



# WORKING MOTHERS CHARACTERISTICS AND PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CALABAR EDUCATION ZONE, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated working mothers' characteristics and pupils' academic performance in Social Studies in primary school in Calabar Education Zone. Two Research hypotheses were tested. Literature review was carried out on working mother domestic role and socio-economic status. The Survey research design was adopted for the study. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to make inference and generalization of the population by selecting and studying the sample for the study. The population of the study was working mothers in the Calabar education zone. A sample of five hundred and twenty-four working mother was used for the study. The selection was done through the stratified random sampling technique. The questionnaire titled Working Mothers Characteristics and Pupils' academic performance Questionnaire (WMCPAPQ) was the main instrument used for data collection. The reliability estimate of the instruments was established through Cronbach Alpha Reliability method. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was the statistical technique employed to test the hypotheses under study. Each hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that, working mothers' domestic role and working mothers' socioeconomic status significantly influence pupils' academic performance in Calabar Education Zone. It was recommended that mothers should accept the everyday tasks of domestic role as a natural expressions of femininity and the routine care of home and pupils to provide opportunities for pupils to express and reaffirm their relation the world at large, The government should emphasize on producing impactful programmes in the interest of creating awareness for working mothers to enable them know the importance of mother- child relationship, Government should make funds available such as low interest loan to mothers to venture into other business that will enable them have time for their pupils.

**KEYWORDS:** Working mothers, Academic performance, Social Studies, Domestic role, Socio-Economic status.

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## INTRODUCTION

A typical African cultural setting is centered on the man as head of the family and the sole provider of daily bread. The mother however is expected to provide informal education and subsequently prepare the child for formal education. The general believe (in the view of the Researcher) is that mothers who work will find it difficult to fulfill their role of providing early childhood education that will ultimately affect their child's academic performance when enrolled in school. Pareja and Lewis (2016) recognized mothers' status on academic performance. He explained that personal characteristics such as achievement, motivation, and self-concept are strong determinants of academic performance, that mothers are supposed to be dedicated to their children and avoid working outside the home because they have influence on the academic performance of their children especially when it is considered that mothers play significant roles in the education of their children, starting from conception, informal to formal education. Murkhajee (2018) stated that there is mounting evidence which indicates that, when malnutrition starts early in life, it becomes more severe in the impairment of the brain and may result in life-long reduction of intellectual abilities. In most homes, mothers do not take care of their children, do not prepare them for school, or cook their food, and do not take care of their dresses and books. Mothers discourage their children to aim high in educational pursuits and through their life example and counseling Ekeh (2013). Bianchi (2018) asserted that global consensus is that education is a process that helps to develop the whole human being, physically, mentally, morally, politically, socially, and, technologically to enable one to function in any environment in which one may find oneself. Education, according to her, performs a major role in equipping the individual with the skills and knowledge which would help to transform any economy. Thus, the researcher is of the view that education is the greatest investment that any nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources. The role of the mother is to ensure that children are well fed with nutritionally balanced diet and were necessary to ensure that the pupils go to school with a well packaged lunch-box. Where the mother is not always available to do this, the tendency is for the pupils to go to school with junk foods. This may influences the mental

development of the child and determines the level of academic performance.

Oyetunde (2014) affirmed that education is the cornerstone for development, and has adopted education as an "instrument per excellence" for effective national development. Thus, education opens access for employment, notwithstanding gender or circumstances of birth. He noted that examination and education are inseparable, for the efficiency and quality of an educational system is usually determined through performance of its products in an examination or a set of examinations. Examination, according to him, therefore influence what is taught and learned in schools, especially when the results of the examinations are used to make important decisions (such as awarding certificates to graduating students, promoting students to higher classes, or selecting students for higher levels of education).

