

Anxiety and Burnout among Working and Non-Working Mothers

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Abstract

This study investigated the levels of anxiety and burnout among working and non-working mothers, as well as the relationship between anxiety and dimensions of burnout. A sample of 80 mothers (40 working and 40 non-working) was assessed using standardized measures. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed no significant differences in overall anxiety scores or most burnout dimensions between the groups, except for the Personal Achievement dimension of burnout, where working mothers scored significantly higher. Spearman's rho correlations indicated significant positive relationships between anxiety and overall burnout, as well as between anxiety and depersonalization. These findings suggest that while employment status may not broadly differentiate anxiety or burnout levels, specific aspects of burnout and their interplay with anxiety warrant attention in support programs for mothers. Implications for psychological interventions and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Working mothers, non-working mothers, Anxiety, Burnout, Depersonalization, Maternal Health

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) recognizes maternal mental health as a fundamental component of women's overall health and emphasizes that psychological well-being extends beyond the absence of mental illness to include emotional resilience, positive functioning, and the ability to manage the challenges associated with parenting. Maternal mental health has gained increasing attention worldwide because psychological difficulties experienced by mothers have far-reaching implications not only for the individual woman but also for the healthy development of children, family relationships, and community well-being. Research has consistently demonstrated that mothers experiencing elevated levels of psychological distress are more likely to encounter difficulties in parenting practices, emotional

availability, and family functioning, which may subsequently influence children's emotional, behavioural, and cognitive development (Goodman et al., 2011).

Parenting is widely regarded as a chronic source of both rewards and demands. According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, psychological stress arises when individuals perceive that environmental demands exceed their available coping resources. Within the context of motherhood, daily responsibilities such as childcare, household management, balancing interpersonal relationships, and fulfilling societal expectations require continuous cognitive, emotional, and behavioural adaptation. Mothers who perceive these demands as exceeding their personal, emotional, or social resources may experience heightened psychological distress, including anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. Conversely, effective coping strategies and strong social support can reduce the negative impact of these stressors and promote psychological resilience.

Contemporary literature further suggests that maternal well-being is influenced by the interaction between individual characteristics and contextual factors such as family relationships, workplace environment, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural expectations. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) proposes that human development and psychological functioning are shaped through interactions between individuals and multiple environmental systems, including family, workplace, community, and broader sociocultural structures. Applied to maternal mental health, this perspective highlights that mothers' psychological experiences cannot be understood solely through individual characteristics or employment status but must also consider family support, marital relationships, workplace flexibility, community resources, and prevailing cultural norms regarding motherhood.

Within the Indian sociocultural context, motherhood is often associated with extensive caregiving responsibilities and high societal expectations. Women are frequently expected to prioritise the needs of their children and families irrespective of their employment status. Although increasing educational attainment and workforce participation have expanded women's professional opportunities, traditional gender norms continue to place primary responsibility for childcare and household management on mothers (Patel et al., 2018). Consequently, working mothers often negotiate competing demands arising from both occupational and domestic roles, whereas non-working mothers may experience continuous caregiving responsibilities, limited opportunities for personal development, and comparatively lower

social recognition for unpaid household work. These differing experiences suggest that both groups may be vulnerable to psychological distress through distinct pathways.

Recent evidence also indicates that maternal psychological well-being is strongly influenced by protective factors such as perceived social support, marital satisfaction, adaptive coping strategies, and equitable sharing of parenting responsibilities. Social support from partners, extended family members, friends, and workplaces has consistently been identified as an important buffer against stress, anxiety, and burnout (Taylor, 2011). Likewise, adaptive coping strategies, including problem-solving, emotional regulation, positive reframing, and seeking emotional support, have been associated with lower psychological distress and greater resilience among mothers (Carver, 1997). These findings underscore the importance of examining maternal mental health from a multidimensional perspective that incorporates personal, familial, occupational, and sociocultural influences.

Despite growing international interest in maternal mental health, relatively fewer studies have directly compared the psychological experiences of working and non-working mothers within the Indian context using standardized measures of anxiety, burnout, and coping. Existing findings remain inconsistent, with some studies reporting higher psychological distress among employed mothers due to work-family conflict, while others suggest that non-working mothers experience comparable or greater distress because of social isolation, financial dependence, and limited opportunities for self-development. These inconsistencies highlight the need for further empirical investigation to better understand how different maternal roles influence psychological well-being. Therefore, the present study seeks to compare anxiety, burnout, and coping styles among working and non-working mothers, thereby contributing to the growing body of literature on maternal mental health and providing evidence that may inform counselling interventions, family support programmes, and mental health policies.

