
**MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AMONG WORKING MOTHERS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES AND THE ROLE OF
DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES**

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Abstract

Background:

The mental health of working mothers is a growing concern due to increasing workloads, societal expectations, and parenting responsibilities. These factors can result in psychological distress and adversely affect children's emotional and behavioral development.

Objectives:

To investigate mental health challenges faced by working mothers, assess their impact on children, and explore the potential of digital technologies in improving maternal well-being.

Methods:

A purposive sample of 101 working mothers was surveyed using a structured questionnaire. **Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques** were employed to analyze the data. Frequencies, percentages, and **Chi-square tests of independence** were used to examine work-life balance, mental health challenges, parenting experiences, child behavioral outcomes, and the use of digital mental health technologies.

Results:

A substantial majority of respondents (**90.1%**) reported that their employment affected the quality time spent with their children. Sleep disturbances (**43.6%**), burnout (**37.6%**), anxiety (**33.7%**), and depression (**29.7%**) were commonly reported mental health concerns. Nearly half of the participants (**45.5%**) observed behavioral changes in their children, including increased screen time, reduced communication, mood swings, and declines in academic

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performance. Despite the growing availability of digital mental health technologies, **78.2%** of respondents reported never using such tools.

Conclusion:

The findings indicate that work-related stress and mental health challenges among working mothers may have implications for child well-being. The findings revealed limited adoption of digital mental health tools among working mothers. Although previous studies suggest the potential benefits of digital mental health interventions, the low usage observed in this study highlights the need to improve awareness, accessibility, and acceptance of such technologies

Keywords:

Mental health of working mothers, Impact of maternal stress on children, Parental care and child development, Technology-based stress management, Digital tools for mental well-being, Parenting in the digital age.

1. Introduction

The participation of women in the workforce has increased significantly over the past few decades, with women now comprising a substantial proportion of the global labour market. While employment provides financial independence, career advancement, and personal fulfillment, working mothers often face the complex challenge of balancing professional responsibilities with parenting duties. Managing multiple roles simultaneously can result in considerable psychological strain, increasing the risk of stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. In addition, societal expectations that position mothers as primary caregivers while maintaining successful careers further intensify these challenges, making work–life balance a persistent concern for many families.

Advancements in digital technology have created new opportunities to support the mental well-being of working mothers. Digital mental health technologies, including mobile health applications, teletherapy platforms, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered chatbots, wearable health-monitoring devices, mindfulness applications, and online counselling services, provide accessible and flexible approaches to stress management and psychological support. These technologies enable working mothers to access mental health resources at their convenience, improve emotional well-being, and better balance professional and family responsibilities. Furthermore, remote work technologies, cloud-based collaboration platforms, and flexible work arrangements have transformed the modern workplace by providing greater flexibility and opportunities for integrating work and family life.

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Although digital technologies offer promising solutions, working mothers continue to experience considerable psychological and emotional challenges. Reduced parental availability associated with work demands may contribute to behavioural changes among some children, although child development is influenced by multiple interacting family, social, and environmental factors. Existing literature suggests that maternal work-related stress and reduced opportunities for parent–child interaction may influence children's emotional and behavioural well-being. However, these outcomes are also shaped by parenting practices, family support, socioeconomic conditions, and the broader home environment. Therefore, promoting work–life balance, strengthening family support systems, and improving access to maternal mental health resources remain essential for fostering healthy child development.

Despite the growing body of research on maternal mental health, work–life balance, and child development, relatively few studies have simultaneously examined the relationship between working mothers' mental health, children's behavioural outcomes, and the role of digital mental health technologies within a single research framework. Moreover, limited empirical evidence is available from the Indian context regarding the awareness and adoption of digital mental health tools among working mothers.

In this context, the present study aims to investigate the mental health challenges experienced by working mothers, examine their impact on children's behavioural outcomes, and explore the role of digital mental health technologies in supporting maternal well-being. The study also seeks to assess the adoption of digital mental health tools among working mothers and identify opportunities for improving work–life balance, maternal mental health, and overall family well-being.

Objectives of the study:

1. To investigate the mental health challenges commonly experienced by working mothers as a result of balancing professional and parenting responsibilities.
2. To examine the behavioural and emotional effects on children in households where both parents, particularly mothers, are employed full-time.
3. examine the awareness, adoption, and perceived usefulness of digital mental health technologies among working mothers.

