



A STUDY OF LEVEL OF STRESS EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYED MOTHERS AND EMPLOYED FATHERS WITH REGARD TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN IN EXAMINATION

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ABSTRACT

Children bring joy in the lives of the parents. With this joy and gift, comes the responsibility and commitment to care and nurture another human being from infancy to adulthood, which results in stress - stress of not being able to be Perfect Parents and not being able to raise Perfect Children. Perfect Parent and Perfect Child is nothing but a myth. Inability to accept this fact leads to stress. Though persons may face unique stressors throughout their lives, many demands of parenthood anxieties and the stressors that parents experience are universally same everywhere, majorly related to the stress due to one's child's academic performance. This study was carried out to find the level of stress experienced by Mothers (50) and Fathers (50) with regard to the performance of their children in examination. For this self-developed questionnaire was used. The level of stress experienced by the respondents was divided into three parts based on especially designed scale, denoting low stress, medium stress and high stress. 'Z' test was applied to check the difference in the level of stress experienced by the respondents. The results showed that mothers experienced high level of stress than that of stress experienced by fathers with regard to the performance of their children in examination. Similarly, fathers experienced low level of general stress than compared to the mothers.

Keywords: Stress, Mothers, Fathers, Performance in examination and School Going Children.

INTRODUCTION

“There is no such thing as a perfect parent. So just be a real one”

Sue Atkins

A perfect parent is nothing but a myth and to aim to become one is none the less a fool's

mission. In a rapidly changing world, parenting seems subject to fads and changing styles, and parenting in some ways has become a competitive sport. A sport in which parents engage



themselves to such an extent that they dream of raising 'Perfect Children'. 'Perfect children' in terms of - children being perfect not only in physical, psychological, social aspects but also in intellectual, educational and other areas of development. In reality there is no such concept as Perfect Parents and Perfect Children. It is often seen that parents want their children to excel in all the aspects of academics. Thus in doing so both fathers and mothers experience anxiety and stress.

The word stress is derived from the Latin word "stringi", which means, "to be drawn tight". It is related to body, mind and heart. It is most commonly defined as, "physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension". According to Angela Morrow (2011), stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response.

It is said that modern world is the world of achievements, as well as a world of stress and modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and

demands. According to Glen R. Elliott and Eisdorfer, C. (1982), persons differ from each other in their nature, capacity, and intensity of emotions, understanding and experiencing stress. Stress is a part and parcel of every person's life and both men and women deal with stress. Dr. Debleena Kumar (2013) opined that stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response. Simply put, stress is any outside force or event that has an effect on our body or mind. Stress results in physical or psychological strain that affects mind or human body. The major area where parents experience stress is their child's school and academic performance, especially performance in examination. The parental expectations from their child in examination are the major source of stress because today the performance of the child in examination and the score of the examination has achieved special status in the society. Good scores are directly related to child's



intellect and better future. If this quest for excellence does not match the expectations, it leads to stress. The other case is about those children who constantly acquire poor or average scores or are unable to excel in school performance. Parents of such children constantly feel anxious of their children. According to Rena L. Repetti (1996) performance in social and academic realms play an increasingly important role in self concept during middle school and pre-adolescence. The frustration, stress and anxiety related to performance in academics are easily transferred to the parents as they aspire that their children score best of marks and grade in the school. Morales and Guerra (2006) discovered that cumulative stress over time was related to decreased academic achievement and increased symptoms of depression among children. Similar effects have been found in adults — cumulative stress is related to increased instances of mental disorders in adults (Sameroff, 2000). A parent

may be able to cope with small independent stressors of an overbearing boss, relationship conflict, financial responsibilities, and child behavior problems, yet these independent stressors accumulate and take a toll on the parent, be it father or mother.

This study explores the level of stress experienced by parents, both as a response to the demands of their day to day parenting role and majorly due to their over expectation from their children to excel in school examinations.

Aim of the Study

To study of level of stress experienced by employed mothers and employed fathers with regard to the performance of their school going children in examination.

Objectives of the Study

- 1.To assess and compare the level of stress experienced by Mothers and Fathers with respect to age.
- 2.To assess and compare the level of stress experienced by Mothers and Fathers due to the performance of their children in Examination.



Hypothesis

1.The level of stress experienced by Mothers is significantly higher than that of the Fathers with respect to their age.

2. The level of stress experienced by Mothers is significantly more than that of the Fathers with respect to the performance of their children in Examination.

Sample

The target number of respondents for the research was hundred (100) parents randomly selected, comprising fifty (50) women/mothers and fifty (50) men/fathers who had school going children.