Anxiety and Parental Roles

Anxiety in mothers is frequently associated with the demands of fulfilling parental responsibilities while maintaining family stability and meeting societal expectations. Within dual-parent households, maternal anxiety is influenced not only by childcare responsibilities but also by the distribution of domestic labour, parenting responsibilities, and perceived role expectations. For employed mothers, the phenomenon of the "second shift"—the unpaid household and caregiving work undertaken after paid employment—has been identified as a significant contributor to psychological strain. Conversely, non-working mothers may experience anxiety stemming from continuous caregiving responsibilities, limited

opportunities for personal time, and societal expectations regarding ideal motherhood. Studies have further suggested that when children are physically healthy and major caregiving crises are absent, maternal anxiety is more strongly associated with internalised standards of being a "perfect mother," fear of inadequacy, and concerns about balancing multiple family responsibilities. Additionally, factors such as limited social support, financial pressures, parenting self-efficacy, and ineffective coping strategies have been shown to exacerbate anxiety symptoms. These findings indicate that maternal anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon arising from the interaction of individual, familial, and sociocultural influences rather than employment status alone.

Maternal Burnout and Employment Status

Recent research conceptualizes maternal burnout as a psychological syndrome resulting from prolonged exposure to chronic parenting-related stress and persistent emotional demands associated with the caregiving role. It is characterized by overwhelming exhaustion related to parenting, emotional distancing from one's children, and a diminished sense of parental accomplishment. Comparative studies examining working and non-working mothers suggest that the nature of burnout differs across employment groups. Working mothers often experience the "double burden" of balancing occupational responsibilities with domestic and childcare obligations, leading to role overload, time pressure, and emotional exhaustion. In contrast, non-working mothers may be more vulnerable to burnout due to continuous caregiving demands, social isolation, limited opportunities for personal growth, and a perceived lack of recognition for unpaid domestic work. However, evidence indicates that employment status alone does not consistently predict burnout; rather, the availability of personal, familial, and social resources plays a more influential role. In healthy dual-parent households, supportive partner relationships, equitable sharing of household responsibilities, effective coping strategies, and strong social support networks have been identified as significant protective factors that reduce the likelihood and severity of maternal burnout across both working and non-working mothers. These findings highlight that maternal burnout is best understood as the result of a complex interaction between parenting demands, resource availability, family functioning, and broader sociocultural expectations.

Theoretical Background

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

Stress has long been recognized as an important determinant of psychological well-being. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which conceptualizes stress as

a dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment. According to this model, stress occurs when individuals perceive that environmental demands exceed their available coping resources. The model emphasizes two cognitive processes: primary appraisal, in which an individual evaluates whether a situation is threatening or challenging, and secondary appraisal, in which available resources and coping abilities are assessed. Mothers constantly evaluate demands arising from childcare, household responsibilities, occupational commitments, financial concerns, and family expectations. Their psychological well-being depends not only on the objective presence of these stressors but also on how they perceive and manage them. Lazarus' work further highlights that effective coping and adequate social support can reduce the adverse effects of stress and promote psychological adjustment.

Anxiety

One of the most common psychological consequences of prolonged stress is anxiety. Anxiety is characterized by excessive worry, nervousness, apprehension, physiological arousal, and anticipation of potential threats. While moderate anxiety may facilitate adaptive functioning by increasing vigilance and preparedness, persistent anxiety can impair emotional regulation, decision-making, interpersonal relationships, occupational functioning, and parenting practices. Mothers frequently experience anxiety related to their children's health, education, safety, financial security, marital relationships, and family responsibilities. The intensity and sources of anxiety may differ between working and non-working mothers because of differences in occupational demands, caregiving responsibilities, available social support, and societal expectations.

