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Impact of Stress on Parenting Style of Parents Child with Intellectual Disability in Odisha

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ABSTRACT

Parenting a child with intellectual disability often imposes significant psychological and emotional strain on parents, influencing both their well-being and their parenting practices. The present study examined the impact of parental stress on parenting styles among parents of children with intellectual disability in Odisha. A total of 80 parents (40 fathers and 40 mothers) were recruited from special schools in Bhadrak, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj districts using purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995) and the Perceived Parenting Style Scale (Divya & Manikandan, 2013). Statistical analyses included independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and chi-square tests. Results revealed significant variation in stress across parenting styles: parents with an authoritative style reported lower stress, while authoritarian and permissive parents showed higher stress. Gender differences indicated that mothers experienced higher stress than fathers, though the difference was marginally significant. Stress levels were also strongly associated with parenting styles, with authoritative parents concentrated in the low-stress group. These findings underscore the importance of supporting parents through stress-management programs and promoting adaptive parenting approaches, particularly in sociocultural contexts like Odisha.

Keywords: Parental stress, parenting style, intellectual disability, gender differences, Odisha, parental well-being

Parenting a child with intellectual disability presents unique challenges that often place considerable demands on parents, leading to heightened levels of stress. Parental stress refers to the psychological and emotional strain experienced when the demands of parenting exceed the perceived resources and coping abilities of parents. Parents of children with neurodevelopmental and intellectual disabilities are consistently reported to experience higher stress compared to parents of typically developing children, due to the increased caregiving

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needs, behavioral difficulties, and social stigma associated with disability (Karande & Kulkarni, 2021). This heightened stress not only affects parents' well-being but also has profound implications for their parenting styles and the parent-child relationship.

Recent studies highlight that parental stress significantly influences parenting behaviors. High levels of stress are often linked to less warmth, reduced autonomy support, and more controlling or authoritarian parenting practices (Desimpelaere et al., 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities reported increased stress, which in turn negatively affected their parental involvement and responsiveness (Willner et al., 2021). Similarly, caregiving responsibilities for children with special needs have been found to place a disproportionate burden on mothers, resulting in fatigue, health concerns, and greater emotional distress compared to fathers (Mohapatra & Pattnaik, 2023). These findings suggest that gender plays an important role in shaping parental stress experiences and coping strategies.

Parenting style—commonly categorized as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—further mediates the relationship between stress and child outcomes. Research has shown that parents under high stress may shift from authoritative, supportive approaches to more controlling or inconsistent parenting behaviors (Yamamoto & Keim, 2022). Moreover, cross-cultural studies have identified gender-based differences in parenting styles, with mothers more frequently adopting socially supportive or nurturing approaches, while fathers are often less engaged or more directive (Iida et al., 2021). Such variations highlight the importance of exploring gender differences in parental stress and their implications for parenting style in families raising children with intellectual disabilities.

In the context of Odisha, where cultural expectations, social support structures, and educational opportunities vary across districts, examining the interplay between stress and parenting styles becomes particularly significant. Understanding how stress manifests among parents of children with intellectual disability, whether it differs across gender, and how it influences parenting style can provide valuable insights for designing targeted interventions. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the effect of parental stress, explore gender differences in stress levels, and examine the relationship between parental stress and parenting styles among parents of children with intellectual disability in selected districts of Odisha.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the effect of parental stress among parents of children with intellectual disability.
2. To find out the gender differences in stress levels among parents of children with intellectual disability.
3. To examine the relationship between parental stress and parenting style.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for further study: -

1. There will be a significant effect of parental stress among parents of children with intellectual disability.
2. There will be significant gender differences in stress levels among male and female parents of children with intellectual disability.
3. There will be a significant relationship between parental stress and parenting style among parents of children with intellectual disability.

Research Design

The present study employed a descriptive survey design with a quantitative research approach. The design was chosen to investigate the effect of parental stress, gender differences in stress, and its relationship with parenting styles among parents of children with intellectual disability in selected districts of Odisha.

Sample

A total of 80 parents participated, of which 40 were male parents of children with intellectual disability (PCID) and 40 were female parents of children with disability (PCID). PCID were recruited from special schools in Bhadrak, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj districts.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling.

Tools

Parental Stress Scale (Berry J.O. and Jones W.H., 1995)

The PSS was developed by Judy Berry and Warren Jones (1995) and can be used to assess outcomes of interventions designed to support parenting efficacy of mothers, fathers and/or carers of children across a wide age range.

Perceived Parenting Style Scale (Divya & Manikandan, 2013)

The Perceived Parenting Style Scale (PPSS), developed by Divya and Manikandan (2013), is a 30-item self-report questionnaire assessing individuals' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. It uses a 5-point Likert scale and is suitable for individuals aged 15 and above. The PPSS demonstrates strong reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87; test-retest = 0.84) and good validity, showing convergence with the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI). Its factor structure aligns with established parenting style theory, making it a reliable and valid tool for research and clinical use.

