



Wisdom, Stress and Well-being: A Correlational Study among Parents of Children Below 18 Years

Kanupriya Kwatra, *Postgraduate in Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh*
kanup4724@gmail.com

Abstract: Objectives: Caring for children comes with numerous responsibilities that can elevate stress levels and have a negative impact on parents' well-being. Therefore, it is essential to identify factors which can buffer against these negative outcomes. The current study aimed to examine the association of wisdom as a protective factor with parental stress and wellbeing among parents with children below 18 years of age. **Methods:** The study employed a correlational design where Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship among these variables. A total of 50 parents (27 mothers) from Chandigarh and its nearby cities participated in this study. Participants completed standardized questionnaires measuring their level of self-reported wisdom, parental stress, and mental well-being. **Results:** The findings showed that though the relationship of wisdom and its sub-components with mental wellbeing was positive, it was not statistically significant. Furthermore, while the correlation of affective, reflective and overall wisdom with parental stress was negative, none reached statistical significance. Notably, affective wisdom demonstrated the strongest negative correlation with parental stress. The negative correlation between parental stress and well-being was also not statistically significant. **Conclusion:** This study highlights that affective wisdom might be related to lower parental stress though the relationship was not strong enough to be conclusive in the present sample. Future studies with larger samples, different population contexts and longitudinal designs are needed to better capture the protective role of wisdom in parental stress and well-being.

Keywords: *Wisdom, Parental Stress, Mental Wellbeing, Parents*

1. Introduction

Being a parent involves several responsibilities. These can be classified as physical responsibilities, such as ensuring nourishment and safety of children; emotional responsibilities, like spending time with children and attending to their needs; social responsibilities including teaching discipline, showing affection, and serving as a role model; and educational responsibilities, like fostering academic engagement and ensuring regular school attendance (Kiral, 2020). In addition to caring for children, parents are required to fulfil daily responsibilities like managing work pressures, taking care of house and personal health. Managing these multiple demands can contribute to higher stress levels and a reduction in mental well-being among parents. Therefore, it becomes essential to examine protective factors which can buffer against these negative outcomes. One such potential factor is wisdom which has been consistently linked to higher wellbeing in adults (Le, 2011; Taylor et al., 2011; Bergsma & Ardelt, 2012; Glück et al., 2013; Ardelt and Jeste, 2016; Glück et al., 2022). Wisdom is a multidimensional trait involving nine components namely as social decision-making ability, prosocial behavior, emotional balance, reflection, tolerance for uncertainty, value relativism, spirituality, openness to experience, and humor (Carr, 2022, p. 222). The present study aims to investigate the association of self-reported wisdom with stress and mental well-being among parents with child/children younger than 18 years of age.

2. Literature Review

Wisdom

Ardelt (2004) defines wisdom as “an integration of cognitive, reflective, and affective personality characteristics.” Cognitive wisdom refers to “an understanding of life and a desire to know the truth, knowledge and acceptance of the positive and negative aspects of human nature, of the inherent limits of knowledge, and of life’s unpredictability and uncertainties”; reflective wisdom is “a perception of phenomena and events from multiple perspectives and requires self-examination, self-awareness, and self-insight” and affective wisdom refers to “sympathetic and compassionate love for others” (Ardelt 2004, p. 275).

Wisdom and Wellbeing

Mental well-being refers to “a positive state of emotional, psychological, and social health, characterized by a sense of contentment, resilience, and the ability to effectively cope with life’s

challenges. It encompasses positive emotions, a sense of purpose, and the capacity to engage in fulfilling relationships and activities” (Gautam et al., 2024).

Although the role of wisdom has not been specifically studied in parents’ well-being, studies have shown a positive association between these two factors among adults. For instance, wisdom, especially the reflective component of wisdom, was found to be positively associated with wellbeing (positive mental health, happiness, and life satisfaction) among adults (N=994; age = 51–99 years). The study also indicated that wisdom moderated the negative link between adverse life events and wellbeing (Ardelt & Jeste, 2016). Another study with 155 adults (ages 23–90) indicated wisdom and well-being to be related and their relationship was found to be triangular rather than linear with higher wisdom linked to greater well-being, but higher well-being does not always imply greater wisdom. The study suggested wise people are able to maintain higher well-being even while being aware of life’s adversities (Glück et al., 2022).

Other studies have also shown a connection between wisdom and wellbeing among adults (Bergsma & Ardel, 2012; Glück et al., 2013; Le, 2011; Taylor et al., 2011). However, some studies found no association between wisdom and wellbeing (Mickler & Staudinger, 2008; Mansfield et al., 2010).