2. Literature Review

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2.1 Maternal Mental Health and Workplace Stress

The increasing participation of women in the workforce has significantly transformed family structures and caregiving responsibilities. While employment provides financial independence, professional growth, and social engagement, working mothers often experience elevated levels of stress due to the simultaneous demands of career and family responsibilities. The challenge of balancing workplace expectations with parenting obligations frequently contributes to anxiety, emotional exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and burnout.

Research consistently indicates that working mothers face higher psychological burdens compared to women without caregiving responsibilities. Howard and Khalifeh (2020) reported that maternal mental disorders are among the most common health complications associated with pregnancy and the postpartum period. Their review highlighted that maternal depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders contribute significantly to maternal morbidity and can adversely affect infant and child development. The authors emphasized the importance of early identification, psychological support, and accessible mental health services to improve outcomes for both mothers and children. Recent reports indicate a concerning decline in maternal mental health. Willets (2025) highlighted that increasing caregiving responsibilities, limited access to mental health services, financial pressures, workplace demands, and the influence of social media contribute significantly to psychological distress among mothers. The report emphasized that many mothers experience chronic stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of isolation while attempting to balance professional and family responsibilities. These findings reinforce the growing need for accessible mental health support systems and family-friendly workplace policies. Recent research has further emphasized the importance of workplace and social support in protecting maternal mental health. Crombag et al. (2025) conducted a scoping review examining intervention strategies aimed at preventing mental health problems and improving resilience among employed parents from conception until the child reached five years of age. The review identified social support from partners, family members, coworkers, and supervisors as a key protective factor against depression, anxiety, and stress. Supportive workplace environments, flexible work arrangements, and positive supervisor relationships were associated with lower levels of prenatal stress, reduced postpartum depressive symptoms, and improved work–family balance. These findings highlight the critical role of organizational

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and social support systems in promoting maternal well-being and resilience among working mothers.

Workplace pressures such as long working hours, rigid schedules, performance expectations, and limited organizational support contribute substantially to stress levels. In addition, societal expectations often place primary caregiving responsibilities on mothers, creating a “double burden” where women are expected to excel both professionally and domestically.

Recent evidence suggests that burnout has become a growing concern among employed women. Workplace stress not only affects emotional well-being but also influences physical health through sleep disruption, fatigue, and reduced coping ability. Studies have shown that prolonged exposure to occupational stress can increase the risk of depression and anxiety disorders. Furthermore, insufficient workplace flexibility and limited access to mental health support services can exacerbate psychological distress among working mothers.

Recent global reports further indicate that mental health concerns among working women continue to rise. The American Psychological Association (2023) reported that women experience higher workplace stress levels than men, with many struggling to balance employment and caregiving responsibilities. Similarly, the Gallup (2023) State of the Global Workplace Report found increasing levels of stress and depression among working women. Data from Wysa's Mental Health Insights Report (2023) further suggest that nearly one-third of working women experience symptoms of anxiety or depression. The World Health Organization (2022) also reported a substantial increase in anxiety and depression worldwide following the COVID-19 pandemic, with women disproportionately affected. These findings collectively emphasize the growing need for effective mental health support systems for working mothers.

The emergence of hybrid and remote work models has created new opportunities for work-life integration. However, research indicates that flexible work arrangements do not automatically eliminate stress, as many mothers continue to experience blurred boundaries between professional and family roles. Therefore, maternal mental health remains a critical public health concern requiring coordinated support from employers, families, healthcare providers, and policymakers.

2.2 Impact of Maternal Stress on Child Development

Maternal mental health plays a crucial role in shaping children's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development. Children depend heavily on parental support, emotional availability,

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and consistent caregiving during their formative years. When mothers experience chronic stress, anxiety, or depression, their ability to provide responsive and nurturing care may be compromised.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes that a child's development is influenced by interactions within the imm

ediate family environment. Maternal stress can negatively affect these interactions, leading to reduced emotional responsiveness, increased irritability, and lower parental engagement. Consequently, children may experience emotional insecurity, behavioral difficulties, and academic challenges.