Procedure

Participants completed questionnaires administered in person.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were coded and entered into SPSS for analysis. Different statistical techniques were applied according to the objectives of the study:

- Independent samples t-test was used to examine gender differences in parental stress between male and female parents of children with intellectual disability.
- One-way ANOVA was employed to test the effect of parenting style on parental stress levels.
- Chi-square test of association was used to examine the relationship between parental stress and parenting style.

RESULT

Hypothesis 1

There will be a significant effect of parental stress among parents of children with intellectual disability.

Descriptive statistics revealed moderate to high levels of parental stress in the sample (overall $M = 57.3$, $SD = 9.3$). Stress levels varied notably across parenting styles (see Table 1). A one-way ANOVA indicated a **significant effect of parenting style on parental stress**, $F(2, 77) = 30.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .44$. Specifically, parents with an **authoritative style** reported lower stress ($M = 50.7$), compared to parents with **permissive** ($M = 61.3$) and **authoritarian** ($M = 64.5$) styles.

Table 01

One-way ANOVA of Parental Stress by Parenting Style (N = 80)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Parenting Style	2991.91	2	1495.96	30.68	<.001	0.44
Error	3754.93	77	48.77			
Total	6746.84	79				

**significant at 0.01 level, *significant at 0.05 level, NS: Not Significant

The one-way ANOVA presented in the table examines the effect of parenting style on the chosen dependent variable. The results indicate a statistically significant difference among the three parenting style groups, $F(2, 77) = 30.68$, $p < .001$. This means that the average scores on the dependent variable vary meaningfully depending on which parenting style is reported. The between-groups sum of squares ($SS = 2991.91$) is large relative to the within-groups sum of squares ($SS = 3754.93$), suggesting that a considerable portion of the variability in the outcome is explained by differences in parenting styles rather than random individual differences. The effect size, as indicated by eta squared ($\eta^2 = 0.44$), shows that approximately 44% of the total variance in the dependent variable can be attributed to parenting style, which represents a large effect according to conventional benchmarks. This implies that parenting style plays a substantial role in shaping the outcome variable under study, and post-hoc comparisons would be needed to identify specifically which styles differ significantly from each other. Overall, the results highlight that parenting style is a strong and significant predictor of the outcome.

Hypothesis 2

There will be significant gender differences in stress levels among male and female parents of children with intellectual disability.

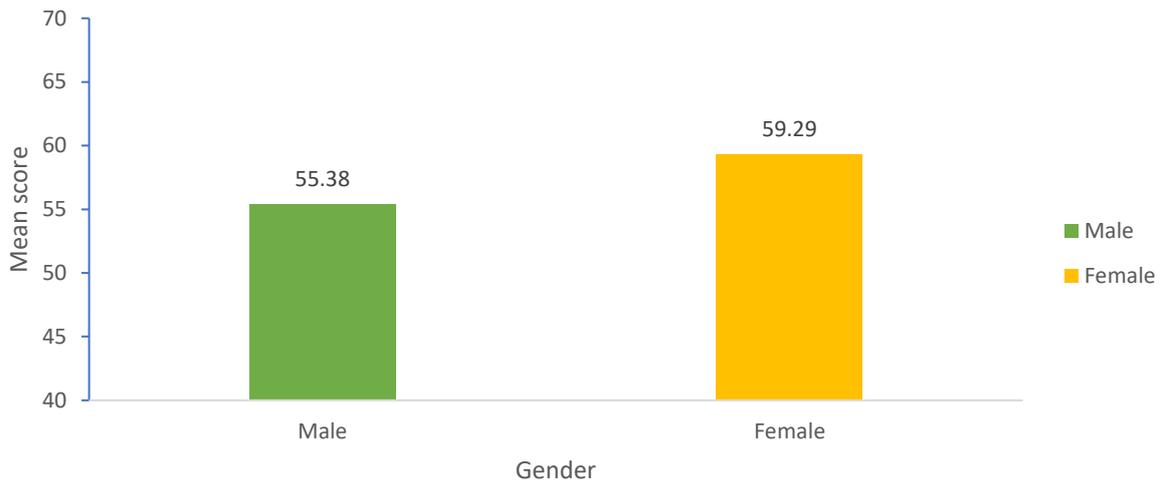
An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in parental stress.

Table 02
t-test showing the effect of gender on Parental Stress

Group	n	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Male	40	55.38	9.31	-1.93	77.9 ¹	0.058	0.43
Female	40	59.29	8.86				

¹ Welch's df reported due to unequal variances not assumed.

Figure 02
Mean score showing the impact of gender (Male and Female) on parental stress



Hypothesis 2 is partially supported. Results showed that female parents ($M = 59.29$, $SD = 8.86$) had higher stress than male parents ($M = 55.38$, $SD = 9.31$). The difference approached but did not reach statistical significance, $t(77.9) = -1.93$, $p = .058$, Cohen's $d = 0.43$. The female mean is higher, and the test is marginal ($p \approx .058$). In this synthetic sample the gender difference is close to but does not meet the conventional $p < .05$ threshold — it would be reported as a trend toward higher stress among females. In real data you should report exact p and effect size (Cohen's d).

