

**STRESS IMPACT DUE TO COVID-19 ON PARENTS****Dr. Sabina R Harold**

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Abstract

For many the pandemic was and still is a terrifying experience. There wasn't a segment of people who remained unaffected by the pandemic. Human lives were affected both physically and psychologically- it was a change that was enforced upon, for many the adjustment is not an easy transition. The very young and the old were the most affected, if it was the frail health of the old, it was the inability of children to understand the pandemic. Stress overwhelmed all alike; it became like second nature.

Parents of the very young aged between one to twenty; were one such segment who experienced stress not only for themselves but also took the onus burden of stressing over their children. Many of them felt their children were on the brink of a lost childhood. This present study is conducted to study the stress levels that parents undergo both as an individual and as a parent.

Keywords: COVID-19, Parents, Parenting Stress, Individual Stress, Demographics

INTRODUCTION

For over a century mankind thought it was invincible, with the turn of the century grappled with problems of terrorism, resource depletion, and nuclear war: came the unheralded pandemic COVID-19. The world came to a standstill; the invincible man realized that a virus the size of destroy all his belief system of invincibility. For many the pandemic was and still is a terrifying experience. There wasn't a segment of people who remained unaffected by the pandemic. Human lives were affected both physically and psychologically- it was a change that was enforced upon, for many the adjustment is not an easy transition. The very young and the old were the most affected, if it was the frail health of the old, it was the inability of children to understand the pandemic. Stress overwhelmed all alike; it became like second nature.

Parents of the very young aged between one to twenty; was one such segment that experienced stress not only for themselves but also took the onus burden of stressing over their children. Many of them felt their children were on the brink of a lost childhood. The demographics of an individual play an important role; studies indicate demographics such as gender, occupation, work environment, age of children etc., to a great extent influence how stressed an individual is and how he copes with stress.

Stress if identified; in terms of what are the stressors (**events or conditions in your surroundings that may trigger stress**) and what levels of stress are the stressors causing then it would be helpful in finding coping mechanisms. With uncertainty looming over the end of the

pandemic situation and the whole world is trying to cope with the same in the best way that one can. It becomes important that those segments that are involved in rising the future generations- Parents should be given due importance. In this context the present study is conducted to study the stress levels that parents undergo both as an individual and as a parent. The study would further enable finding coping mechanisms for the stress that ensues due to Parenting in these difficult times.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Covid-19 Pandemic has changed the lives of all around the globe. The family environment has deeply changed. In the home environment, the parental role has become even more crucial than before. To support the child education in this pandemic which has shifted suddenly to online mode, the parent's role in supporting with the Childs education needs like homework's and projects has increased. Children have only their parents around them, to provide support with homework when necessary and promote a positive development and new learning experiences for toddlers and preschoolers (Wang et al., 2020). Moreover, we know that children have lower personal resources to deal with the many changes the pandemic is daunting on their life (Liu et al., 2020) and guidelines suggest parents should discuss and explain the situation with them, since correct information about what is happening and the reasons for the restrictions children have to face is vital to prevent negative psychological consequences (Dalton et al., 2020). Parents who report finding taking care of their children's education and learning, finding space and time for themselves, and for their partner, for the children overall development, and for the activities they used to do before the lockdown more difficult, are more stressed. This confirms that there is an effect of the limitations associated with quarantine on the well-being of adults (Brooks et al., 2020).

Literature regarding previous experiences all over the world that may have some aspects in common with the COVID-19 situation reported a high presence of psychological distress such as depression, stress, irritability, and post-traumatic stress symptoms associated with the quarantine (Hawryluck et al., 2004; Brooks et al., 2020) with long-lasting effects continuing for years after the event (Liu et al., 2012). The majority of studies conducted during previous pandemics and from the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak examined psychological consequences on the general population, leaving the study of effects on parents and children mainly unexplored, with few exceptions (Brooks et al., 2020).

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To study the stress levels in parenting during the pandemic.
2. To study the stress levels that parent undergo as an individual.

HYPOTHESES:

1. H1: There is no significant relationship between demographic variables and stress levels(Parenting and Individual)
2. H2: There is no significant difference in the stress levels (parenting and Individual) among the various demographic variables