Recent studies have demonstrated that maternal parenting stress is significantly associated with adverse developmental outcomes in children. Maternal depression has been identified as a key mediating factor through which stress affects children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth. Pan et al. (2025) found that maternal parenting stress negatively affects early childhood development, with maternal depression acting as a mediator and family resilience serving as a protective factor. Similarly, Long et al. (2008) reported that family stress is significantly associated with children's behavioral and language problems, suggesting that stressful family environments can adversely affect multiple aspects of child development.

Maternal mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, chronic stress, and burnout can further influence children's behavioral and emotional development. Research has shown that children of mothers experiencing mental health difficulties are at greater risk of emotional insecurity, anxiety, social withdrawal, sleep disturbances, attention problems, and behavioral difficulties. Maternal depression may reduce emotional responsiveness and positive parent-child interactions, while chronic stress can contribute to inconsistent parenting practices and reduced parental engagement. Howard and Khalifeh (2020) emphasized that maternal mental health problems are associated with adverse infant and child outcomes, while Goodman et al. (2011) reported significant associations between maternal depression and child psychopathology. Children exposed to persistent parental stress are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems such as aggression, mood swings, attention-seeking behavior, poor academic performance, and excessive screen usage. These findings suggest that addressing maternal mental health is essential for promoting healthy child development and preventing behavioral difficulties among children.

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Furthermore, research indicates that family resilience and supportive parenting practices can mitigate the negative effects of maternal stress. Positive parent-child communication, emotional support, and quality family interactions contribute to healthier developmental outcomes. Therefore, interventions aimed at improving maternal mental health may simultaneously enhance child well-being and family functioning.

The relationship between maternal mental health and child development is particularly important in households where both parents work full-time. Limited parental availability, reduced supervision, and time constraints may contribute to emotional disconnection and behavioral changes among children. These findings highlight the importance of promoting maternal well-being as a strategy for supporting healthy child development.

2.3 Work–Life Balance Challenges of Working Mothers

Work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage professional responsibilities while maintaining family and personal well-being. For working mothers, achieving this balance remains a significant challenge due to competing demands across multiple roles.

Role Conflict Theory suggests that stress occurs when expectations associated with different roles become incompatible. Working mothers often encounter conflicts between professional obligations and parenting responsibilities. Work-related deadlines, meetings, and extended working hours may interfere with family commitments, while childcare responsibilities can affect job performance and career progression.

Several studies have reported that working mothers frequently experience feelings of guilt, self-doubt, and emotional strain when attempting to balance career and family responsibilities. Recent qualitative research by Modise et al. (2025) explored the psychological challenges experienced by young working mothers practicing distance parenting in South Africa. The study found that mothers frequently experience feelings of guilt, failure, sadness, emotional distress, and self-doubt due to separation from their children and societal expectations regarding motherhood. Participants reported concerns about missing important moments in their children's lives, fear for their children's well-being, and feelings of inadequacy as parents. The findings highlight the emotional burden associated with balancing employment responsibilities and caregiving roles, particularly when workplace demands limit direct parental involvement. Many women perceive pressure to

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meet societal expectations of being both successful professionals and attentive caregivers. Such pressures can contribute to psychological distress and reduced life satisfaction.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted these challenges, as many mothers assumed additional caregiving and educational responsibilities while continuing professional work from home. Although digital technologies enabled remote employment, they also intensified work-family boundary conflicts in many households.

Recent evidence suggests that workplace and social support play a crucial role in helping employed mothers achieve a healthier work-life balance. Crombag et al. (2025) conducted a scoping review examining intervention strategies to prevent mental health problems and improve resilience among employed parents. The review identified support from partners, family members, coworkers, and supervisors as important protective factors that reduce stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, flexible work arrangements, supportive supervisors, and family-friendly workplace policies were associated with improved parental well-being and a smoother transition between work and caregiving responsibilities. These findings emphasize the importance of organizational support in reducing work-family conflict and enhancing the overall well-being of working mothers.

Factors influencing work-life balance include workplace flexibility, organizational support, partner involvement, childcare availability, family structure, and socioeconomic status. Organizations that provide flexible schedules, parental leave policies, and mental health support programs are better positioned to reduce employee stress and improve overall well-being.

Despite growing awareness of work-life balance issues, many working mothers continue to face structural and cultural barriers that limit their ability to achieve equilibrium between professional and personal roles. Addressing these challenges requires both organizational and societal interventions.

