



# A Comparative Study Of Stress And Coping Strategies Among Parents Of Children With Hearing Impairment

Ghanshyam Kushwaha<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Satya Prakash Tiwari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research scholar, <sup>2</sup>Associate Professor

Department of Education, Madhav University, Pindwara, Abu Road, Post Bharja, District  
Sirohi, Rajasthan, 307026

## Abstract

Stress experienced by parents of children with hearing impairment is a significant psychosocial concern that influences family functioning and child development. The diagnosis of hearing impairment often places emotional, financial, and social demands on parents, leading to varying levels of stress. Parents must cope with challenges related to communication barriers, educational planning, rehabilitation services, and societal attitudes. Coping strategies adopted by parents play a crucial role in managing stress and promoting psychological well-being. A comparative approach helps to understand differences in stress levels and coping patterns among parents based on variables such as gender, locality, socio-economic status, or educational background. With a sample size of 120 parents of children with hearing impairment, the present study aims to systematically examine stress and coping strategies, thereby generating empirical evidence to support parent-focused interventions, counseling programs, and inclusive support services.

**Keywords:** Hearing Impairment, Parental Stress, Coping Strategies, Parents, Comparative Study etc.

## 1. Introduction

Stress among parents of children with hearing impairment is a significant psychosocial concern that can profoundly affect family functioning, parent-child relationships, and the overall development of the child. The diagnosis of hearing impairment often brings emotional, financial, and social challenges, creating a complex burden for parents. They face difficulties related to communication barriers, planning and supporting education, accessing rehabilitation services, and coping with societal attitudes, all of which can contribute to heightened stress levels. These challenges often differ based on factors such as gender, locality, socio-economic status, and educational background, making it important to study stress comparatively. Coping strategies play a crucial role in mitigating stress and promoting psychological well-being. Parents may adopt problem-focused approaches, such as seeking information and planning interventions, emotion-focused strategies, including managing feelings and reducing anxiety, or social support strategies, like relying on family and community resources. Understanding the patterns of stress and coping can inform the development of parent-centered interventions, counseling programs, and inclusive support services. With a sample size of 120 parents of children with hearing impairment, the present study aims to systematically examine stress levels and coping mechanisms, and compare them across demographic variables. The findings

are expected to provide valuable insights for educators, therapists, and policymakers to strengthen family support systems and enhance the quality of life of both parents and children.

Hearing impairment is a sensory disability that significantly influences a child's ability to communicate, learn, and participate effectively in social interactions (Meadow-Orlans, Mertens, & Sass-Lehrer, 2003). Limitations in auditory perception often result in delayed speech and language development, academic difficulties, and problems in social adjustment (Powers, 2002). When parents receive a diagnosis of hearing impairment in their child, they frequently experience feelings of shock, grief, anxiety, and uncertainty regarding the child's future (Hintermair, 2006). These emotional reactions are natural, as parents must rapidly adjust their expectations and prepare to meet the special needs of their child.

Parents play a pivotal role in the rehabilitation and development of children with hearing impairment. Their involvement is essential in early identification, the use of hearing aids or cochlear implants, participation in speech and language therapy, and educational planning (Quittner, Steck, & Rouiller, 1991). Active parental participation enhances the effectiveness of intervention programs and supports the child's emotional and social development. However, these responsibilities often impose significant physical, emotional, and financial demands on parents, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Kumar & Singh, 2014).

In addition to practical challenges, parents frequently encounter communication barriers with their child, leading to frustration and feelings of inadequacy. Social stigma, lack of awareness, and insensitive societal attitudes further intensify parental stress (Powers, 2002). Many parents experience social isolation due to limited support networks and a lack of understanding from family and community members (Hintermair, 2006).

Parental stress refers to the psychological and emotional strain experienced while managing caregiving responsibilities and adapting to disability-related demands (Abidin, 1995). To manage this stress, parents adopt various coping strategies, including problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Effective coping enhances psychological well-being and family functioning, whereas maladaptive coping may lead to emotional exhaustion and mental health concerns (Kumar & Singh, 2014). Understanding parental stress and coping strategies is therefore essential for developing effective counseling and support interventions.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study. It helps in understanding previous research related to parental stress and coping strategies among parents of children with hearing impairment and identifies research gaps for the current investigation.

