

# ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AMONG PARENTS DURING THE STRESSFUL EVENT

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## ABSTRACT

The study is to examine parents' perceived symptoms of anxiety, depression during the Stressful event pandemic periods. During the pandemic period it has been reported that parents living with more than one child, and reported greater levels of parental stress, more burnout, and more anger towards their children, as well as less social support. Many researches have evidenced the psychological impact of the Stressful event on families, and the key role played by parenting stress levels. The main objective is to study how parents have experienced symptoms of deteriorated mental health due to the, including anxiety, and depression.

**Keywords- Stress, Mental Health, Depression, Anxiety**

## I. INTRODUCTION

When the stressful situation struck globally, everyday family life changed dramatically as the pandemic and measures to combat it wreaked havoc on millions of parents and families. The rapid onset of the pandemic quickly and radically changed many otherwise stable features of family life and functionality and imposed additional burdens and demands on parents. Hence, major concerns regarding the potentially deleterious effects of these increased family demands and stressors on parents' well-being and mental health were addressed by medical practitioners and governmental agencies in the outbreak.

Parents' experiences with everyday stress and demands pertaining to their role as parents are a well-documented phenomenon. Even under normal circumstances, many parents experience everyday stressors related to their role as parents and inadequate access to the resources necessary to meet the demands of parenthood. Parenting-related stress and associated risk factors that may impact parents' mental health, as well as protective factors that may buffer these mental health outcomes following a global pandemic, remain relatively unexplored areas in the stress literature. Until recently, little has been known of the tremendous impact extensive disease containment measures may have on parenting and family life during a global health crisis. Following are the variable studied across the research has spread across the globe, resulting in significant changes in virtually every aspect of life. Mitigation efforts, like shelter-in-place orders, have taken a particular toll on parents who have had to navigate disruptions in work and/or school schedules. Research from high-income countries demonstrates increased parental anxiety, stress, depression, and burnout resulting from the pandemic. It is unclear if these outcomes are the same for parents in high-risk communities in low-income countries where pre-pandemic conditions were deleterious.

Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. For example, going to a job interview or giving a speech on the first day of school may cause some people to feel fearful and nervous. But if your feelings of anxiety are extreme, last for at least 6 months, and are interfering with your life, you may have an anxiety disorder. It's normal to feel anxious about moving to a new place, starting a new job, or taking a test. This type of anxiety is unpleasant, but it may motivate you to work harder and do a better job. Ordinary anxiety is a feeling that comes and goes but doesn't interfere with your everyday life. In the case of an anxiety disorder, the feeling of fear may be with you all the time. It's intense and sometimes debilitating. This type of anxiety may cause you to stop doing things you enjoy. For example, it may prevent you from entering an elevator, crossing the street, or even leaving your home in extreme cases. If left untreated, the anxiety will keep getting worse.

Anxiety disorders are the most common form of emotional disorder and can affect anyone. But, according to the American Psychiatric Association, women are more likely than men to receive a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder.

## II. TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

1. **Generalized Anxiety Disorder** -Generalized anxiety disorder involves persistent and excessive worry that interferes with daily activities. This ongoing worry and tension may be accompanied by physical symptoms, such as restlessness, feeling on edge or easily fatigued, difficulty concentrating, muscle tension or problems sleeping. Often the worries focus on everyday things such as job responsibilities, family health or minor matters such as chores, car repairs, or appointments.
2. **Panic Disorder**- The core symptom of panic disorder is recurrent panic attacks, an overwhelming combination of physical and psychological distress. During an attack several of these symptoms occur in combination:
  1. Palpitations, pounding heart or rapid heart rate
  2. Sweating
  3. Trembling or shaking
  4. Feeling of shortness of breath or smothering sensations
  5. Chest pain
  6. Feeling dizzy, light-headed or faint
  7. Feeling of choking
  8. Numbness or tingling
  9. Chills or hot flashes
  10. Nausea or abdominal pains
  11. Feeling detached
  12. Fear of losing control
  13. Fear of dying

Because the symptoms are so severe, many people who experience a panic attack may believe they are having a heart attack or other life-threatening illness. They may go to a hospital emergency department. Panic attacks may be expected, such as a response to a feared object, or unexpected, apparently occurring for no reason. The mean age for onset of panic disorder is 20-24. Panic attacks may occur with other mental disorders such as depression or PTSD.

