

Relationship between mental health and parenting stress among intact families

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to know the relationship between mental health and parenting stress among intact families in University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad in the year of 2013-2014. The sample comprised 60 intact (dual parent) families working in Dharwad campus. The self-structured questionnaire was used to collect personal information of the respondents. The mental health inventory developed by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983) and the parenting stress scale by Abidin (1995) were used to assess the stress related to life roles and life events experienced by parents. The results revealed that 63.6 per cent fathers and 40.4 per cent mothers from intact families had very poor mental health irrespective of age. No association was observed between the age of fathers and mothers from intact families with respect to mental health. None of the parents from intact families expressed very good, good and average levels of mental health. The correlation between occupation and mental health of both fathers and mothers was negative but not-significant. There was no significant difference and also no association found between the fathers and the mothers of intact families with respect to parenting stress. It was interesting to note that in case of fathers from intact families there was positive but non-significant relationship between mental health and parenting stress to the general health status. In case of mothers however there was positive but non-significant relationship. This indicates that increase in parenting stress increases the mental health problems.

Keywords: Stress; general health status; mental health; intact; dual parent

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is the ability to maintain an even temper, an alert intelligence, socially considerate behavior and a happy disposition. Mental health refers to psychological well-being of people at any place that represents an individual's level of personal effectiveness, success and

satisfaction (Banks et al 1980). It is the social and emotional adjustment of an individual. In recent years the role and status of women have been changed tremendously. With increasing female education and more liberty for their rights and privileges women's attitude towards their stereotyped role is changing. Their participation in education and work place

has also led to increased socio-familial roles. Women who work outside the home are required to make many socio-familial adjustments that can contribute to stress and anxiety. In India it is familial system that renders most of support to its members.

The crucial role of parents and family in caring, nurturing, protecting and socializing young children is well established across the cultures. Research conducted by World Health Organization has found that an ongoing, warm relationship between parents and child is just as important to the child's survival and development as is the provision of food, child care, stimulation and disciplining. Providing proper nutrition, minimizing exposure to toxins and ensuring immunizing schedules are followed for protecting the child from injury and violence. Because parenting can influence children's social, emotional and academic adjustment, efforts have been made to determine factors that affect parenting behavior. One such factor is parenting stress. Parenting stress can be defined as excess anxiety and tension specifically related to the role of a parent and to parent-child interactions (Abidin 1995). The present study was undertaken to know the relationship between the mental health and parenting stress among dual parent families.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the year of 2013-2014 at the University of

Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad. The sample comprised 60 intact families working in Dharwad campus. The respondents' age ranged from 25 to 40 years. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect personal information of the respondents. The mental health of respondents was assessed using mental health inventory developed by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983) and the parenting stress scale designed by Abidin (1995) was used to assess the stress related to life roles and life events experienced by parents. The data were further analyzed and tabulated by calculating frequency and percentages. To know the relationship between selected factors, mental health and parenting stress, modified Chi square, t-test and correlation were used.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The background information collected of the dual parent families covered under the study included variables like locality, caste, number of children, income, education and occupation. The mean age of the fathers of dual parent families was found to be 41.3 years while that of mothers was 33.6 years. Majority (96.6%) of dual parent families were residing in urban areas. Among them 60 per cent possessed 1-2 children, followed by 40 per cent who possessed 3-4 children. Nearly half (48.3%) families earned income of Rs 2500-4999 while 40 per cent of Rs 5000-9999.

The Mental health of the parents was assessed using mental health inventory. Depending upon the scores the respondents were classified into very good, good, average, poor and very poor levels of mental health status. Among them 58.3 and 41.6 per cent fathers whereas 63.3 and 36.6 per cent mothers showed poor and very poor levels of mental health respectively (Table 1). There was no significant difference and association observed between the fathers and mothers from dual parent families with respect to mental health levels. Mothers had poor mental health compared to fathers that could be due to the reason that former had more responsibilities at home and at work place. Parker et al (2008) revealed that fathers and mothers from single parent families are more likely to have more mental health problems than dual parent families.