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The data for this research is collected from parents through online surveys. The primary data for this research is collected through a structured questionnaire on parenting stress and individual stress containing 13 items (8 on parenting stress and 5 on Individual stress) which was shared via social media targeting parents basing on convenience sampling. Parents were asked to indicate their stress levels on a 5 point Likert scale. The Secondary data for this research has been collected from various research articles published in Journals. The final sample providing information on all study variables consisted of 80 parents. The data is analyzed using SPSS Ver.28. The data collected has been analyzed using statistical methods like Cross tabulations, chi-square and Kruskal Wallis test. The Limitations of this study being the very small sample which has responded, so it can be expanded to wider study. Multiple studies going on this research topic might have lead to respondent indifference.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data has been collected from parents on a 13 item questionnaire consisting of stress levels in parenting and individual stress. Parenting stress is measured on 8 items like adjusting children to new routine, making children understand the pandemic situation, keeping socially distant from outsiders including extended family members, making children understand the precautions to be taken, dealing with children's online education, coparenting in this pandemic, taking care of the medical needs of the children, dealing with parent-child conflict that arose because of Covid-19. Individual stress is measured on 5 items like the stress the individual faced to protect children in pandemic, stress due to timing regulations imposed by the Government, to balance both work and children from the Home environment, because of the uncertainties that pandemic brought on them, because of missing out the normal life or childhood of their children. Basing on the literature review made for this study, the above items are measured on different demographic variables like: The type of family they are in like Nuclear or Joint, the type of work environment they have to deal with like Work from Home / Office/ Combination of both, the number of kids, age group of kids, employment status. Basing on the data collected the following analysis has been made.

The Demographic Profile:

		No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Type of Family	Joint	23	28.75
	Nuclear	57	71.25
Type of Work	Work From Home	22	27.5
	Office	35	43.75
	Combination	23	28.75
No. of Kids	1	26	32.5

	2	49	61.25
	3 or more	05	6.25
Age group of kids	0-5	27	33.75
	6-10	24	30
	11-15	18	22.5
	16-20	11	13.75
Family Employment Status	Single parent working	32	40
	Both parents working	48	28.75

a. To study the interrelationship between the demographic variables and Parenting and Individual Stress, the data has been studied through cross-tabulation.

I. Parenting stress

- Making children understand the precautions to be taken about covid19.
 - 52% of the respondents from joint family felt that it is manageable for them to make the children understand about precautions to be taken. Only 4% of the respondents from joint families felt it is stressful to do so. Whereas, 37% of the respondents from nuclear families felt it is stressful to make the children understand about precautions.
 - 28% of the respondents who go to office felt stressful about this, whereas only 17% of the respondents who work from home felt stressful about this.
 - 30% of the respondents whose kids are below 5 years were stressful, 29% of the respondents whose kids are between 6-10 years were stressful whereas 63% of the respondents whose kids are above 15 years dint felt stress.
 - 49% of the respondents where there is single parent working are not stressful, where as 26% of the respondents families in which both parents working dint felt stress.
- Adjustment to the new way of learning /online classes
 - 31% of the respondents from nuclear families felt stressful, whereas only 17% of the respondents from joint families were stressful about online classes.
 - 30% of the respondents who go to office were stressful about online classes, and 43% of the respondents who work in combination of office and home were stressful. Whereas only 13% of the respondents who work from home were stressful about online classes.
 - 41% of the respondents whose kids are in primary school education were stressful, where as 45% of the respondents whose children are above 16 years don't felt any stress about children online classes.
 - 50% of the respondents where one of the parents is not working dint experience stress, whereas only 30% of the respondents where both parents were working were free of stress.

II. Individual stress

- Stress an individual takes with the feeling of their child missing out the childhood / normal life as before pandemic.
 - 75% of the respondent felt stressful about this. 30% of the respondents from joint families were stressful whereas 38% of the respondents from nuclear families were stressful.
 - 19% of the parents who have single kid are more stressful whereas only 8% of the parents who have 2 kids were stressful
 - 82% of the parents whose kids are the age group of 6-10 are stressful.
- Work life Balance
 - 33% of the respondents from nuclear families are stressful in balancing work and children in this pandemic, where as 13% of respondents form joint families felt stress.
 - 27% of the respondents who are even working from home are stressful in balancing, whereas 19% of respondents who go to office were stressful in balancing work and children.
 - 38% of the respondent who have single kid don’t feel stressed, 26% of respondents who have more than 2 kids were stress free in balancing work and children.
 - 40% of respondents whose kids are less than 5years are able to balance work and home without stress, whereas 24% of respondents whose younger kids’ age group is 6-10 years were able to balance work and children.
 - Though 70% of the respondents feel stressful in balancing work and life.43% of the them feel manageable stress and 27% feel highly stressful, though either single parent is working or both parents working.

b. To study the interdependence of attributes chi-square test has been used.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between demographic variables and stress levels (Parenting and Individual)

A. Parenting Stress

In order to find out the association between parenting stress and demographic variables, Chi-Square test are conducted. The results of the tests are:

