

Impact of Stress among Parents of Children having Hearing Impairment : A Study on Visakhapatnam School Students

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ABSTRACT

Studies on stress revealed several areas and aspects related to it. Abidin (1995), viewed these areas as aspect inborn within the child, aspect inborn in the parent, and aspect related to the parent-child contact. The identification of these aspects draws awareness to the reality that children and parents are inclined by diverse variables. The present study was conducted to examine the stress of parents having children with hearing impairment. The sample consisted of 116 parents comprising 58 fathers and 58 mothers of hearing impaired children who were studying in special education schools and centers in Visakhapatnam district. Data was gathered through Parental Stress Index questionnaire developed by Abidin(1995). The data was analyzed using independent sample t test and one way and two way ANOVA to see whether there is significant mean difference on parental stress as a function of gender, parental income and parental education. Based on findings of the present study, the conclusion and recommendations were forwarded.

1. Introduction

Stress is a multilayered emotion influenced by numerous aspects. Thus quite a lot of domains are used to examine it. One kind of long term stress that can occur is due to a disabled child's parenting. This kind of stress is difficult to comprehend because of the emotional connection between parent and child. (Pipp-Siegel & Yoshinaga-Itano, 2002).

Analysis of stresses have shown that there are several different areas related to it. According to Abidin (1995), these areas include aspect inborn within the child, aspect inborn in the parent, and aspect related to the parent-child contact. The identification of these aspects draws awareness to the reality that children and parents are persons inclined by diverse variables.

Many aspects that increase parental stress are under consideration. The aspects that increase the stress may include the emotional disturbance, child abilities, child disabilities and anxiety. The parents also have the vital role to improve the performance of the children.

Due to these stressful factors, parental role may be affected negatively. (Lederberg & Golbach, 2002). Some aspects that are related to the child stress have bad impact on his behavior. Stress affects the child's performance such as the lack of acquiescence, persistence, wait for turn etc. (Pipp-Siegel & Yoshinaga-Itano, 2002). The socio-emotional issues may exhibit themselves inside a child's emotions and behavior. In a parent-child contact, stress is characterized by a strain in the relationship that influences affection (Abidin, 1995).

The stress of parents has a depressing influence on development of the child as well as the associations parents have for their kids (Hintermair, 2006; Lederberg & Golbach, 2002; Quittner & Glueckauf, R.L., 1990). It is very essential to promote the awareness about stress, causes and control

strategies for those who experience and practice the stress related issues.

There are various aspects in a parent's life that can cause apprehension of their stress levels. Disability of child is one of those factors. The study showed that the normal mothers of children with hearing loss face increased stress level than the hearing impaired mothers of children with hearing impairment. The normal mothers of deaf or children with hearing impairment did not report higher stress levels than mothers of normal children (Jackson, Glueckauf, & Quittner, 1990). The study depicted that parents having children with hearing impairment did not report higher level of stress than the parents having normal children. In some families the cause of parental stress was only the child's hearing impairment and language deficiency (Koester & Meadow-Orlans)

It is necessary to explore those enhancing factors that increase the stress level of parents. These studies will be helpful for professionals for understanding and overcoming these issues. Professionals can provide the appropriate intervention accordingly.

One study showed the characteristics of the child and the perception of the parent regarding hearing impairment, contribute to enhance the stress level of parents. The characteristics such as the child age, type and degree of hearing loss, and age of identification enhance the stress level of parents of hearing impaired children. Some other factors that negatively influence the parental stress are additional disability, source of income, financial issues, and family support. (Pipp-Siegel & Yoshinaga Itano 2002).

The parents of younger children face less stress than the parents of adult children. The study when considering other variables found that there is no strong evidence related to age of the child and parental stress. (Pipp-Siegel & Yoshinaga-Itano, 2002). Lederberg (2002) found that age of the child plays a vital role in the increase of the stress in mothers. Mothers feel greater amount of stress as their children grow

up. But, the results furthermore accomplished that age of the child did not influence the quantity of stress experienced by the mother. It continued with her during the growth of her child. It is also observed that in this study some other variables are considered for the increase of the stress and is not directly related to only age.

The age of the child can be supposed to be the central factor of the high parental stress. Expert counselors must have the knowledge about the parents concerns about their children who have hearing impairment. Parental stress may be correlated to what they recognize as educational support. This educational support includes intervention services (Lederberg & Golbach, 2002). The findings of the study suggest that the intervention service plays an important role in the compensation of the parental stress faced due to the disability of their children or hearing impairment. When evaluated about the family income, it was found that mothers with lower income experienced more stress level as compared to mothers of high income families (Pipp-Siegel & Yoshinaga-Itanol, 2002).

Societal supportive behavior plays a significant function on parental aptitude to handle their children's hearing impairment. Research illustrates societal support of parents of hearing impaired children may be from their normal and artificial systems. Normal supportive system consists of parents, children, partners, connections, friends, and relatives. Non-natural or artificial supportive systems are innovative relations with other parents in an analogous circumstance for example parents within a parent group, contact with hearing impaired adults, and specialized educators. The writer states that the accessibility of individual and societal assets significantly influences the parents' stress management procedures. (Hintermair, 2006).

The present study attempted to handle this issue through answering the following sets of questions:

- What is the level of stress among parents having children with hearing impairment?
- Are there significant mean differences in parents' stress level as the function of gender, parental income and parental education?

2. Objectives

The major purpose of this study was to examine the impact of stress on parents having children with hearing impairment. Specifically the purpose of this study was to:-

- Examine the level of stress among parents having children with hearing impairment.
- Explore whether there exist significant mean difference in parents' stress level as the function of gender, parental income and parental education.