The fathers (66.6%) belonging to age group of 46-55 years reported more of poor mental health than the fathers belonging to 36-45 years (61.7%) and 25-35 years (36.3%) age groups. As against this 66.6 and 33.3 per cent of the mothers belonging to age group of 36-45 years exhibited poor and very poor mental health respectively (Table 2). The young fathers (63.6%) and young mothers (40.4%) exhibited very poor mental health. On the whole none of the parents exhibited very good, good and average levels of mental health. However there was no association between mental health and different age

groups of fathers as well as mothers. This highlights that age group does not associate with mental health status of parents. The results are contradictory to the earlier research done by Currin et al (2011) who reported that the perceptions of younger adult parents are positive and significant with regard to changes in the mental health status.

Among the self-employed category 66.6 per cent mothers and fathers were in very poor mental health. Among fathers 54.5 per cent laborers and among mothers 76.9 per cent were in poor mental health. In case of mothers who were engaged in private business sectors 80 per cent and 20 per cent showed very poor and poor levels of mental health respectively (Table 2). The fathers who were labourers had poor and very poor mental health. The probable reason may be that those in lower occupational levels also had lower education and were not aware of the strategies to solve their problems and were not aware of techniques to maintain good mental health or were unable to look after their family expenses which in turn led to their poor mental health. Thakar and Misra (1999) found that employed women had better mental health status compared to unemployed groups of women.

The parenting stress was used to assess the stress related to life roles and life events experienced by parents. The respondents were categorized into low,

Table 1. Mental health level of the respondents from dual parent families

Level	Fathers (n= 60)	Mothers (n= 60)	Modified χ^2	t-value
Very good	-	-	5.91 ^{NS}	1.65 ^{NS}
Good	-	-		
Average	-	-		
Poor	35 (58.3)	38 (63.3)		
Very poor	25 (41.6)	22 (36.6)		
Mean ($\pm$ SD)	136.5 $\pm$ 7.02	134.3 $\pm$ 7.22		

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

NS= Non-significant

Table 2. Mental health of the parents by age and occupation

Parameter	Level		Modified χ^2	R
	Poor	Very poor		
Age (years)				
Fathers (n= 60)			4.06 ^{NS}	0.27*
23-35 (n= 11)	4 (36.3)	7 (63.6)		
36-45 (n= 34)	21 (61.7)	13 (38.2)		
46-55 (n= 15)	10 (66.6)	5 (33.3)		
Mothers (n= 60)			0.53 ^{NS}	-0.02
23-35 (n= 42)	25 (59.5)	17 (40.4)		
36-45 (n= 18)	12 (66.6)	6 (33.3)		
46-55	-	-		
Occupation				
Fathers (n= 60)			4.76*	-0.15
Service in private/business (n= 13)	7 (53.8)	6 (46.1)		
Service at shops, home	-	-		
Self-employment (n= 3)	1 (33.3)	2 (66.6)		
Laborer (n= 44)	24 (54.5)	20 (45.4)		
Househusband	-	-		
Mothers (n= 60)			3.87 ^{NS}	-0.05
Service in private/business (n= 5)	1 (20)	4 (80)		
Service at shops, home	-	-		
Self-employment (n= 3)	1 (33.3)	2 (66.6)		
Laborer (n= 13)	10 (76.9)	3 (23)		
Housewife (n= 39)	26 (66.6)	13 (33.3)		

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage, *Significant at 0.05 level, NS= Non-significant

Mental health, parenting stress relationship

Table 3. Parenting stress of the respondents from dual parent families

Level	Parent		Modified χ^2	t-value
	Fathers (n= 60)	Mothers (n=60)		
Low	2 (3.3)	1 (1.6)	2.11 ^{NS}	0.95 ^{NS}
Normal	11 (18.3)	17 (28.3)		
High	4 (6.6)	4 (6.6)		
Clinically significant	43 (71.6)	38 (63.3)		
Mean $\pm$ SD	101.7 $\pm$ 23.8	97.8 $\pm$ 20.4		