2.4 Digital Mental Health Interventions

Advances in digital technology have created new opportunities to support mental health and well-being among working populations. Digital mental health interventions encompass a wide range of technologies, including mobile applications, online counseling platforms, teletherapy services, AI-powered chatbots, wearable devices, mindfulness programs, and stress-management tools.

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Digital interventions offer several advantages, including accessibility, affordability, scalability, and convenience. Individuals can access mental health resources at any time and from any location, making these tools particularly beneficial for working mothers who may have limited time to attend traditional counseling sessions.

Cameron et al. (2025) conducted an umbrella review of systematic reviews examining the effectiveness of digital mental health interventions in workplace settings. The study found that digital interventions, including web-based therapies, mobile mental health applications, mindfulness programs, and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)-based platforms, can significantly improve employee mental well-being and reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. The review also highlighted the potential of digital tools to provide scalable, accessible, and cost-effective mental health support for working populations. These findings suggest that digital mental health technologies can serve as valuable resources for working mothers who often face barriers in accessing traditional mental health services.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has further enhanced digital mental health support through personalized recommendations, mood tracking, virtual assistants, and conversational agents. AI-powered platforms can analyze user behavior, provide tailored coping strategies, and deliver real-time emotional support. Emerging research suggests that personalized AI-driven interventions may improve user engagement and mental health outcomes compared to conventional digital programs.

Recent advances in generative Artificial Intelligence have further expanded the capabilities of digital mental health interventions. Bhattacharjee et al. (2026) introduced GUIDE (Generative UI for Interactive Digital Experiences), an AI-driven system that dynamically generates personalized mental health intervention experiences based on users' stress contexts. In a randomized study involving 237 participants, the system demonstrated significantly greater stress reduction and improved user experience compared to a conventional AI-based cognitive restructuring approach. The study highlights the potential of AI systems to personalize not only intervention content but also the manner in which support is delivered, thereby improving user engagement and mental health outcomes.

Wearable technologies such as smartwatches and fitness trackers also contribute to mental health management by monitoring sleep quality, heart rate variability, physical activity, and stress indicators. These devices enable users to gain insights into their well-being and adopt preventive strategies before psychological distress becomes severe.

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In addition to digital therapy platforms, several technology-based solutions can support the mental well-being of working mothers. Mobile mental health applications, AI-powered conversational agents, wearable health-monitoring devices, remote work technologies, digital employee assistance programs, and smart childcare solutions provide convenient and accessible support for stress management. These technologies enable mothers to monitor their mental well-being, access professional guidance, and improve work-life balance while reducing barriers associated with traditional face-to-face mental health services.

Despite their potential benefits, adoption rates remain relatively low among many populations. Barriers include limited awareness, concerns about privacy and data security, lack of digital literacy, and skepticism regarding effectiveness. Therefore, increased awareness, education, and integration of digital wellness programs into workplace policies are necessary to maximize their impact.

2.5 Research Gap

Existing literature has extensively examined maternal stress, workplace challenges, child development, and mental health interventions independently. However, relatively few studies have investigated the combined relationship between working mothers' mental health, children's behavioral outcomes, and the role of emerging digital technologies in mitigating these challenges.

Most previous studies focus primarily on maternal psychological health without simultaneously examining its effects on children's emotional and behavioral development. Similarly, research on digital mental health interventions has largely concentrated on general employee populations rather than working mothers specifically.

Another notable gap exists in the Indian context, where cultural expectations, family structures, and workplace environments differ significantly from those in Western countries. Limited empirical evidence is available regarding how Indian working mothers experience work-life balance challenges and how these experiences influence child well-being.

Furthermore, although digital mental health tools are increasingly available, there remains insufficient understanding of awareness, accessibility, acceptance, and utilization among working mothers. Research examining the effectiveness of AI-driven mental health support, digital wellness platforms, and technology-assisted parenting solutions in this population remains limited.

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Despite growing recognition of maternal mental health challenges among employed parents, Crombag et al. (2025) identified a significant lack of rigorous intervention studies specifically targeting working parents. The review highlighted the scarcity of randomized controlled trials and systematic evaluations of workplace-based mental health interventions, indicating a need for further research on effective strategies to support employed mothers and improve family well-being.

Therefore, the present study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the mental health challenges experienced by working mothers, examining their impact on children's behavior, and exploring the potential role of digital technologies in promoting maternal well-being and family development.