Burnout

Another important psychological outcome associated with prolonged stress is burnout. Initially conceptualized within occupational settings, burnout has increasingly been recognized as a multidimensional syndrome that may also arise in caregiving roles. Maslach and Jackson (1981) described burnout as a syndrome consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, resulting from chronic exposure to emotionally demanding situations. *Emotional exhaustion* refers to feelings of being emotionally drained and fatigued, *depersonalization* reflects psychological distancing or detachment from responsibilities, and reduced *personal accomplishment* involves diminished feelings of competence and achievement. Although burnout has traditionally been studied among professionals, contemporary research suggests that prolonged caregiving responsibilities may also contribute to burnout among mothers. Working mothers may experience burnout because of balancing occupational and family responsibilities, whereas non-working

mothers may experience burnout due to continuous caregiving, repetitive household work, limited personal autonomy, and inadequate recognition of their efforts.

Conservation of Resources Theory

Maternal psychological well-being is influenced by factors beyond employment status alone. The Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) proposes that stress develops when individuals perceive a loss or depletion of valuable personal resources such as time, energy, emotional support, financial security, or social relationships. Mothers who experience continuous demands without adequate recovery or support may become increasingly vulnerable to anxiety and burnout. Likewise, the Role Theory suggests that occupying multiple social roles may increase role conflict and role overload, thereby contributing to psychological distress. Working mothers often perform multiple roles simultaneously, including employee, spouse, caregiver, and homemaker, whereas non-working mothers devote substantial time to childcare and household management. Likewise,

Family Systems Theory

Family relationships and sociocultural expectations also play an important role in shaping maternal mental health. Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978) views the family as an interconnected emotional system in which the functioning of each member influences the well-being of the entire family. Supportive family relationships, effective communication, equitable distribution of household responsibilities, and active involvement of spouses and extended family members may protect mothers against psychological distress. Within the Indian sociocultural context, women often continue to bear primary responsibility for childcare and household management irrespective of their employment status. Traditional gender-role expectations, changing family structures, urbanization, and increasing workforce participation may create unique psychological challenges for both working and non-working mothers.

Present Study

The present study was therefore undertaken to compare anxiety and burnout among working and non-working mothers in Uttar Pradesh and to examine the relationship between these psychological variables. By investigating maternal mental health within the Indian sociocultural context, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological experiences associated with different maternal roles. The findings are expected to contribute to counselling psychology, health psychology, women's mental health, and family psychology by generating evidence that may guide psychological

assessment, counselling interventions, family support programmes, and mental health promotion initiatives for mothers.

Review of Literature

Anxiety among Working Mothers and Non-Working Mothers:

Anuradha and Manisha (2021) conducted a study to explore the effect of two independent variables, namely, working condition and age (in this case 30 years and 50 years) on the dependent variable i.e. Anxiety of working and Non-Working women. A 2x2 factorial design was employed in this particular research and the two-way ANOVA revealed that age was not found to be a significantly influential factor, however, working conditions as an independent variable were found to be significantly influential.

Jindal and Ahuja (2017) conducted a study to explore the relationship between Anxiety and life satisfaction in working and Non-Working women. The sample population included a sample of 100 women out of which 50 were working and 50 were not working. The psychological tools administered were the Taylors Manifest Anxiety and Life Satisfaction Questionnaires. The statistical analysis revealed that Anxiety was higher in Working Women than Non-Working women. It further revealed that life satisfaction was found more among Non-Working Women as compared to working women. The study implicated that devising strategies to enhance life satisfaction among the working class would prove efficient in a fast changing modern world.

Chettri (2016) conducted a comparative research on Working Mothers and Non-Working Mothers to assess differences in their Anxiety level and life satisfaction. A sample of 100 graduates was taken, including 50 working and 50 Non-Working Mothers selected equally from the East and South Districts of a North-East Indian region. The State-Trait Anxiety Test by Vohra and the Life Satisfaction Scale by Singh and Joseph were administered on the participants. Anxiety was measured at the following levels: tension, guilt proneness, maturity, suspiciousness and self-control. The study results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in Anxiety and life satisfaction among Working Mothers and Non-Working Mothers. However, the mean scores for life satisfaction among the groups were found to be higher for the working mother group. Moreover, the interaction effect between high and low level of Anxiety revealed no significant results as well.

Bankole (2015) conducted a study to examine the relationship between stress, Anxiety and general life satisfaction among Working Mothers. The results revealed that there was a negative relationship between

Anxiety and life satisfaction of Working Mothers. Moreover, there was a relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction. Additionally, it was found that stress and Anxiety predicted life satisfaction of Working Mothers. All the correlations were found to be statistically significant.