### 2.1 Studies Related to Parental Stress

**Abidin (1995)** developed the *Parenting Stress Index (PSI)*, which conceptualizes parental stress as an outcome of interactions between parent characteristics, child characteristics, and situational factors. The study emphasized that parents of children with disabilities experience significantly higher stress due to increased caregiving responsibilities, behavioral challenges, and concerns about the child's future. The PSI identifies stress domains such as parental distress, parent-child dysfunctional interaction, and difficult child characteristics. This framework is particularly relevant to parents of children with hearing impairment, as communication barriers and rehabilitation demands intensify stress. Abidin's work provides a strong methodological base for assessing parental stress in disability-related research.

**Hintermair (2006)** examined the relationship between parental resources, stress, and socioemotional development of deaf and hard-of-hearing children. The study revealed that higher parental stress negatively affected children's socioemotional outcomes. Parents with better social support, personal resources, and professional guidance reported lower stress levels. The findings emphasized that parental stress is influenced

more by coping resources than by the severity of hearing loss itself. The study highlighted the importance of family-centered intervention programs aimed at strengthening parental competence and reducing stress.

**Quittner, Steck, and Rouiller (1991)** studied parental stress and adjustment among parents of children with cochlear implants. The findings indicated that although cochlear implantation improved communication outcomes, it introduced new stressors such as surgical anxiety, rehabilitation demands, and high parental expectations. Parents with realistic expectations and adequate support adjusted better over time. The study emphasized the importance of psychological counseling and support services alongside medical intervention.

## 2.2 Studies Related to Coping Strategies

**Lazarus and Folkman (1984)** proposed the transactional model of stress and coping, which explains stress as a result of an individual's appraisal of a situation and perceived coping ability. The model categorizes coping strategies into problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. This theoretical framework is highly applicable to parents of children with hearing impairment, as their stress levels depend on how they perceive disability-related challenges and available resources. Parents using problem-focused coping strategies tend to show better psychological adjustment than those relying on avoidance or denial.

**Kumar and Singh (2014)** conducted a study on stress and coping strategies among parents of children with hearing impairment in the Indian context. The study revealed moderate to high stress levels among parents, particularly mothers. Problem-focused coping strategies such as seeking professional help and participating in intervention programs were associated with lower stress. In contrast, emotion-focused and avoidance coping were linked to higher stress. The study emphasized the need for parental counseling, awareness programs, and support services to promote effective coping.

## 2.3 Studies Related to Parental Involvement and Support Systems

**Meadow-Orlans, Mertens, and Sass-Lehrer (2003)** explored the early experiences of parents raising deaf children. The authors reported that parents often experience emotional reactions such as shock, denial, guilt, and anxiety following diagnosis. The study highlighted the importance of early intervention, parental education, and effective communication strategies in reducing stress and improving parent-child interaction. Family-centered approaches were found to be crucial in supporting parental adjustment and empowerment.

**Powers (2002)** examined inclusive education practices for deaf and hard-of-hearing children in the United Kingdom. The study emphasized that parental stress is influenced by the quality of educational support and collaboration with professionals. Parents experienced less stress when schools provided adequate resources, trained personnel, and inclusive practices. The research highlighted the importance of strong school-parent partnerships in enhancing parental coping and confidence.

## 3. Research Gap

The review of related literature reveals that several studies have examined parental stress and coping strategies among parents of children with hearing impairment. However, most existing research is either descriptive in nature or conducted in Western contexts, with limited empirical evidence from the Indian setting. Very few studies have undertaken a comparative analysis of stress and coping strategies based on demographic variables such as gender, locality, and socioeconomic status. Additionally, there is a lack of integrated studies that simultaneously examine stress levels and coping patterns among parents of children with hearing impairment. The absence of context-specific findings and comparative insights highlights the need for the present study to address these gaps and contribute to evidence-based intervention planning.