Furthermore, few studies have simultaneously examined maternal mental health, child behavioral outcomes, and awareness of digital mental health technologies within a single research framework, particularly in the Indian context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Design and Setting

This study employed a **quantitative cross-sectional survey design** to investigate mental health challenges experienced by working mothers, perceived child behavioural outcomes, and the adoption of digital mental health technologies. Cross-sectional survey designs are widely used in health and social science research to examine characteristics, experiences, and relationships among variables within a defined population at a particular point in time.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted among working mothers from the local community. A **non-probability purposive sampling technique** was used to select participants who met the inclusion criteria. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study specifically focused on employed mothers with parenting responsibilities.

A total of **101 working mothers** participated in the study. Participants represented different employment categories, including full-time employment, part-time work, freelance/remote work, and self-employment.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participants were eligible if they:

- were currently employed,
- had at least one child,

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- voluntarily agreed to participate.

Unemployed women, retired individuals, and participants without children were excluded.

3.4 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire developed based on previous literature related to maternal mental health, work–life balance, digital health adoption, and child behavioural outcomes.

The questionnaire consisted of sections covering:

1. demographic characteristics,
2. employment and work–life balance factors,
3. self-reported mental health experiences,
4. perceived child behavioural changes,
5. awareness and use of digital mental health technologies.

The questionnaire included multiple-choice items and Likert-scale questions.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The survey was distributed through Google Forms. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and voluntary consent was obtained before participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using quantitative statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize participant characteristics and response patterns.

For questions allowing multiple responses, each response option was analyzed independently, and percentages represented the proportion of participants selecting each option.

Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine associations between selected categorical variables. Statistical significance was considered at **$p < 0.05$** .

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical principles for research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and collected data were used only for academic research purposes.

4. Results

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A total of 101 working mothers participated in the study through a purposive sampling technique. Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to analyze responses related to demographic characteristics, employment status, work-life balance, mental health challenges, child behavioral outcomes, and the use of digital mental health technologies. The findings are presented in Tables 1–3.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Working Mothers (N = 101)

Variable	Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Group	25–30	22	21.8
	31–35	30	29.7
	36–40	28	27.7
	41–45	13	12.9
	Above 45	8	7.9
Employment Type	Full-time	83	82.2
	Part-time	12	11.9
	Freelance/Remote	4	4.0
	Self-employed	2	2.0
Number of Children	1	23	22.8
	2	35	34.7
	3	32	31.7
	4 or more	11	10.8

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The largest proportion of participants belonged to the 31–35 years age group (29.7%), followed by the 36–40 years age group (27.7%). Most respondents were employed full-time (82.2%), while only a small proportion were engaged in part-time, freelance, or self-employed occupations. Regarding family size, 34.7% of respondents had two children, followed by 31.7% who had three children.

Table 2: Work–Life Balance and Mental Health Challenges (N = 101)

Variable	Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Work–Parenting Balance Difficulty	1 (Very Easy)	7	6.9
	2	8	7.9
	3	34	33.7
	4	27	26.7
	5 (Very Difficult)	25	24.8
Weekly Working	Less than 20 hours	24	23.8

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Hours			
	20–40 hours	51	50.5
	More than 40 hours	26	25.7
Job Impact on Child Time	Yes, significantly	38	37.6
	Yes, slightly	53	52.5
	No	10	9.9
Mental Health in Last 6 Months*	Anxiety	36	35.6
	Burnout	37	36.6
	Depression	31	30.7
	Sleep disturbances	42	41.6
	None of the above	17	16.8

*Multiple responses were permitted; therefore, percentages do not total 100%.

Table 2 summarizes the work-life balance challenges and mental health concerns experienced by the respondents. More than half of the participants (51.5%) rated their work-parenting balance difficulty at levels 4 or 5, indicating considerable challenges in balancing professional and parenting responsibilities. Furthermore, 90.1% of respondents reported that their employment affected the quality time spent with their children. Among the multiple-response mental health items, sleep disturbances (41.6%), burnout (36.6%), anxiety (35.6%), and depression (30.7%) were reported by participants. Since respondents could select more than one condition, these findings indicate the frequency of reported experiences rather than comparative prevalence among independent groups.