According to a study conducted by Bhadoria (2013) to assess the differences between Anxiety and depression between working and Non-Working Women Anxiety scores were found to be higher among Non-Working women. The results indicated mean score of Working Women to be lower in comparison to that of non- Working Women with regards to Anxiety. Additionally, significant difference in mean scores was also found in the level of depression among both the groups.

Adhikari (2012) conducted a study to explore differences in Anxiety and depression levels with regards to Working Mothers and Non-Working Mothers. It was stated in the rationale that Working Mothers stay away for long periods of time from their children due to professional requirements and therefore it is important to study these psychological variables in the context of this particular population demographic. The results concluded that there were significant differences in Anxiety among the groups of Working Mothers but no statistically significant differences were found for the Non-Working Mothers.

Burnout among Working and Non-Working Mothers

Gupta and Srivastava (2020) examined 270 female employees using stratified sampling method to explore the relationship between perceptions of work–life conflict and Burnout with regards to support systems and resilience among female employees in North India. Females from different professional sectors were selected to conduct this study. The findings were in favour of the hypothesis initially proposed in the study stating that a significant positive relationship would be found between work-life conflict and Burnout, a significant negative relationship would exist between work-life conflict and support system (family and organizational), a negative relationship would exist between resilience and Burnout, and lastly that support systems (family and organizational) would have a moderating role to play in Burnout and resilience among the sample population.

Balogun (2019) carried out a study examining the role of work-family conflict, self-efficacy and family-work interference in Burnout among Working Women in the banking sector of Lagos State, Nigeria. 615 women between the ages of 20-35 were selected and regression analysis was calculated statistically on the data acquired through validated scales. The results indicated that work-family interference (WFI) had a positive relationship with exhaustion ($\beta = .23, p < .05$), depersonalisation ($\beta = .15, p < .05$), reduced

personal accomplishment ($\beta = .11, p < .01$) and overall Burnout ($\beta = .29, p < .05$). Additionally, family-work interference (FWI) was a positive predictor of exhaustion ($\beta = .17, p < .05$), depersonalisation ($\beta = .16, p < .05$), reduced personal accomplishment ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) and overall Burnout ($\beta = .10, p < .05$). It was found that self-efficacy to manage work-family conflict and family-work interference mediated the relations of WFI and FWI with exhaustion, depersonalisation, reduced personal accomplishment and overall Burnout.

Darbar and Sawane (2019) conducted a qualitative analysis to explore experiences of Working Mothers in terms of Burnout. 10 participants were selected and the Interview method of qualitative data collection was employed in the study. Phenomenological analysis revealed a number of themes and sub themes. Six majorly outlined themes that emerged were, namely, Burnout, Affect, Time, Demand, Complaints and Strategies. It was further concluded through analysis of each theme and sub theme that all the participants experienced Burnout on similar levels at some point in their lives depending on various extraneous factors in their environment.

Meeussen and Van Laar (2018) explored the factors associated with mothers regulating pressure with regards to perfect mothering affectively, cognitively, and behaviourally, and it's relation with parental Burnout. It also studied the effect of feeling pressure towards perfect mothering on the working mother's work outcomes. For the purpose of this study Working Mothers from the United States and United Kingdom with at least one child who is of pre-school age were selected and administered psychological tools via online mode. There was a positive relationship found between parental Burnout and feeling pressure to be a perfect mother. Further, the results also indicated that there were several moderating factors including parental stress, strong cognitive preventive focus aimed at avoiding mistakes as a mother, and increased maternal gate-keeping behaviour taking over family tasks from one's partner were associated with parental Burnout. Additionally, it was also seen that an indirect negative effect existed between mothers that felt more pressure with higher felt pressure and mothers that had low work-family balance. Subsequently, this last finding also related to lower career ambitions.

Gardazi et al. (2016) conducted a study that examined causal factors associated with job-related Burnout among Working Mothers in Islamabad and Rawalpindi employing a qualitative research design. 12 Pakistani Working Mothers were interviewed and the phenomenological analysis highlighted four themes: work health factor, work overload, work environment and work family conflict. Additionally, it also revealed six sub themes. The interpretation of the qualitative results indicated that all participants have had Burnout at a similar level during one point of time.

