

Parental Stress among Parents of Children with Autistic, Language Impairment and Normal Children

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ABSTRACT

This research is a comparative study of stress between parents having normal children, and parents having children with autism, speech and hearing impairment. The study conducted was on parents of children between the age group of 4 to 15 years old and the age group of parent was 25-60. The study was conducted on 30 parents of children with autism and 30 parents of children with speech hearing impairment 30 parents with normal children. The parental stress scale by Judy O Berry and Warron H Jones was used for the study. The responses were scored according to the manual and the data was analyzed employing appropriate statistical methods using SPSS. The results show that parental stress was high on parents of children with autism than parents with normal children and speech hearing impairment children. Parents of children having autism scored highest mean 48.700 which shows autistic child's parent experience more stress. The results indicate that parent's age is a differentiator on parental stress among parents with normal children. The age group of parents with 25-35 got higher mean rank 20.11 than the other age groups 36-45 and 46-60 which shows that as the age increases stress levels decreases.

KEYWORDS: *parental stress, autism, impaired hearing*

BACKGROUND

Parenting or child rearing is the process of promoting and supporting a child from infancy to adulthood through physically, emotionally, socially, financially, and intellectually. Parenting refers to the aspects of raising a child aside from the biological relationship. There are different styles of parenting such as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. These styles were further expanded to four, including an uninvolved style. These four styles of parenting involve combinations of acceptance and responsiveness on the one hand and demand and control on the other. Deater-Deckard, (1998) parenting stress can be defined as a stress that is experienced as negative feelings towards self and towards the children. Parenting stress is felt in response to the demands of being a parent. These negative feelings are directly attributable to the demands of parenthood. Parents can experience stress because of the immediate demands of meeting a child's needs for example, food, comfort, attention etc. The need to balance a child's needs with parents need, and the general social pressure associated with a long-term investment in the child's growth and wellbeing. Parenting brings immense amounts of joy, pride, personal growth and other good things to those with children, it can also bring a lot of challenges, and researchers say that these challenges can take a toll. A parenting stress

study by Florida State University professor Robin Simon and Vanderbilt University's Ranae Evenson found that parents have significantly higher levels of depression than adults who do not have children.

There is the physical stress which is from carpools, preparing meals, bathing, homework, shopping, and so on. This is also compounded by psychological stressors as parent-child conflicts, such as not having enough time to complete responsibilities and concern regarding a child's well-being. Unique stressors are added when a family has a child with autism spectrum. An individual with autism may not express their basic wants or needs in the manner we would expect. Parents have to figure out their need by trial and error. There is a constant corridor of uncertainty. The child's frustration can lead to aggressive or self-injurious behaviors that threaten his/her safety and the safety of other family members (e.g., siblings). Stereotypic and compulsive behaviors concern the parents since they appear peculiar and interfere with functioning and learning. Stress may be increased for the family if child has deficits in social skills, such as the lack of appropriate play. Individuals lacking appropriate leisure skills and often require constant structure, and not a feasible task in the home environment.

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It is a great stress for parents when taking an individual with autism and speech, hearing impairment child out into the community. People may stare, make comments or fail to understand their mishaps or behaviors that may occur. For example, individuals with autism have been seen taking a stranger's food or things. Because of these potential experiences, families often feel social insecurity and shaming. Children on the autism spectrum may experience a sense of isolation from their friends, relatives and community. They have feeling like they cannot socialize or relate to others.

The experience of stress is highly individualized. What constitutes overwhelming stress for one person may not be perceived as stress by another. Likewise, the symptoms and signs of poorly managed stress will be different for each person.

Stress comes in many forms and affects people of all ages and all walks of life. No external standards can be applied to predict stress levels in individuals -- one need not have a traditionally stressful job to experience workplace stress, just as a parent of one child may experience more parenting stress than a parent of several children. The degree of stress in our lives is highly dependent upon individual factors such as our physical health, the quality of our interpersonal relationships, the number of commitments and responsibilities we carry, the degree of others' dependence upon us, expectations of us, the amount of support we receive from others, and the number of changes or traumatic events that have recently occurred in our lives.

