and from school if nearby, and managing breakfast and lunch. Respondents reported feeling relief and saved time and energy through delegation. Among married couples, 16 out of 24 delegated responsibilities to their children, while 5 out of 6 divorced mothers, 10 out of 12 nuclear families, and 6 out of 18 joint families partially delegated tasks to their children.

### Theme 3: Energy Centric Coping Mechanisms

Working mothers adopted energy-centric coping mechanisms to alleviate fatigue and exhaustion resulting from their domestic and job responsibilities. Balancing employment and domestic duties drained their energy levels, hindering their desired participation in their children's academic learning. These coping mechanisms aimed to reduce their workload, particularly active involvement in their children's education. Many working mothers utilized these strategies to ensure their children received quality academic coaching, which they were unable to provide due to their other commitments.

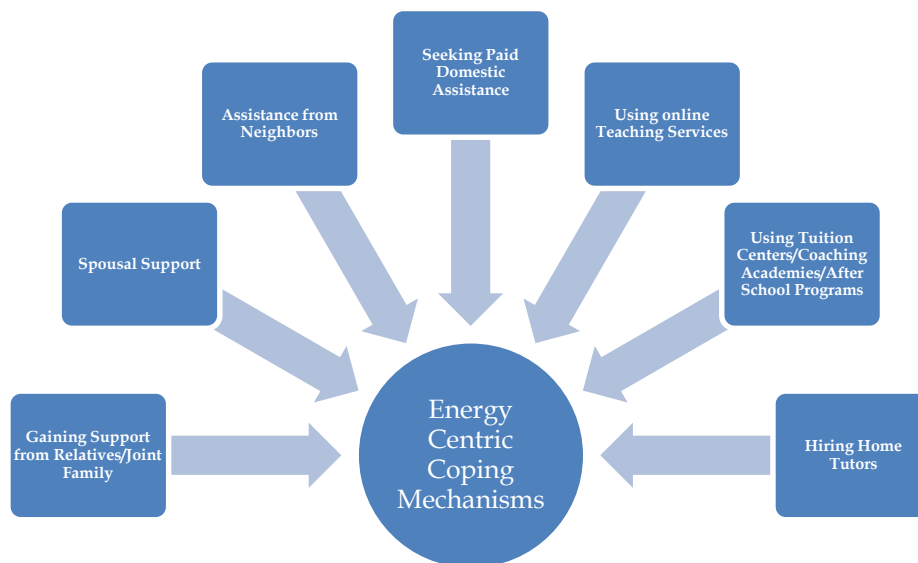


Figure 2: Theme - 3 and its Categories

#### Gaining Support from Relatives/Joint Family

Support from relatives was available to working mothers in joint families and nuclear families with close relatives nearby who were willing to assist. In joint families, support included tasks like preparing meals, getting children ready for school, pick and drop services, supervising maids, caring for children until the mother's arrival, social and religious training. For nuclear families with nearby relatives, support typically included pick and drop services and caring for children until the mother returned home. Among the 24 married couples studied, 10 received help from relatives. All divorced

mothers, 7 out of 18 joint families, and 3 out of 12 nuclear families were supported by relatives.

### **Hiring Home Tutors**

Working mothers opted for home tutors to provide professional academic coaching to their children, acknowledging their own limitations in this regard. However, home tutoring was expensive, with charges applicable for each subject and each child separately. In joint families, home tutors could be arranged at any time after the children returned from school. In contrast, for nuclear families, home tutors were scheduled to arrive after the mother or father returned home to ensure the safety of the children. Finding home tutors who could accommodate the schedules of nuclear families was challenging and more costly than regular tutors. Among the 12 nuclear families studied, 3 utilized home tutoring services, while 5 out of 18 joint families did the same.

### **Using Tuition Centers/Coaching Academies/After School Programs**

Tuition centers, coaching academies, and after-school systems served as convenient options for nuclear families to supervise and educate children between school closure and the mother's arrival. These centers addressed both childcare and academic coaching needs and were more affordable than home tutors. Working mothers preferred them due to the presence of other children, creating a comfortable environment. Among the respondents, 7 married couples utilized tuition centers, while no divorced mothers did. Additionally, 3 joint families and 4 nuclear families made use of tuition centers for their children.

