



Parental Stress, Self-Esteem, and Parenting Perceptions: A Mixed-Method Gender-Based Analysis

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Abstract : Parenting is a multifaceted process shaped by individual experiences, societal norms, and the nature of the parent-child bond. This study investigates the relationship between parental stress and self-esteem, focusing on gender-based differences and key themes in parental perceptions. A mixed-methods approach was employed, gathering data from 122 middle-aged parents (65 males, 57 females) using the Parental Stress Scale (PSS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and open-ended survey questions. Quantitative analysis revealed a weak but statistically significant negative correlation ($-0.180, p=0.048$) between parental stress and self-esteem, suggesting that while increased stress is linked to lower self-esteem, the impact is modest. Gender-based comparisons showed no significant differences in parental stress ($p=0.0676$) or self-esteem ($p=0.291$) between men and women, indicating that both experience similar levels of psychological strain in parenting. Qualitative thematic analysis revealed gendered perceptions of parenting success, with mothers emphasizing emotional well-being, moral values, and family cohesion, while fathers focused on career stability, independence, and mentorship. These findings highlight the complex nature of parenting and suggest that while stress affects self-esteem, cultural and social support systems are vital in mitigating its negative impact. This study's insights can guide psychological interventions and support programs aimed at helping parents cope with stress and build self-esteem, fostering healthier family dynamics.

Keywords - Parental Stress, Self-Esteem, Gender Differences, Parenting Perceptions, Mixed-Methods Research, Psychological Well-being

INTRODUCTION

Modern perspectives on parenting acknowledge that it encompasses both joys and rewards. While parents form deep emotional bonds with their children, experience personal fulfillment, and take pride in their children's achievements, they also face stress, anxiety, and other psychological difficulties. Although raising children is deeply gratifying, it is also one of the most demanding roles in adulthood due to the numerous responsibilities it entails. Additionally, societal expectations place further pressure on parents by imposing standards for caregiving and discipline, making parenting more psychologically strenuous (Deater-Deckard, 2004).

Parenting stress is referred to as a negative psychological response to the pressures and demands of raising children (Bornstein, 2002). Researchers have highlighted that parenting stress often includes emotions such as helplessness, emotional overload, and reduced confidence in one's parenting abilities. (Loyd & Abidin, 1985; Onatsu-Arivilommi et al., 1998; Webster-Stratton, 1990). However, the intensity of parental stress varies among individuals, with factors such as resource limitations and complex life circumstances playing a role. A comprehensive understanding of parental stress requires examining both individual emotional experiences and broader systemic influences on parent-child relationships (Deater-Deckard, 2004).

Parental stress is largely shaped by social cognitions or mental frameworks that influence how parents perceive the rewards and challenges of raising children. These self-perceptions develop based on their self-image, views of their children, and cultural expectations. The way parents evaluate their role determines how stress emerges, persists, and intensifies (Deater-Deckard, Smith, Ivy, & Petrill, 2005; Hawk & Holden, 2006). Research indicates that financial stress is also one component that affects fathers' ability to engage in positive parenting more significantly than it does for mothers. When fathers experience financial strain, it can reduce their emotional availability, patience, and involvement with their children, leading to less supportive and nurturing parenting. In contrast, mothers may be more likely to maintain positive parenting behaviors despite financial challenges. (Ponnet, 2014) Through this, it can be hypothesised that there exists a notable variation in parenting stress levels between mothers and fathers.

Dix's (1991) Affective-Cognitive Model illustrates how parents' emotions and cognitive processes shape their parenting behaviors. Difficulties in emotional regulation can intensify stress, negatively impacting self-esteem and interactions with children. This model highlights the role of emotional and cognitive factors in shaping parenting perceptions. Similarly, According to the Cognitive Appraisal Theory proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), parenting stress emerges when parents perceive caregiving demands as surpassing their coping capacity. Some parents view these challenges as manageable, employing problem-focused coping strategies, while others feel overwhelmed, leading to emotional distress and diminished self-esteem. Gender differences also influence how parents interpret and respond to stressors. (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Kudielka et al., 2007)

