



UNDERSTANDING PARENTHOOD AND THE MENTAL WELL-BEING OF PARENTS WITH ADULT CHILDREN IN INDIA**Sabeena G, Dr. Sunitha Abhay Jain & Stalin Ramesh Jerald**

Researcher, LLM, M.Sc. Counselling and Psychotherapy, School of Law, Christ (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru.

Address: Sabeena G, 2b, No.6, 11th Cross, Kariyanapalaya, St. Thomas Town, Bangalore - 560084

Email id: sabeena.g2@gmail.com

Co-author 1:

Professor and LLM Coordinator, School of Law, Christ (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru Christ (Deemed to be University)

Email id: sunitha.abhay@christuniversity.in

Co-author 2:

Researcher, M.Sc. in Counseling and Psychotherapy, Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati

Email id: brojerald@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

The cultural, social, and religious differences in parenting and child-parent relationships in families make parenthood a sensitive domain for the research study. Accordingly, the changing nature of families, culture, and gender discrimination influence or affect parenting styles and parent-child relationships. The current study explored the conceptual understanding of parenthood, such as beliefs, views, expectations, and parental well-being in Indian families, especially in the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Gujarat. The participants were nine parents living together and with children the age range between eighteen and thirty-five. The parents' age ranged from 41 to 63 (M = 50.8 years, SD = 6.05) (Mother's age M = 48.7 years, SD = 6.04; Fathers' age M = 52.9 years, SD = 5.28). They were selected based on purposive sampling. The method had an exploratory and qualitative design with multiple case studies. The researcher conducted in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews using the online platform Google Meet and Zoom and face-to-face meetings. The interview transcriptions were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's inductive thematic analysis. The resulting six themes were: 1) Parental Responsibility, 2) Parental Integrity, 3) Presence of Children, 4) Progressive Parent-child Relationship, 5) Parenthood as Being for/with the children, and 6) Impending Concerns. Parenthood is fulfilling responsibilities and being for the children physically and in their absence. Parents' satisfaction lies in how they relate to the children, the presence of the children, their achievements, and when they become resources for the parents.

Keywords: Parenthood, mental well-being of parents, progressive parent-child relationship, parental integrity, parental satisfaction

Introduction

The cultural, social, and religious differences in parenting and child-parent relationships in families make parenthood a sensitive domain for the research study. Families are the major sources of nutrition, health, education, and protection for children (Reeta, 2001). Families are pivotal institutions and vary in diverse societies due to norms, traditions, gender discrimination, and customs. Accordingly, the changing nature of families greatly impacts the styles of parenting and child-parent relationships. For example, permissive parents in India are more helpful and caring for their children, whereas authoritarian parents in the United States are more helpful and caring for their children (Barnhart, Raval, et al., 2013). Rucha (2015) adds that the vital role of culture in rearing children and adapting the style of parenting is another contributor, and besides, acculturation pressurizes the parents to create a proper environment for the identity formation of the children and to decide factors for balanced child-rearing. According to Shailaja (2017), the male enjoys the privileges of society such as education, inheritance, job opportunities, and performing last rites (at the time of parents' deaths), but in the case of a woman, her personhood is at stake if she does not bear a child, preferably a boy child. So, the current study focused on exploring the understanding of parenthood and parental well-being in Indian families.

Parenthood

In India, childbearing is a socio-religious obligation and a mother believes that it is a social accomplishment. (Mila, 2012). Leon (2002) distinguishes that child-bearing is a biological function, but parenthood is a psychosocial construct. While Polivanova (2018) differentiates parenting (raising a child) from parenthood (social role). Urbano, Martínez, and Iglesias (2018) point out that one of the determining factors for couple relationships is parenthood, which brings a personal and family transition with the arrival of children. According to Hansen (2012), parenthood gives meaning and fulfillment to couples, while childless couples experience emptiness and loneliness in their marital lives. The nature of parental life satisfaction and self-esteem varies according to their parental styles, and there is interconnectedness between parental styles and well-being (Milevsky, Schlechter, & Keehn, 2007).