### **Using online Teaching Services**

Although, on line teaching services were quite ubiquitous after covid-19, yet it was surprising that working mothers did not sufficiently use this coping mechanism to enhance learning of their children. There were just 2 working mothers who said that they used on line services for academic learning of their children both were from joint families. They used on line services from tutors as an augmenting process while their primary reliance was on teaching the children themselves.

### **Seeking Paid Domestic Assistance**

Paid domestic assistance could be through hiring a full-time or part-time maid or servant. Full time maid/servant were considered more reliable and useful but costed higher than a part-time maid/servant. Joint families preferred part-time maid/servant because elder members of the family (not employed due to old age) were available at home for supervision of the maid/servant. Nuclear families preferred full-time maid/servant because a part-time maid/servant could not be relied for leaving the entire house on her/him. However, there had been incidents of fraud and planned thefts so families were cautious in employing full-time or part-time maid/servants especially those who were compelled to leave the house to the maid/servant for some time of the day. The full-time employers of maid/servant were 8 families while 10 families employed part-time maid/servant. Out of 18 families using paid domestic assistance, just 2 families used male servants, remaining 16 had female maids.

### **Assistance from Neighbors**

Assistance from neighbors was a scanty affair being a huge responsibility and current state of security. Working mothers living in higher housing societies like DHA, Bahria Town, and PHA, Naval Anchorage, City Housing etc., could not get such



assistance due to non-existent concept of neighborhood. However, families living in small communities and on permanent basis had many acquaintances who were kind and willing to assist with regard to overseeing the maid/servant or children in the absence of adult member of the family.

### Spousal Support

Spousal support was one of the major sources to save time and conserve energy for working women. Divorced working mothers were deprived of this option and had to take full load either by themselves or share with joint family members. The level of spousal support was found lesser in joint families as other family members were there to share the burden. In nuclear families the spousal support was observed to be higher as mentioned by Respondents 1, 4, 8, 11, 14, 16, 17, 20, 23, 24, and 27. Spousal support could facilitate working mothers in all activities whether internal or external. Many fathers (8 out of 24) picked and dropped children to school, 3 helped in preparation of breakfast, 2 in getting ready the children for school. Similarly, 6 fathers helped in home work of children and 8 attended parent-teacher meetings regularly. The most significant aspect of spousal support was the psychological safety and consolation in the face of derogatory remarks and taunts from others for ignoring children due to job commitments.

### Theme-4: Involvement Centric Coping Mechanisms

The involvement centric coping mechanisms provide dual advantages. First, by enhanced involvement of working mothers with children, the academic learning of children was improved. Second, the increased involvement ameliorated the deprivation and lack of attachment of working mothers with their children due to mental and physical exhaustion and paucity of time. These mechanisms were aimed at increasing involvement of working mothers in the life of their children where they had more time interacting with children by realigning the priorities. Mothers used these mechanisms to contribute more to the development of children and enhance academic learning by participation in all relevant activities.

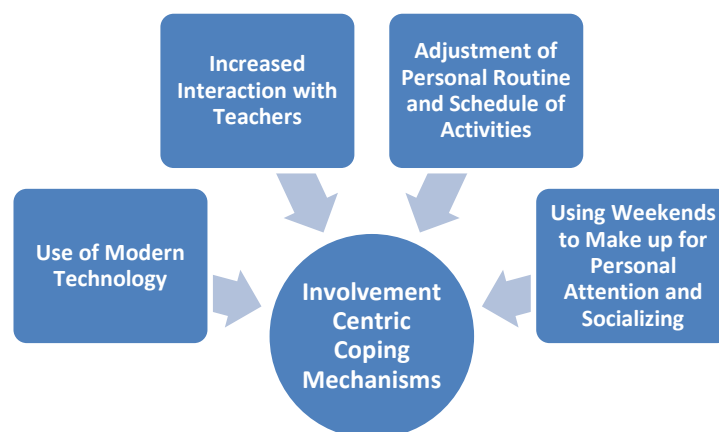


Figure 3: Sub-Theme – 4 and its Categories

#### Increased Interaction with Teachers

Increased interaction with teachers was considered a direct involvement of working mothers in the school activity of the child. The interaction with teachers could be through personal meetings by visiting school, telephone call, on-line interaction via social media, on-line meeting applications, and exchange of messages on telephone.