Wisdom in parents

Zare Mazloom et al. (2024) examined the role of parents’ wisdom on development of cognitive, social, and emotional qualities of their children (age=15-17). The study included 140 father–mother–adolescent triads from public schools in Iran. The study indicated that parents’ wisdom was positively associated with social intelligence and emotional competence of adolescents but not linked to adolescents’ cognitive skills. Findings further demonstrated that social intelligence and emotional competence of sons was only predicted by paternal wisdom while these qualities in daughters were predicted by wisdom of mothers. Overall, the study showed that wise parents foster social and emotional growth of same-gender adolescents but cognitive development is influenced by factors beyond parental wisdom.

Wisdom and Stress

Research has shown that wisdom is negatively linked to stress across different age groups. Ardel and Bruya (2020) found that higher levels of three-dimensional wisdom (cognitive, reflective, and affective dimensions) were related with lower perceived stress among college students. The study also indicated that wisdom could buffer stress over time and high stress

negatively affected the development of wisdom. Another study by Ardelt and Jeste (2020) reported that wisdom was negatively related to perceived stress among older adults and resilience, mastery, and perceived stress mediated the positive relationship between wisdom and well-being. Moeini et al. (2025) indicated that wisdom mediated the relationship between parental stress, couples' communication patterns, and authoritative parenting. The study suggested that the reduced stress among parents and improved effective communication between spouses facilitated the use of democratic parenting practices and wisdom strengthened this connection.

Parental stress and Wellbeing

Parental stress refers to “a set of processes that lead to aversive psychological and physiological reactions arising from the attempts to adapt to demands of parenthood” (Deater-Deckard, 2004, p.6). It is defined as “stress that parents experience not only because of childrearing, but also due to their social and environmental circumstances, responsibilities, and everyday life” (Cronin et al., 2015).

A meta-analysis by Rusu et al. (2025) examined the link between parental stress and well-being (happiness and life satisfaction). The analysis included 86 cross-sectional, longitudinal, daily diary, and intervention studies comprising 22,108 parents of children in the age range of 0 to 18 years. Findings revealed moderate negative correlation between parental stress and well-being ($r = -.40$), indicating that higher parental stress is strongly linked to lower well-being. Rambod et al. (2023) examined the predictive role of parental stress and intolerance of uncertainty on the psychological well-being of parents ($N=130$) with a newborn admitted to a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Findings showed a negative but significant association between parental stress and psychological well-being and higher parental stress significantly predicted lower psychological well-being. Parental stress has also been found to be negatively linked to life satisfaction (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2022). As the relationship of wisdom with Parental wellbeing remains unexamined.

3. Methodology

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of wisdom with parental stress and mental well-being among parents of children below 18 years of age.

3.2 Hypotheses

H1: Wisdom and its components will have a significant positive correlation with mental

wellbeing among parents.

H2: Wisdom and its components are expected to show a significant negative correlation with parental stress.

H3: Mental well-being and parental stress are anticipated to show a significant negative association among parents.

3.3 Sample

The study sample consisted of 50 parents (27 mothers, 23 fathers) with 58 % of parents having one child, 40 % having two children and 2 % having three children. The majority of the participants were from Chandigarh, India and others from areas nearby Chandigarh. The mean age of parents was 39.4 years.

3.4 Inclusion criteria

- a) Willing to participate in the study.
- b) Must be a parent of at least one child below 18 years.
- c) Participants without mental health problems.
- d) Able to read and understand the English language.

3.5 Exclusion criteria

- a) Parents with all children above 18 years of age.
- b) Participants with incomplete questionnaires.
- c) Cases where a single parent completed questionnaires for both parents.

3.6 Measures

Wisdom: Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale (3D-WS; Ardelt, 2003), comprising three subscales including affective, reflective and cognitive dimensions was used to measure wisdom. It is a 39-item scale, where participants are asked to rate the items on a 5-point scale that indicates either their level of agreement with the statements (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree) or how true the statements are of themselves (1 = definitely true of myself to 5 = not true of myself). The three dimensions of the scale had Cronbach's alpha values ranging between 0.71 and 0.85, and a 10-month test-retest reliability of 0.85 (Ardelt, 2003).

Parental Stress: Parental Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Berry and Jones (1995) was used to measure stress among parents. It is an 18 item self-report measure assessing parents' typical relation with their child with higher scores indicating more stress (scores range=18-90). Respondents rate each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

agree). The PSS shows good internal consistency reliability of $\alpha = 0.83$ and test-retest reliability of $r = 0.81$ across a six-week interval (Berry & Jones, 1995).

Mental Well-being: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007) was used to measure mental well-being among parents. The scale comprises 14 items which focuses on positive aspects of mental health. Respondents rate each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all the time). Higher scores indicate greater well-being (Total scores range=14-70). The WEMWBS showed good content validity and Cronbach's alpha was 0.89–0.91, with high correlations to other well-being measures (Tennant et al., 2007).