However, modernity and the hi-tech lifestyle have changed the outlook on parenthood and parental mental well-being. Sobotka (2010) expresses strongly that the relationship between modern couples, their economic status, and their lifestyle has changed their determination and drive for parenthood and child-bearing. Delaying parenthood causes the risk elements of infertility, malformation of the fetus, miscarriage, birth prematurity, stillbirths, genetic abnormalities, and an unstable family. Delaying parenthood affects interactions between parents and children, and intergenerational relationships (Sobotka 2010).

The changes in modern parenthood show how they influence the family and society due to educated parents, the role of women, raising children, late marriage, and socio-economic changes (Polivanova, 2018). Cui, Darling, et al. (2019) give two types of parenting (1) indulgent, which exposes high responses and low demands on behaviors, relationships, and material goods; and (2) overparenting (helicopter), - which gets too involved in the lives of the

children, both of which are negative contributors to the well-being of the parents and the adult children.

Responsibilities of Parents

As aforementioned, parenthood is a social role that gives meaning and fulfillment to couples, so it is imperative to consider the responsibilities of the parents. A mother is responsible for the initial education of her children in India and later allows them to be more independent and self-reliant (Mila, 2012). For Barnhart, Raval, et al., (2013), one of the goals of the parents is to make the children autonomous, competent, and self-expressive. Kirby and Hoang (2018) emphasize that the balance between controlling and supporting children will aid a smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood and that personal, vocational, social, and cultural factors also determine the relationships and expectations of parents and adults. Birditt, Fingerman, and Lefkowitz (2009) highlight that families with parents and adult children have tensions and conflicts because of their independence and importance.

Parental Satisfaction and Mental Well-being

Parental satisfaction is attached to the achievements of adult children, which removes the loneliness from their parents. Such parents possess the personality traits of agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to a higher degree and get satisfied with health, education, good relationships, and spirituality rather than job and salary (Olawa & Idemudia, 2019). Hansen (2012) indicates two aspects of the parents' well-being: happiness and life satisfaction due to having children. Bhoskar (2020) describes parental satisfaction as the manifestation of well-being with self-esteem and a positive emotional state.

The parents' well-being and the children's emotions and behaviors depend on their togetherness in the family (Stack, Serbin, & Barrieau, 2010). Aquilino and Supple (1991) explain that relinquishing control (letting go) of adult children is essential in the launching stage of family life for their emotional and economic independence. Parents approve of this empty nest period for their satisfaction, while older parents want their adult children to be with them always. Unlaunched adult children create problems for child-parent relationships and reduce the opportunities for mid-life parents' self-development. Moreover, the parents interact more with their daughters and enjoy the moments with them than their sons.

Besides well-being and parental satisfaction, there are conflicts and tensions in child-parent relationships. The two conflicts Birditt, Fingerman, and Lefkowitz (2009) identify are 1) individual conflicts or tensions concerning autonomy, self-care, education, job, finance, housekeeping, and lifestyle; and 2) relationship conflicts or tensions concerning interactions, spontaneous advising, personality issues, and passing of the values to them. Urbano, Martínez, and Iglesias (2018) affirm that conflicts and dissatisfaction affect the couple's relationships and children. Therefore, the current study sheds more light on parenthood and the mental well-being of parents with adult children in the Indian context.

Conceptual Framework

In this current study, the researcher briefly conceptualized parenthood and the mental well-being of parents as parental roles, qualities, and meanings in parental life. The conceptual framework used in the present study was the Parental Involvement Model. It was a multidimensional construct that had evolved since 1955. Here are some of the milestones in developing the parental involvement model: Firstly, Parsons and Bales' (1955) parental involvement had two roles: instrumental and expressive. The former was for fathers, and the latter was for mothers. The model was based on gender. Lamb and Colleagues' (1987) parental involvement had three typologies: a) interaction with the children; b) accessibility to the children; and c) responsibility for the welfare of the children. Finley and Schwartz (2004) added mentoring and advising involvements to the expressive and instrumental involvements.

Si and Pei (2010) used the Parental Involvement Model in Malaysia to discover parent-child relationship satisfaction. They offered three dimensions of parental involvement: 1) Expressive involvement is concerned with the care, fun, social, spiritual, emotional, physical development, and companionship between parents and children. 2) Instrumental involvement regards to shelter, income, discipline, education, career, and moral development; and 3) Mentoring/advising involvement is focused on intellectual development, advice, and competence. They identified that expressive and monitoring involvement by fathers had greater satisfaction within father-child relationships. In contrast, only expressive involvement by mothers had higher satisfaction within mother-child relationships.