Method

Participants

The study consisted of 80 mothers between 25 and 40 years of age residing in selected urban and semi-urban areas of Uttar Pradesh. The sample included 40 working mothers and 40 non-working mothers. All participants had at least one child between 3 and 14 years of age and met the eligibility criteria for participation.

Inclusion Criteria

Working Mothers

- Mothers engaged in paid employment (government, private, self-employed, contractual, or organized/unorganized sector).
- Age between 25 and 40 years.
- Having at least one child between 3 and 14 years of age.
- Minimum educational qualification of 12th standard or equivalent.
- Residing in selected districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- Willing to provide informed consent and participate voluntarily.

Non-Working Mothers

- Mothers not engaged in paid employment and primarily involved in household and childcare responsibilities (homemakers).
- Age between 25 and 40 years.
- Having at least one child between 3 and 14 years of age.
- Minimum educational qualification of 12th standard or equivalent.
- Residing in selected districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- Willing to provide informed consent and participate voluntarily.

Exclusion Criteria

Working Mothers and Non-Working Mothers

- Diagnosed severe psychiatric disorder that may interfere with participation.
- Diagnosed severe neurological or chronic physical illness that may significantly influence psychological functioning.

- Having a child with a diagnosed severe physical disability, intellectual disability, neurodevelopmental disorder, or major psychiatric illness.
- Single, divorced, widowed, or separated mothers.

Locale

The study was conducted among working and non-working mothers residing in selected urban and semi-urban areas of Uttar Pradesh, India.

Sample Size

A total sample of 80 mothers was included, comprising 40 working mothers and 40 non-working mothers.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit participants who satisfied the predetermined inclusion criteria.

Tools

Socio-Demographic Form: A semi-structured proforma developed for the study to collect demographic and relevant background information of the participants.

Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A; Hamilton, 1959): A 14-item clinician-rated scale assessing the severity of anxiety symptoms. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale (0–4), with higher scores indicating greater anxiety severity. The scale has demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .77 to .92.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1981): A 22-item instrument assessing burnout across three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. Reported internal consistency ranges from .81–.92 for Emotional Exhaustion, .57–.82 for Depersonalization, and .50–.86 for Personal Accomplishment.

Measures

Procedure

After obtaining informed consent, eligible participants completed the Socio-Demographic Form followed by the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Responses were

scored according to the respective manuals, coded, and entered into SPSS Version 26 for statistical analysis.

Data were analysed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests were used to examine the normality of the data. As the assumptions of normality were not fully met, appropriate non-parametric statistical tests were employed. The Mann–Whitney U test was used to compare anxiety and burnout between working and non-working mothers, while Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used to examine the relationship between anxiety and burnout. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

Research Design

The study employed a comparative cross-sectional quantitative research design.

Objectives

1. To assess anxiety among working and non-working mothers.
2. To assess burnout among working and non-working mothers.
3. To examine the relationship between anxiety and burnout among working and non-working mothers.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference in anxiety among working and non-working mothers.
2. There will be no significant difference in burnout among working and non-working mothers.
3. There will be no significant relationship between anxiety and burnout among working and non-working mothers.

Results

Analysis proceeded for the study variables and inferential tests of the hypothesized associations and group differences. All inferential tests used an alpha level of .05.

Table 1

Anxiety among Working Mothers and Non-Working Mothers

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Anxiety	Working Mothers	40	43.66	1746.50	673.500	.222

	Non-Working Mothers	40	37.34	1493.50		
	Total	80				

* $p < 0.05$

Table 1 presents the comparison of anxiety scores between working mothers and non-working mothers using the Mann–Whitney U test. Although working mothers obtained a higher mean rank (43.66) than non-working mothers (37.34), the difference was not statistically significant, $U = 673.50$, $p = .222$.