## 4. Objectives of the Study

- To study the level of stress among parents of children with hearing impairment.
- To identify the coping strategies adopted by parents of children with hearing impairment.
- To compare stress levels among parents based on selected demographic variables.
- To examine differences in coping strategies among parents of children with hearing impairment.



## 5. Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference in stress levels among parents of children with hearing impairment based on selected variables.
- There is no significant difference in coping strategies among parents of children with hearing impairment.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Research Design:

The present study adopts a descriptive-comparative research design to examine stress levels and coping strategies among parents of children with hearing impairment and to compare these variables across selected demographic factors such as gender, locality, education, and socio-economic status.

### 6.2 Population and Sample:

The target population includes parents of children with hearing impairment enrolled in special and inclusive schools. A sample of 120 parents was selected using purposive sampling, ensuring representation of both genders and diverse demographic backgrounds.

### 6.3 Tools

- **Parental Stress Scale:** A standardized scale was used to measure the level of stress among parents.
- **Coping Strategies Inventory:** Adapted to assess the frequency and type of coping strategies adopted, including problem-focused, emotion-focused, and social support strategies.
- **Demographic Data Sheet:** Collected information on gender, age, educational qualification, locality, socio-economic status, and family type.

**6.4 Procedure:** Parents were approached through schools and special education centers. After obtaining informed consent, questionnaires were administered either in person or online. Clear instructions were given to ensure accurate responses, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the process.

**6.5 Data Analysis:** Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to assess stress levels and coping strategies. Comparative analysis (t-test, ANOVA) was used to examine differences based on demographic variables. Correlation analysis was also conducted to explore the relationship between stress levels and coping strategies.

## 7. Results and Discussion

**Table:1 Stress and Coping Strategies among Parents of Children with Hearing Impairment (N = 120)**

Variable	Group	N
Gender	Mothers	65
	Fathers	55
Locality	Urban	70
	Rural	50

The study included a total of 120 parents of children with hearing impairment, distributed across gender and locality. Among them, 65 were mothers (54.2%) and 55 were fathers (45.8%), indicating a slightly higher participation of mothers, which may reflect their more direct involvement in daily caregiving and educational support for their children. In terms of locality, 70 parents (58.3%) resided in urban areas, while 50 parents (41.7%) were from rural areas, ensuring representation from both socio-geographical contexts. This demographic distribution provides a foundation for comparative analysis, as stress levels and coping strategies can vary depending on gender roles and environmental factors. Mothers, being more directly engaged in child-rearing activities, may experience higher stress and adopt different coping strategies than fathers. Similarly, urban parents may rely more on professional and social support systems, whereas rural

parents might depend primarily on family and community resources. The table highlights the balanced sample structure, enabling meaningful interpretation of stress and coping differences across these groups.

**Table 2: Comparison of Stress and Coping Strategies among Parents of Children with Hearing Impairment Based on Gender and Locality (N = 120)**

Variable	Group	N	Mean Stress (M)	SD	t-value	Significance (p)	Problem-Focused Coping (M ± SD)	Emotion-Focused Coping (M ± SD)	Social Support Coping (M ± SD)
<b>Gender</b>	Mothers	65	72.5	8.4	2.86	0.005	34.8 ± 5.1	30.5 ± 4.8	32.0 ± 4.6
	Fathers	55	68.3	7.9	-	-	36.5 ± 5.3	26.8 ± 4.5	32.3 ± 4.9
<b>Locality</b>	Urban	70	71.2	8.1	1.62	0.11 ns	36.0 ± 5.2	29.1 ± 4.7	33.0 ± 4.8
	Rural	50	69.4	7.6	-	-	35.0 ± 5.0	28.4 ± 4.8	31.1 ± 4.6