Increased interaction was used by working mothers to know about the academic progress, behavioral progress, social and moral development of children. Increased interaction helped teachers and working mothers to solve academic problems of children. It was noted (Sub-Theme – 1.8) working women were better positioned to have better interaction with teachers. Almost all (29 out of 30) participants of this study regularly interacted with teachers during parent teacher meetings. More than half (23 out of 30) remained in communication with teachers through telephone while 18 were part of the official social media groups created by class teachers. Similarly, 9 working mothers were in contact with teachers through emails and messages.

### **Use of Modern Technology**

Coping through use of modern technology could be vital for working mothers to enhance their involvement with children. Modern technology could be effectively used by working mothers for monitoring activities of children, interaction with children and teachers, enhancement of academic learning, and augmenting personality development. Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras installed at home, laptops and mobiles for video calling, tabs and laptops for educational videos, animations, and recorded lectures could be used by mothers. The sample for this study had 7 mothers using CCTV cameras, 11 had video calling arrangements at home, 21 used educational material available on the internet via use of laptops, tabs, mobiles, and smart TVs.

### **Using Weekends to Make up for Personal Attention and Socializing**

Throughout the week, job and school routines did not allow sufficient shared time and activities to have the involvement and attachment to working mothers at par with housewives. To compensate, working women used weekends special days for making up the deficiency of personal attention and socializing. This was done by working mothers by planning an outdoor family activity, visit to a close relative, jointly watching movie, celebration of children related events, and hoteling. Similarly, working mothers used weekends to enhance academic learning by revision of lessons taught during the past week, emphasis on lesson not fully understood by children, and practice of subjects requiring practice like mathematics and other science subjects. All working mothers used weekends for enhancing their involvement in academic learning of children.

### **Adjustment of Personal Routine and Schedule of Activities**

Working mothers needed to cope by adjustment of their personal routine and schedule of activities. After reaching home from office, working mothers adjusted their activities in such a manner to spend maximum time with children. Working mothers should avoid spending their entire time in the kitchen away from children. If that was unavoidable, they should make arrangements to remain with the children like making them sit in the kitchen to supervise their homework. Similarly, working mothers needed to be with their children till they went to sleep. Respondents 3, 7, 10, 14, 15, 19, 22, 23, and 27 said that the entire family should be together on dinner and should give time to each other. Working mothers should avoid doing any office work, use of mobile phone and laptop, and being away from children. All working mothers made adjustments to their activities to be with the children for maximum of their time at home. It was particularly noted that single mothers (divorced mother) were more sensitive to their time with children. Most of the women performed maximum of their domestic work by waking up early in the morning. They spent their time with children after returning from office without getting busy in household activities that could be performed in the morning.

### Theme-5: Emotion Centric Coping Mechanisms

Emotion centric coping mechanism included all ways adopted by working mothers to manage their own and children's emotions. Emotional issues included obsession with profession, sensitivity to behavior and remarks of people, sense of deprivation of children, excessive load of expectations on children, and feeling of guilt of neglecting children.

