

Building Resilience: A Deep Dive into the Parenting Stress and Coping Mechanisms of Mothers Caring for Children with Mental Health Issues

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Abstract

This research explores the parents who experienced stress, particularly mothers, of children with mental health challenges, focusing on their handling skills and coping mechanisms. 50 samples were taken from mothers from Rahmaniya Special School in Kozhikode, Kerala, was analyzed using various statistical methods, including ANOVA correlation, t-tests, chi-square tests and regression analysis. The results show significant relationships between socio-demographic factors such as religion, economic status, and parenting stress. This research provides insights into the dynamics of stress and offers potential intervention strategies for mental health professionals working with parents of disabled children.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Bringing up a mentally ill child issues presents unique challenges that often lead to increased stress levels. The combination of a child's behavioral issues, coupled with societal and familial pressures, may result in significant psychological and emotional stress for parents, particularly mothers. When a parent is subjected to demands that are more than available funds, both emotional and financial, to cope effectively.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This research aims to assess the levels of motherhood stress in mothers of mentally ill children issues, evaluate their handling techniques, and analyze how socio-demographic factors influence stress levels. By identifying key stressors, this research seeks to offer solutions to mitigate parental stress.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant difference in parental stress levels based on religion.
- H2: Economic status significantly influences parental handling skills.
- H3: Parental satisfaction varies significantly by marital status.

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have observed the effect of raising a child with developmental or mental health challenges on parental stress. Dyson (1991) explored how developmental disabilities contribute to family dysfunction and parental stress. Gupta (2007) found that the type of disability affects the stress levels of minority mothers, with ADHD and PDD leading to higher stress. Other research has focused on how socio-demographic variables, such as economic status and education, impact parental stress.

Parenting Stress and Mental Health Issues: Long-standing research has shown that raising a child with mental health issues, such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), or developmental delays, poses significant challenges. These challenges increase the likelihood of parental stress, which can impact both the parents' mental wellness and the growth of the child. According to Deckard - Deater (2004), One kind of stress that parents experience is psychological distress which arises from the demands placed on the parent, often exceeding their perceived ability to cope.

Impact of Socioeconomic Status: Research has revealed that socioeconomic status plays a crucial role in parenting stress. Parents from lower economic backgrounds often lack access to necessary resources such as quality healthcare, respite care, or mental health services. These barriers exacerbate stress and contribute to a sense of isolation and helplessness (Barker, 2012). Research by Emerson (2003) on families with kids who have intellectual challenges discovered that lower household income was directly correlated with higher levels of parental stress.

Role of Religion and Culture in Parenting Stress: Religious and cultural contexts shape how parents perceive and handle stress. Studies by Ahmed & Khalid (2010) demonstrated that religious beliefs could help as both a protecting factor and a source significant tension for guardians of kids with special needs. Some parents might find solace in their faith, while others might feel stigmatized or judged by their religious communities for their child's condition.

Parental Coping Mechanisms: The role of coping mechanisms a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of parenting stress. Coping strategies include asking for help from others, solving problems, or using religious or spiritual frameworks, are essential tools for managing the emotional toll of raising children with disabilities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A study by Resch et al. (2010) emphasized the importance of social networks and mental health facilities accessibility in lowering parental stress.

Parenting Styles and Child Outcomes: The connection between parental approaches and kids' outcomes has been extensively studied. Baumrind's (1967) framework on assertive, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles has been widely applied to understand how parents of mentally ill children issues adjust their approaches to meet their children's needs. Research by Hastings (2003) found that authoritative parenting, which balances warmth and control, led to more favorable behavioral outcomes in children with developmental disorders.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Study Design

The study employed a descriptive and quantitative design to evaluate parenting stress and handling techniques.

3.2 Sample

50 mothers from Rahmaniya Special School in Kozhikode, Kerala, aged between 30-60, were selected through purposive sampling.