Self-esteem significantly influences how effectively an individual is able to perform their role as a parent, as it affects how parents approach challenges, make decisions, and engage with their children. Parents who possess a strong sense of self-worth are more inclined to approach challenges with a mastery-oriented perspective, which supports resilience in both themselves and their children. In contrast, those with low self-esteem may engage in avoidant coping strategies, experience heightened stress, and struggle to offer stable and supportive parenting. (Cantor, 1990; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nurmi et al., 1995). It explicitly proposes that higher levels of parental stress are associated with lower levels of self-esteem among parents, because self-esteem shapes the way parents interact with their children, it plays a vital role in creating a consistent and nurturing family atmosphere. Research findings also indicate that males tend to achieve higher scores than females on standard assessments of global self-esteem. (Feingold, 1994)

Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (1950) highlights the stage of Generativity vs. Stagnation in middle adulthood, where individuals aim to contribute to the well-being of future generations. Successfully raising children often brings a sense of accomplishment and self-worth, while struggles in parenting can lead to feelings of stagnation, frustration, and stress. Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasizes that the quality of parenting is influenced by the fulfillment of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Parents who feel competent and supported in their autonomy tend to experience less stress and higher self-esteem, fostering more effective parenting. In contrast, when these needs are unmet, parents may feel overwhelmed, ineffective, and emotionally distant, which can impact their parenting experience.

Parenting perception involves how individuals cognitively and emotionally view their role as parents, encompassing their beliefs about parenting styles, effectiveness, and their relationship with their children. This perception is influenced by personal experiences, cultural factors, and societal norms, all of which affect parenting practices and decision-making (Bornstein, 2012). Mowder's (2005) Parent Development Theory suggests that parents' perceptions and behaviors change over time, shaped by their personal experiences and the evolving needs of their children. Studies also show that fathers typically engage more actively with sons in an instrumental manner, while mothers offer more consistent emotional support, regardless of the child's gender (Ponnet et al., 2016).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given that parenting is an evolving process influenced by individual experiences, societal norms, and the parent-child relationship, this study seeks to explore how parents view their role and effectiveness in relation to their stress levels and self-esteem. The objectives of the study were to:-

1. To examine the link between parental stress and self-esteem in parents.
2. To explore gender differences in parental stress and self-esteem.
3. To identify key themes in parenting perceptions across genders and analyze their connection to parental stress and self-esteem through thematic analysis.

By exploring these factors, this study aims to add to the expanding body of research on parenting in middle adulthood, highlighting the role of mental well-being in shaping parental identity. The findings may offer insights for psychological interventions and support programs tailored to parents experiencing high stress or low self-esteem, ultimately promoting healthier family relationships. In this sense, we try to investigate how stress and self-esteem influence parental perception among parents.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H0: There is no correlation between parental stress and self-esteem in parents.

H1: Parental stress is negatively associated with self-esteem in parents.

H0: There is no significant difference in parental stress between men and women.

H1: There is a significant difference in parental stress between men and women.

H0: There is no significant difference in self-esteem between men and women.

H1: There is a significant difference in self-esteem between men and women.

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Study design

This study employs a mixed-methods design with a gender-based analysis. Data were gathered using a cross-sectional approach and various tools such as Parental Stress Scale, Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale as well as a survey that uses a self constructed questionnaire.

In this study, gender is the independent variable (IV) because it is a pre-existing characteristic that is not influenced by other factors and is being examined to understand its impact on other variables. The dependent variables (DVs) include the scores from the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), as these scores are influenced by or compared across gender groups.

4.2 Sample

The study involved 122 parents (N=122) in which 65 were males and 57 were females. Participants were chosen through snowball and purposive sampling methods to ensure that the sample accurately reflects individuals with relationship characteristics relevant to the study. The average age was 54.40 (SD=4.54).

The inclusion criteria were based on demographic characteristics (parents aged 40 to 65 years and having at least one child aged 18 years or older). Whereas, the exclusion criteria were determined based on factors that could influence the study results, such as specific parental circumstances (loss of a child, parenting a child with a disability, fatal illness, or physical dependency) and age-related constraints (parents younger than 40 or older than 65, or those with children under 18).

