



## Gender difference in parenting stress: A study on adolescents parents in reference to Farrukhabad district (UP)

**Shikha Dixit**

Research\_scholar  
Department of Education  
IFTM University, Moradabad, UP India  
Email id: [rahulti2000@yahoo.com](mailto:rahulti2000@yahoo.com)

**Mohan Lal 'Arya'**

Professor  
Department of Education  
IFTM University, Moradabad, UP, India  
Email id: [drmlarya2012@gmail.com](mailto:drmlarya2012@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Stress can be defined as a real or interpreted threat to the psychological or physiological integrity of an individual that results in physiological and behavioral responses. In Eastern culture, stress has been viewed as an absence of inner peace. On the other hand, western culture has viewed stress as a loss of control. Children bring joy, love, and countless gifts to our lives, and there is no deeper bond than that between mother and child. However, with the commitment to nurture another human being from infancy to adulthood; comes an additional load of stress and the stress that comes with motherhood can be significant. While each mother may face unique stressors, many demands of motherhood and the stressors experienced are virtually universal. Parenting stress is defined as an imbalance between the perceived demands of parenting and the perceived available resources. This study intends to assess the role stress situations on adolescent's parents. 300 adolescent parents (150 fathers; 150 mothers, 35-50 years of age) from various families of Farrukhabad constitute the sample of the study. Perceived Stress Scale is used to collect the data. The collected data was analyzed using appropriate statistics. In the study the researcher observed very high stress scores of mothers in comparison to fathers on perceived stress scale.

**Key Words:** stress, adolescents, parenting, Farrukhabad district.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Adolescence is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood that is characterized by physical, physiological, psychosocial and behavioral changes that are influenced to a large extent by the age, culture and socialization of the individual. Programs for adolescents often fail to recognize the heterogeneity and widely differing needs of the group, which are influenced by gender roles, age, residence and prior socialization. Adolescent relationships are characterized by gender power imbalances, irrational decision-making, poor communication, inadequate preparation for responsibilities of marriage and childbearing, fear of rejection and outside influence from family, peers or parents. Men and women report different reactions to stress, both physically and mentally. They attempt to manage stress in very different ways and also perceive their ability to do so — and the things that stand in their way — in markedly different ways. Findings suggest that while women are more likely to report physical symptoms associated with stress, they are doing a better job connecting with others in their lives and, at times, these connections are important to their stress management strategies. Though they report similar average stress levels, women are more likely than men to report that their stress levels are on the rise. They are also much more likely than men to report physical and emotional symptoms of stress. When comparing with each other, there also appears to be differences in the ways that married and single women experience stress. Women are more likely than men (28 percent vs. 20 percent) to report having a great deal of stress. There is a difference in the stress response exhibited by men and women. It is characterized by 'fight-or-flight' in men and 'tend-and-befriend' in women. This hypothesis is supported by neuro endocrine and behavioral evidence. The physiological stress response typically involves activation of the sympathetic nervous system and the HPA axis in both genders. However, the stress response specifically builds on attachment care-giving processes in females. This tends to buffer the sympathetic and HPA arousal. When researchers from UCLA analyzed data from hundreds of biological and behavioral studies (both human and animal), they concluded that females were more likely to deal with stress by "tending and befriending" -- that is, nurturing those around them and reaching out to others. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to sequester themselves or initiate a confrontation, behavior in line with the "fight or flight" response that's long been associated with stress. "Parental stress tends to be higher among teenage mothers, with everything from the affordability of childcare, to daily caretaking concerns, to balancing school or work and their baby



causing them stress,," the challenges women face nowadays is different than 20 years ago. Women are able to focus on their professional career, however, they still have to compete with men to obtain the same rights, and as a result, they become emotionally worn out. On top of that, they have to balance their work life with their personal life, fulfilling their role as mothers and also finding time to take care of themselves and their relationships. When researchers from UCLA analyzed data from hundreds of biological and behavioral studies (both human and animal), they concluded that females were more likely to deal with stress by "tending and befriending" -- that is, nurturing those around them and reaching out to others. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to sequester themselves or initiate a confrontation, behavior in line with the "fight or flight" response that's long been associated with stress.