The Parental Involvement Model clearly shows parent-child relationships, parental involvement, role, responsibilities towards the children, the children's contributions to the family, and parent-child satisfaction. Parenthood as a psychosocial construct (Leon, 2002), a social role (Polivanova, 2018), and the responsibilities and expectations of the parents take a position in all three involvements (expressive, instrumental, and monitoring involvement) in the parental involvement model. Bhoskar (2020) describes parental satisfaction as the manifestation of well-being with self-esteem and a positive emotional state.

The model mentioned above showed how parents and children get involved in their relationships regarding responsibilities, satisfaction, contributions, mental health, and conflicts. The literature showed vaguely the components contributing to the mental well-being of parents with adult children and little knowledge about parenthood. The knowledge acquired by the literature review was contextually limited. Besides, the parents' beliefs, expectations, and views on parenthood were not very clear. The perceptions of parental satisfaction, the relationship with the children in their developmental stages, and the differences in parenthood between fathers and mothers were not evidently or explicitly available in the literature. Hence, the study explored the following research questions: 1) What are parents' views, beliefs, and expectations about parenthood? 2) What are the perceptions of parents' mental health during children's developmental stages?

Research Methodology

The current study employed the qualitative research design to explore and understand the meaning of the content through the individuals (Creswell, 2014), their views and experiences perceived and interpreted (Merriam, 2009) on parenthood and parents' mental health.

An interview guide with open-ended questions was constructed for this study. The questions focused on the parents' experiences of parenthood and the mental well-being of parents. A few sample interview questions were: Before getting married, what were your initial perceptions, views and expectations on parenthood? What did you experience in your first three years of being a parent? What were the challenges that you have encountered being a parent? How did you cope with the challenges? What was most satisfying in being a parent and in understanding your parenthood? What challenges/struggles are you experiencing as a parent at present? What are your plans for your children and yourself? What are the issues you are looking for? What are the rewarding experiences you are looking for? What is the best thing about being a parent?

Nine families (nine fathers and nine mothers) were recruited through purposive sampling and with the following criteria of inclusion: 1) The families chosen for the study were composed of mother, father, a son and or a daughter, or both sons and daughters; 2) The children were eighteen to thirty-five years old at the time of interviews; 3) both parents and child(ren) were living together in the same household. Table no. 1 provides the details of the participants. The parents' age ranged from 41 to 63 (M = 50.8 years, SD = 6.05) (Mother's age M = 48.7 years, SD = 6.04; Fathers' age M = 52.9 years, SD = 5.28). The parents were from three states of India, namely three from Tamil Nadu, three from Kerala and three parents from Gujarat.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information

Participants	Age	Age of Marriage	Occupation	Number of Children (Ages)	
1	Father	51	26	Electrician	2 sons (23 & 22)
	Mother	46	21	Teacher	
2	Father	57	27	farmer	2 sons & 1 daughter (29, 27 & 24)
	Mother	52	24	Housewife	
3	Father	63	26	Shopkeeper	3 sons & 1 daughter (34, 30, 27 & 36)
	Mother	58	21	Housewife	
4	Father	48	23	Painter	2 sons (24 & 22)
	Mother	43	18	Housewife	
5	Father	50	28	Fisherman	2 daughters & 1 son (21, 20 & 19)
	Mother	41	19	Fisherwoman	
6	Father	47	25	Business	1 son & 1 daughter

	Mother	43	21	Housewife	(21 & 19)
7	Father	47	26	Teacher	1 son & 1 daughter (20 & 15)
	Mother	46	25	Teacher	
8	Father	57	33	Mason	2 daughters (23 & 21)
	Mother	51	27	Housewife	
9	Father	56	26	Teacher	1 son & 1 daughter (29 & 25)
	Mother	58	28	Teacher	

The researcher received the consent of the participants for full participation in the interviews. He conducted the semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews at their convenience. The entire interview was predominantly in Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati and partially in English. Then the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and translated into English and checked with others for their translation accuracy. After that, the data was organized and prepared for analysis.