Hornby (2006) defined employment as work, especially when it is done to earn a living. Thus, working mothers may also be defined as mothers working to earn money. Mothers' employment could be full time, on shift basis, part-time, or even temporary. It is full time when the mother takes up a permanent and pensionable appointment and has to start work at 8:00am to close at 4:00pm and may even stay over time up till 6:00pm. The mother could work on shift-basis, this is common with nurses. She could work on day or night shift and could even be on off-duty. Part-time employment is when the mother is not fully engaged as a permanent staff but engaged as an ad-hoc staff that may not have to work the full length from 8:00am to 4:00pm. Temporary employment means that the mother is only engaged to work for a short period of time; for example as a cook during a conference or a special occasion. Academic performance, on the other hand, refers to how successful or unsuccessful pupils are in their learning activities. All the variables defined above can be inter-related to indicate a connection between mothers' employment and the academic performance of pupils. Igube and Ejaro (2013) argued that working mothers contribute towards juvenile delinquency and poor academic performance of their pupils. They noted that, the working mother phenomenon could also contribute to marital conflict and may lead to increase in the divorce rate among dual career families.

The working mothers (whether on shift basis, part time employment or full employment), to a large extent determines how successful or unsuccessful their children would be in their academic performance. This is attested to by Mustapha (2008) who observed that child training is a neglected area in most families and mothers are no more devoted to the up keep of their pupils. According to him, when mothers work, they spend the whole day at their places of work, especially if they occupy top positions at work, and have little or no time for their pupils and family. This neglect of family responsibilities may result in pupils who are ill-cultured and whose moral and academic performance leaves a lot to be desired. It is on this Backdrop that this study seek to examine the extent to which working mothers characteristics influence pupils academic performance in primary school in Calabar Education Zone.

Domestic role has been shown to negatively affect a child's social, emotional and behavioural development and a mother's emotional well-being, parenting capacity and ability to respond to their child needs Okonkwo (2018) conducted a study on the influence of mothers' domestic activities on academic performance of pupils in secondary schools in Sokoto State. The aim was to find out if domestic duties of mothers have influence on their children's academic performance. The simple random sampling technique was adopted and a total of 120 pupils and 40 teachers from 8 selected schools served as subjects for the study. The collected data were descriptively analysed using tables of frequency distribution and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that influence of domestic duties on pupils' academic performance was not widely known to the people, and most mothers believe that the mothers domestic duties plays an important part in their children's proper development. The findings showed that the existing rate of mothers neglect on domestic duties is a major obstacle to the performance of children in secondary schools; 60.0%.

This present research is similar to the study carried out by Okonkwo (2018) in terms of focus on pupils' performances as influence to mothers' domestic role. However, Okonkwo did not select independent families as samples for his studies and only focused on pupils and mothers. Goode, (2012) observed that mothers who more strongly endorsed the belief that mothers are instinctively and innately better caretakers than fathers,

perceptions of increased domestic responsibilities were associated with lower well-being post-lockdown. Mothers' domestic workload - including childcare and housework- increases, those who strongly endorse the belief that women are essentially better caretakers will report lower well-being compared to mothers who weakly endorsed. Thus, the increased domestic role, together with the belief that they solely are responsible for the well-being of the child, might have severe negative consequences for these mothers' well-being. We predict that the more a woman endorses essentialist beliefs about parenting, the more she will suffer because of an increased share of childcare and housework. A number of studies have been conducted to assess the influence of domestic role and pupils' academic performance in school.

Goode (2012) observed that mothers who neglect their domestic role tends out to have higher degree of marital conflicts, and house chaos they by hurting the minds of their pupils emotionally and this negatively affect the pupils academic performance. Kessler and McRae (2019) observed that mothers who do not dedicate time for their domestic roles and activities at home, which the pupils are bound to have dissatisfaction and have higher degrees of depression, and lower levels of physical and mental wellbeing. Partial explanation for this, according to them, is that such pupils tend to hold negative peer group influence, environmental trauma and emotional instability, such pupils feel threatened; and that pupils may hate the fact that their mothers do not care about them, and they begin to long for their mothers attention. He also observed that currently domestic role of mothers as well as poor attitudes of mothers have left pupils with poor reasoning and poor learning abilities, when compared to the two pupils that has motherly care and attention in their homes. Freudigar, (2013). Observed that a mothers greatest fulfillment and ultimate achievement as a mother should be the need to take care of her domestic role, taking care of the home and checking the needs of her children and husband. It is usually said that mothers obligation is to dedicate her life unselfishly to the raising of her pupils and to be constantly on call for her child's needs at any time. Demeis and Perkins, (2016) he noted that, mothers who remain at home, performing most of the domestic roles and care for the pupils needs are far better than Mothers who work full-time job