3. Method

Research Design

Likewise, to achieve the purpose of the study and to answer research questions, this study is principally organized around a cross sectional survey research design. The reason behind selecting this design is, primarily it is "...the most commonly used design in the social science" (Kumar, 1996:81). The second reason is that a cross sectional survey

research design is best suited to studies intended at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, circumstance to problem of attitude or issue by taking cross section of the population.

Participants

The target population of this study has been students of Visakapatnam special education schools. The sample consisted of 116 parents (comprising 58 fathers and 58 mothers) of hearing impaired children who were studying in special education schools and centers in Visakhapatnam district. The sampling technique employed was convenience sampling technique.

Instruments

Parenting Stress: to measure parental stress 36 items questionnaire was adapted from Abidin(1990). The questionnaire had five scales ranging from 1=strongly agree 5=strongly disagree.

Data Analysis

After all data was collected, to analyze the answer to the first research question, disruptive statistics like frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were employed. To analyze the answer to the second leading question, independent sample t test and one way and two way ANOVA were employed to see whether there is significant mean difference on parental stress as a functions of gender, parental income and parental education

4. Results

Socio-demographic Context of Participants of the Study

Before turning to the foremost analyses of the study, the main socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1 below

Table 1
Characteristics of Demographic Variables (N=116)

Variable		n	Percentage
Gender	Fathers	58	50.0
	Mothers	58	50.0
Income of the parent (Rupees)	dependent	53	45.7
	below 20,000	36	31.0
	21,000-40,000	19	16.4
	41,000-60,000	5	4.3
Parents Education Level	61,000 above	3	2.6
	Below Intermediate	107	92.2
	Graduate	8	6.9
	Post graduate	1	.9

So as to have a better insight of the sample, a summary of demographic characteristics of the study sample is presented in Table 1. A total sample 116 participants were involved in the present research. The Father group comprise 58 (50%) and Mother group 58 (50%) participants are in the equal proportion. Of those participants, 107 (92.2%) are below intermediate level, 8 (6.9%) belong to graduate, and 1 (.9%) is post graduate. The income level includes 53 (45.7%) are dependent, 36 (31.0%) with monthly income of below 20,000

rupees, 19 (16.4%) participants with monthly income of between 21,000 to 40,000 rupees, 5 (4.3%) with monthly income of 41,000-60,000 and 61,000 above 3(2.6% respectively.

As clearly observed in table two below the parents have higher level of stress which requires them to have clinical interventions. As per Abedin (1995) a stress level score above 90 score would be considered as chronic.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics indicating the stress levels of parents having children with hearing impairment.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Parental Total Stress	116	48.00	161.00	12543.00	108.1293	20.15830

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare parental stress score for father and mother (Table 3). There was no significant difference in scores for Father (M = 106.6724 ,SD 19.22023) and Mother (M = 109.5862, SD = .21.12123); $t(114) = -.777, p > .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 3

Results of independent samples t-test and Descriptive Statistics for overall parental stress score as a function of parental group

	Parental Group						95% CI for		
	Father			Mother			Mean Difference		
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	t	df	
Parental Stress	106.4	19.22023	58	109.5862	.21.12123	58	-.10.34205, 4.51447	.777	114

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of participant's age to their overall stress level (Table 4). Participants were divided into three groups according to their educational levels (Group 1:

below intermediate; Group 2: graduate; Group 3: post graduate;). There was no statistically significant difference at the $p > .01$ level in parental stress scores for the three educational groups: $F(2, 113) = .204, p = .815$.

Table 4

Results of One-way Analysis of Variance for parental stress as a function of respondents educational level.

Parental stress	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between groups	168.425	2	84.212	.204	.815
Within groups	46562.636	113	412.059		
Total	46731.060	115			

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of parents group and their monthly income on overall parental stress (Table 4). Participants were divided into five groups according to their monthly income (Group 1: Dependent; Group 2: Below 20,000; Group 3: 21,000-40,000, Group 4: 41,000-60,000 and Group

5: 61,000 and above The interaction effect between parents group and their monthly income was not statistically significant, $F(1, 115) = .313, p = .577$. There was no statistically significant main effect for monthly income, $F(4, 112) = .536, p > .01$; There was no statistically significant main effect for parents group, $F(1, 115) = .345, p > .01$.

Table 5

Two-way ANOVA results and Descriptive Statistics for Overall stress of Parents group and Monthly Income of the Parents

Variable	Mean	SD	N	
Fathers Group				
Income below 20,000	102.0937	21.71421	32	
Income 21,000-40,000	77.92	10.07	18	
Income 41,000-60,000	109.6842	12.92307	5	
Income above 61,000	111.6667	18.17507	3	
Mothers Group				
Dependent	110.1509	21.51511	53	
Income below 20,000	101.7500	19.08533	4	
Income 21,000-40,000	111.0000	10.05	1	
Source	SS	df	MS	F
Monthly Income	1268.768	4	317.192	.787
Parents group	139.087	1	139.087	.345
Monthly Income x Parents	126.291	1	126.291	.313
Error	43921.783	109	402.952	

Note: $R^2 = .060$, adj. $R^2 = .008$.

$p > .01$

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn:

- parents seem to have chronic level of stress because of having children with hearing impairment
- Parents level of education seem to have no effect on overall parental level of stress.
- Parental stress is common for parents having different level of income

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions the following recommendations could be given:

- The counseling session for the parents of hearing impaired students should be conducted to guide them to overcome the communication gap between hearing impaired children and their family members.
- Government should take solid steps to financially support the poor parents who have hearing impaired children.
- Opportunities for the vocational training of the hearing impaired children should be increased and for better results parents of the hearing impaired children should also be involved in the vocational training.
- Early intervention programmers should be developed to increase the attention span of the hearing impaired children.

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