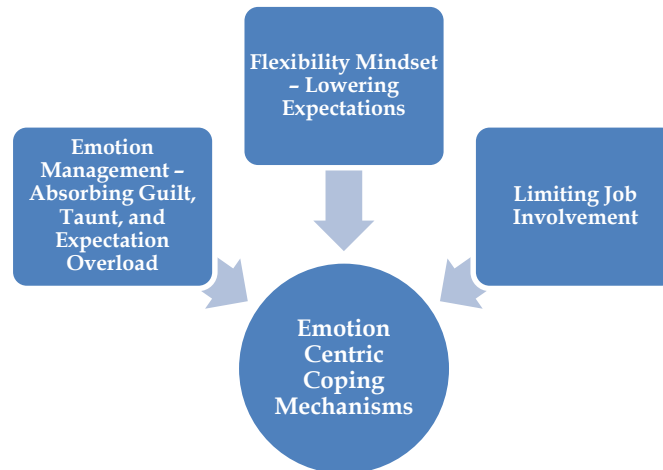


Figure 4: Theme - 5 and its Categories

#### Limiting Job Involvement

This coping mechanism enabled working mothers to alleviate anxiety about slower career progression by reducing their job involvement to allocate more time and energy to domestic responsibilities. They could limit job involvement without antagonizing their employers in three ways. Firstly, by requesting a desk with lesser workload and public dealings, which may seem less lucrative career-wise but saves considerable time and energy for attending to their children's academic needs at home. Secondly, by remaining satisfied with employment at smaller branches with fewer customers, although larger branches offer greater career progression opportunities. Thirdly, by avoiding volunteering for additional responsibilities despite creating a good impression, which could lessen energy drain and exhaustion. Among the 30 cases studied, 5 working mothers opted for desks with lesser workload, 2 preferred staying at sub-branches, and 5 confined themselves to limited responsibilities.

#### Flexibility Mindset - Lowering Expectations

Maintaining a flexible mindset was deemed crucial by respondents as it enabled working mothers to alleviate pressure on their children from heavy academic expectations. Alongside the constant push for academic excellence from parents and teachers, children needed engaging activities to maintain a healthy psychological state. The constrained timeframe of 3 to 4 hours after school posed challenges, requiring children to balance homework, family interaction, refreshment, and dinner. A semi-fixed daily routine could stress both children and working mothers, necessitating a flexible approach to allow necessary breathing space for the children. Similarly, working mothers needed to manage expectations and not demand peak performance from their children in all aspects. Respondents highlighted the importance of allowing children to take responsibility for their studies while ensuring they have sufficient time for rest and recreation.

## **Emotion Management – Absorbing Guilt, Taunt, and Expectation Overload**

Emotion management emerged as a vital coping mechanism among the participants of this research. Working mothers often experienced disturbance from hurtful remarks and behaviors of those around them, leading to feelings of disappointment, guilt, depression, frustration, and anger, which drained their energy and hindered creating a conducive domestic environment for their children's academic learning. Particularly in joint families, hurtful remarks and maltreatment often came from relatives, causing significant emotional distress. Spousal support played a crucial role in managing these emotions. Additionally, working mothers faced depression and frustration when solely responsible for managing home and children without assistance from relatives, joint family members, or maids/servants. This led to a lack of time for themselves and the relegation of academic learning to a lower priority, focusing only on meeting essential needs. Working mothers with three to four children were particularly seen as preoccupied with worries and short-tempered, according to respondents.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Coping mechanisms to conserve energy, save time, increase involvement, or reduce emotional burden, are interconnected. A coping mechanism adopted to save time also conserves energy and at the same time, may increase involvement and reduce stress. This characteristic of coping mechanism leads to the conclusion that working mothers should adopt the coping mechanism which suit them the best keeping in view their peculiar set of conditions. They may start with the evaluation of the situational determinants posited by this study to select the coping mechanism for enhancing the academic learning of their children. The choice can then be further refined on the basis of their experience and availability of other alternatives.

## **Time-Centric Coping Mechanisms**

Time-centric coping mechanism need to be adopted to address the factors generated by shortage of time of working mothers. Working mothers have a shortage of time at home because of their job commitments. The banking sector consumes more time of its employees as they have to spend extra time for the day's closing activities before leaving their desks. Similarly, the start time in the morning has to be strictly followed to prevent customer dissatisfaction. Resultantly, bank employees keep a bigger cushion time to reach the bank before start of its business timings. On returning home, working mothers have to do domestic work depending upon the availability of assistance to them. The time compressed routine of working mothers necessitates them to adopt time-centric coping mechanism to manage, save, utilize time in the best interest of the family including academic learning of children at home.

