

Comparative Study

Long- term Impact of COVID-19 on Parental Stress: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the enduring effects of COVID-19 on parental stress by comparing parents who contracted the virus with those who did not. A total of 120 participants, 60 in each group (those who contracted COVID-19 and those who did not), were surveyed using the Parental Stress Scale developed by Berry and Jones. The sample was collected using purposive sampling. Statistical analysis, employing the T-test, revealed significant differences in parental stress levels between the two groups. Findings suggest that parents who contracted COVID-19 experienced a prolonged elevation in parental stress levels compared to unaffected parents. These results underscore the importance of addressing and supporting parental well-being in the aftermath of pandemic-related challenges.

Keywords: COVID-19, parental stress, Parental Stress Scale

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted families worldwide, with parents bearing the majority of the stress and pressure. The virus has spread to nations of all economic levels, causing outbreaks and significantly impacting the economy, society, and health. Parental stress has been one of the main effects of the pandemic, as parents must balance various obligations and worries in a constantly changing setting.

Some major factors that raised parental stress levels during the pandemic include the shift to hybrid or online learning models, which required parents to take on additional responsibilities as supervisors and educators, as well as their own jobs or household duties. This increased workload, feelings of inadequacy, and concerns about knowledge gaps have contributed to increased stress among parents. Juggling childcare with work obligations or ensuring their kids' safety has also added to the stress, as many parents had to balance the demands of their careers with the needs of their kids, putting more strain on their mental health.

Many families experienced severe stress due to job losses, income reductions, and unstable economic conditions, increasing the already high levels of stress and strain parents were under. Parents felt overburdened and worn out due to more household chores and responsibilities, leading to symptoms of anxiety, sadness, and exhaustion.

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The digital age and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought about unprecedented challenges for parents in raising their children. The rise of social media and digital devices has led to new concerns, as technology can be difficult for kids to ignore due to its careful design and increased attention span. The pandemic has also caused a cultural shift towards an online-centric lifestyle, with remote learning becoming the standard in schools and a significant shift in daily social connections to online platforms.

To ensure children develop well-rounded communication skills, parents must help them recognise the potential hazards associated with the digital world. Body language and facial emotions play a crucial role in interpersonal communication, but overexposure to digital forms of communication can be a significant threat to a child's interpersonal abilities.

One of the largest issues facing parents today is finding a balance between job and family life, which may involve balancing multiple responsibilities simultaneously. Many parents prioritise their careers and families, but finding a healthy work-life balance and making time for themselves can be challenging. Coping with stress is another major challenge for modern parents, as they struggle to control their emotions and maintain composure, whether due to work stress or feeling overburdened with daily obligations.

Managing a household on a budget is another challenge for parents, as there may seem to be never enough money due to the current inflation rate, growing cost of living, and rising costs for housing, healthcare, childcare, and education. By helping their children develop a healthy and balanced relationship with the digital world, parents can help their children navigate the challenges of raising children in the digital age.

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected emotional health, parent-child interactions, stress levels, and family dynamics. Promoting resilience and well-being requires acknowledging these difficulties and offering assistance to parents and families. Families can overcome the obstacles posed by the pandemic by promoting open communication, building relationships, and using support resources.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, parents from the Delhi-NCR region were chosen. All responders were between the ages of 30 and 60. An initial sample of 150 replies was collected. However, after a subjective analysis of the data, all outliers were removed. Thus, a final sample of 120 responses was used, including 60 parents who contracted COVID and 60 parents who did not. To collect responses for the study, researchers employed the Purposive Sampling technique, in which they purposefully selected specific individuals or groups from a wider population based on specified criteria or specific purposes using Google Forms. The form was open for 3 weeks and the data was collected only during that particular time. No incentives were offered to the people who participated in the research. The details of the survey and the aim was discussed with the participants beforehand. Hence, the participation of the individuals was completely voluntary.

Following the selection of the tool and objectives to be followed, participants were given the Parental Stress Scale questionnaire to examine the long-term impact of COVID on parents' stress levels in the Delhi-NCR region. Every participant provided their consent before the questionnaire was administered.