### **A high percentage of mothers feel stress in the following areas:**

**Time Demands:** With all the care and nurturing that children require, as well as the additional demands of extra people in the household, most mothers feel a shortness of time. Whether it's a lack of sufficient time to one's self or time for dozens of other important activities, many mothers find that there are simply not enough hours in the day to do everything that they need or would like to do.

**Finances:** Whether using daycare, a nanny, or surrendering a full income to stay at home, caring for children is expensive. As they grow into new clothes, new activities, and eventually off to college, each child can pose a strain on a family's budget. While children are more than worth the expense, parents do tend to face greater financial stress.

**Relationship Demands:** As mothers invest the necessary time into their relationships with their children, sometimes other relationships take a back seat, especially when children are young and need more attention. Also, as children grow and change, mothers can change and grow in new directions, which can also put pressure on longstanding relationships. Single mothers can face this to an even greater degree, especially when it comes to dating.

**Protective Instincts:** Charged with the responsibility to care for a vulnerable young soul and nurture this sweet life to adulthood, many mothers feel the world to be a more perilous place than it once seemed. From the days when toddlers are climbing the walls and putting everything in their mouths to the days when teens are driving (without us) and preparing for college, there is a multitude of dangers our children face, and therefore stresses that mothers face. Mothers also worry about their children's behavior and social development, which makes every new stage of development a challenge.

**Self Doubt:** There's also the fear that many mothers have that they're not doing a good enough job. Because each child has unique temperament traits, needs, and quirks, and because children grow and change all the time, it's impossible to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to mothering. That means that mothers are constantly reevaluating what they're doing, looking for new insights (from parenting experts who often disagree with one another on major issues), and trying to stay one step ahead of their kids to be their best as mothers. Often, there are mysteries to be solved, crises to handle, and fires to put out along the way. It's easy for mothers to question themselves, and become stressed by the consequences of making a mistake. It's all part of being a conscientious mother.

**Time Alone:** Finally, among these issues, many mothers find it difficult to make time and save energy to care for them. Gone are most of the spa treatments, personal enrichment activities and even hobbies of the pre-child days once a woman's responsibilities multiply with the advent of motherhood. Sadly, many of us need this time to be alone, reflect, explore in a journal, and take care of ourselves to be in a good position to care for others. Motherhood is a significantly important event in the life of a woman. Maternal role attainment is a process that requires acquires necessary abilities, learn appropriate behavior, and establish in maternal identity. Preparation to accept the maternal role has important effects on maternal adjustment and transition to adulthood.

## **2. Methods:**

In the present study an attempt was made to study the gender difference to stress in adolescent parents. The present paper consists of objective of the study, hypothesis, design of the study, sample, tools used in the study. To assess stress level in parents Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen, 1994 is used.

## **3. Objective of the study:**

To study gender difference in stress on adolescent parents.

### **Hypothesis:**

Women were found more stressed than men.

### **Design of the study:**

t- test is done to see the gender difference in stress. Being co-relational in nature, the design is:

**Predictor variable:** Gender and **Dependent variable:** stress

#### 4. Results:

Results are shown below:

**Table: 1**  
**Showing the gender difference in Stress**

| variable | mean                         | SD                       | t     |
|----------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| stress   | Mothers 13.7<br>Fathers 12.1 | Mother 6.6<br>Father 5.9 | .275* |

#### 4.1 Analysis of result:

The perceived stress scale is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress. It is a measure of the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. The scale includes a number of direct queries about current levels of experienced stress. As we can see from the above table that our mean for father is 12.1 and mean for mothers is 13.7, which indicates high stress level in mothers. T value also indicates significant gender difference in scores of both parents. The scores support our hypothesis that mothers feel more stressed than father of adolescents. There are many causes of stress. Men and women share many of the same sources of stress, such as money matters, job security, health, and relationship issues. Perhaps a little more unique to women is the many roles they take on. In today's society, women's roles often include family obligations, care giving for children and/or elderly parent (statistically more likely to be a woman) and work responsibilities as well as other roles. As demands increase to fulfill these roles, women can feel overwhelmed with time pressures and unmet obligations. They may feel a sense of failure in not being able to meet expectations for themselves and others. Oftentimes women spend more time meeting the needs of others rather than nurturing their own needs. If functioning at high stress levels, women may not even recognize what their needs are. Women can manage stress by practicing healthy self-care strategies for coping with stress.