Data Analysis

The transcripts of the interviews were coded and organized into themes. To analyze the interview transcriptions, the researcher employed the reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Byrne, 2021) with the six-phase approach: 1) Familiarizing with the data, 2) Coding, 3) Searching for themes, 4) Reviewing themes, 5) Defining and naming themes; and 6) Write-up. In this analysis, the researcher emphasized the inductive approach to draw themes meaningful to the research questions and ensure respondent-based meanings (Byrne, 2021).

Results

The participants shared their unique views, beliefs, and expectations about parenthood and parents' mental well-being. The themes identified from the analysis of the data are 1) Parental Responsibility, 2) Parental Integrity, 3) Presence of Children, 4) Progressive Parent-child Relationship, 5) Parenthood as Being for the children and 6) Impending Concerns. They are described in Table No. 2.

Table 2: Themes and Subthemes

S. No.	Themes	Sub-themes
1	Parental Responsibility	a) Establishing Stability b) Need and Expectation Fulfilling
2	Parental Integrity	

3	Presence of Children as a Source and Resource	
4	Progressive Parent-child Relationship	
5	Parenthood as Being for the Children	
6	Impending Concerns	a) Children's Future Well-being b) Parents' Desires and dreams

1) Parental Responsibility

Polivanova (2018) stated that parenthood is a social role, and the result reveals that parental responsibility is vital to parenthood. The data showed two subthemes: establishing stability and fulfilling needs and expectations.

a) Establishing Stability

Before their marriage, the parents had different views about being parents and having their own family. So, they had an idea to establish a stable life, and the roles of the parents were active even before the marriage.

"Before getting married, I had the plan of building a small house and having a family" (Father 2).

"I expected to be like my parents. I wanted to have a house and give a good education to the children. I wanted to be a good husband to my wife and a good father to my children" (Father 3).

Beyond the external establishment of stability, the parents prepared themselves internally to be teachers and influencers of the children.

"I believed that the parents must be the first teachers of the children, and they are the greatest influence on the children. They must do everything to bring up the children. I thought I would be their great influencer when I gave birth to my children" (Mother 8).

Handling parents' challenges and involving the children is another responsibility in parents' lives. They had to toil hard to seek a reasonable settlement, deal with health issues, and establish a good family.

"It would be difficult to have more children in the city away from their homeland. So, we went for family planning. It was good because my health also was not too good for the third child" (Mother 1).

"I had to manage my own family needs. I couldn't breastfeed my children well. I was so thin. I didn't have enough money to buy milk either. I managed with the milk powder and health powder given by the village primary health center" (Mother 2).

b) Fulfilling Needs and Expectations

Primarily, the parents had the responsibility of providing a conducive atmosphere for their shelter and children's education. They provided the same to the children with great care in spite of hardships.

"When I moved into the city, it was a difficult task to get settled in one place. I shifted my rented house to at least twelve places. It was difficult to move with my wife and children. For the children's education, I had to shift to different schools" (Father 1).

"I sometimes felt bad that I could not give them privacy in the house since they were growing old. Because my wife or my daughter changes dress, we divide the house with curtains, or we come out of the house. In that case, constructing a toilet was a great success for our family" (Father 2).

The other areas in which the parents concentrated on fulfilling the needs of the children, the data revealed, were taking care of the children, making opportunities for their studies and jobs, and providing security to their children.

"I was caring for them. When they fell sick, I took them to the hospital. For the family and bringing up the children, I had financial difficulties, choosing the school was a challenge" (Father 6).

"I loved them. I was a watchwoman for them in order to protect them. I was really scared of the environment, and I took extra precautions to protect them when they were growing. For graduate study, they had to go to the hostel. To guard them, I accompanied them, rented a house, and stayed with them" (Mother 8).

Apart from providing external facilities to the children, the parents were eager to instill in them internal values and skills like making them strong to survive in society independently, make their own living, take responsibility for their lives, and grow with maturity.

"According to my ability, I have educated them as much as they want. Now it is their responsibility to look after their lives. We are there to support them. I expect them to live a good life in society" (Father 3).

"I also expect them to have the values of life, like hard work, commitment, sincerity, and so on. If they have them, they will live their lives happily, even with a simple lifestyle. They should reach somewhere in life. They should respect others and elders" (Mother 4).