outside the home and neglect the amount of time they spend on their pupils and household tasks, and fail in their responsibilities. This made them to refer to mothers who are diligent in their domestic roles as “super moms” meaning mothers who remain heavily involved with domestic roles.

Follan and Minnis (2019) are of the view that mothers should accept the everyday tasks of domestic role as a natural expressions of femininity and the routine care of home and pupils to provide opportunities for pupils to express and reaffirm their relation the world at large. Igube and Ejaro (2013) noted that mothers should accept the traditional role of mothers as wife, mother and house keeper. Motherhood, according to them, is often perceived as the ‘quintessence of womanhood’.

Igube and Ejaro (2013) observed that, in great contrast to societal perception of women’s traditional role as mother, wives and home makers, a significant number of mothers have been neglecting their domestic role this is resulting in an increase in the dual work and dual career family phenomenon. The argument here is that, when mothers work it reduces the time the mother devotes to the home thereby creating instability. It may in turn create physiological, emotional and social problems to pupils of working mothers due to neglect. They also noted that, the most dramatic social negative change in the twentieth century was the entry of mothers in the work place. This has in turn resulted in the breakdown of the traditional breadwinner husband and home maker wife dichotomy. Improved educational opportunities for women have led to rapid increase in the number of employed women both in public and private spheres. It is obvious from the review of literature that opinions remains that the duty of a mother is known through her domestic role Dele (2019) discovered that pupils whose mothers steadily function in their domestic role at home are more likely to be higher in academic performance (obtaining A and B grades), and that this means that there is high intelligent quotient scores by pupils from stable mothers. This is because such mothers co-ordinate and give attention as well as guidance to their pupils. According to him, nutrition plays a very vital role in the development of a child. If a child is hungry in school, that child is less likely to concentrate. He states that diet has remarkable influences on a child’s mental and physical development, and that inadequate feeding of pupils can lead to problems which often influence the rate

and extent of brain growth that is why it is very important for the mother to be at home taking care of their domestic needs. It is the view of the researcher that the nature of work mothers do outside the home has cause a negative influence in their children academic performance.

The socio-economic background of a mother according to Okonkwo (2018) can be of great negative influence on the academic performance of pupils in school. Okonkwo (2018) conducted a study on the influence of socio economic status of mothers on academic performance of children in primary schools in Sokoto Local Government Area of Sokoto State. The aim was to find out if socio-economic status of mothers has influence on their children’s academic performance. The simple random sampling technique was adopted and a total of 120 pupils and 40 teachers from 8 selected schools served as subjects for the study. The collected data were descriptively analysed using tables of frequency distribution and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that influence of socioeconomic status of mothers on pupils’ academic performance was not widely known to the people, and most mothers believe that the home plays no part in their children’s proper development. The findings showed that the existing rate of low socioeconomic status of mothers is a major obstacle to the performance of children in primary schools; 60.0% of the educated parents’ pupils perform better academically than others.

Agbor, Ukwetang and Abam (2023) asserted that nursing mothers can get some information in the training of their children while in school. The school environment can as well be a social point where children can see and learn. The school environment, serve as socio-cultural interaction for nursing mothers and their responsibilities as it concerns their infants. Economic and social status of mothers enhanced Children access and quality of Education to achieve the Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015: Economic and social status enhanced children access and quality of education. The mothers will take interest and send their children to the school with full interest and enthusiasm. Increase enrollment ratio with the help of parent motivation and community involvement “In Pakistan enrollment of girls increased 247 percent in the North West Frontier Province and 197 percent in Baluchistan Province between 1994 and 1998. Student attendance and dropout rates were also positively affected. Each month a five-

liter tin of vegetable oil was distributed to the family of each female student who attended school for at least 20 days." In the hands of mother in the premises of residential environment, but formal education is in school which may include learning instruction, training, development of disposition, temperament, spirit, mental power through systematic instructions.