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Data analysis:

After the procedure of data collection, the sample was first examined by descriptive statistical methods including mean and standard deviation to check the reliability and validity of the responses gathered throughout the procedure. It was then analyzed using two sample T- test in Microsoft Excel. A two sample T-test is a statistical hypothesis test used to compare the means of two independent groups to determine if they are significantly different from each other.

RESULT

The present study was conducted to investigate whether there is any long-term impact of COVID-19 on parental stress levels on those who contracted COVID as compared to those who didn't using T-test method.

Table 1: Result table

T TEST

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	X	Y
Mean	41.71666	35.31666
	667	667
Variance	123.7997	83.74548
Observations	175	023
Hypothesized Mean Difference	60	60
df	0	
	114	
t Stat	3.441115	
	539	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000405	
	274	
t Critical one-tail	1.658329	
	969	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000810	
	549	
t Critical two-tail	1.980992	
	298	

The provided table presents the findings of a statistical analysis comparing the stress levels of parents who experienced COVID-19 with those who did not, based on a two-sample t-test assuming unequal variances. The analysis encompasses various key parameters: Firstly, it's evident that the sample sizes for both groups are equal, with 60 observations each. The mean stress level among parents who contracted COVID-19 stands at 41.72, while for those who did not, it's slightly lower at 35.32. Notably, the variance in stress levels is higher among parents who experienced COVID-19 compared to those who did not, with values of 123.80 and 83.75, respectively. Moving on to the hypothesis testing, the null hypothesis assumes no difference in stress levels between the two groups, while the alternative hypothesis suggests otherwise. With a calculated t-statistic of 3.44 and degrees of freedom (df) equal to 114, the p-values for both one-tailed ($p < 0.0004$) and two-tailed ($p < 0.0008$) tests are significantly lower than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, indicating strong evidence against the null hypothesis. This implies that parents who contracted COVID-19 indeed experienced significantly higher stress levels compared to those who did not. Such findings highlight the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on parental stress, emphasizing the urgent need for

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tailored interventions and support systems to address the unique challenges faced by this demographic during the pandemic.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between COVID-19 and Parental Stress Levels in the Delhi-NCR region. Specifically, the study sought to determine if there is any significant long-term impact of corona on stress levels of parents who contracted it as compared to those who didn't based on the data collected from a sample of 120 respondents. The research design employed in this study was a survey-based approach using the Parental Stress Scale by Berry and Jones as an alternative to Parental Stress Index. The sample was drawn from the Delhi-NCR region and consisted of individuals who were parents.

Since $\alpha=0.05$, the one tailed and two tailed p-value came out to be 0.0004 and 0.0008 respectively, where the P value stands for probability and measures how likely it is that any observed difference between groups is due to chance.

Thus, The results indicate a significant difference between the means of groups X and Y, as the p-value is less than the specified significance level (0.05) in both one-tailed and two-tailed tests suggesting that there is a significant long term impact of COVID-19 on parental stress levels of those parents who contracted it as compared to those who didn't.

The result of the study suggests that there is a significant long- term impact of COVID-19 on stress levels of parents who contracted it as compared to those parents who didn't.

Parental stress can have a substantial negative impact on day-to-day functioning and have different effects on parents and their kids. In addition to mental health concerns like anxiety, sadness, and mood swings, high levels of stress can cause physical health problems including headaches, exhaustion, and sleep disruptions. Parents who are under stress may find it difficult to relate positively with their kids, which can result in uneven discipline and strained relationships between parents and kids. In addition, stress can exacerbate family conflict, disturb routines, and strain marriages or partner relationships. When parents are stressed, it can cause emotional distress and behavioral issues in their children, which can negatively impact their behavior, emotional control, and academic achievement. Parents who are under stress may also overlook their own needs and use unhealthy coping mechanisms, which worsens their stress levels and has a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of their families. Identifying the symptoms of parental stress and implementing effective coping strategies and support systems are crucial for promoting family resilience and well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide compelling evidence of a significant long-term impact of COVID-19 on parental stress levels, particularly among those who contracted the virus. Specifically, parents who contracted COVID-19 experienced significantly higher levels of stress compared to those who did not contract the virus. These results underscore the enduring psychological toll of the pandemic on affected individuals and families. Moving forward, it is imperative for policymakers, healthcare providers, and support services to recognize and address the long-term mental health consequences of COVID-19, with targeted interventions and resources tailored to meet the needs of affected parents and families.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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