2) Parental Integrity

Parental integrity is another factor in understanding the concept of parenthood. The disposition of the parents plays a role in bringing up the children. The data revealed a few elements such as spirituality, support systems, and living styles contributing to their integrity.

Praying to God and remembering God in different aspects of the parents' lives were essential to their parenthood as well as their mental well-being.

"I thanked God for such a wonderful family and prayed that God continued to bless us in every way like children continued to be fine with good health. I kept up my family prayer. Early morning Divine Mercy prayer was important" (Father 1).

"I pray to God and entrust it to God that my sons' need has to be given" (Mother 4).

The parents received enough support from their parents and, partially, from their siblings. Since they were good and had integrity in society and the workplace, they could get financial and moral help from their boss and neighbors.

"Though there are a lot of ups and downs in my life, my wife is my constant support. Another important person who stood by me was my boss. He is supportive at any moment of my life" (Father 1).

"It was hard for me to manage my child and school. My in-laws, with their poor condition, helped a lot. Whenever my children became sick, we could not run to the hospital. Sometimes our neighbors helped us. Then my husband met with an accident and became lame" (Mother 9).

The parents could adapt to life situations for the sake of the children and themselves. They lived a simple life with the minimum and managed life better.

"In the first three years of our married life, we just had a simple life. We did not live in a glamorous way. We wanted to raise our children with good education and with good character. We were happy to have food on our table. We were just satisfied with simple things" (Mother 1).

"We had a lot of support through our priests. We don't have any other financial help from anybody. Since we learned to live with the minimum, we can manage still better" (Father 2).

3) The Presence of Children as a Source and Resource

The children are the source of their mental well-being because of the way they are. Their physical presence due to the birth in the family, academic excellence with achievements and rewards they received from the school, the maturity of growth in the family and society, and gaining of reputation make the parents more fulfilled and satisfied. They see their children as gifts from God.

"After two years, we had a son. I was pleased that I had a goal to live my life" (Father 1). "It was a happy beginning, and God gave two beautiful sons. Concerning the number of children, I did not have plans. Every child is a blessing that I believe in" (Mother 1).

"I was delighted when they got prizes in school or were recognized as good children by the church and society. And those times I shed happy tears that were more valuable than the diamond the children gave" (Mother 2).

"The most rewarding thing is that my son and daughter are growing well with maturity" (Father 6).

"Looking at the cheerful faces of my children, money did not seem a big issue" (Mother 9).

The parents expect that the children will be their resources for future and continuous well-being in terms of being well-mannered and loyal to them after they have their own families. They are the resources to take care of them in their old age, at times of sickness and difficulties.

"My children have regard for us. In times of difficulties, they are there for us. They should not forget how we cared for them" (Mother 1).

"My health is not so good. I feel weak and tired very often. I am worried about it. At the same time, I am confident that I will be taken care of by my children. I can say it because even after returning from their jobs, they help me do the housework and take care of buffaloes" (Mother 2).

"I hope that they get good life partners later. Still, there is time for them to decide and start their own families. And my son, when he finishes his studies, will find a good job, have a good family and be able to support us as we grow old" (Mother 7).

4) Progressive Parent-Child Relationship

The relationship between parents and children differs in their developmental stages. The stages were children, adolescents and adults. There is gradual progress in the relationship between parents and children as children, adolescents, and adults. Similarly, the parents also had different ways to relate with them.

"When they were children, they used to sit on my lap even if I was drunk. They discuss many things; sometimes, they approach me through their mother. They are not scared of me. If they make mistakes, they hide from me. They go to their mother. As they grew up as adolescents, they became more responsible in the house, schools, colleges, and the church. As adults, they don't have much time for me" (Father 3).

"As a mother, my relationship with my children is very good and healthy. They are close to me. I am very friendly with them. When they were children, I was very affectionate; now, they show that affection and care for me. I don't see many changes in them. But now they are more independent. I have been relating with them as a friend. They also share everything with me even growing up" (Mother 4).

"They have lots of friends outside. They think I am angry and strict; they tell everything to their mother. I dream of giving them a bright future and wish to teach them so much to survive in this world. I meet with failures. My children don't listen to

me at all. When I start saying something, they behave as though I don't exist to them; either they play with mobiles or somehow escape from me. My wife also feels bad for them" (Father 5).