Sarigian (2014) established a link between mother's socio economic status and children's educational attainment, and that this holds true whether in rural or urban settings. According to him, incidents of anaemia and retarded growth are common among the pupils from low mothers profile and socioeconomic status, and pupils of such mothers have cases of anaemia and retarded growth. Krieseberg (2013) reported that the middle class mother is more supportive and rewarding of, academic achievement than the lower class mothers.

Chancham (2019) observed that the mother's social and economic factor influences the development of children's personality; and that the mothers' early care provides a stepping stone for the nursery school teachers. This view is supported by Uche (2013) who also observed that the mothers have a remarkable influence on the child's academic achievement, and that pupils learn faster at home when the family motivates them towards education and contributes to their success in school. He further observed that mothers socioeconomic belief, their philosophies of life, prestige, social status, and political powers, all acts as factors that influence the pupil's academic achievement negatively or positive. Other subordinate influences according to him are the mothers influence and socioeconomic status, as well as urban and rural influences. He opined that mothers with high socioeconomic status or homes were so encumbered with duties that they had little time for their pupils.

Ademola (2015) stated that, it has been found that mothers from high and middle socioeconomic status in the society have no time in checking and supervising their pupils educational materials which would have enhance their best attainment and place them at an advantageous position in school. Similarly, Ogunlade (2015) found that the influence of socioeconomic of mothers has negative influence on the academic performance of pupils in school and there is a negative correlation that exists between mothers' socioeconomic status

and their pupils' intelligence and participation in school. In the same vein, Douglas (2015) noted that pupil's mental and emotional development, which is a factor for school education, would be greatly influenced by mother's socioeconomic status negatively because of mothers' negligence towards their pupils' academics. He noted, for instance, that poor feeding during pregnancy and after is likely to have adverse influences on the mental development of the child; and that a state of abject poverty may lead to emotional depression of the child. According to him, occupation is a major index in determining what class a group belongs, and can result to inequality of performances of pupils in school.

Ukwetang and Agbor (2018) opined that environmental factors helps a lot in instilling general knowledge both to nursing mothers and their children. The safety of the environment play a vital role in learning and in playing. Nursing mothers and their babies needs decent and clean environment with educational facilities because learning starts from infancy.

Robinson, Godbay and Jacobson (2019) noted that women report that their experience of mothering is altered significantly when they work outside the home, and they often must address new variations of problems concerning time pressures and conflicting role demands. Mothers who are employed, not only have less time to spend with their children but also spend fewer hours on household chores such as meal preparation and cleaning. They cited for example, that in 1965, the average woman spent 27 hours a week on cooking and cleaning while in 1995, she spent only 15 ½ hours a week.

Alabi (2019) showed that mothers education has a very strong influence on pupils' academic performance, and that death of one of the parents, especially the bread winner can bring an end to a child's education. From the foregoing, it can be seen that socio-economic status determines the lifestyle of a family, the type of food they eat and the environment they live in and ultimately influence their children's academic performance in school. Mohammed (2019) puts it more succinctly, when she asserts that education is an important tool for knowledge, skills and the building of self-confidence, and that through education, women are able to contribute most influentially in transforming their environment and improving the economic status of their family.

For instance, the educational level of a woman determines the quality of health attained by her and the members of her family. The woman is the first contact the child has at birth and virtually all the first lessons of life received by the child (at least within the first three years in life) are from the mother.

Enoh (2019) asserts that parents with considerable wealth are capable of maintaining their children in schools for as long as they are willing to read. Poor parents, on the other hand, may be forced to withdraw their children from school even when they are still capable of reading just because they can no longer cope with the high cost of schooling. According to him, in certain societies, special schools are built for the very rich, and the criterion for selection in such schools is wealth and not aptitude. He therefore concludes that, there is no doubt that educational attainment is to a large extent determined by one's level of intelligence; however, socioeconomic factors and aspirations such as parental employment are equally important determinants.