METHOD:

OBJECTIVES:

Objective 1 : To study the parental stress of children with autism than parents with normal children and speech hearing impairment children.

Objective 2 : To study the significant difference of age group and stress level of parents with normal children.

HYPOTHESIS:

H1 : Parental stress will be high on parents of children with autism than parents with speech hearing impairment children and normal children

H2 : There will be a significant difference in stress levels among parents of different age group of normal children.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Quantitative research using correlation design

VARIABLES:

Dependent variable:

Children with or without disability (normal, autistic and speech, hearing impairment)

Age group

Independent variable:

Stress

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:

The study sample consist of 90 participants (the study targets to collect data from 90 participants of parents those who have children with the age group of 4 to 15 years old and parents of age group between 25 to 60) using purposive sampling method.

TOOL USED:

Variable	Authors	Psychometric Properties
Parental stress scale	Berry & Jones(1995)	Reliability (.83) and test-Re-test reliability (.81).

DATA ANALYSIS:

SPSS software was used forgone-way ANOVA and KruskalWallis test

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

H1 : *There is significant difference in the level of stress of parents with autism speech, hearing impairment and normal children.*

Table 1 Shows score of one-way ANOVA test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p
Normal	30	42.200	8.5153	5.805	0.004<0.05
Autism	30	48.700	9.0025		
S/H impairment	30	42.767	6.8867		
Total	90	44.556	8.6155		

Table 1.Shows parental stress mean score values for parents of normal child is 42.2, SD was 8.5153 where N= 30. The mean value of autistic children parent is 48.7, SD was9.0025 and the sample number is 30. The mean of speech, hearing impaired children parent is 42.76, SD was 6.8867and the sample number is 30. Aim of the test was to find significant differences in the level of stress of parents of children between the three categories, and to find out which parent group is having high stress. Table 1.also shows parental stress mean score values for parents of normal child is 42.2, SD is 8.5153 and the sample number is 30. The mean value of autistic children parent is 48.7, SD is 9.0025 and the sample number is 30. The mean of speech, hearing impaired children parent is 42.76, SD is 6.8867 and the sample number is 30. This shows that parents of children with autism are having high stress level when compared to parents of children with speech, hearing impairments and normal children

The findings confirm the first objective of the study. The ANOVA value shows the between group F value as 5.805 and significance level as 0.004 which is $p < 0.05$ level, this shows that there is a significant difference in the stress level of parents with normal children, autistic and speech/ hearing impaired children which proves.

Table 2 Post hoc tests showing the comparisons between variables of each group.

	Mean difference	p
Normal- autism	6.5	0.008
Autism- S/H imp	5.9333	0.017
S/H Imp-Normal	0.5667	0.961

Table 2.showsComparison of parents with normal child and autistic shows 0.008 as significant value which has $p < 0.01$ level, indicating that there is a statistically significant difference in the stress level of parents with normal children and autistic children. Comparison of parents with autistic child and speech/hearing impaired child shows0.017 as significant value which shows that there is statistically significant difference in the level of stress of parents with

autism and speech/hearing impairment child at $p < 0.01$ level. Comparison of parents with normal child and speech/hearing impaired child shows sig value as 0.961 which has $p > 0.05$ indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of stress of parents with speech hearing impairment and parents with normal children.

Table 3 Parental stress among different age groups and the chi-square and significant value using KruskalWallis test

Age Code	N	Mean Rank	Chi square	Asymp. sig
25-35	9	20.11	3.678	.159
36-45	10	14.25		
46-60	11	12.86		
Total	30			

It shows that the age group between 25-35 includes 9 parents with mean of 20.11. Age group between 36-45 includes 10 parents with mean of 14.25. Age group between 46-60 includes 11 participants with mean of 12.86. The mean values show that the age group between 25 to 35 aged parents has more stress than the other group. It was also found that the age of parent increases the level of stress decreases. This proves that there was a significant difference of age group and stress level of parents with normal children. The chi square 3.678 results are also found to be statistically non-significant (0.159, $p > 0.05$) level which shows that there was no significant difference in the level of stress between three different age groups at 0.05 level. There was no statistically significant variation of age group and stress level of parents with normal children. The results show that there was a significant difference in the level of stress among parents with autism, speech/hearing impairment and normal children. The mean value of parental stress was high which implies the parents of children with autism experience more stress when compare to other two parental groups. That achieved the first objective of the study was to find out which parent group was having high level of stress.

