



Correlational Study to Determine Behavioural & Emotional Problems and Parental Stress Among the Parents of Preschoolers

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Abstract

The spurts of increasing prevalence of behavioural & emotional problems and parental stress of young children are a big challenge to the mental health of them. The primary objective of the study was to determine the behavioral & emotional problems and parental stress among the parents of pre-schoolers at selected hospital. A quantitative research approach, non –probability correlational research design was used. After obtaining the prior permission from the research committee, 60 samples that fulfilled the inclusion criteria was selected using convenient sampling technique. Informed consent was obtained from the samples, & self-administered questionnaires consisting of demographic variables, Goodman(1997) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and Parenting Daily Hassles Scale (PDH) was administered. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyse the data. The results revealed that the correlation of emotional & behavioural problem score and parental stress score was positively correlated, with r value of 0.1185, which is significant at $p < 0.05$. The study is concluded that behavioural & emotional problems are increased among preschoolers and has significant impact on parental stress. So awareness of identifying the behavioural & emotional problems and early intervention may have a positive impact on reducing the parental stress.

Keywords- behavioural problems, emotional problems, parental stress, demographic variables, quantitative research, inferential statistics

1. Introduction

The early childhood years are a pivotal stage in a child's development, influencing not only physical growth but also behavioral, emotional, and psychological well-being [1]. During this period, children acquire foundational skills in communication, social interaction, and emotional regulation [2]. However, research indicates a growing prevalence of behavioral and emotional difficulties among young children, including issues such as temper tantrums, hyperactivity, anxiety, and social withdrawal. Such issues may not only hinder the child's developmental trajectory but also impact family dynamics, creating additional stress for parents and caregivers [3]. In recent years, lifestyle changes, increased exposure to digital devices, and shifting parenting styles have been implicated as contributing factors to behavioral and



emotional problems in children [4]. Increased screen time, for example, has been associated with attention difficulties, social withdrawal, and reduced physical activity, all of which can contribute to developmental challenges [5]. Additionally, socio-economic factors, parental work demands, and limited access to mental health resources can exacerbate stress levels among parents, impacting their ability to manage these emerging behavioral issues effectively [6]. Parental stress, often defined as the distress associated with parenting responsibilities, can lead to adverse effects on both the child and the parents [7]. Studies suggest that elevated stress levels can impair parents' ability to respond effectively to their child's needs, potentially leading to a cycle of negative interactions that may worsen the child's behavior [8].

Parents experiencing high stress may have difficulty providing consistent, nurturing responses, which in turn may contribute to increased behavioral issues in children [9]. This interdependent relationship underscores the importance of addressing both child behavior and parental stress within the family system [10]. Preschoolers who experience high levels of parental stress are more likely to have emotional and behavioural problems. Anxiety, impatience, and violence are common in children from stressful households, which might impair their capacity to properly control their emotions [11]. Parenting that is less attentive and sensitive might result from stress. Pre-schoolers may have worse emotional control skills as a result of parents who are under stress because they are unable to give their kids the emotional support and direction they require [12]. This insensitivity might show out as inconsistent discipline, which has a detrimental effect on kids' emotional regulation skills [13]. The association between parental stress and children's emotional regulation is mediated by the quality of family upbringing [14]. Negative emotions can be passed from parents to children in a vicious cycle caused by parental stress. Children may find it more difficult to develop good coping skills as a result of this emotional contagion, which can also make social interactions and emotional reactions more complex [15]. Maladaptive parenting styles brought on by high parental stress can have a detrimental impact on kids' social abilities. Children of stressed-out parents may be less receptive and nurturing, which can result in social interaction issues like sharing, cooperating, and interpreting social signs [16]. According to research, kids



from high-stress homes frequently show less social competence and struggle to build healthy relationships with their classmates [17]. Children's school preparedness, which includes critical social skills required for classroom interactions, has been connected to parental stress. Children who grow up in stressful situations frequently have lower social skills [18]. According to research, parents who experience stress may adopt inconsistent parenting styles, which could impede their children's development of critical social skills including empathy, cooperation, and dispute resolution [19].

Over time, this disability may make it more difficult to make and keep friends [20]. Children whose parents are under stress are more prone to act aggressively or withdraw socially. Because of these inclinations, individuals may avoid social situations or respond badly in group situations, which can make it difficult for them to form positive peer relationships [21]. Moreover, regression analysis [22] was utilized to address the issues like autism disorder children. Then, video feedback intervention framework [23] has effectively applied the correlation problem identifications and involvement learning model is used to enhancing the parent student relationships [24]. Such actions can further impede social development by fostering a cycle of conflict and isolation. A child's ability to regulate their emotions can be adversely affected by parental stress, making it more difficult for them to control their emotions in social situations [25]. Key contribution of the developed study has summarized as follows:

- Initially, identify the behavioral and emotional problem scores and parental stress scores among the parents of preschool-aged children,
- (2) Then, investigate the correlation between these behavioral and emotional problem scores in children and the parental stress scores.
- (3) Finally, examine the association between children's behavioral and emotional problem scores and selected demographic variables.