Okonkwo (2018) conducted a study on the influence of socioeconomic background on mothers and academic performance of children in primary schools in Sokoto Local Government Area of Sokoto State. The aim was to find out if socioeconomic backgrounds of mothers have influence on their children's academic performance. The simple random sampling technique was adopted and a total of 120 pupils and 40 teachers from 8 selected schools served as subjects for the study. The collected data were descriptively analysed using tables of frequency distribution and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that influence of socio-economic background of mothers and pupils' academic performance was not widely known to the people, and most families believe that the home plays no part in their children's proper development. The findings showed that the existing rate of low mothers socioeconomic status is a major obstacle to the performance of pupils in primary schools; 60.0% of pupils with mothers from low socioeconomic status perform lower academically than others.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research design adopted for this study is the survey research design. Joshua, Isangedighi, Asim and Ekuri (2012) describe the survey research

design as one which determines the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of investigation. The area of the study is Calabar Education Zone which is one of the three Education zone in Cross River State Nigeria. It is located at the southern senatorial district, its latitude is 4 28 and 6 35 north of the equator and longitude of the meridian, with an area of 1.807,443,589 KM, Calabar education zone is politically known as southern senatorial district.

The population of the study comprises of the entire working mothers living in Calabar Education Zone, which includes mothers working in Hospitals, Banks, force, tertiary institutions, Primary schools, and secondary schools in the seven local governments Area. In order to sample respondents for the study the researcher employed multifaceted strategy. The stratified sampling technique was used to select working mothers in Calabar Education Zone.

A sample of five hundred and thirty-five working mothers was randomly selected from Calabar Education Zone. The sample was selected from thirty communities comprising of sixteen for urban and fourteen for rural areas. A self-designed questionnaire titled 'Working Mothers Characteristics and pupils' Academic Performance Questionnaire (WMCPAPQ)' was used to obtain data for this study. Two kinds of validity are established for the instrument of this study. These are the face and content validity. The reliability of working mothers' characteristics was determined using the Cronbach alpha after subjecting the instruments to a trial test of 50 working mothers who are not part of the sample for the study but had relevant qualities as those in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Hypothesis one

The first hypothesis used for the study states that there is no significant influence of working mothers' domestic role on pupils' **academic** performance in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. The independent variable in this hypothesis is working mothers' domestic role (low, moderate and high); while the dependent variable is pupils' academic performance. To test this hypothesis, pupils' academic performance from working mothers' domestic role low, moderate and high were compared using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1:** Summary data and One-Way ANOVA of the influence of working mothers' domestic role on pupils academic performance (N=524)

Working mothers' domestic role	N	X	SD		
Low - 1	89	20.5506	1.33153		
Moderate- 2	268	20.9067	1.79332		
High - 3	167	22.2635	1.73276		
Total	524	21.2786	1.83409		
Source of variance	SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig of F
Between group	246.223	2	23.112	42.391*	.000
Within group	1513.098	521	2.904		
Total	1759.321	523			

Significant at p <.05 level, df= 2, 521.

The result on Table 1 revealed that the F-value of 42.391 at p=.000. Since the p (.000) is less than p (.005), the null hypothesis is rejected. This result therefore implied that, working mothers' domestic role significantly influenced pupils' academic performance. Since working mothers' domestic

role had a significant influence on pupils' academic performance, a post hoc analysis was employed using Fishers' Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

**TABLE 2: Fishers' Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis of the influence of Working mothers' domestic role on pupils' academic performance**

(1) Working domestic role	mothers'(J) Working mothers' domestic role	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Low	Moderate	-.35615	.20849	.088
	High	1.71291(*)	.22366	.000
Moderate	Low	.35615	.20849	.088
	High	1.35676(*)	.16801	.000
High	Low	1.71291(*)	.22366	.000
	Moderate	1.35676(*)	.16801	.000