		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Null Hypothesis
was it stressful making your children understand the pandemic	Family Type	12.186	4	.016	Rejected
	Type of Work	4.608	8	.799	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	3.277	8	.916	Accepted
	Age group of kids	14.585	12	.265	Accepted
	Employment status	3.558	4	.469	Accepted
was it stressful to make the children understand the precautions to be taken because of Covid-19	Family Type	13.193	4	.010	Rejected
	Type of Work	8.959	8	.346	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	11.278	8	.186	Accepted
	Age group of kids	10.028	12	.614	Accepted
	Employment status	8.148	4	.086	Accepted
Was it stress full to settle children into the	Family Type	10.786	4	.029	Rejected
	Type of Work	2.376	8	.967	Accepted

new routine during Covid-19	No. Of Kids	4.434	8	.816	Accepted
	Age group of kids	23.991	12	.020	Rejected
	Employment status	4.760	4	.313	Accepted
was it stressful to keep children socially distant from outsiders including extended family members	Family Type	8.292	4	.081	Accepted
	Type of Work	7.120	8	.524	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	2.528	8	.960	Accepted
	Age group of kids	14.492	12	.270	Accepted
	Employment status	1.381	4	.847	Accepted
was it stressful to make your children adjust to the online classes	Family Type	4.806	4	.308	Accepted
	Type of Work	11.457	8	.177	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	8.188	8	.415	Accepted
	Age group of kids	16.693	12	.162	Accepted
	Employment status	8.284	4	.082	Accepted
was it stressful to co-parenting	Family Type	14.061	4	.007	Rejected
	Type of Work	13.064	8	110	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	10.534	8	.230	Accepted
	Age group of kids	5.506	12	.939	Accepted
	Employment status	11.460	4	.022	Rejected
Was it stressful to take care of the medical needs of the children	Family Type	6.088	4	.193	Accepted
	Type of Work	4.625	8	.797	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	11.596	8	.170	Accepted
	Age group of kids	9.760	12	.637	Accepted
	Employment status	10.096	4	.039	Rejected
was it stressful deal with the parent-children conflict that arose because of Covid-19	Family Type	8.616	4	.071	Accepted
	Type of Work	6.132	8	.632	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	10.742	8	.217	Accepted
	Age group of kids	14.109	12	.294	Accepted
	Employment status	12.747	4	.013	Rejected

From the above table, it can be inferred that

- **Family Type (Joint/Nuclear):** There is significant relationship between family type and Parenting stress with exception to variables such as maintaining social distance, child online education, medical needs of the children and parent-child conflict.
- **Type of Work Environment (WFH/Office/Combination):** There is no significant relationship between type of work environment and Parenting stress.
- **No. Of Kids:** There is no significant relationship between number of kids and Parenting stress.
- **Age group of kids:** There is no significant relationship between age group of kids and Parenting stress with exception to settle the children to new routine due to pandemic.
- **Employment status:** There is significant relationship between employment status of both the parents and Parenting stress with exception to variables such as making child understand the pandemic, making them understand the precautions, settling children to new routine and child online education.

B. Individual Stress

In order to find out the association between individual stress and demographic variables, Chi-Square test are conducted. The results of the tests are:

		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Null Hypothesis
Was it stress full to take the measures to protect your children to avoid Covid	Family Type	4.054	4	.399	Accepted
	Type of Work	18.399	8	.018	Rejected
	No. Of Kids	7.323	8	.502	Accepted
	Age group of kids	3.264	12	.993	Accepted
	Employment status	1.673	4	.796	Accepted
During Quarantine, were you stressed due to the timing regulations by the Government	Family Type	2.618	4	.624	Accepted
	Type of Work	15.096	8	.057	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	16.596	8	.035	Rejected
	Age group of kids	15.062	12	.238	Accepted
	Employment status	1.962	4	.743	Accepted
Was it stressful, to handle both work and children from the Home environment	Family Type	15.128	4	.004	Rejected
	Type of Work	7.381	8	.496	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	7.797	8	.454	Accepted
	Age group of kids	9.648	12	.647	Accepted
	Employment status	4.414	4	.353	Accepted
Were you stressful because of the uncertainties that Covid-19 brought on you.	Family Type	6.939	4	.139	Accepted
	Type of Work	7.762	8	.457	Accepted
	No. Of Kids	11.765	8	.162	Accepted
	Age group of kids	8.789	12	.721	Accepted
	Employment status	3.399	4	.493	Accepted
Were you stressful because your children are missing out the normal life adjusting to the Covid-19 Pandemic	Family Type	3.763	4	.439	Accepted
	Type of Work	18.488	8	.018	Rejected
	No. Of Kids	7.851	8	.448	Accepted
	Age group of kids	10.515	12	.571	Accepted
	Employment status	2.043	4	.728	Accepted

From the above table, it can be inferred that

- **Family Type (Joint/Nuclear):** There is no significant relationship between family type and Individual stress with exception to stress alleviated due to balancing both work and children.
- **Type of Work Environment (WFH/Office/Combination)::** There is significant relationship between type of work environment and individual stress with exceptions to variables such as stress due to timing regulations, stress alleviated due to balancing both work and children, and uncertainties that covid bought.
- **No. Of Kids:** There is no significant relationship between number of kids and Individual stress with exception to stress to balance both work and children.