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage, NS= Non-significant

Table 4. Parenting stress of the parents by age and occupation

Parameter	Level				Modified χ^2	R
	Low	Normal	High	Clinically significant		
Age (years)						
Fathers (n= 60)					4.55 ^{NS}	0.11
25-35 (n= 12)	-	4 (33.3)	2 (16.6)	6 (50)		
36-45 (n= 34)	2 (5.8)	5 (14.7)	3 (8.8)	24 (70.5)		
46-55 (n= 14)	-	2 (14.2)	-	12 (85.7)		
Mothers (n= 60)					1.74 ^{NS}	-0.15
25-35 (n= 43)	-	11 (25.5)	3 (6.9)	29 (67.4)		
36-45 (n= 17)	1 (5.8)	6 (35.2)	1 (5.8)	9 (52.9)		
46-55	-	-	-	-		
Occupation						
Fathers (n= 60)					3.08 ^{NS}	-0.15
Service in private/ business (n= 12)	1 (8.3)	3 (25)	1 (8.3)	7 (58.3)		
Self-employment (n= 3)	-	-	-	3 (100)		
Laborer (n= 45)	-	9 (20)	3 (6.6)	33 (73.3)		
Househusband	-	-	-	-		
Mothers (n= 60)					5.11 ^{NS}	-0.12
Service in private/ business (n= 4)	-	2 (50)	1 (25)	1 (25)		
Self-employment (n= 4)	-	2 (50)	-	2 (50)		
Laborers (n= 15)	1 (6.6)	4 (26.6)	-	10 (66.6)		
Housewife (n= 37)	-	9 (24.3)	3 (8.1)	25 (67.5)		

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage, NS= Non-significant

Table 5. Relationship among health status, mental health and parenting stress of dual parent families

Variable	Parent			
	Fathers (n= 60)		Mothers (n= 60)	
	Health status	Mental health	Health status	Mental health
Mental health	0.083	1	0.229	1
Parenting stress	0.107	-0.114	0.156	-0.103

normal, high and clinically significant categories of parenting stress.

Majority of the fathers (71.6%) and mothers (63.3%) from dual families expressed clinically significant parenting stress (Table 3). There was no significant difference and association observed between the fathers and the mothers with respect to parenting stress. It is quite obvious that as the responsibilities increase the stress also increases. Among the fathers 85.7 per cent belonging to age group of 46-55 years expressed clinically significant parenting stress (Table 4). In case of mothers (25-35 years) and fathers (46-55 years) exhibited 67.4 and 85.7 per cent clinically significant parenting stress respectively. There was no association observed between parenting stress and different age groups of fathers and the mothers. Bharati and Reddy (2002) revealed that age had insignificant effect on job stress of the teachers working in primary school. Alka and Asthana (2004) found that teachers belonging to different age groups differed significantly in their job satisfaction.

Cent per cent of the fathers who were self-employed expressed clinically significant parenting stress. In case of housewives 67.5 and 8.1 per cent exhibited clinically significant and high category of parenting stress respectively (Table 4). There was no association observed in case of the fathers and the mothers between their parenting stress and occupation. The study is supported by the work of Aminabhavi and Kamble (2004) who showed that middle age technical personnel had significantly higher stress than older technical personnel. Kee and Sieak (2013) revealed that there were no significant differences in parenting stress between employed and non-working mothers.

The results revealed that there was negative and non-significant relationship between parenting stress and mental health. There was positive and high correlation between parenting stress and health status. Parenting stress leads to general health problems (Table 5). It can be concluded that personal characteristics viz age, occupation and experience affect the

general health status, mental health and parenting stress of women and men. Health status, mental health and parenting stress interact with one another to have an impact on the quality life of people from dual parent families.

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