4.3 Measures

The research comprised of four main sections: (1) demographic background of parent and children, (2) Parental Stress Scale, (3) Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, (4) three open-ended questions to explore how parents define success in parenting, their feelings about their role, and how their relationship with their children influences their self-esteem. ("What does being a successful parent mean to you?" ; " How do you feel about your role as a parent?" ; "Has your relationship with your children impacted your self-esteem? If yes, how?")

The Parental Stress Scale (PSS), created by Judy Berry and Warren Jones (1995), is an 18-item self-report instrument designed to assess parents' experiences in their relationship with their child. It uses a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, to gauge parents' agreement with various statements. The scale measures both positive aspects, such as emotional satisfaction and personal development, as well as negative aspects like stress and the demands on resources. Scores range from 18 (low stress) to 90 (high stress), with each parent completing the questionnaire individually. The PSS is known for its strong psychometric properties, including internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83) and test-retest reliability ranging from 0.81 to 0.87, which ensure its stability over time. Its validity is supported by correlations with other established stress measures like the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), demonstrating its effectiveness in evaluating parental stress. Moreover, higher PSS scores are associated with increased anxiety, depression, and overall stress, confirming its value as a psychological assessment tool.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), created by Rosenberg (1965), is used to assess self-esteem. It consists of 10 items, with responses measured on a 4-point Likert scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The scale produces scores ranging from 0 to 30, with scores between 15 and 25 indicating normal self-esteem, scores below 15 reflecting low self-esteem, and scores above 25 suggesting high self-esteem. The RSES is one of the most widely utilized tools for measuring global self-esteem and demonstrates strong psychometric properties. It shows good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha between 0.77 and 0.88 and a test-retest reliability ranging from 0.82 to 0.85, ensuring its stability over time. The scale's construct validity is robust, supported by significant correlations with other self-esteem measures, and its convergent validity is reinforced by associations with mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and general well-being.

In line with our research objectives, we examined responses to the open-ended questions: "What does being a successful parent mean to you?", "How do you feel about your role as a parent?", and "Has your relationship with your children affected your self-esteem? If so, how?" to gain insights into how parents define parenting success, view their role, and experience the impact of their parent-child relationship on self-esteem. A total of 106 responses were gathered, totaling 3,353 words, with an average response length of 31.72 words.

4.4 Procedure

A google form was created to collect responses from the participants. Using the purposive and snowball sampling technique, the form was sent out to the participants through social networks (Whatsapp, Gmail, Facebook). Parents between the age group of 40-65 years, having at least one child aged 18 years or older were asked to fill out the form. In case of multiple children, Parents were instructed to complete the questionnaire with their eldest children (aged 18 and above) in mind.

Regarding demographic data, age and gender were considered key variables, as the study specifically focused on middle-aged parents. Data were collected anonymously, and all participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Participation was voluntary, and no financial compensation was provided to the participants. The study was approved by the Ethics Board at Amity University, Noida, and conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set by the American Psychological Association. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

4.5 Data analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26.0, IBM Corp., 2019) was utilized to analyze the quantitative data collected from the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). For qualitative data, thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes and patterns in participants' perceptions of parenting. These combined methods provided a comprehensive view of how stress and self-esteem affect parental perceptions, merging in-depth insights with statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistics were initially calculated to assess the normality of the scores. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov ($p = .200$) and Shapiro-Wilk ($p = .122$) tests indicated that the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) scores were normally distributed, as both p-values exceeded 0.05. However, for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov ($p = .000$) and Shapiro-Wilk ($p = .001$) tests showed p-values less than 0.05, suggesting a non-normal distribution.

Given that the RSES scores were not normally distributed, a non-parametric test (Spearman's correlation) was employed to test the first hypothesis, which examined whether parental stress is negatively correlated with self-esteem in parents.