METHODOLOGY

The main focus of the present research was to understand, assess and analyze the stress experienced by mothers and fathers with regard to the performance of their children in examination. For this, 50 women and 50 men women were selected. A total of 100 parents and their stress were studied.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Upadhyaya, G. R. and Havalappanavar, N.B.(2008) assessed fathers and mothers of 628 mentally challenged individuals for their perceived stress using Family Interview for Stress and Coping in Mental Retardation (FISC-MR) developed by Girimaji, et.al.(1999). Behavioural Assessment Scale for Indian Children with Mental Retardation, Part B (Peshawaria & Venkatesh, 1992) was also used to study the extent of behavioural disorder in the mentally retarded individual that was perceived by the parents. Results showed that mothers reported higher stress compared to fathers. In the areas of education, care, emotional and social stress, mothers reported higher stress, whereas in the area of finance, both mothers and fathers reported equal levels of stress. Parents below 35 years of age showed higher stress than parents over 35 years of age.

Alexis Philbin Walker (2000) compared perceived levels of parenting stress between mothers and fathers of children with



Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), children with developmental disabilities, and normally developing children. Significant gender differences were found between mothers and fathers in terms of parent characteristics related to stress. Fathers reported greater stress in the areas of attachment, while mothers reported more parent role restrictions.

Nicole Y. Weekes et. al., (2005) examined 107 young-adult participants (65 females, 42 males) who were administered Self-Report Inventories of Perceived Stress, Stressor Exposure, and Negative Health Symptoms, to study the effects of stress on the health of the male and female respondents. Results indicated that sex differences were observed in the associations among perceived stress, stressor exposure, and negative health symptom rates. It was concluded that while exposure to stress was a significant negative predictor of health for both sexes, perception of stress was predictive only for females, the reason being

that women have to maintain the balance between work-place and factors related to home like daily chores, looking after the elders and children and their requirements.

Elsa Fontainha (2006) studied the effects of family environment on individual stress. Two-parent families with at least one child aged under 15 years were divided into two groups- up to 6 years and between 6 and 14 years. To test stress, Portuguese Time Use Survey Data Models of Stress was used. Stress affected mothers more than fathers. Similarly the effects of stress were observed more in employed mothers than the unemployed mothers. Considering all the other observations it was also seen that the mothers were more affected than fathers by the stressors that occurred due to the children's academics and school performance.

DATA ANALYSIS

Stress is inevitable in today's modern life style. It takes toll on every person irrespective of age, gender, class, educational



qualification, income, profession of that person. In spite of this, stress is necessary for optimum performance. Without stress a person cannot perform. In the present research, level of stress experienced by mothers and fathers due to the performance of their children in examination was studied.

The table 1 indicates the general stress experienced by mothers and fathers. The level of general stress experienced by the respondents is divided into three parts based on the scale, especially designed, denoting low stress, medium stress and high stress. From the above table it is also observed that 26% of the mothers and 6% of the fathers in the age group of 40-45 years experience high level of general stress. Similarly, in the age group 35-40 years, 20% of the mothers and 4% of fathers experience high level of general stress. And in the age group 30-35 years, 4% of mothers and 22% of fathers experience low level of general stress. The calculated mean values show that

the level of stress experienced by the mothers is more than that of the fathers. (Mean value for mothers is $79.63 \pm 86.4 \pm 90.31$ and for fathers is $72 \pm 78.5 \pm 82.63$).

The individual Z (CAL) value is less than the Z (TAB) value for the respective age groups with respect to the stress experienced by the mothers supports the hypothesis. This means that there is significant difference between the level of stress experienced by the mothers and that of the stress experienced by the fathers.

Hence the hypothesis, "The level of stress experienced by Mothers is significantly higher than that of the Fathers with respect to their age", is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The most significant fact that was revealed was that, 62% (16+20+26) of the mothers experienced high stress, whereas only 12% (4+4+6) of fathers experienced high stress. On application of higher statistics (Z test) it was observed that the level of stress experienced by the mothers was significantly more



than that experienced by the fathers.

From the table 1, it is inferred that, as age increases, mothers experience higher level of stress than fathers. The level of stress experienced by mothers in the age group 40-45 is higher than that of the fathers of the same age group. The major cause of stress in men was attributed to reasons like-being unhappy in their jobs, long working hours, heavy workload, increased financial obligations, over expectation at job place, inability to take decisions due to poor management at work place, personal problems, etc.

The major cause of stress in women is attributed to increased household responsibilities, caring for children, elderly and sick family members, coping on both home, family and work fronts adds up to the stress and anxiety she already experiences. In the work place the woman experience stress due to lesser pays, gender pay gaps, instances of sexual harassment, lack of job satisfaction, lesser pay, competitive stress, etc.

The table 2 indicates the stress experienced by mothers and fathers due to the performance of their children in the examination. In the present study, the term examination includes all types of oral and written curriculum based examination carried out in the schools.

The level of stress experienced by the respondents due to the performance of their children in the examination is divided into three parts based on the scale, especially designed by the researcher, denoting low stress, medium stress and high stress. From the table it is observed that 20% mothers and 6% of fathers in the age group 40-45 years experienced high stress due to the performance of their children in examination. A contradictory observation in the table indicated that 14% of mothers and 20% of fathers from the age group 30-35 years experience high level of stress due to the performance of their children in examination.



