

Parenting-related Stress In Mothers OF Toddlers (1-3 Years) at Piliyandala MOH Area

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Abstract: Parents of toddlers are at risk of increased parenting-related stress as toddlerhood is considered as a period with challenging behaviors due to significant physical and emotional development of the child. This descriptive cross-sectional study aims to examine the parenting-related stress levels and identify the factors affecting stress in mothers of toddlers (n=423) registered at Child Welfare Clinics of Piliyandala MOH area. The validated version of the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) was used as the data collection tool and a systematic random sampling technique was used. A Chi-square test was used to assess the associations between categorical variables. The mean age of the mothers was 30.62 (± 4.77) years and 29.8% (n = 126) were employed. According to the subscales of PSS, the mean score of the Parental Stress (PS) subscale of mothers was 28.72 (Scale; 15- 49) and 51.3% (n=217) were reported with a higher level of stress. The mean of Lack of Parental Satisfaction (LPS) subscale was 11.30 (Scale; 8-23) and nearly 40% (n=170) were reported with a higher LPS score which is above the mean. Further, parental stress was significantly associated when the age of the toddler is between 1-2 years (p = 0.03), having more than one child (p = 0.00), the toddler is being in the second or higher ordinal position (p = 0.02), unemployed mothers (p = 0.00) husband educated up to O/L or less (p = 0.02), temporary residence (p = 0.03) and husband being alcoholic (p = 0.01). In conclusion, the majority of the mothers of

toddlers showed a higher level of parental stress and a considerable percentage is having a lack of parental satisfaction.

Keywords: Parenting, stress level, mothers of toddlers

Introduction:

Parents of toddlers are at risk of increased parenting-related stress as toddlerhood is considered as a period with challenging behaviours due to significant physical and emotional development of the child. Higher parental stress is usually associated with the poor adjustment outcomes in children, including insecure attachment and behaviour problems (McQuillan and Bates, 2017). Therefore, early identification of higher parental stress is essential to enhance effective parenting practices. The objectives of the study are to assess the perceived parental stress of mothers with toddlers registered at the Piliyandala MOH area and assess the association of perceived parental stress level with sociodemographic variables.

Methodology:

A community based, descriptive cross sectional quantitative study was conducted to assess the perceived parental stress level among mothers with toddlers attending child welfare clinics in the Piliyandala MOH area. A systematic random sampling technique was used as the sampling technique, and interviewer-administered questionnaires were used for data collection. Perceived

parental stress was assessed using a validated version of the Parental Stress Scale (PSS). The parental stress scale were subdivided as Parental Stress statements (PS) and Lack of Parental Satisfaction statements (LPS) (Pontoppidan, Nielsen and Kristensen, 2018). A separate questionnaire was used to obtain socio-demographic, and other information related to the family environment. Data was analysed using SPSS version 23. Chi-square test was used to assess associations between categorical variables, and the level of significance was set as 0.05.

Results, and Discussion:

Four hundred and twenty-three mothers with toddlers participated in the study. The mean age of the mothers was 30.62 years, and 29.8% (n = 126) were employed. According to the subscales of PSS, the mean score of Parental Stress (PS) subscale of mothers was 28.72 (Scale; 15- 49) and 51.3% (n=217) were reported with higher level of stress (Figure 1). The mean of Lack of Parental Satisfaction (LPS) subscale was 11.30 (Scale; 8-23) and nearly 40% (n=170) were reported with higher LPS score which is above the mean (Figure 2).