LSD

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The result of the analysis in Table 2 showed that pupils whose working mothers' domestic role was Low were significantly different in their pupils' academic performance from those whose Working mothers' domestic role was either Moderate or high. Also pupils whose Working mothers' domestic role was Moderate were significantly different from those who were high in pupils' academic performance. The finding is in line with the study of Goode, (2012) who observed that mothers who more strongly endorsed the belief that mothers are instinctively and innately better caretakers than fathers, perceptions of increased domestic responsibilities were associated with lower well-being post-lockdown. Mothers' domestic workload -including childcare and housework-increases, those who strongly endorse the belief that women are essentially better caretakers will report lower well-being compared to mothers who weakly endorsed. Thus, the increased domestic role, together with the belief that they solely are

responsible for the well-being of the child, might have severe negative consequences for these mothers' well-being. We predict that the more a woman endorses essentialist beliefs about parenting, the more she will suffer because of an increased share of childcare and housework. A number of studies have been conducted to assess the influence of domestic role and pupils' academic performance in school.

Hypothesis two

The second hypothesis used for the study states that there is no significant influence of working mothers' socioeconomic status on pupils' academic performance in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. The independent variable in this hypothesis is working mothers' socioeconomic status (low, moderate and high); while the dependent variable is pupils' academic performance. To test this hypothesis, pupils' academic performance from working mothers' socioeconomic status low, moderate and high were compared using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

**TABLE 3:** Summary data and one-way ANOVA of the influence of working mothers' socioeconomic status on pupils' academic performance (N=524)

Working mothers' socioeconomic status	N	X	SD
Low- 1	92	20.5652	1.46988
Moderate- 2	266	20.9023	1.76492
High – 3	166	22.2771	1.71844
Total	524	21.2786	1.83409

  

Source of variance	SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig of F
Between group	250.000	2	125.000	43.149*	.000
Within group	1509.320	521	2.897		
Total	1759.321	523			

\* Significant at p <.05 level, df= 2, 521.



The result on Table 3 revealed that the F-value of 43.149 at  $p=.000$ . Since the  $p (.000)$  is less than  $p (.005)$ , the null hypothesis is rejected. This result therefore implied that, working mothers' socioeconomic status significantly influenced pupils' academic performance. Since working

mothers' socioeconomic status had a significant influence on pupils' academic performance, a post hoc analysis was employed using Fishers' Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

**TABLE 4:** Fishers' Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis of the influence of Working mothers' socioeconomic status on pupils' academic performance LSD

(I) Working mothers' socioeconomic status	(J) Working mothers' socioeconomic status	Mean Difference (W)	Std. Error	Sig.
Low	Moderate	-.33704	.20586	.102
	High	1.71189(*)	.22122	.000
Moderate	Low	.33704	.20586	.102
	High	1.37485(*)	.16835	.000
High	Low	1.71189(*)	.22122	.000
	Moderate	1.37485(*)	.16835	.000

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The result of the analysis in Table 4 showed that pupils whose working mothers' socioeconomic status was Low were significantly different in their pupils' academic performance from those whose working mothers' socioeconomic status was either moderate or high. Also pupils whose working mothers' socioeconomic status was moderate were significantly different from those who were high in pupils' academic performance. The finding of this study agrees with that of Okonkwo (2018) who revealed that influence of socioeconomic status of mothers on pupils' academic performance was not widely known to the people, and most mothers believe that the home plays no part in their children's proper development. The findings showed that the existing rate of low socioeconomic status of mothers is a major obstacle to the performance of children in primary schools; 60.0% of the educated parents' pupils perform better academically than others.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study it was concluded that working mothers' domestic role and mothers' socio-economic status significantly influences pupils academic performance in primary schools in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Mothers should accept the everyday tasks of domestic role as a natural expression of femininity and the routine care of home and pupils to provide opportunities for pupils to express and reaffirm their relation the world at large.
2. Mothers should stay at home, to play with pupils, educate and watch over them, feeding, taking them to hospital, washing their clothes and other household routine tasks.
3. The State should emphasize on producing impactful programmes in the interest of creating awareness for working mothers to enable them know the importance of mother-child relationship.

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