

Parental Stress and Its Influence on Emotional Well-Being Among Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in Middle Eastern Countries: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of parental stress on the emotional well-being of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) children living in Middle Eastern countries. The research sought to understand how parental stress, coping mechanisms, and selected demographic factors shape children's emotional adjustment in an expatriate context. A sample of 101 respondents was chosen through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a self-prepared standardized questionnaire and analyzed through multiple regression. The independent variables included parental stress assessment, coping mechanisms, age, gender, country of residence, duration of stay in the Middle East, number of children aged 5–16 years, and work status, while the dependent variable was child emotional well-being. The regression model was statistically significant ($R = .778$, $R^2 = .606$, Adjusted $R^2 = .571$, $p < .001$), showing that nearly 57% of the variance in child emotional well-being was explained by the predictors. Parental stress and coping mechanisms were the strongest positive contributors, while gender, duration of stay, and number of children also had significant effects. Age, work status, and current country of residence were not significant predictors. The findings highlight that parental stress and coping play a central role in shaping the emotional well-being of NRI children. The findings underscore the critical need for targeted stress management programs and supportive interventions to promote healthier emotional outcomes for expatriate children.

Keywords: Parental stress, NRIs, Emotional well-being, Middle East, Coping mechanisms, Regression analysis

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a challenging responsibility, further intensified when families live in expatriate settings. Non-Resident Indian (NRI) parents in Middle Eastern countries often encounter unique stressors such as occupational demands, cultural adaptation, financial strain, and the absence of extended family support. These stressors influence not only the psychological health of parents but also the emotional adjustment of their children.

Research consistently shows that parental stress impacts child emotional well-being through its effects on parenting styles, emotional availability, and family interactions. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), Abidin's Parenting Stress Model (1992), and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provide a framework for understanding these dynamics. This study investigates the influence of parental stress on child emotional well-being in NRI families, aiming to identify key stress factors, coping mechanisms, and demographic predictors.

While the NRI population in the Middle East continues to grow, there is limited research exploring how this unique confluence of stressors affects the emotional health of their children. However, limited studies have focused on NRI families in the Middle East, where socio-cultural and legal contexts differ substantially from

parental stress influence the emotional well-being of children (aged 5–16) among Non-Resident Indian (NRI) families living in Middle Eastern countries?

Research Objectives:

1. To identify key stress factors affecting NRI parents and examine how work pressures, financial burdens, cultural adaptation, and lack of social support contribute to parental stress.
2. To analyze the impact of parental stress on children's emotional well-being.
3. To explore the coping mechanisms used by NRI parents and assess their effectiveness.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parental stress has been linked to negative child outcomes such as anxiety, behavioral problems, and reduced emotional regulation (Bakoula et al., 2009). Graham and Jordan (2011) found that migration-related stress impacts children's psychological well-being, while Barreto et al. (2024) emphasized that interventions reducing parental stress improve child socio-emotional health.

The Family Stress Model (Conger & Elder, 1994) highlights how economic strain heightens parental stress, thereby undermining parenting quality. Similarly, The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) is essential here, as it views stress as a dynamic interaction between the person and the environment. Effective coping mechanisms whether problem-focused (e.g., managing finances) or emotion-focused (e.g., seeking social support) are theorized to buffer the effects of stress. The present study tests this mechanism, hypothesizing that effective parental coping will significantly mediate the relationship between parental stress and child emotional well-being.

Parental stress is centrally defined by models like Abidin's (1992) Parenting Stress Model, which posits that stress arises from parent characteristics, child characteristics, and situational life events. For NRIs, the situational context is highly complex, involving acculturation stress (Fang & Shi, 2018), and high-demand work environments (Jamal, 1984). These expatriate pressures constitute chronic stressors that elevate the parent's allostatic load (McEwen, 1993), directly impacting their capacity for supportive parenting.

Child emotional well-being encompasses the child's ability to manage emotions, develop resilience, and form secure attachments (Bowlby, 1969). For children in the Middle East, this is impacted by the transience of their community and the lack of a stable Macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). When parental stress is high, the resulting decrease in emotional support can lead to increased adolescent negative mood (Janssen et al., 2020) and emotional difficulties.

While evidence from Western and Asian contexts is extensive, there is a research gap concerning NRIs in Middle Eastern countries. This study addresses that gap by analyzing parental stress, coping mechanisms, and their combined effect on children's emotional health.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

A descriptive research design was employed to examine the relationship between parental stress and children's emotional well-being.

Sample:

The sample comprised 101 NRI parents (both fathers and mothers) residing in Middle Eastern countries with children aged 5–16 years. Participants were selected using convenience sampling.