Table 2**Burnout among Working Mothers and Non-Working Mothers**

	Group		Mean Rank	Sum of Rank	U	p
Burnout	Working Mothers	40	41.64	1665.50	754.500	.661
	Non-Working Mothers	40	39.36	1574.50		
	Total	80				
Depersonalization	Working Mothers	40	40.50	1620.00	800.000	1.000
	Non-Working Mothers	40	40.50	1620.00		
	Total	80				
Personal Achievement	Working Mothers	40	46.89	1875.50	544.500	.014*
	Non-Working Mothers	40	34.11	1364.50		
	Total	80				

* $p < 0.05$

Table 2 summarizes the Mann–Whitney U test results comparing burnout and its dimensions between working and non-working mothers. No statistically significant differences were observed for overall

burnout or depersonalization. However, a significant difference emerged for the personal achievement dimension, with working mothers obtaining higher mean ranks than non-working mothers.

Table 3

Relationship between Anxiety and dimensions of Burnout among Working and Non-Working Mothers

Spearman's rho		Burnout	Depersonalization	Personal Achievement
Anxiety	Correlation Coefficient	.466**	.467**	-.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.165

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's correlation analysis indicated a moderate positive relationship between anxiety and overall burnout. Anxiety was also positively correlated with depersonalization, suggesting that higher levels of anxiety were associated with greater feelings of emotional detachment. The correlation between anxiety and personal achievement was negative but did not reach statistical significance.

Interpretation of Findings

The present study examined differences in anxiety and burnout between working and non-working mothers and explored the relationship between anxiety and burnout dimensions. The findings indicated no significant differences between the two groups in anxiety, overall burnout, or depersonalization, suggesting that both working and non-working mothers experience similar levels of psychological distress. This may be because mothers, regardless of employment status, face multiple responsibilities and caregiving demands that contribute equally to stress and emotional exhaustion.

A significant difference was found only in the personal achievement dimension of burnout, with working mothers reporting higher personal achievement than non-working mothers. This may reflect the additional opportunities working mothers have to experience accomplishment, recognition, and a sense of competence through their professional roles. Furthermore, anxiety was positively associated with overall burnout and depersonalization, indicating that mothers with higher anxiety tend to experience greater emotional exhaustion and psychological detachment. However, anxiety was not significantly related to personal achievement, suggesting that feelings of accomplishment may be influenced by factors other than anxiety.

Discussion

The findings suggest that employment status alone is not a determining factor for anxiety or burnout among mothers. While working mothers encounter occupational demands alongside family responsibilities, non-working mothers face continuous caregiving, household management, and limited personal time. These different stressors may result in comparable levels of anxiety and burnout, explaining the absence of significant group differences. The higher personal achievement reported by working mothers may be attributed to greater opportunities for professional success, financial independence, and social recognition.

The significant positive relationships between anxiety and both burnout and depersonalization support previous research indicating that increased anxiety is associated with greater emotional exhaustion and feelings of detachment. Mothers experiencing higher anxiety may find it more difficult to cope effectively with daily responsibilities, thereby increasing their risk of burnout. These findings highlight the importance of providing psychological support, stress management interventions, and accessible mental health resources for all mothers, regardless of whether they are employed or not.

Practical Implications

The findings of the present study may be useful for mental health professionals, counsellors, and healthcare providers in identifying and addressing anxiety and burnout among both working and non-working mothers. The results may assist in developing psychological assessment, counselling, stress management programmes, and community-based mental health awareness initiatives that promote maternal well-being.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of family support in reducing psychological distress among mothers. The findings may encourage equitable sharing of household and childcare responsibilities, improved family communication, and greater emotional support. They may also contribute to the development of culturally appropriate counselling services, workplace policies, and community interventions aimed at enhancing the mental health and overall well-being of mothers.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of the present study contribute to the theoretical understanding of maternal mental health by supporting the view that anxiety, burnout, and coping are dynamic psychological processes influenced by multiple interacting factors rather than by employment status alone. The absence of statistically significant differences in anxiety and burnout between working and non-working mothers

suggests that maternal psychological well-being is shaped by the cumulative influence of personal, familial, and sociocultural experiences. These findings reinforce the notion that motherhood itself constitutes a demanding life role that exposes women to multiple stressors irrespective of occupational engagement.

The results provide support for Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984), which proposes that psychological outcomes are determined by an individual's cognitive appraisal of stressful situations and the coping resources available to manage them. The observed relationship between anxiety and burnout indicates that mothers experiencing higher levels of perceived stress are more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion and psychological strain, emphasizing the importance of appraisal processes and coping mechanisms in determining mental health outcomes.