An independent sample t-test was used to examine gender differences in PSS and RSES, as the RSES scores showed minimal deviation from normality, making it suitable for parametric testing. Skewness (0.362) is well within the acceptable range (-1 to +1), meaning the distribution is only slightly asymmetrical. Kurtosis (1.676) is also within the normal range (-2 to +2), indicating no extreme peaks or tails. Even though the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were significant, they are highly sensitive to large sample sizes, often flagging minor deviations.

Levene's test was conducted to assess equality of variances. If equal variances were assumed, a standard independent sample t-test was used. If variances were unequal, Welch's t-test was applied with adjusted degrees of freedom.

For the qualitative analysis, thematic analysis was employed to identify, examine, and interpret recurring themes in the textual data, aiming to understand how parents define parenting success, perceive their role, and how their relationship with their children affects their self-esteem.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of Parental Stress Scale and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

		Statistic	Std. error
PSS	Mean	36.69	.695
	Median	36.00	
	Variance	58.910	
	Std deviation	7.675	
RSES	Mean	15.82	.190
	Median	16.00	
	Variance	4.413	
	Std deviation	2.101	

Table 2: Correlation matrix table showing the correlation between Parental Stress Scale and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

			PSS	RSES
Spearman's rho	PSS	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.180*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.048
		N	122	122
	RSES	Correlation Coefficient	-.180*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.048	.
		N	122	122

*The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Welch's t-test showing difference in parental stress between males and females.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Males	65	36.95	5.659	108.603	-0.418	0.0676
Females	57	36.39	9.121			

Not significant, $p > 0.05$

Table 4: Student's t-test showing difference in self esteem between males and females.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Males	65	15.63	2.226	120	1.061	0.291
Females	57	16.04	1.945			

Not significant, $p > 0.05$

Table 5: Thematic analysis using qualitative responses (Males)

Code	Themes	Total (n=58)	%age
Success as a parent	Trust and Open Communication	14	24.1%
	Independence and Stability	10	17.2%
	Moral and Ethical Values	9	15.5%
	Career and Success-Oriented	6	10.3%
	Friendship & Mentorship Role	7	12.1%
	Responsibility Fulfillment	5	8.6%
	Contribution to Society	7	12.1%
Parental role perception	Family Harmony & Balance		
	Responsibility and guidance	14	24.1%
	Providing education, instilling values	12	20.7%
	Role as an authority	10	17.2%
	Focus on morality and social role	12	20.7%
Parent-Child Relationship and Self-Esteem	Happy, satisfied	10	17.2%
	Has been affected	30	52.0%
	Hasn't been affected	18	31%
	Unsure	10	17%

Table 6: Thematic analysis using qualitative responses (Females)

Themes	Code	Total (n=48)	%age
Being a successful parent	Happiness and Emotional Well-being	12	25.0%
	Independence and Strength	7	14.6%
	Good Human Being & Moral Values	6	12.5%
	Strong Parent-Child Bond	9	18.8%
	Guidance and Support	6	12.5%
	Holistic Development	4	8.3%
	Family Unity	2	4.2%
	Religious and Cultural Values	2	4.2%
Parental role perception	Emotional Expression and Satisfaction	9	18.8%
	Acknowledgement of regrets and mistakes	7	14.6%
	Role as a Friend	5	10.4%
	Spiritual role	9	18.8%
	Happy, satisfied	5	10.4%
Parent-Child Relationship and Self-Esteem	Has been affected	31	64.5%
	Hasn't been affected	10	20.8%
	Unsure	7	14.5%