Instrument:

1. Parental Stress Scale (11 items)

2. Coping Mechanisms Scale (4 items)
3. Child Emotional Well-being Scale (8 items)

All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire underwent expert review for content validity.

Reliability Analysis:

Cronbach's α

Parental Stress 11 Items 0.811

Coping Mechanisms 4 Items 0.501

Child Emotional Well-being 8 Items 0.894

Table 1

Shows the reliability of combined scales (Cronbach's Alpha)

Parent Stress Assessment			Coping Mechanism			Child Emotional Wellbeing		
<i>N</i>	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	<i>N</i>	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	<i>N</i>	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
<i>(Valid)</i>			<i>(Valid)</i>			<i>(Valid)</i>		
101	11	0.811	101	4	0.501	101	8	0.894

Table 2

Shows the descriptive statistics of combined scale items:

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
Parental stress Assessment	101	1.55	4.45	3.2907	.52065
Coping Mechanism	101	1.50	5.00	3.1188	.57074
Child emotional Well being	101	2.25	5.00	3.5903	.67155

Data Analysis:

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarized demographics and scale scores. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine predictors of child emotional well-being.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which Parent Stress Assessment, Coping Mechanism, Age, Gender, Current Country of Residence, Duration of Stay in the Middle East, Number of Children aged 5–16 years, and Work Status predicted Child Emotional Wellbeing.

Table 3

Shows model summary and ANOVA for regression analysis

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of the Estimate
1	0.778 ^a	.606	.571	.43967

ANOVA

Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression on	27.313	8	3.414	17.661	<.001 ^b
Residual	17.785	92	.193		
Total	45.097	100			

The overall model was statistically significant, $R = 0.778$, $R^2 = 0.606$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.571$, $F(8, 92) = 17.661$, $p < .001$. This indicates that approximately 57% of the variance in Child Emotional Wellbeing was explained by the predictors. The standard error of the estimate was 0.440. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which Parent Stress Assessment, Coping Mechanism, Age, Gender, Current Country of Residence, Duration of Stay in the Middle East, Number of Children aged 5–16 years, and Work Status predicted Child Emotional Wellbeing. The overall model was statistically significant, $R = 0.778$, $R^2 = 0.606$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.571$, $F(8, 92) = 17.661$, $p < .001$. This indicates that approximately 57% of the variance in Child Emotional Wellbeing was explained by the predictors. The standard error of the estimate was 0.440.

ANOVA

The ANOVA confirmed that the regression model significantly predicts Child Emotional Wellbeing, $F(8, 92) = 17.661$, $p < .001$, indicating that the model provides a better fit than a model with no predictors.

Regression analysis confirmed that parental stress significantly predicts child emotional well-being. The overall model was statistically significant, $R = 0.778$, $R^2 = 0.606$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.571$, $F(8, 92) = 17.661$, $p < .001$. Non-significant predictors: age, work status, and country of residence.

DISCUSSION

The findings align with Abidin's Parenting Stress Model (1992), which highlights that stress arises from interactions among parent, child, and situational factors. High stress undermines parenting quality, leading to emotional and behavioral difficulties in children (Bakoula et al., 2009). In NRI families, financial pressure, cultural adaptation, and lack of extended family support exacerbate stress levels, consistent with the Family Stress Model (Conger & Elder, 1994).

The study also supports Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping, where coping strategies act as buffers against stress outcomes. Parents with stronger coping skills reported better child emotional well-being, showing that resilience-building practices are crucial. The findings confirm that parental stress significantly affects child emotional well-being. High stress levels reduce emotional availability and consistency in parenting, while effective coping strategies buffer these effects. The results align with Abidin's Parenting Stress Model and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, highlighting the interconnectedness of family and environmental factors.

Interestingly, coping mechanisms emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that interventions to strengthen parental coping may significantly improve children's outcomes. Gender and duration of stay also influenced child well-being, indicating cultural and adjustment factors. Families with more children reported lower child emotional well-being, possibly due to divided parental attention and resources.

This evidence underscores the need for support systems such as counseling services, school-based interventions, and community groups to strengthen family resilience in expatriate contexts.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that parental stress significantly undermines the emotional well-being of NRI children in Middle Eastern countries. Effective coping mechanisms enhance resilience and mitigate these negative outcomes. Policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals must prioritize interventions tailored to expatriate families.

Limitations

1. Reliance on parent self-reports may introduce bias.
2. Sample size ($n = 101$) limits generalizability.
3. Cross-sectional design restricts causal conclusions.
4. Children's own perspectives were not directly measured.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research should integrate children's self-reports and longitudinal data. Stress management and parenting workshops should be made accessible to expatriate families. Culturally sensitive community-based programs may help mitigate stress and foster child well-being.

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