1. Related study and objectives

Su-Mei Wang, et al, [26] have developed the questionnaire model based on children strength and difficulties. Also, this model was effectively applied on the emotional performance as well as behavior of the each student. Moreover, the binomial logistic regression was inverted to implement the detection for pre-school children



characteristics. Similarly, parenting behavior also analyzed in terms of participation rate, parental support, high level maternal report, etc. Consequently, abnormal and normal activity was predicted based on the difficulty score <0.05 and >0.05 . this model would mitigate and enhance the emotional problems of each pre-school students.

Behavioral development and children psychological shaping was the most significant key factors for analyzing the parental behavioral. Therefore, Soon Aun Tan et al, [27] have developed the examination for conducting the associative study on the parent-child relationship. This study was also analyses the working parent stress, parental stress and moderating role of the parenting stress. Then, take the short survey based on work from home parents list, work from office parents lists, parental gender role, parents child relationship, etc. finally this study has provides high strength of student psychological behavioral understanding.

Ana pardo-Salamanca, et al, [28], have introduced a study, which is for assessing the student emotional, sleep and behavioral issues. Moreover, this study has took 120 mothers and her typically born 30 children, 47 autism children and 43 hyperactivity disorder children. Then apply the correlation analysis in these collected data and detect the emotional issues according to the social; supports such as affective report and confident. After that, multiple regressions have showed the significant performance for both children and parents relationships.

3. Problem statement

While extensive research has been conducted on the developmental and psychological impacts of early childhood behavior, there is limited research specifically exploring the correlation between preschoolers' behavioral and emotional problems and the resulting parental stress in India. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to bridge this research gap, providing insights for healthcare providers, educators, and mental health professionals to implement effective early intervention strategies. Early identification and support for both parents and children could mitigate the negative impacts of behavioral and emotional problems on family health and improve developmental outcomes for children.

3.1. Motivation, Novelty and Scope of this study



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- A correlational study to determine the behavioural & emotional problems and parental stress among the parents of preschool children at selected hospital, Chennai
- To identify the behavioural and emotional problems scores & parental stress score among the parents of preschool age children
- To correlate the behavioural and emotional problems scores & parental stress score among the parents of preschool age children
- To associate between the behavioural and emotional problems score and selected demographic variables.

3.2 Hypotheses

- There will be a significant correlation between the behavioral and emotional problems scores & parental stress score
- There will be a significant association between the behavioral and emotional problems and selected demographic variables.

4. Proposed Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research methodology to methodically examine the relationship between pre-schoolers' emotional and behavioural issues and parental stress. This method makes it possible to gather numerical data that can be statistically examined to find trends and connections. To investigate the associations between variables without changing them, a descriptive correlational study design is used. This design is appropriate for comprehending the relationship between children's social skills and emotional control and parental stress. Convenient sampling is the method used in this study, which entails choosing willing and accessible subjects. This method is useful for rapidly collecting data, but it can restrict how broadly the results can be applied. There are 60 people in the study's sample.



- **Inclusion criteria**

Willingness to Participate: In order to participate in the study and give their informed consent, participants must be willing. To guarantee efficient communication during data collection, participants must be able to understand either Tamil or English.

- **Exclusion criteria**

To prevent confounding variables, participants who are currently receiving medication or behavioural modification therapy and have been diagnosed with emotional or behavioural issues will not be allowed to participate. Noncompliant participants will not be included in the data gathering procedure. To make sure that medical issues don't influence their responses, participants who are really ill in the outpatient department (OPD) will not be allowed to participate.

Table.1 Sample description

Age level	Mean	2 to 4 years
	Standard deviation	1.21
Parents	Single	30
	Both	21
	None	12
Education level	None	31
	Graduate	32
Mother tongue	Tamil	10
	Hindi	53

4.1 Setting

The study will be carried out at Chennai's Bhaarith Medical College & Hospital. The recruitment of participants who fit the study's inclusion criteria is made easier by the setting's access to a varied community of parents with preschool-aged children. In order to ensure that the research is carried out methodically and ethically, this structured methodology provides a clear framework for examining the relationship between parental stress and pre-schoolers' social skills.