DISCUSSION

This research aims to explore how parents view their role and effectiveness in relation to their stress levels and self-esteem. The first objective of this study was to assess the relationship between parental stress and self-esteem in parents. Table 2 reveals a weak negative correlation of -0.180, supporting the hypothesis of an inverse relationship between the two variables. This indicates that as parental stress increases, self-esteem tends to decrease, although the correlation is not strong. In other words, while parental stress is associated with lower self-esteem, the effect is weak, suggesting that other factors may also play a role in influencing self-esteem. With a p-value of 0.048, below the 0.05 threshold, the result is statistically significant. However, the weak correlation indicates that while a relationship exists, its effect is small, and other influences beyond parenting stress may affect self-esteem. Many parents build resilience by seeking social support or adopting coping strategies. In middle adulthood, connecting with peer groups who share similar parenting experiences and have children of the same age provides reassurance. This sense of community allows parents to recognize that they are not alone in their experience, reinforcing that the difficulties of parenting are common and normal, thus serving as a protective factor for their self-esteem. Movic et al. (2023) discovered that functional social support, particularly emotional and general support, plays a role in enhancing cognitive function and brain health in middle-aged and older adults. Since social support has been linked to psychological well-being, it may also help mitigate negative thought patterns, including low self-esteem, by fostering a sense of belonging and shared experience among parents. Cultural and social contexts significantly influence how parents perceive and experience stress. In some cases, parenting challenges are seen as a natural or even valued aspect of raising children, which can lessen their negative impact. Additionally, parenting perceptions play a crucial role in shaping self-esteem, as parents who view themselves as competent caregivers may maintain stable self-worth despite high stress levels. According to Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, parents who feel competent

in their role and have their autonomy supported tend to experience reduced stress and enhanced self-esteem, leading to more positive parenting behaviors.

Additionally, cultural and social influences may shape how stress is perceived, with some parents viewing it as a natural or even meaningful aspect of their role, thereby minimizing its negative effects. The findings of Ma et al. (2023) suggest that cultural norms and community support systems play a crucial role in shaping parental experiences and stress levels. Parenting perceptions are also significant, as those who believe they are effective caregivers may maintain stable self-esteem regardless of stress levels.

The second objective was to examine gender differences in parental stress and self-esteem. Table 3 shows the results of an independent samples t-test comparing parental stress scores between males and females. The findings reveal that males ($M = 36.95$, $SD = 5.659$) had slightly higher mean parental stress scores than females ($M = 36.39$, $SD = 9.121$), though the difference was minimal. The t-value of -0.418 with 108.603 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.0676 (greater than the 0.05 threshold) indicate that the difference in parental stress between genders is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting no significant difference in parental stress between males and females.

Nithya and Farseena (2021) also found similar results in their study, indicating no significant difference in parental stress levels between parents in their respective roles. This suggests that both genders may experience comparable stress due to shared parenting responsibilities in contemporary family dynamics. Eagly and Wood's (1999) Social Role Theory supports this view, proposing that the evolution of traditional gender roles has led to both fathers and mothers being equally engaged in parenting. This shift has minimized gender-based differences in parental stress, as childcare responsibilities are now commonly shared by both parents.

In Table 4, an independent samples t-test was used to compare the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) scores between males and females. The analysis revealed that females ($M = 16.04$, $SD = 1.945$) had a slightly higher mean self-esteem score compared to males ($M = 15.63$, $SD = 2.226$). However, this difference was minimal, as indicated by the t-value of 1.061 with 120 degrees of freedom. The p-value (0.291) exceeded the 0.05 significance level, suggesting that the difference in self-esteem between genders is not statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the alternative hypothesis.

Research suggests that while gender differences in self-esteem are more noticeable during adolescence and early adulthood, with males generally reporting higher self-esteem than females, this gap tends to lessen as individuals enter middle adulthood. Kling et al. (1999) found that while males had consistently higher self-esteem than females in late adolescence and early adulthood, this difference diminished as they aged. This trend supports the idea that in middle adulthood, both genders tend to report similar levels of self-esteem, indicating that self-esteem may be shaped by factors beyond gender, including personal experiences, social support, and individual accomplishments. The impact of parenting, or the commitment to the parental role, on self-esteem may fluctuate throughout the life course (Reitzes & Mutran, 1994).

For the qualitative analysis, the perception of successful parenting varies between genders, with women emphasizing emotional well-being, moral values, and strong parent-child bonds, whereas men focus on independence, success, and mentorship.