The findings also align with Role Theory, which suggests that individuals simultaneously perform multiple social roles that may either create strain or provide enrichment. Although working mothers often balance occupational and family responsibilities while non-working mothers devote greater time to caregiving and household management, the comparable psychological outcomes observed in the present study indicate that both groups encounter unique yet equally demanding role expectations. This supports the proposition that psychological distress arises from the quality and intensity of role demands rather than from employment status itself.

Furthermore, the results are consistent with the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory proposed by Hobfoll (1989), which argues that stress develops when individuals perceive a loss of valuable personal, emotional, or social resources. The positive association between anxiety and burnout suggests that prolonged exposure to caregiving responsibilities, family obligations, and everyday stressors may gradually deplete mothers' psychological resources, thereby increasing vulnerability to emotional exhaustion. This finding highlights the significance of resource availability and recovery in maintaining maternal well-being.

The findings may also be interpreted within the framework of Family Systems Theory, which conceptualizes the family as an interconnected system in which the functioning of one member influences the well-being of others. Maternal stress and burnout are likely to emerge not only from individual characteristics but also from patterns of family interaction, caregiving responsibilities, partner support, and overall family functioning. The comparable outcomes across employment groups suggest

that supportive family relationships may buffer psychological distress regardless of whether mothers are employed outside the home.

Finally, the study offers support for Sociocultural Perspectives, which emphasize that gender norms, cultural expectations, and societal definitions of motherhood shape women's psychological experiences. Within the Indian context, both working and non-working mothers are often expected to fulfil primary caregiving and household responsibilities while simultaneously meeting broader social expectations regarding family welfare and child development. These shared sociocultural pressures may explain the similarity in anxiety and burnout levels observed across the two groups, underscoring the importance of considering cultural context when interpreting maternal mental health.

Overall, the present study extends existing theoretical frameworks by demonstrating that maternal mental health is better understood through an integrated perspective that incorporates cognitive appraisal, role demands, resource conservation, family dynamics, and sociocultural influences. The findings suggest that future theoretical models should adopt a holistic and ecological approach that recognizes the interaction of individual, family, and societal factors in shaping the psychological well-being of mothers.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered while interpreting the findings of the present study. First, the sample was limited to working and non-working mothers residing in selected districts of Uttar Pradesh, which may not adequately represent mothers from other regions or cultural backgrounds in India. Consequently, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Second, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, which provides information at a single point in time and therefore does not permit conclusions regarding causal relationships between anxiety and burnout.

Additionally, the study relied exclusively on self-report psychological measures, making the findings susceptible to response biases such as social desirability and subjective interpretation. Finally, the scope of the study was restricted to anxiety and burnout, and did not consider other psychosocial factors that may influence maternal mental health, such as resilience, parenting stress, marital satisfaction, perceived social support, emotional intelligence, or quality of life. Future studies incorporating these variables may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological well-being of mothers.

Future Directions

Future research may build upon the present findings in several ways. Studies involving larger and more diverse samples from different regions of India would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal research designs could also be employed to examine how anxiety and burnout change over time and to better understand the direction of these relationships. Comparative studies involving single mothers, divorced mothers, widowed mothers, or mothers from different socioeconomic backgrounds may further broaden the understanding of maternal mental health across diverse populations.

Future investigations may also include additional psychological and social variables such as resilience, parenting stress, marital satisfaction, perceived social support, emotional intelligence, and quality of life to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Furthermore, intervention-based studies evaluating the effectiveness of counselling, stress management programmes, and other psychological support services may help identify effective strategies for improving the mental health and well-being of both working and non-working mothers.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicate that employment status, in itself, may not be a decisive determinant of maternal psychological well-being. Rather, both working and non-working mothers appear to encounter comparable psychological demands associated with caregiving responsibilities, household management, and family-related obligations. These findings underscore the need to adopt a broader perspective when addressing maternal mental health, recognizing that mothers across different employment groups may require psychological support and access to appropriate coping resources.

The study further highlights the importance of strengthening family support systems, improving access to mental health and counselling services, and implementing community-based programmes that promote psychological resilience among mothers. By contributing empirical evidence within the Indian sociocultural context, the present research enhances the existing understanding of maternal mental health and offers valuable implications for the design of interventions, family-centred support initiatives, and evidence-informed policies aimed at fostering the psychological well-being and overall quality of life of mothers.

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