#### 4.2 Educational implications:

The present study is only designed for adolescents parents, this can further done on parents of college students and primary school also, as every stage of life we have to struggle in one way or the other. The study is conducted on a small sample of 300 students which also can be conducted on large sample to better understand the role of stress. The study is also restricted to a single district further studies can be conducted on multiple districts.

#### 5. CONCLUSION:

According to psychologists, parenting stress is the distress you experience when you feel you just can't cope as a parent. The demands being placed on you are too high. You don't have the resources to meet them. Regardless of their sources of stress and the physical and emotional symptoms of stress that men and women report, both groups say they manage their stress in very different ways. In general, though, both men and women tend to choose sedentary activities like reading, listening to music and watching television to manage their stress over healthier behaviors like seeing a mental health professional or exercising. Stress response is associated with manifestations of various psychosomatic and psychiatric disorders. Hence, it is important to understand the underlying mechanisms that influence this association. Moreover, men and women tend to react differently with stress—both psychologically and biologically. These differences also need to be studied in order to have a better understanding in the gender difference observed for many disorders, which are likely to be contributed by the gender difference in stress reactivity and responses. Such an understanding would have a significant impact on our understanding about how adult health is set during early life and how adult disease could be prevented in men and women.

#### REFERENCES:

1. A k James (2011) (an international study on the stress among adolescents and young adults ; university of malasia)
2. Dhull I, Kumari S. (2015), (Academic stress among adolescent in relation to gender. International Journal of Applied Research; 1(11):394-6.)
3. Goldstein JM, Jerram M, Poldrack R, Ahern T, Kennedy DN, Seidman LJ, et al. (2005) Hormonal cycle modulates arousal circuitry in women using functional magnetic resonance imaging. J Neurosci; 25:9309–16.
4. Holden C. Sex and the suffering brain. Science. 2005; 308:1574.



5. Kajantie E, Phillips DI. (2006) The effects of sex and hormonal status on the physiological response to acute psychosocial stress. *Psych neuroendocrinology*, 31:151–78.
6. Kendler KS, Thornton LM, Prescott CA. (2001) Gender differences in the rates of exposure to stressful life events and sensitivity to their depressogenic effects. *Am J Psychiatry*, 158:587–93.
7. Kudielka B M, Kirschbaum C. (2005) Sex differences in HPA axis responses to stress: A review. *Biol Psychol*. 2005;69:113–32.
8. Lundberg U. Stress hormones in health and illness: The roles of work and gender. *Psych neuroendocrinology*, 30:1017–21.
9. Mazure CM, Maciejewski PK.(2003) The interplay of stress, gender and cognitive style in depressive onset. *Arch Womens Ment Health*, 6:5–8.
10. McCrae, R.R (2001). (Gender differences in personality traits across cultures: Robust and surprising findings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81 (2), 322 – 331).
11. Moksnes, Mazanov, & Espnes, (2010). (Adolescent stress: Evaluation of the factor structure of the Adolescent Stress Questionnaire (ASQ-N). *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 51, 203–209.)
12. Otte C, Hart S, Neylan TC, Marmar CR, Yaffe K, Mohr DC. (2005) A meta-analysis of cortisol response to challenge in human aging: Importance of gender. *Psych neuroendocrinology*, 30:80–91.
13. Prabhu S. (2015), (A Study on Academic Stress among Higher Secondary Students. *International journal of Humanities*; 4(10):63-8).
14. Stroud LR, Salovey P, Epel ES. (2002) Sex differences in stress responses: Social rejection versus achievement stress. *Biol Psychiatry*, 52:318–27.
15. Wang J, Korczykowski M, Rao H, Fan Y, Pluta J, Gur RC, et al. (2007) Gender difference in neural response to psychological stress. *Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci*, 24:227–39.
16. Wong ST. (2006), (The relationship between parent emotion, parent behavior, and health status of young African American and Latino children. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*; 21:434–442.)
17. Yannis Tountas (2003) (adolescents wellbeing and functioning relationship with parents general physical and mental health)