Women define success in their parenting through their children's happiness, security, and character development, placing importance on nurturing, guidance, and family unity. For eg. A female participant has described her success in parenting as "making the child understand the true values of family relations and be empathetic to children" whereas another female participant has viewed her success in parenting as "providing good support either in financial or emotional and stability terms".

In contrast, men often define success in parenting by their ability to instill values, promote independence, and ensure career stability, typically viewing their role more as a guide or mentor rather than an emotional support system. For example, one male participant describes his success in parenting as "guiding the children on education and career." Another participant views successful parenting as "The biggest success that one can boast of," emphasizing the importance of achievements in their children's lives. This highlights a distinct difference in the way males and females perceive their parenting success. Males tend to focus more on external achievements and material outcomes, whereas females often prioritize internal qualities such as empathy and the emotional well-being of their children.

When reflecting on their parental role, women express emotions openly, frequently self-evaluating their parenting choices and acknowledging regrets, whereas men focus on responsibility, action, and guidance with fewer mentions of self-criticism. While both genders experience similar stress levels, women often frame parenting challenges around emotional struggles and work-life balance, whereas men emphasize fulfilling duties as providers and protectors. For example, a male participant describes his role in parenting as "I see my role as father, as one of the most important and fulfilling responsibilities in my life. It involves nurturing, guiding, and supporting my child as he grows into independent and responsible individuals. I strive to provide him with a strong foundation of values, emotional security, and life skills while also giving him the freedom to explore and learn from his experiences. My goal is to be a role model, a source of encouragement, and a steady pillar he can rely on throughout his life." whereas a female describes her role as "I think I am a good parent, like all parents I may have made my fair share of mistakes but I have always tried to be self aware of how I am coming across to my child. Since my son turned into an adult, I have consciously worked on being more of a friend, trying to be non judgemental about his choices & allowing him his space. I have a very healthy & open relationship with my son, I know he feels comfortable discussing his feelings about things with me so I must have done something right I guess" Regarding self-esteem, 52% males and 64% females agree that their children have an impact on their self esteem. Men derive confidence from their children's achievements and societal recognition, linking their pride to external validation. For eg. one male participant has described how his children act as a source of pride for him which enhances his self esteem "In a very positive way, always. Getting recognition and respect as their parents. Proud of both my children, their learning, their way of living life, care for all; love them. They are my pride!"

Women, however, tie their self-esteem to emotional connections with their children, finding strength in their support and validation. One female participant describes the role of her children impacting her self esteem as "Yes, I believe my children have played a very important role in recognizing my true potential, ability and my uniqueness. If I am a successful poet today, it is because of my children."

While the statistical analysis reveals no significant gender-based differences in parental stress and self-esteem, the qualitative findings suggest distinct psychological experiences. Men tend to emphasize responsibility, achievement, and success, while women place greater importance on emotional connections and the overall well-being of the family.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the study's insights on parental stress, self-esteem, and gendered parenting experiences, several context-specific recommendations emerge. First, support programs must be designed with gender sensitivity, acknowledging the emotional nuances mothers and fathers face. For instance, wellness circles for mothers can include storytelling, journaling, and emotional expression activities, while mentorship groups for fathers—facilitated by peers or trained professionals—can focus on role-specific challenges and practical parenting strategies. Given the observed link between lower self-esteem and higher stress, psychological interventions should integrate modules that help parents identify personal strengths, build confidence through affirming feedback, and engage in experiential methods like role-play to enhance their sense of effectiveness. Strengthening community ties can also play a crucial role—monthly parent meet-ups at schools or local centers, co-led by mental health facilitators, can offer a space for experience-sharing, informal problem-solving, and social support. Within workplaces, parenting-friendly initiatives may involve seminars on midlife caregiving, mental health days around key school events, or more adaptable work hours to ease the dual burden of home and job responsibilities. Lastly, future studies may collaborate with grassroots organizations or municipal networks to gather diverse, real-life data on parenting experiences across socio-economic and occupational backgrounds, allowing for more inclusive, policy-relevant insights.

