



Parental Stress of Parents in Incarceration and Correlating Demographic Variables

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Introduction

Parental Stress

- Parental stress is one of the most frequently reported mental health issues among incarcerated parents (Carlson, 2010).
- The Parenting Stress Index – 4th ed. (PSI-4) measures child, parent, and situational characteristics associated with parenting stress and dysfunctional parenting (Abidin, 2012).

Incarcerated Mothers

- Mothers with a history of incarceration experience high rates of mental health diagnoses and symptoms such as:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Posttraumatic Stress
- Incarcerated mothers have been shown to be dissatisfied with how often they were in contact with their children, such separation lead to feelings of
 - Distress
 - Remorse
 - Depression
 - Shame
 - Guilt
- Incarcerated mothers have also described positive views of themselves such as high self-esteem, a sense of pride, a high sense of control, and optimism (Stanton, 2018).

Incarcerated Fathers

- While incarcerated, fathers have reported symptoms of parental stress such as a sense of
 - Helplessness
 - Lack of Parental Control
 - Little Ability to Give Financial Support
 - Little Ability to Give Emotional Support (West-Smith, 2007).
- Visitation with their children while incarcerated has shown that fathers had a difficult time seeing their children due to having higher expectations and future goals for themselves as well as feeling like they were not connected to the identity they had as a father before becoming incarcerated (Hairston, 1989).

Hypothesis:

- Demographic variables will correlate with PSI-4 scores.

References

References are available upon request, please email henson90@marshall.edu for reference list.

Abstract

The majority of literature on incarcerated parenting styles and parental stress has focused primarily on mothers, with very little research conducted with fathers. Research has found that mothers report more parenting stress on the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) than fathers. In response to limited research in this area, the current study used preliminary data from a larger study to examine the correlation between parenting stress and various demographic variables (i.e. age, number of children, number of contact hours with children while incarcerated, number of contact hours with children while not incarcerated) with males and females in an incarcerated setting. Eight males and eleven females completed the PSI 4th Edition Long Form and a demographic form as part of a larger study. Results and implications of results will be discussed.

Results

Incarcerated Mothers

- There was a significant negative correlation between the amount of contact with children and the PSI Health Subscale.
- There was a significant negative correlation between the amount of contact with children and the PSI Spouse/ Parenting Partner Relationship Subscale.

Incarcerated Fathers

- Results indicated a significant negative correlation between number of children fathers have and the PSI Competence Subscale.

Mothers

Table 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	-	0.225	-0.173	0.027	0.187	0.026	-0.131	-0.039	-0.505	-0.233	0	-0.22	-0.124
2. # of Children		-	-0.367	0.25	-0.122	0.278	-0.347	-0.176	-0.101	-0.357	-0.246	-0.249	-0.192
3. # of Contact (I)			-	.606*	-0.007	-0.183	-0.091	-0.534	-0.059	0.06	-0.192	-0.171	-0.051
4. # of Contact (O)				-	-0.269	0.055	-0.571	-0.863**	-0.021	-0.412	-0.64*	-0.5	-0.29
5. PSI Competence					-	0.061	0.739**	0.325	0.196	0.469	0.434	0.636*	0.329
6. PSI Isolation						-	0.111	0.368	0.584	0.418	0.268	0.506	0.43
7. PSI Attachment							-	0.612	0.254	0.552	0.534	0.711*	0.445
8. PSI Health								-	0.177	0.54	0.596	0.653*	0.335
9. PSI Restriction									-	0.698*	0.506	0.72*	0.692*
10. PSI Depression										-	0.876**	0.889**	0.813**
11. PSI Relationship											-	0.783*	0.743*
12. PSI Test Stress												-	0.816*
13. PSI Life Stress													-

Note. n = 11. PSI = Parenting Stress Index 4th Edition (Abidin, 2012). # = Number, (I) = Inside Incarceration and (O) = Outside Incarceration; *p > .05. **p > .01.

Fathers

Table 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	-	0.616	0.31	0.304	-0.618	0.465	-0.193	-0.174	-0.108	-0.499	0.191	-0.375	0.486
2. # of Children		-	-0.111	-0.443	-.722*	0.438	0.015	0.091	-0.069	-0.002	0.311	-0.052	0.344
3. # of Contact (I)			-	0.593	0.168	0.091	0.263	-0.024	-0.095	-0.579	-0.42	-0.067	0.239
4. # of Contact (O)				-	0.263	0.044	-0.222	0.054	0.067	-0.68	-0.456	-0.36	0.236
5. PSI Competence					-	-0.471	0.572	0.543	-0.095	0.246	-0.102	0.602	0.232
6. PSI Isolation						-	0.017	-0.155	.795*	0.015	0.361	0.026	0.118
7. PSI Attachment							-	0.515	-0.032	0.442	0.391	.916**	0.551
8. PSI Health								-	-0.113	0.208	0.006	0.556	0.682
9. PSI Role Restriction									-	0.218	0.184	0.118	-0.233
10. PSI Depression										-	.712*	.738*	-0.603
11. PSI Relationship											-	0.567	0.31
12. PSI Test Stress												-	0.43
13. PSI Life Stress													-

Note. n = 8. PSI = Parenting Stress Index 4th Edition (Abidin, 2012). # = Number, (I) = Inside Incarceration and (O) = Outside Incarceration; *p > .05. **p > .01.

Methods

Participants

- 8 incarcerated fathers and 11 incarcerated mothers in an incarcerated setting.
- Research assistants obtained data from a group of residents.
- All participants involved in the study had children between the ages of birth to 8 years.
- The study population is composed of all Caucasian members from the Appalachian region.

Procedure

- The research project was explained to participants and informed consent was obtained. Participants completed the PSI-4 and a demographic questionnaire.

Measures

- PSI-4 evaluate the magnitude of stress in the parent-child system, 120-item inventory that focuses on three major domains of stress: child characteristics, parent characteristics, and situational/demographic life stress.
 - Child Domain test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .55 to .82, Parent Domain from .69 to .91, and Total Stress score from .65 to .96.
 - Both Child & Parent domains and the Total Stress scale reliability coefficients were .96 or greater.
- Demographic Questionnaire was developed by the study investigator to collect demographic information (e.g., age, number of children, ethnicity, etc).

Analysis

- Bivariate correlational analysis was used to examine possible correlations between several demographic variables and PSI-4 scores for mothers and fathers in an incarcerated setting.

Discussion

Incarcerated Mothers

- In this study, the more contact mothers reported with their children prior to incarcerated, the less stress they have about how their health contributed to parenting stress. While some research has found visitation to be associated with higher levels of parental stress, others found that more frequent visits lead to improved empathy for children's needs as well as decreased mental health symptoms, institutional behavioral infractions, and parental stress.
- The more mothers had contact with their children before incarceration, the less stress they report about the emotional and physical support from the other parent. McBride, Shoppe, and Rane (2002) found that fathers spend significantly less time caring for children than their mothers, leaving mothers feeling that their partner is falling short of what an ideal relationship should be between the child and the father/partner.

Incarcerated Fathers

- The present study has shown that the more children a father has, the less comfortable and capable the father feels in his parenting role.

Limitations

- Limitations with the present study include having a small sample size, all parent participants are incarcerated, no variation in ethnicity (all Caucasian participants), and data were collected in one setting.