3.3 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the degree of stress moms of children endure when raising their children with mental health problems
- To analyze the socio-demographic factors contributing to parenting stress
- To evaluate the coping mechanisms and handling skills employed by mothers
- To explore the effect of education and social support on reducing stress of parents
- To identify relationship between parental satisfaction and socio-demographic factors
- To provide recommendations for intervention programs
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3.4 Data Collection Tools

- Parental Stress Scale: This scale assesses the stress levels of parents through an 18-item questionnaire, which captures both positive and negative aspects of parenting.
- Parent Handling Questionnaire: A 14-item questionnaire designed to assess how parents manage their children's behavioral issues.

A scoring system called the "parental stress scale" is used to gauge how stressed out parents of ADHD kids are. There are eighteen items in it. Developed as a substitute for the 101-item Parenting Stress Index by Berry and Jones (1995). Positive and negative aspects of parenting are represented by the 18 self-report scale components.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

A summary of the descriptive analysis is given by the sample's socio-demographic characteristics, including religion, economic status, education, and marital status.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Hindu	17	34%
Islam	33	66%

The majority of respondents belong to the Islamic faith, accounting for 66% of the sample.

Table 2: Respondents' Distribution according to Economic Status

Economic Status	No. of Frequency	Percentage %
Up to 5000	20	40%
5000-10,000	29	58%
Above 10,000	1	2%

Most respondents (58%) fall in the 5000-10,000 income bracket, while only 2% have an income above 10,000.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing: Correlation Analysis

The relationship between the two was investigated using a Pearson correlation study economic status then parental stress. Results indicate a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that lower economic status is associated with higher parental stress.

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Parental Stress & Economic Status	0.42	0.04

The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.42 suggests a moderate positive relationship between parental stress and economic status. This means that as economic status decreases, parental stress tends to increase, and vice versa. At the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$), the association is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.04. Therefore, we can conclude there is a noteworthy connection between economic status then parental pressures, with lower economic status associated with higher stress.

4.3 Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to predict parental satisfaction based on marital status and economic status.

Variable	R ²	F-Value	p-value
Parental Satisfaction (Dependent)	0.32	5.12	0.05
Economic Satisfaction (Independent)	0.32	5.12	0.05
Marital Status (Independent)	0.32	5.12	0.05

The R² value of 0.32 means that 32% of the variability in parental satisfaction can be explained by the combined effects of economic status and marital status. The whole model appears to be statistically significant at the 5% level based on the F-value of 5.12 and the associated p-value of 0.05., meaning that the independent variables (economic status and marital status) together have a significant impact on parental satisfaction.

- **Economic Status:** Parental happiness is positively correlated with economic position, indicating that parents who are more stable financially typically report higher levels of satisfaction in managing their children with mental health issues.
- **Marital Status:** Marital status also plays a role, but the exact nature (whether being married, divorced, or single) can affect parental satisfaction differently.

4.4 t-Test for Parental Stress Based on Religion

A t-test was conducted to compare the mean stress levels between Hindu and Islamic parents.

Group	Mean Stress	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Hindu	21.82	3.24	4.3	0.01
Islam	18.09	2.71	4.3	0.01

The mean parental stress for Hindu parents is 21.82, while for Islamic parents, it is lower at 18.09. The t-value of 4.30, showing a statistically significant difference in stress levels between Hindu and Islamic parents at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$), with a p-value of 0.01. This proposes that compared to their Islamic counterparts, Hindu parents are far more stressed out, which could be attributed to different cultural, social, or familial expectations about raising mentally ill children.

4.5 ANOVA: Education and Stress

An ANOVA was conducted to analyze the impact of education on parenting stress levels.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	p-value
between groups	124.4	3	41.47	0.03
within groups	120.2	46	2.61	0.03
Total	244.6	49		

The ANOVA results reveal a significant difference in parental stress levels based on educational qualifications. The F-value of 3.45, with a p-value of 0.03, is 5% threshold statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This means that parents with different levels of education experience significantly different levels of stress. Typically, parents with higher education (degree/diploma) experience lower stress, likely because they have better access to resources, coping strategies, and social support.

4.6 Chi-Square Test for Marital Status and Overall Parental Stress

A chi-square test was performed to determine if there was an association between overall parental stress levels and marital status.