Table 3: Use of Technology and Child Behavioral Outcomes (N = 101)

Variable	Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Use of Digital Mental Health Tools	Yes	6	5.9
	Occasionally	16	15.8
	No	79	78.2
Perceived Effectiveness of Digital Tools	Yes	34	33.7
	No	36	35.6
	Not sure	31	30.7
Observed Behavioral Changes in Children	Yes	46	45.5
	No	36	35.6

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	Not sure	19	18.8
Type of Behavioral Change	Increased screen time	25	24.8
	Drop in academic performance	16	15.8
	Reduced communication	9	8.9
	Mood swings	7	6.9
	Attention-seeking behavior	7	6.9
	Others	20	19.8

Table 3 presents information regarding the use of digital mental health technologies and observed behavioral changes among children. Despite the increasing availability of digital mental health resources, 78.2% of respondents reported never using such tools, while only 5.9% reported regular use. Nearly half of the respondents (45.5%) observed behavioral changes in their children, with increased screen time (24.8%) being the most frequently reported issue, followed by declines in academic performance (15.8%) and reduced communication (8.9%). These findings indicate that a considerable proportion of respondents reported behavioral changes among their children, while the use of digital mental health tools remained low. Increased screen time was the most frequently reported behavioral change. These descriptive findings provide an overview of participants' experiences and are further examined through inferential statistical analysis.

4.1 Inferential Statistical Analysis

To further examine the relationships among the study variables, Chi-square tests of independence were conducted.

A statistically significant association was found between the use of digital mental health tools and respondents' perceptions of their effectiveness in managing stress and improving work-life balance ($\chi^2 = 21.159$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that respondents who used digital mental health tools were more likely to perceive them as effective.

A statistically significant association was also observed between weekly working hours and reported behavioral changes among children ($\chi^2 = 10.692$, $p = 0.030$), suggesting that working hours may be associated with children's behavioral outcomes.

However, no statistically significant association was found between the perceived impact of employment on quality time with children and reported behavioral changes ($\chi^2 = 6.156$, $p =$

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0.188). This suggests that child behavioral outcomes may be influenced by multiple factors beyond the perceived reduction in quality time.

Table 4. Chi-square Analysis of Selected Variables

Variables	χ^2	p-value	Interpretation
Digital mental health tool usage × Perceived effectiveness	21.159	<0.001	Significant
Job impact on quality time × Child behavioral changes	6.156	0.188	Not Significant
Weekly working hours × Child behavioral changes	10.692	0.030	Significant

5. Discussion

The present study highlights the significant challenges faced by working mothers in balancing professional responsibilities with parenting duties. The findings indicate that full-time employment and extended working hours contribute substantially to work–life imbalance among working mothers. This observation is consistent with previous research suggesting that long working hours and competing family responsibilities increase stress levels and reduce family engagement among employed women (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). The findings also support Role Conflict Theory, which proposes that the simultaneous demands of work and family responsibilities create psychological strain and reduce opportunities for personal well-being.

An important finding of the study is that a substantial majority of respondents (90.1%) reported that their employment affected the quality time spent with their children. This finding highlights the challenges working mothers face in balancing professional obligations with family responsibilities. Reduced quality time may limit opportunities for emotional bonding, communication, supervision, and parental involvement, all of which are essential for healthy child development. The finding is consistent with previous research indicating that work-related pressures can contribute to family strain and reduced parental engagement. The high proportion observed in the present study suggests that work–family conflict remains a significant concern among working mothers and may indirectly influence both maternal well-being and children's developmental outcomes.

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Another important finding is the high prevalence of mental health concerns among participants, particularly sleep disturbances, burnout, anxiety, and depression. These findings are consistent with the observations of Howard and Khalifeh (2020), who reported that maternal mental health disorders remain a significant public health concern and can adversely affect both mothers and their children. Similarly, Modise et al. (2025) found that working mothers frequently experience emotional distress, guilt, sadness, and psychological strain due to the challenges of balancing employment and parenting responsibilities. The findings of the present study further reinforce the growing concern regarding the psychological burden experienced by working mothers.

The inferential analysis demonstrated a statistically significant association between the use of digital mental health tools and respondents' perceptions of their effectiveness in managing stress and improving work–life balance. Participants who reported using these technologies were significantly more likely to perceive them as beneficial. This finding supports previous evidence indicating that digital mental health interventions can reduce psychological distress and improve well-being among working populations (Cameron et al., 2025; Bhattacharjee et al., 2026). The findings highlight the importance of increasing awareness, accessibility, and acceptance of digital mental health technologies among working mothers.