4.2 Data collection method

After getting the consent from the samples, 60 samples who fulfilled the inclusion criteria was selected using the convenient sampling technique. The behavioural and emotional problems of the preschoolers was identified using Goodman (1997) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and parental stress was assessed using Keith Crnic et al.,(1990) Parenting Daily Hassles Scale (PDH) was administered to the parents of the preschoolers who attended the OPD, at selected hospital. The data analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics.

5. Results and discussion

The analysis of frequency and percentage distribution of demographic variables revealed that based on the age of the child, 15 (25%) were 3 years, 35 (58%) were 4 years and 10 (17%) were 6 years old child. With respect to the gender of the child, 32 (47%) were male and 28 (53%) were female. Based on the religion of the child, 42 (70%) were Hindus, 10 (17%) were Christians & 8 (13%) were Muslims. Regarding the educational status of the father, 7 (12%) had primary school, 25 (42%) secondary school, 23 (38%) had undergraduate and 5 (8%) had post graduate education. Based on the educational status of the mother 8 (13%) had primary school, 32 (53%) had secondary school, 18 (31%) had undergraduate and 2 (3%) had post graduate education. Occupational status of the father showed that 8 (13%) was Daily wages, 35 (58%) was Private sector, 7 (12%) was Government employee, 10 (17%) was business person. With regards to Occupational status of the mother, 25 (42%) were home makers, 18 (30%) were daily wages, 15 (25%) were private sector and 2 (3%) were government employees. Based on the type of family, 42 (70%) belonged to nuclear family, 15 (25%) were joint family and 3 (5%) belonged to extended family. Regarding the order of the child in the family, majority of them 48 (80%) were first born child, 12 (20%) were second child. Based on the income of the family per month, 8 (13%) belonged to Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10000, 45 (75%) had Rs. 11000 to Rs. 15000 and 7 (12%) earned Rs. 16000 and above. Regarding the residence, 13 (21%) lived in urban, 40 (67%) in (67%) & 7 (12%) in semi urban. With respect to Screen time of



children per day, 2(3%) less than a hour, 13 (22%) and 45 (75%) used 3 hours & more. Based on Civil or Marital status of the parents, 3 (5%) were single, 4 (7%) were divorced, 1 (1%) were separated and 52(87%) were married & not separated. Regarding the working condition of the parents, 25 (42%) were one parent & 35 (58%) were both parents working.

5.1 Performance analysis

An authoritative parenting style and student mental health outcomes were found to be significantly positively correlated by the developed analysis. For students in the research area, authoritative parenting is linked to higher mental health outcomes, as indicated by the correlation coefficient of 0.518. The null hypothesis, which suggested no meaningful connection between students' mental health and authoritative parenting, was thus disproved.

Table.1 Statistical relationship between parenting and student mental health issues

Functions	Total behavioural	Mean	Standard deviation	RMSE	Positive relationship score
Mental health results	250	39.2	6.9	0.518	0.04
Authoritative parenting	250	3.6	0.8		

Table.2 Normal and abnormal detection rates

Sl.no	Psychological behavioural	Obtained scores	Normal score	Abnormal score
	Hyperactivity	1.6 ± 1.5	16	0.43
	Emotions	2.4 ± 1.3	285	0.76
	Problem conduction	4.2 ± 1.3	2595	0.69
	Relation issues	2.9 ± 1	890	0.24
	Prosaically behavior	5.1 ± 1.5	1270	0.34



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3.1 Objective analysis

Objective: 1

The first objective was to identify the behavioural and emotional problems among the preschool age children depicted that was 12 (20%) had normal, 30 (50%) had slightly raised, 11 (18%) had high and 7 (12%) had very high behavioural and emotional problems. The parental stress among the parents of preschoolers revealed that 17 (28%) had low stress, 31(52%) had moderate stress, 12(20%) had severe stress.