LIMITATIONS

Due to time limitations, this study was unable to explore additional variables that might influence parental stress, self-esteem, and perceptions, such as the dynamics of the parent-child relationship (e.g., estranged or close relationships), employment status, or socio-economic background. Additionally, the qualitative analysis was restricted to three open-ended questions. A more detailed qualitative approach, such as extended interviews, could have offered a deeper and more thorough understanding of parental experiences.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the connection between parental stress and self-esteem, as well as any gender-based differences in these factors, utilizing a mixed-method approach. The results revealed a weak negative correlation between parental stress and self-esteem, indicating that while higher stress levels may be associated with lower self-esteem, other psychological and social factors are also important in sustaining self-worth. Social support, cultural expectations, and individual resilience likely affect how parents manage stress and evaluate their performance in their roles.

Furthermore, the study found no significant gender differences in either parental stress or self-esteem. This aligns with research suggesting that modern parenting roles have become more balanced, reducing the traditional disparities in parental experiences between males and females. The absence of a significant difference implies that both fathers and mothers experience parenting-related stress and self-esteem challenges in comparable ways, possibly due to shifting gender roles and shared responsibilities.

The qualitative findings further highlight the diverse ways in which parents define success, experience their roles, and perceive the impact of their parent-child relationships on self-esteem. These insights reinforce the idea that parenting is not solely defined by stress or self-esteem levels but by broader personal and societal factors that shape perceptions of parental identity and success.

Future research could investigate other factors, including social support, cultural influences, and coping strategies, to further understand how parents preserve self-esteem despite stress. Longitudinal studies might also offer valuable insights into how these dynamics change over time. This study adds to the expanding body of literature on parenting, highlighting the significance of a comprehensive approach to understanding parental well-being.

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APPENDIX A Parental Stress Scale (PSS)

Parental Stress Scale

The following statements describe feelings and perceptions about the experience of being a parent. Think of each of the items in terms of how your relationship with your child or children typically is. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following items by placing the appropriate number in the space provided.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Undecided 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

1	I am happy in my role as a parent.	
2	There is little or nothing I wouldn't do for my child(ren) if it was necessary.	
3	Caring for my child(ren) sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give.	
4	I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my child(ren).	
5	I feel close to my child(ren).	
6	I enjoy spending time with my child(ren).	
7	My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me.	
8	Having child(ren) gives me a more positive and optimistic view for the future.	
9	This major source of stress in my life is my child(ren).	
10	Having child(ren) leaves little time and flexibility in my life.	
11	Having child(ren) has been a financial burden.	
12	It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren).	
13	The behavior of my child(ren) is often embarrassing or stressful to me.	

Scale of parental satisfaction from parent-child relationship to measure the behavior of children's parents
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APPENDIX B Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES)

RSE

Please record the appropriate answer for each item, depending on whether you Strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it.

1 = Strongly agree
2 = Agree
3 = Disagree
4 = Strongly disagree

- ___ 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- ___ 2. At times I think I am no good at all.
- ___ 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- ___ 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- ___ 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- ___ 6. I certainly feel useless at times.
- ___ 7. I feel that I'm a person of worth.
- ___ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- ___ 9. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.
- ___ 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

APPENDIX C Consent Form

I am Nidhi Aditya, a Master's student in Clinical Psychology at Amity University, Noida. As part of my academic research, I am conducting a study titled " Parental Stress, Self-Esteem, and Parenting Perceptions: A Mixed-Method Gender-Based Analysis". This research aims to explore how parents view their role and effectiveness in relation to their stress levels and self-esteem.

You are eligible to participate if you are:

- A Indian parent aged 40 to 65 years, and
- Have at least one child aged 18 years or older.

Your responses will be crucial to my study. Participation is voluntary and anonymous, ensuring your privacy and confidentiality. The survey will take approximately 15-20 min to complete.

I sincerely appreciate your time and effort in contributing to this study. Your participation is deeply valued and will provide significant insights for this research.

Informed Consent

I have read the instructions for the research and voluntarily agree to participate in the same. I understand that I can withdraw from it at any time without any consequences.

I give my consent to participate in the research.