## **Energy-Centric Coping Mechanisms**

Energy-centric coping mechanisms are aimed at preserving energy of working mothers to enable them actively participate in academic learning at home for their children. Usually the lack of energy and, physical and mental exhaustion on return from job prevents working mothers from full involvement in supervision of homework and pleasant interaction with children. The fatigue caused by job commitments drains energy of working mother and on returning home they have a strong desire to relax. Additionally, if working mothers have to handle domestic work like putting things in order, cleaning, cooking dinner, dish washing, and ironing clothes/uniforms for the next day, their time and energy becomes exceptionally low. Monitoring and supervision of academic learning of children requires them to have sufficient energy. The lack energy

becomes a hurdle in spending quality time with family ultimately leading to an unhealthy home environment which is not conducive for academic learning at home.

### **Involvement-Centric Coping Mechanisms**

Involvement-centric coping mechanisms for the essence of mothers' role in academic learning of children. Working mothers having time and energy but lacking a desire to involve cannot play effective role in academic learning of their children. The involvement in academic learning is not limited to monitoring and supervision of homework only. The help in homework is just a part of academic learning of children. Working mothers need to understand that cognitive and affective learning is mastered by children through their observation of mother, father, and elders of the family. Children must be able to see the involvement of mothers in their lives. Concern about homework only is likely to fixate children on obtaining marks in the class whereas they should be guided to transform into good human being, good Muslim, and good citizen. Involvement-centric mechanisms manifest love of mothers and the care for their children covering all aspects of their life at home and outside it. Involvement-centric coping mechanisms show the children that their working mothers (parents) are part of their lives including academic learning.

### **Emotion-Centric Coping Mechanisms**

Emotion-centric coping mechanisms enable working mothers to adopt a balanced approach to deal with children especially their academic learning. People around working mothers usually add to their emotional burden through overload of expectations, stigmatization, and stereotyping. Similarly, the expectation overload on children and lack of full-time attention of their mother also impacts their emotions. Emotional aspect assumes greater importance because passion for professional excellence can yield a neglect to home and children which can create serious marital implications for working mothers. Similarly, distancing from relatives can result in social isolation and increased stereotyping by people damaging reputation of working mothers. Working mothers are prone to short-temperament and intolerance due to increased responsibilities and prolonged/continuous physical and mental strain. Dealing all types of customers causes job exhaustion in the banking industry in Pakistan where people expect banks to instantly respond to all their issues. The job stress usually spills over to the home matters of working mothers and they feel emotionally depleted. Emotional burden becomes a big hurdle to create pleasant environment at home and due participation of working mothers in academic learning of their children at home.

### **Theoretical Implications**

In a nutshell, this study adds value to the resource conservation theory by exploring the interplay between working mothers' time and energy resources and their children's academic learning outcomes in the following ways:

1. **Resource Allocation:** The study investigated how working mothers allocate their limited resources between work responsibilities and supporting their children's academic learning.

2. **Role Conflict and Enrichment:** The study examined how the dual roles of being a working mother and a parent impact resource conservation. It explored whether role conflict arises when working mothers juggle competing demands for time and energy between work and family responsibilities. Conversely, the study also investigated

instances of role enrichment, where experiences in one role positively spill over to enhance performance in another role.

3. **Psychological Well-being:** The study explored the psychological implications for working mothers, such as stress, burnout, or feelings of guilt, as they navigate the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities while supporting their children's academic learning.

4. **Support Networks and Coping Strategies:** The study discovered how working mothers mobilize social support networks and coping strategies to conserve resources and manage the demands of multiple roles effectively. It explored the role of organizational support, family support, and individual coping mechanisms in mitigating resource depletion and promoting resilience.

5. **Cultural Context:** Given the study's focus on the banking sector of Pakistan, it also examined how cultural norms, societal expectations, and institutional factors shape working mothers' experiences and resource conservation strategies. Cultural values regarding gender roles, family dynamics, and education influence how working mothers prioritize and manage their resources.

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