The calculated mean values show that the level of stress experienced by mothers with respect to the performance of their children in examination is more than the stress experienced by fathers in all the age groups (Mean value for Mothers is 20.43+21+19.89 and that of fathers is 15.66+16.5+16.25).

The individual Z (CAL) value is more than the Z (TAB) value for the respective age groups with respect to the stress experienced by the mothers and fathers due to performance of the children in the examination; which supports the hypothesis. This means that there is a significant difference between the level of stress experienced by mothers and fathers with respect to the performance of their children in examination.

Thus the hypothesis, “the level of stress experienced by Mothers is significantly more than that of the Fathers with respect to the performance of their children in Examination” is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The most significant fact that was revealed was that, 42% (14+8+20) of the mothers experienced high stress, whereas 40% (20+8+12) of fathers experienced high stress due to the performance of their children in examination (Table 2). On application of higher statistics (Z test) it was observed that the level of stress experienced by the mothers was significantly more than that experienced by the fathers. Besides this, another fact observed was, 34% (14+8+12) of the mothers experienced medium stress and 30% (16+6+8) of fathers experience medium stress due to the performance of their children in examination.

Examination is a word that mostly elicits anxiety in the minds of the student and even more, in the minds of the mothers as it is she who is totally involved in taking care of the child’s study. A lot of emphasis is laid on the marks secured by the student in the examination, to the extent that a child who secures very poor



marks or excellent marks, may not be known by his name, but will be known by the percentage secured by her/him. The percentage secured assures the future of students and all the aspirations of his /her parents and himself/herself. It is assumed that a child who secures good marks (above 90%) is intelligent and anything less than this, indicates that the child is unintelligent and doomed to a life of mediocrity. Mothers of children with poorer marks are troubled with a sense of shame, anger, frustration and sometimes guilt. The aptitude of the child is not taken into consideration and expectations are high on behalf of the mothers. When these expectations are not met, it leads to anxiety and a sense of personal failure in mothers. In case of children who fare well, the anxiety in mothers is no less, as now her expectation is to see her child not only maintain the good performance but perform even

better. Thus mothers are anxious about the results of their children.

On the other hand fathers are busy securing the family financially, and have other stressors and anxieties at work place that they consciously or unconsciously leave the schooling part of the children on the wives' shoulders.

CONCLUSION

Due to the inclusion of the different types of competitive activities into the educational system, the school curriculum has become too large and loaded. This has affected children as well as their parents, especially the mothers. This study was carried out to find the level of stress experienced by two groups of respondents – mothers and fathers. From the study, it was concluded that compared to fathers mothers experience higher level of general stress as well as stress due to performance of their children in examination.



Table No. 1: Level of Stress experienced by Mothers and Fathers with respect to Age

Level of Stress	Age of Respondents	Mothers				Fathers				Z(CAL)*
		Frequency	%	Mean	SD	Frequency	%	Mean	SD	
LOW	30-35	2	4	21	2.83	11	22	11.73	2.61	1.71
	35-40	3	6	18.33	2.08	10	20	15	2.71	0.72
	40-45	1	2	17	3.52	9	18	10.5	2.45	1.16
MEDIUM	30-35	4	8	42.25	2.5	4	8	38.5	1.29	0.75
	35-40	6	12	46.83	2.32	3	6	39.4	2.30	1.74
	40-45	3	6	46.33	2.52	5	10	43.4	2.70	0.57
HIGH	30-35	8	16	79.63	1.92	2	4	72	1.41	1.36
	35-40	10	20	86.4	1.58	2	4	78.5	2.12	1.44
	40-45	13	26	90.31	1.97	3	6	82.67	2.08	1.69
TOTAL		50	100			50	100			

* Z (TAB) at 5 % level of significance is - 1.96

Table No. 2: Level of Stress experienced by Mothers and Fathers with respect to the Performance of their Children in Examination

Level of Stress	Age	Mothers				Fathers				Z(CAL)*
		Frequency	%	Mean	SD	Frequency	%	Mean	SD	
LOW	30-35	4	8	5.75	0.96	3	6	3	1	0.51
	35-40	5	10	5.4	1.14	5	10	3.2	0.84	0.49
	40-45	3	6	5	1	7	14	3	0.82	0.41
MEDIUM	30-35	7	14	11.86	1.57	8	16	8.86	0.83	0.81
	35-40	4	8	12.75	0.96	3	6	8.33	0.58	0.82
	40-45	6	12	13.33	0.82	4	8	9	0.82	0.95
HIGH	30-35	7	14	20.43	0.79	10	20	15.66	1	1.33
	35-40	4	8	21	0.82	4	8	16.5	1.30	0.18
	40-45	10	20	19.89	1.05	6	12	16.25	0.96	0.86
TOTAL		50	100			50	100			

* Z (TAB) at 5 % level of significance is - 1.96

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