**Table 2** - presents a comparison of stress levels and coping strategies among parents of children with hearing impairment based on gender and locality (N = 120). The results indicate that mothers (M = 72.5, SD = 8.4) experienced significantly higher stress than fathers (M = 68.3, SD = 7.9), as reflected by a t-value of 2.86 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that mothers, being more involved in daily caregiving and child-rearing activities, are more susceptible to psychological strain. In terms of coping strategies, mothers relied more on emotion-focused coping (M = 30.5), whereas fathers preferred problem-focused strategies (M = 36.5), highlighting gender-based differences in managing stress. Regarding locality, urban parents (M = 71.2, SD = 8.1) reported slightly higher stress than rural parents (M = 69.4, SD = 7.6), though the difference was not statistically significant ( $t = 1.62$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ). Urban parents also used more social support and problem-focused strategies compared to rural parents, indicating environmental and resource-related influences on coping mechanisms. Overall, the table reflects how gender and locality impact both stress levels and coping patterns among parents.

### Discussion and key findings

The present study examined the stress levels and coping strategies of parents of children with hearing impairment and explored differences based on gender and locality. The findings revealed that parents generally experience moderate to high levels of stress, confirming earlier research that parenting a child with hearing impairment imposes emotional, financial, and social challenges (Gautam, 2020; Sharma & Raina, 2019). Mothers reported significantly higher stress than fathers, which aligns with previous studies indicating that mothers often assume primary caregiving responsibilities, including managing rehabilitation, education, and daily routines, leading to greater psychological strain.

In terms of coping strategies, parents predominantly adopted problem-focused strategies, such as planning interventions and seeking professional guidance, followed by social support strategies. Mothers tended to use more emotion-focused coping, whereas fathers relied on problem-solving approaches, reflecting gender-specific patterns of stress management. Although urban parents reported slightly higher stress than rural parents, the difference was not statistically significant, suggesting that stress is influenced by multiple factors beyond locality, including support networks, education, and socio-economic status. Urban parents, however, used more social support and professional guidance, while rural parents relied primarily on family and community resources.

## Key Findings

- ❖ Parents of children with hearing impairment experience moderate to high stress, with mothers showing higher stress than fathers.
- ❖ Problem-focused coping is the most commonly adopted strategy, followed by social support and emotion-focused strategies.
- ❖ Gender differences exist in coping: mothers prefer emotion-focused coping, fathers prefer problem-focused coping.
- ❖ Urban parents report slightly higher stress than rural parents, but differences are not statistically significant.
- ❖ Coping strategies vary by locality: urban parents rely more on professional and social support, rural parents on family and community support.
- ❖ Effective coping strategies are associated with lower perceived stress, emphasizing the importance of training, counseling, and support programs for parents.

## 8. Educational and Psychological Implications

The study emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive support to parents of children with hearing impairment to help them manage stress and enhance coping skills. Parent counseling and stress-management programs can equip parents with strategies to handle emotional and psychological challenges effectively. Training on effective coping strategies enables parents to adopt problem-focused, emotion-focused, and social support approaches in a balanced manner. The formation of parent support groups offers opportunities for sharing experiences, gaining peer encouragement, and reducing feelings of isolation. Additionally, awareness programs aimed at reducing social stigma can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for both parents and children. Strengthening school-parent collaboration ensures that parents receive guidance on educational planning, rehabilitation, and resource access, fostering better parent-child outcomes and promoting overall family well-being.

## 9. Conclusion

The present study highlights that parents of children with hearing impairment experience moderate to high levels of stress, with mothers showing higher stress than fathers. Stress arises from challenges related to communication, education, rehabilitation, and social expectations. The study also reveals that parents adopt a range of coping strategies, with problem-focused coping being the most common, followed by social support and emotion-focused strategies. Gender and locality influence coping patterns, as mothers rely more on emotion-focused strategies and fathers on problem-focused strategies, while urban parents utilize professional and social support, and rural parents depend primarily on family and community resources. These findings underscore the importance of supportive interventions, including parent counseling, training in effective coping strategies, awareness programs to reduce stigma, and strengthening school-parent collaboration. Overall, equipping parents with appropriate coping mechanisms not only reduces stress but also enhances their well-being and positively impacts the development and inclusion of children with hearing impairment.

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