FazailaSabih, Wahid BakhshSajid (2005, 2006) conducted a study and assess the level of parenting stress and associating factors of stress in parents rearing children with autism. Result showed that mothers of children with autism are more prone to experience stress, thus requiring special attention from mental health professionals.

In the present study it was found that there was a significant difference in the level of stress of parents with autism and speech/hearing impairment children; there is significant difference in the stress level of parents with normal children and autistic children. There was no significant difference in the level of stress of parents with speech hearing impairment and parents with normal children. This proves the first hypothesis of the study 'There was a significant difference in the level of stress of parents with autism, speech/ hearing impairments and normal children.'

H2: *There will be a significant difference in stress level of different age group parents of normal children.* The Chi-square value and significant value shows there was no significant difference in the level of stress between three different age groups. Therefore H2 is rejected. According to

AycaCoskunpinar, Cody Winter (2009) indicated that there are no differences in the levels of depression and stress on parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and coping strategies are similar for parents whose children have the studied nervous system disabilities.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

1. Out of 90 samples of parent with three different categories such as parents of children with autism, normal children and speech/hearing impaired children, parents of children with autism had the highest mean of 48.700 which found that among three different parental groups, parents of children with autism experience more stress in comparison to other two parental groups.
2. There was a significant difference in the level of stress of parents of all three parental group ($0.004 < 0.05$).
3. There was a significant difference in the level of stress of parents with autism and speech/hearing impairments child at 0.05 levels. ($0.017 < 0.05$)
4. There was a significant difference in the stress level of parents with normal children and autistic children ($0.008 < 0.05$).
5. There was no significant difference in the level of stress of parents with speech hearing impairment and parents with normal children at 0.05 level. ($0.961 > 0.05$).
6. The sample of parents in this study was limited to low level and medium level stress. Out of 90 parents there are no cases of high-level stress.
7. The study found that age is a moderator of stress among parents of normal children. The result shows that parents between the age group 25-35 experience more stress than other two age groups such as 36-45 and 46-60. This implies that as age increases the level of stress decreases.
8. Chi square value that is 3.678 and significant value is 0.159 > 0.05 which shows there was no significant difference in the level of stress between three different age groups at 0.05 level.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND PLANNING

The implications of the study involve the importance of assessing parental stress. Through getting awareness of the stress level in parents, it is helps parents to get adopt coping strategies to handle stress. The assessment of stress is not only limited to parents but to everyone. There is perceived stress scale, general stress scales and different stress assessment tools were administered separately for male and female. All types of stress assessments can be useful to be applied in educational settings and its stake holders since stress level of teachers and parents will influence the child significantly. It can also be used in schools in to assess stress of teachers. Stress in parents as a result of parenting children with disabilities can adversely affect the child-parent relationship and that both of them psychologically. There is a need to identify the stress in early stages and to adopt appropriate interventions so as to protect both children their parents from its adverse consequences.

This study shows that there is a high level of stress in parents having children with autism, it symbolizes that parent/s of the disabled children will be more stressed. The findings will have a significant bearing on the policy for

special schools issues and will involve counseling and Psycho-education of the parents. Interventions can be inbuilt in the system for enlightened parenting and developing positive attitude and mind frame. The task of parenting has to move away from "THE BURDEN SYNDROME"

This study would also be applicable to NGO's, special schools for autism and disabled children, schools for the speech and hearing impaired. The assessment of stress level of care taker would help to improve awareness and adopt early interventions to control the stress that will enable better bonding between the child and the parent (caregiver.)

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