## III. PHOBIAS, SPECIFIC PHOBIA

A specific phobia is excessive and persistent fear of a specific object, situation or activity that is generally not harmful. Patients know their fear is excessive, but they can't overcome it. These fears cause such distress that some people go to extreme lengths to avoid what they fear. Examples are public speaking, fear of flying or fear of spiders.

## IV. AGORAPHOBIA

Agoraphobia is the fear of being in situations where escape may be difficult or embarrassing, or help might not be available in the event of panic symptoms. The fear is out of proportion to the actual situation and lasts generally six months or more and causes problems in functioning. A person with agoraphobia experiences this fear in two or more of the following situations:

1. Using public transportation
2. Being in open spaces
3. Being in enclosed places
4. Standing in line or being in a crowd
5. Being outside the home alone

The individual actively avoids the situation, requires a companion or endures with intense fear or anxiety. Untreated agoraphobia can become so serious that a person may be unable to leave the house. A person can only be diagnosed with agoraphobia if the fear is intensely upsetting, or if it significantly interferes with normal daily activities. Rates of paternal depression and anxiety have increased during the Stressful event compared with prior estimates. One group that has been particularly affected by the social and financial ramifications of the Stressful event are parents, especially mothers. In addition to working to maintain a livelihood, some parents have adopted caregiving or homeschooling roles. Cross-sectional studies of mental health problems during the Stressful event have found approximately 30% of mothers reporting clinically significant symptoms of depression or anxiety. The pandemic has created indescribable amounts of grief, loss, and devastation, leaving us to process incomparable amounts of stress. Still, while media conversations tend to focus on the physical and financial consequences for individuals, many parents feel alone, suffocating under the weight of a society that tends to fade away a helping hand to them.

Behaviorism emphasizes the importance of the environment in shaping behavior. The focus is on observable behavior and the conditions through which individuals learn behavior, namely classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning theory. Therefore, depression is the result of a person's interaction with their environment. For example, classical conditioning proposes depression is learned through associating certain stimuli with negative emotional states. Social learning theory states behavior is learned through observation, imitation and reinforcement.

Operant conditioning states that depression is caused by the removal of positive reinforcement from the environment (Lewinsohn, 1974). Certain events, such as losing your job, induce depression because they reduce positive reinforcement from others (e.g. being around people who like you). Depressed people usually become much less socially active. In addition, depression can also be caused through inadvertent reinforcement of depressed behavior by others. For example, when a loved one is lost, an important source of positive reinforcement has lost as well. This leads to inactivity. The main source of reinforcement is now the sympathy and attention of friends and relatives. However, this tends to reinforce maladaptive behavior i.e. weeping, complaining, and talking of suicide. This eventually alienates even close friends leading to even less reinforcement, increasing social isolation and unhappiness. In other words, depression is a vicious cycle in which the person is driven further and further down.

Some children may seek to avoid this by denying their true self and projecting an image of the kind of person they want to be. This façade or false self is an effort to please others. However, the splitting off of the real self from the person you are pretending to be causes hatred of the self. The person then comes to despise themselves for living a lie. All of the sudden all the schools and other educational institutions were shut. The students had to stay home away from friends, teachers and their daily schedule was disrupted. This led to very tough situations for the children. The Stressful event brought a complex array of challenges which had mental health repercussions for everyone, including children and adolescents. Grief, fear, uncertainty, social isolation, increased screen time, and parental fatigue have negatively affected the mental health of children. Children could not go out to play. It was most difficult for a single child at home. The use of internet among children therefore increased. It had its both negative and positive impacts. The biggest support for children during this tough time was their parents. But the parents at the same time were going through the same difficult phase. Parents had to deal with mobile addiction among children, shyness among growing children, no mood for studying, aggression in children, rivalry between siblings, improper eating habits, constant complaining about things and a lot more.

During the pandemic due all these reasons the depression and anxiety levels of parents increased. Parental stress also included financial troubles, lack of social support, or it can stem from problems within the marriage. Stressors adversely affect the general well-being and health of parents and demand attention and emotional energy from them.

## V. CONCLUSION

The present study focused on the effects of parents. During the period of anxiety levels and depression levels in the parents increased. High levels of parental anxiety would be accompanied by similarly high levels of depression. There were several factors affecting the stress levels of the parents which led to increase in the stress accompanied by depression. It was found that anxiety and depression among parents increased during the pandemic. Lack of social support, social life and social distancing from the surroundings lead to increase in anxiety. This was added on with mobile addiction among children, shyness among growing children, no mood for studying, aggression in children, rivalry between siblings, improper eating habits, constant complaining about things and a lot more. This overall affected the mental health of the parents.

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