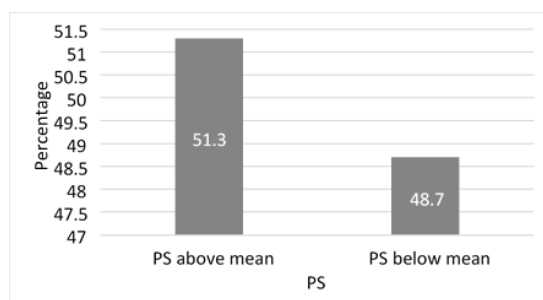


Figure 1: Percentage of Parental Stress (PS)

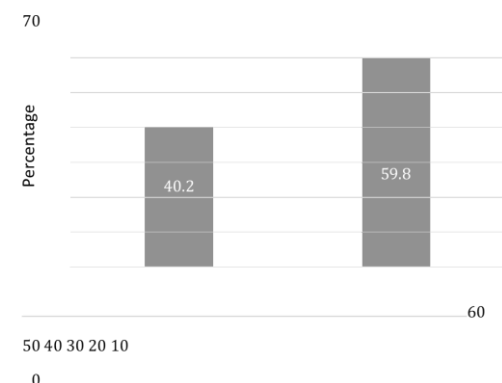


Figure 2: Percentage of Lack of Parental Satisfaction (LPS)

Further, parental stress was significantly associated when the age of the toddler is between 1-2 years (p = 0.03), having more than one child (p = 0.001), the toddler is being in the second or higher ordinal position (p = 0.02), unemployed mothers (p = 0.004) husband educated up to O/L or less (p = 0.02), temporary residence (p =0.03) and husband being alcoholic (p = 0.01) (Table 1).

Table 1: Associations between PS subscale and socio-demographic variables

	PS		
	X ²	df	p value
Age of child	4.970	1	0.03
Number of living children	10.423	1	0.001
Position of child	5.651	1	0.02
Employment status of mother	8.416	1	0.004
Fathers' education	5.223	1	0.02
Type of residence	4.665	1	0.03
Alcoholic husband	6.996	1	0.01

On further analysis of Parental stress and socio-demographic association, around 55.9% of mothers who had toddlers aged 1-2 years had shown higher levels of stress. This showed that having a children between age of 1 and 2 can be the most stressful period for a mother. This was further reinforced by a study conducted in USA which mentioned that average parental stress decreases each year of the child but at the age of 2 parental stress is at its peak (Williford, Calkins and Keane, 2006).

When considering number of living children, 57.4% of mothers who had 2 or more children had shown higher levels of stress. Since having more than one child can make it difficult to give the attention required for all the children, thus leads to parents being more stressed.

Similarly in ordinal position of child, 57% of mothers who had toddlers as second born or above had higher levels of stress. Equally to number of living children, having more children increases mothers' commitment to care for all her children. Therefore mothers well spend more time and energy taking care

of them while maintaining their daily activities, which can be increasingly stressful.

For mothers' who were educated up to O/L and below, study concluded that 51.9% had shown high levels of stress. Since mothers who are poorly educated lack the knowledge to properly take care of their child, children would often suffer from neglect. Consequently the mother would have difficult time taking care of an ill child. A study was done in Scotland which stated that parental stress was higher for mothers with low educational level (Parkes, Sweeting and Wight, 2015).

On the other hand when considering father involvement, 66.7% of families with alcoholic husbands had higher levels of stress. Families with alcoholic fathers can be extremely damaging to relationships and bonds, mainly due to the dependence and long term effect on the psyche. Irrational behaviours and quarrels between parents, can injure the paternity role in a family and often lead to distancing. A study regarding alcoholic fathers done in India showed that 80% of spouses had suffered from psychological distress (Lingeswaran, 2016).

Lastly, the type of residency had a significant impact on mothers' stress. According to the study 60.4% of mothers with temporary residence had high levels of stress. When having to regularly change residence it can be difficult process for a family to adapt to. This leads to family being more chaotic, which has been associated with more behavioural problems of children and causes more parental stress (Mayberry et al., 2014).

Conclusion:

The parental stress was higher among mothers with toddlers, and also considerable a percentage of mothers showed lack of parental satisfaction. Further, the study was

able to identify that mothers with high stress had; 1-2 years old toddlers, second-born or above ordinal position in the family, and families with more than two children. Mothers who were unemployed and educated up to O/L and below had high-stress levels. On the other hand, employed mothers who were doing both day and night duties, suffered from the highest stress. Similarly, mothers with an alcoholic husband, husbands who were educated up to O/L and below and families having a temporary residence showed higher parental stress.

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