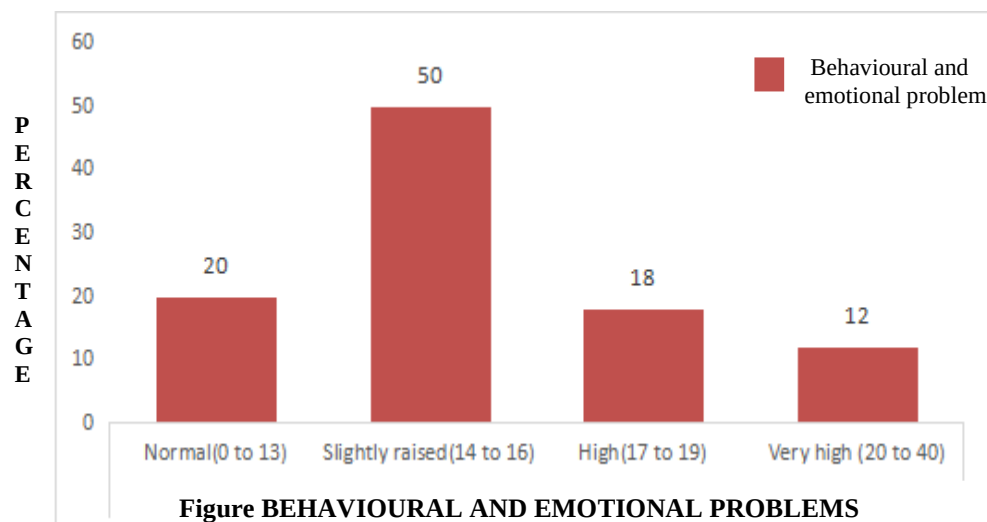


Figure 1 depicts the percentage distribution of emotional & behavioural problem score among the parents of preschool age children.

Objective: 2

The second objective was to find the correlate emotional & behavioural problem score and parental stress score which had positively correlation, with r value of 0.1185, which is significant at $p < 0.05$.

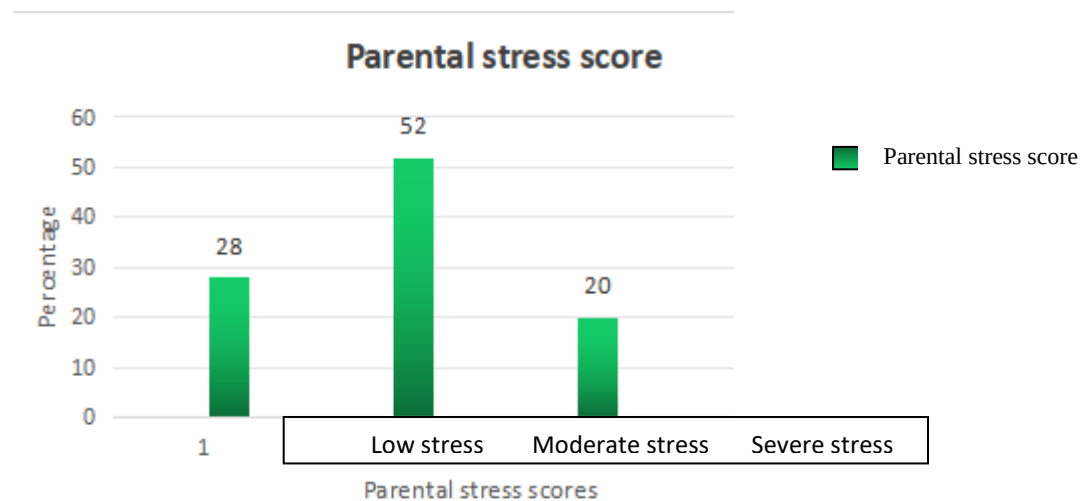


Figure 2 depicts the percentage distribution of parental stress score among the parents of preschool age children.

Objective: 3

The third objective was to associate between the behavioral and emotional problems and selected demographic variables, was found that with Age of the child $X^2 = 2.94$, gender of the child $X^2 = 0.32$, religion $X^2 = 2.91$, $p = 0.81$, Educational status of the father $X^2 = 9.78$, $p = 0.36$, Educational status of the mother $X^2 = 2.71$, $p = 0.97$. Occupational status of the father $X^2 = 2.71$, $p = 0.97$. Occupational status of the mother, $X^2 = 4.07$, $p = 0.90$. Type of family, $X^2 = 5.67$, $p = 0.46$. Sibling order, $X^2 = 5.46$, $p = 0.46$. Income of the family, $X^2 = 2.02$, $p = 0.91$. Residence, $X^2 = 3.50$, $p = 0.74$, based on the screen time of children per day, $X^2 = 1.16$, $p = 0.97$, Civil or Marital status of the parents, $X^2 = 9.41$, $p = 0.15$, Working condition of the parents, $X^2 = 5.24$, $p = 0.15$ were found to be not significant at $p < 0.05$.



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Figure. 3 depicts the correlate emotional & behavioral problem score and parental stress score among the parents of preschool age children

2. Conclusion

The temper tantrums, enuresis, hyperkinesis, overdependency, distractability, aggression, bullying, lying, shyness, lack of empathy are the common behavioural problems of the preschoolers. The study concluded that the raising prevalence of behavioural & emotional problems of the preschoolers due to the digitalization, parenting style had a greater impact on parental stress. Early interventions in identifying the behavioural problems and addressing them will help to secure the mental health of both the preschoolers and their parents.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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