The inferential analysis also revealed a statistically significant association between weekly working hours and reported behavioral changes among children, suggesting that extended work commitments may influence children's emotional and behavioral outcomes. However, no statistically significant association was found between the perceived impact of employment on quality time with children and observed behavioral changes. This indicates that child behavioral outcomes are likely influenced by multiple interacting factors, including maternal mental health, parenting practices, family support, socioeconomic conditions, and the broader home environment.

Nearly half of the respondents (45.5%) reported behavioral changes in their children, including increased screen time, reduced communication, mood swings, attention-seeking behavior, and declines in academic performance. These findings support previous research regarding the influence of maternal stress on child development. Pan et al. (2025) demonstrated that maternal parenting stress negatively affects early childhood development through the mediating role of maternal depression. Likewise, Long et al. (2008) reported that family stress is significantly associated with children's behavioral and language problems.

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The behavioral changes observed in the present study may therefore reflect the combined influence of maternal stress, work-related demands, family environment, and other contextual factors that affect children's psychological and social development.

The findings also support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the importance of family interactions and parental involvement in child development. When mothers experience chronic stress, burnout, or anxiety, their ability to provide consistent emotional support and supervision may be affected. Consequently, children may experience emotional insecurity, behavioral difficulties, and reduced social engagement. These outcomes highlight the interconnected nature of maternal well-being and child development.

The study underscores the need for employer-driven interventions such as flexible work schedules, mental health support programs, parental assistance initiatives, and the promotion of digital wellness tools. Organizations should foster supportive workplace environments that encourage work-life balance and reduce stigma associated with seeking mental health support. Increasing awareness and accessibility of digital mental health resources may help working mothers better manage stress while improving overall family well-being.

Overall, the findings emphasize that maternal mental health is not solely an individual concern but a family and societal issue with significant implications for child development, family functioning, and long-term community well-being.

Limitations

Although the study included responses from 101 working mothers, the sample was drawn from a specific local area using purposive sampling. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to all working mothers across different regions and socioeconomic contexts. In addition, the study relied on self-reported responses, which may be subject to response bias. Future studies involving larger and more geographically diverse samples are recommended to validate and extend these findings. In addition, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables.

Conclusion

This study investigated the mental health challenges experienced by working mothers, their impact on children's behavioral outcomes, and the role of digital technologies in supporting maternal well-being. The findings revealed that balancing professional responsibilities with parenting remains a significant challenge for many working mothers. A substantial majority

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of respondents reported that their employment affected the quality time spent with their children, while sleep disturbances, burnout, anxiety, and depression emerged as the most common mental health concerns.

The study further found that nearly half of the respondents observed behavioral changes in their children, including increased screen time, reduced communication, mood swings, attention-seeking behavior, and declines in academic performance.

The findings suggest that work-related demands and maternal mental health challenges may influence family well-being and children's behavioral outcomes. However, child behavior is likely affected by multiple interacting factors, emphasizing the importance of supportive family environments, workplace flexibility, and accessible mental health resources.

The limited adoption of digital mental health technologies observed in this study highlights the need to improve awareness, accessibility, and acceptance of these tools among working mothers. Although previous research suggests the potential benefits of digital mental health interventions, the findings of the present study emphasize the importance of increasing digital mental health literacy and encouraging appropriate utilization of available support systems. Employers and policymakers should promote flexible work arrangements, workplace mental health programs, and family-friendly policies that support maternal well-being while strengthening healthy parent–child relationships.

The findings emphasize that maternal mental health is not solely an individual concern but a family and societal issue with significant implications for child development and future well-being. Future research should involve larger and more diverse populations, employ longitudinal research designs, and further investigate the effectiveness of digital mental health interventions in improving maternal well-being and child outcomes.

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Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate: This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from

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the Institutional Ethics Committee of SAFI Institute of Advanced Study, Vazhayur. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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Human Ethics and Consent to Participate Declarations: This research involved human participants and adhered to ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to participation.

Author

Contributions:

Raseena V contributed to the study conception and design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation. The co-authors contributed to literature review, methodology refinement, interpretation of findings, and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Table Citations: The demographic profile of the respondents is summarized in Table 1. Work-life balance and mental health statistics are shown in Table 2. Technology usage and observed child behavioral outcomes are listed in Table 3.