➤ **Age group of kids:** There is no significant relationship between age group of kids and Individual stress.

➤ **Employment status:** There is no significant relationship between employment status of both the parents and Individual stress.

c. To study the significant differences between stress levels among various demographic variables, Kruskal-Wallis has been used.

Ho: There is no significant difference in the stress levels (parenting and Individual) among the various demographic variables

A. Parenting Stress

In order to find out the significant difference in the parenting stress levels and demographic variables, Kruskal-Wallis test is conducted. The results of the tests are:

		Parenting Stress: [Was it stressful to settle children into the new routine during Covid-19]	Parenting Stress: [Was it stressful making your children understand the pandemic]	Parenting Stress: [Was it stressful to make the children understand the precautions to be taken because of Covid-19]	Parenting Stress: [Was it stressful to keep children socially distant from outsiders including extended family members]	Parenting Stress: [Was it stressful to make your children adjust to the online classes]	Parenting Stress: [Was it stressful to co-parenting]	Parenting Stress: [Was it stressful to take care of the medical needs of the children]	Parenting Stress: [Was it stressful to deal with the parent-child conflict that arose because of Covid-19]
Family type	Kruskal-Wallis H	2.77	1.304	2.733	2.666	0.432	1.089	0.011	0.349
	df	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.096	0.254	0.098	0.103	0.511	0.297	0.915	0.555
Type of Work environment	Kruskal-Wallis H	0.918	2.112	1.554	2.237	2.91	0.337	1.197	1.319
	df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Asymp. Sig.	0.632	0.348	0.46	0.327	0.233	0.845	0.55	0.517
No. of Kids	Kruskal-Wallis H	1.843	0.503	1.56	0.627	0.056	1.685	0.214	2.393
	df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Asymp. Sig.	0.398	0.778	0.458	0.731	0.972	0.431	0.899	0.302

Age of Younger Kid	Kruskal-Wallis H	4.813	3.48	2.275	2.426	6.69	1.412	1.689	0.739
	df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.186	0.323	0.517	0.489	0.082	0.703	0.639	0.864
Employment Status	Kruskal-Wallis H	0.307	0.145	0.868	0	1.68	1.187	0.1	0.427
	df	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.579	0.704	0.352	0.992	0.195	0.276	0.751	0.514

From the above table, as the null hypothesis is accepted, it can be inferred that the stress levels are not different with the demographic variable variations irrespective of the subdivisions in the demographics and Covid-19 stress seems to affect all parents equally.

B. Individual Stress

In order to find out the significant difference in the individual stress levels and demographic variables, Kruskal-Wallis test is conducted. The results of the tests are:

		Individual Stress: [Was it stress full to take the measures to protect your children to avoid Covid]	Individual Stress: [During Quarantine, were you stressed due to the timing regulations by the Government]	Individual Stress: [Was it stressful, to handle both work and children from the Home environment]	Individual Stress: [Were you stressful because of the uncertainties that Covid-19 brought on you.]	Individual Stress: [Were you stressful because your children are missing out the normal life adjusting to the Covid-19 Pandemic]
Family type	Kruskal-Wallis H	0.001	0.011	2.023	0.026	0.016
	df	1	1	1	1	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.981	0.916	0.155	0.872	0.899
Type of Work environment	Kruskal-Wallis H	2.009	6.992	4.607	2.854	4.204
	df	2	2	2	2	2
	Asymp. Sig.	0.366	0.03	0.1	0.24	0.122
No. of Kids	Kruskal-Wallis H	1.102	0.247	2.082	0.1	0.401
	df	2	2	2	2	2
	Asymp. Sig.	0.576	0.884	0.353	0.951	0.818
Age of Younger Kid	Kruskal-Wallis H	0.346	2.157	0.614	0.069	2.524
	df	3	3	3	3	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.951	0.54	0.893	0.995	0.471
Employment Status	Kruskal-Wallis H	0	0.356	0.117	0.618	1.088
	df	1	1	1	1	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.991	0.551	0.732	0.432	0.297

From the above table, as the null hypothesis is accepted, it can be inferred that the stress levels are not different with the demographic variable variations irrespective of the subdivisions in the demographics and Covid-19 stress seems to affect all individuals equally

with exception to type of work environment and the individual stress faced due to the timing regulations of the Government during lockdowns.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the present study has helped us identify that irrespective of the demographic background, stress has affected all parents alike. The major concern of parents related to the covid-19 was how children would cope with the pandemic in terms of taking precautions to protect themselves. Concerns such as the above can be addressed if small measures such as wearing a mask, sanitizing, washing the hand regularly are inculcated in their every day routine irrespective of whether they are in the protective environment of home or elsewhere.

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