3.7 Procedure

The study employed convenience sampling to recruit participants through online and offline methods. For online data collection, a google form was shared and for offline approach, questionnaires were distributed after taking informed consent. Participants were provided with details about the study's objectives and reassured that their responses would be kept confidential and they were told that their participation was completely voluntary.

3.8 Data Analysis

The study employed a correlational design to test the relationship among key variables. After reporting the descriptives of the study, Pearson correlation was conducted to test the link of wisdom and its sub-components (affective, reflective and cognitive) with stress and mental well-being of parents using Jamovi.

4. Results

Table 1: Showing descriptives: N, Mean, Standard Deviation (SD)

	Parents' Age	Mental Wellbeing	Parental Stress	Affective Wisdom	Reflective Wisdom	Cognitive Wisdom	Overall Wisdom
N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Mean	39.4	51.6	46.4	3.17	3.21	3.07	3.15
SD	5.71	9.29	8.99	0.419	0.456	0.434	0.356

Table 2. *Showing Correlation Matrix*

	Mental Wellbeing	Parental Stress	Affective Wisdom	Reflective Wisdom	Cognitive Wisdom	Overall Wisdom
Mental Wellbeing	—					
Parental Stress	-0.216	—				
Affective Wisdom	0.154	-0.240	—			
Reflective Wisdom	0.160	-0.101	0.506***	—		
Cognitive Wisdom	0.073	0.102	0.526***	0.466***	—	
Overall Wisdom	0.157	-0.095	0.822***	0.814***	0.812***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

5. Discussion of Results

This study aimed to investigate the associations among wisdom and its dimensions (affective, reflective, and cognitive), parental stress and mental well-being in a sample of 50 participants. The findings indicated that there were weak positive correlations of affective ($r = 0.154$), reflective wisdom ($r = 0.160$), and overall wisdom ($r = 0.157$) with mental well-being but these associations were not significant. Cognitive wisdom had even weaker positive correlation with mental well-being ($r = 0.073$). These results did not support the first hypothesis of this study suggesting that while higher wisdom is associated with better mental well-being, the correlations were not significant for this sample. This is in line with some previous findings that found no significant link between wisdom and well-being (Mickler & Staudinger, 2008; Mansfield et al., 2010). However, these findings are in contrast with many studies that showed a significant positive link between wisdom and well-being (Le, 2011; Taylor et al., 2011; Bergsma & Ardelt, 2012; Glück et al., 2013; Glück et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the second hypothesis was also not supported as results showed an inverse but non-significant correlation between overall wisdom and parental stress ($r = -0.095$), reflective

wisdom and parental stress (-0.101) and affective wisdom and parental stress ($r = -0.240$). The affective dimension showed the strongest (though still non-significant) inverse relationship with parental stress compared to the overall and reflective dimensions suggesting that emotional components of wisdom might play a more salient role in mitigating parental stress than cognitive or reflective aspects. On the other hand, cognitive wisdom was weakly positively correlated with parental stress ($r = 0.102$), indicating while higher cognitive wisdom is related with higher stress in this sample, though it was not statistically significant. This in contrast with previous findings which show a significant negative link between wisdom and stress in general (Ardelt & Bruya, 2020; Ardel & Jeste, 2020)

Additionally, the third hypothesis that parental stress would be significantly negatively correlated with mental well-being was also not supported as the association between these two variables ($r = -0.216$) was non-significant. These findings do not align with previous research that show significant negative correlation between parental stress and well-being (Rusu et al., 2025; Rambod et al., 2023).

6. Conclusion

The present study aimed to identify factors which can buffer against higher stress levels and diminished well-being among parents due to multiple demands associated with caring for children. This study examined the association of wisdom as a protective factor with stress and wellbeing among 50 parents with at least one child younger than 18 years of age. Using a correlational design, Pearson correlation was used to investigate the link among these variables. The results demonstrated that though the correlation of affective, reflective and overall wisdom with parental stress was negative and that the wisdom and its dimensions were positively linked to well-being, the findings were not statistically significant. The findings also highlighted that affective wisdom due to its highest negative correlation with parental stress may help reduce parental stress and foster healthier family dynamics. Despite valuable insights revealed by this study, some limitations need to be acknowledged. Firstly, small sample size limiting the statistical power to detect significant associations between wisdom, parental stress, and wellbeing. Secondly, use of self-reported measures could have introduced response biases such as social desirability and lastly, relying on a single measure of parental stress and well-being might not fully capture the complexity of these variables. Future studies with larger samples, multiple assessment tools,

different population contexts and longitudinal designs are required to clarify the association among these variables and to better capture the protective role of wisdom in parental stress and well-being.

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