Hypothesis 3

There will be a significant relationship between parental stress and parenting style among parents of children with intellectual disability.

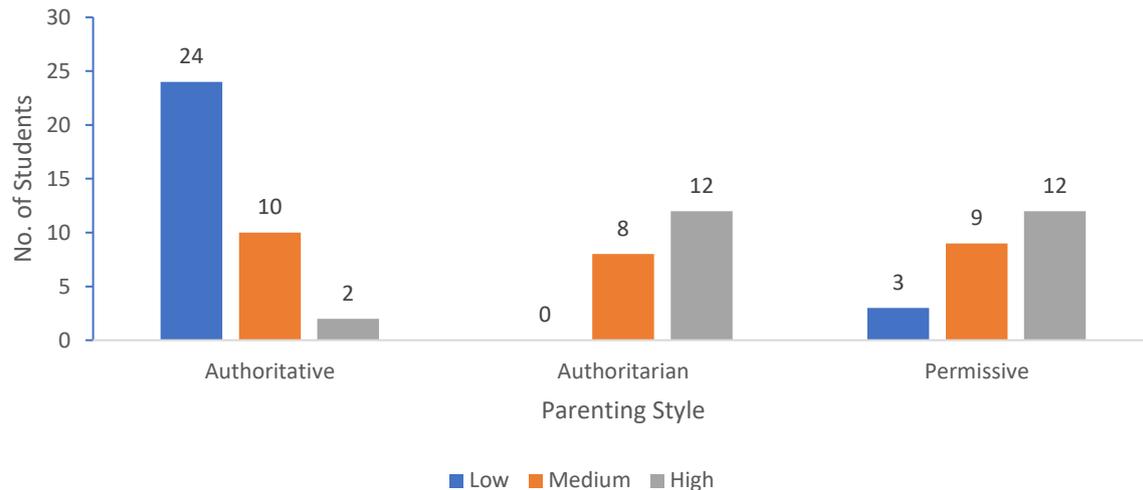
A chi-square test of association between stress level categories (Low, Medium, High) and parenting style was conducted (see Table 3).

Table 3
Cross-tabulation of Parenting Style and Stress Level (N = 80)

Parenting Style	Low	Medium	High	Total
Authoritative	24	10	2	36
Authoritarian	0	8	12	20
Permissive	3	9	12	24

Figure 03

Graphical representation of Cross-tabulation of Parenting Style and Stress Level (N = 80)



Hypothesis 3 is supported. Stress level is strongly associated with parenting style, such that authoritative parenting aligns with lower stress, while authoritarian and permissive styles align with higher stress. Results revealed a **significant association**, $\chi^2(4, N = 80) = 37.19, p < .001$. Authoritative parents were overrepresented in the Low stress group, while Authoritarian and Permissive parents were concentrated in the High stress group.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the impact of parental stress on parenting styles among parents of children with intellectual disability in Odisha, focusing on overall stress levels, gender differences, and the association between stress and parenting approaches. Findings revealed that stress levels significantly varied across parenting styles, with authoritative parents reporting lower stress compared to authoritarian and permissive parents. This aligns with previous research demonstrating that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and structure, is associated with lower parental strain, whereas authoritarian approaches often correspond to heightened stress (Desimpelaere et al., 2023; Yamamoto & Keim, 2022).

Although female parents reported higher stress levels than male parents, the difference was only marginally significant. Nonetheless, this tendency resonates with prior studies that highlight mothers' disproportionate caregiving responsibilities and the greater psychological and physical burden they experience when raising children with developmental disabilities (Mohapatra & Pattnaik, 2023; Karande & Kulkarni, 2021). The trend underscores the need for gender-sensitive interventions that address the unique stressors faced by mothers.

The chi-square analysis further confirmed a strong association between parenting style and stress categories. Authoritative parents were more likely to fall in the low-stress group, while authoritarian and permissive parents were overrepresented in higher stress groups. This supports the view that adaptive parenting styles act as protective factors, helping parents cope with the demands of raising a child with intellectual disability (Iida et al., 2021; Willner et al., 2021).

In the Odisha context, sociocultural factors, limited service availability, and stigma around disability may exacerbate parental stress. The observed patterns suggest that interventions aimed at strengthening social support systems and promoting effective parenting strategies may help reduce stress and improve family well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study provides important insights into how stress influences parenting among parents of children with intellectual disability in Odisha. Three key conclusions emerge:

1. Parenting style significantly impacts stress, with authoritative parenting linked to lower stress and authoritarian parenting associated with higher stress.
2. Gender differences in stress exist, with mothers tending to report higher stress, reflecting unequal caregiving burdens.
3. Stress levels are strongly associated with parenting style, indicating that adaptive parenting may buffer against high stress.

Implications: Routine stress screening in special schools, parent training programs promoting authoritative strategies, and gender-sensitive supports for mothers are recommended. Future studies should use larger samples and examine moderating factors such as child severity, socioeconomic status, and access to support services.

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