Marital Status	Low Stress	High Stress	Total	Chi-Square Value	p-value
Married	14	15	29	6.89	0.076
Unmarried	9	4	13	6.89	0.076
Divorced	0	4	4	6.89	0.076
Widowed	3	1	4	6.89	0.076

There is no discernible correlation, according to the chi-square test, between married status and overall parental stress. The p-value of 0.076 is greater than 0.05, indicating that marital status does not significantly affect parental stress levels in this sample. This contrasts with some previous studies, which suggest that single or divorced parents may experience higher stress. In this study, marital status appears to have no significant impact, which could be due to cultural factors, including extended family support.

5. Discussion

The results of this study bring significant impact of socio-demographic factors such as religion and economic status on parental stress. Hindu parents reported higher stress levels compared to their Islamic counterparts, which may be influenced by cultural or societal expectations. Economic status was another key predictor of stress, with lower-income families experiencing greater challenges in managing their children's needs.

Correlation Analysis: Shows a significant moderate positive relationship between economic status and parental stress.

Regression Analysis: Economic status and marital status together explain 32% of the variance in parental satisfaction, with a significant impact.

t-Test: Reveals a notable distinction in the levels of parental stress between Hindu and Islamic parents, with Hindu parents reporting higher stress.

ANOVA: Indicates a significant difference in parental stress based on educational background, with more educated parents experiencing lower stress.

Chi-Square: Suggests that marital status does not significantly affect overall parental stress.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study confirms that parenting stress is significantly influenced by socio-demographic factors such as religion, economic status, and education. However, marital status did not significantly affect parental stress, suggesting that other support systems may mitigate stress levels for single or divorced parents.

6.2 Recommendations

Economic Support Programs:

- Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should consider developing financial support systems for low-income families who care for children with mental health problems. These programs could include subsidies for therapy, respite care, and access to specialized educational services.
- Additionally, providing free or inexpensive access to resources for mental health, including counseling and medical services, would significantly reduce the financial burden on these families.

Parenting Workshops and Mental Health Education:

- Educational programs aimed at increasing parental knowledge about mental health issues and teaching effective coping strategies should be made widely available. Workshops that focus on stress management, positive parenting techniques, and child behavior management can empower parents to better handle their children's needs.

- These programs should be customized to reflect the socio-cultural context of the parents, particularly taking into account religious beliefs and practices.

Enhancing Access to Social Support Networks:

- Developing local support networks for guardians of kids with mental health problems can help mitigate stress by providing a platform for parents to get emotional support, counsel, and to share their experiences.
- Community-based programs could be implemented to strengthen informal support systems, especially for single or economically disadvantaged parents.

Policy Advocacy for Mental Health Services:

- Advocating for stronger policies that prioritize mental health services in schools and communities can ensure initial intervention and continuing assistance for families and kids with mental health issues.
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- Collaboration between educational institutions, healthcare providers, and social services can create a holistic support system that addresses the mental, emotional, and financial needs of affected families.

Culturally Sensitive Interventions:

- Mental health professionals and service providers should design interventions that take into account the religious and cultural context of the families they serve. For example, understanding the role of religion in coping mechanisms can help professionals create more effective, culturally sensitive support systems.
- Engaging community leaders and religious institutions in advocating for mental health awareness can reduce stigma and encourage more families to seek the help they need.

Special Focus on Educational Attainment:

- Efforts should be made to provide parents, particularly those with lower educational backgrounds, with accessible information on mental health conditions and strategies for dealing with stress. This could include informational brochures, online resources, or community seminars designed to raise awareness.
- Providing educational opportunities, such as night classes or online learning, could empower parents equipped with the knowledge and abilities needed to provide their kids with better assistance.

Ongoing Research and Evaluation:

- There is a need for continuous research to further discover the lasting effect of parenting stress on both parents and children. Future studies should look at a wider variety of socio-demographic factors, including rural vs. urban settings, and investigate how different family structures influence parental stress.
- It is also essential to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, programs, and policies over time to ensure that they are successfully addressing the needs of families dealing with mental health challenges.

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