"The children grew up nicely. I can think of many changes in parenting in these many years. When they were children, our presence was important. They learned to imitate us. Growing up, they started going out to play, and our guidance and correction were important. When they became teenagers, understanding them was important. And when they are adults, free space to grow is important. I understood this. Accordingly, I dealt with them. They are so attached to me" (Mother 9).

5) Parenthood as Being for the Children

Parenthood is being for and with the children. It comprises the parental roles and responsibilities for the well-being of their children. It is also connected with the children physically and being in communion with them when they are at a distance and after they are married.

"Parenthood is to bring up the children with good character and a happy living. It is also about being together and being for others which requires a lot of sacrifices, trust and love" (Mother 1).

"It is not merely fulfilling the responsibilities and duties but living and sharing the lives with our children with eternal values" (Father 6).

"Parenthood is a gift of God. Parenting is not only about bearing children and bringing them up but also about making them face the world courageously. It is not only giving life, resources, education but also sharing time, love and respect" (Mother 8).

"I learned I could not achieve all I wanted through my children. They have their own time and space. Only then will they be different and better. Otherwise, they will represent me in their life" (Father 9).

6) Impending Concerns

Parents' mental well-being predominantly relies on the impending concerns of children's future well-being and their desires and dreams.

Children's Future Well-being

Children's future well-being is one of the concerns of the parents. The concerns are as they get a proper job, settle with marriage; form new families; they remain united with siblings and parents; they continue to grow with good character, remain God-fearing, and make wise decisions for their lives.

"I want to see my sons' marriage and grandchildren. I wish them to be as good to the family and society as they are now because I worry whether they will change after

marriage. I see in society, after marriage, the family gets broken, and fighting" (Father 2).

"I am worried about my children having a peaceful life, not like me. They should have their own houses and permanent houses. I want my children to always be united with their families and us" (Mother 3).

"I am thinking about children only. They should not go astray. I wish that we need happiness and peace in the family. If they don't change themselves, it is challenging for them to get girls for marriage. This is my fear" (Mother 5).

"My future expectations for my children are to give them in marriage. So, I have to find good boys with good reputations. I want them to run the family with commitment and hard work. I will be happy if they go for jobs or have the opportunities to go for jobs" (Father 8).

"Now the only worry is about the marriages of our children. Secondly, they should know the value of money and spend accordingly" (Father 9).

Parents' Desires and Dreams

Parents have their concerns, like being healthy and happy. They are eager to see their children run their families, play with grandchildren, and re-establish family bonds in their native places. The parents want to spend more time with their life partners and fulfill their dreams of doing something for society.

"I plan to go back to my hometown. I have a small house there and a piece of field. I can live there with my wife. We will have our relatives there" (Father 1).

"Presently, I am worried about my health. My eyesight is blurry, not able to hear properly, not able to walk longer, etc. We want our children to take care of us in the future without forgetting the past and how we cared for them even during poverty and family struggles. I hope they talk to us occasionally, and sometimes they visit us" (Mother 3).

"We hope that they realize their parents' values, treat them with kindness and take care of them when they are sick or old. I don't curse them, but I wish and pray that they learn from their mistakes and live peacefully" (Father 5).

"We are already in the 22nd year of married life. After three years, we will have the silver jubilee celebration as the celebration of thanksgiving and celebration of relationship. I am going to invite all my relatives and my wife's relatives. It will be a family get-together" (Father 6).

"The rewarding thing I am looking for is, after retirement, to conduct tuition for the children on a larger level. It is not for earning money, but giving opportunities for the poor children to study." (Father 7).

Discussions

Through reflexive thematic analysis with an inductive approach, the researcher drew six themes meaningful to the research questions and ensured respondent-based meanings (Byrne, 2021). The themes are 1) Parental Responsibility, 2) Parental Integrity, 3) Presence of Children, 4) Progressive Parent-Child Relationship, 5) Parenthood as Being for the children and 6) Impending Concerns. These themes give different ways to understand parenthood and the mental well-being of parents with adult children among Indian families.

Parenthood: For Leon (2002), parenthood is a psychosocial construct, while for Polivanova (2018), parenthood is a social role. According to Hansen (2012), parenthood gives meaning and fulfillment to couples, while childless couples experience emptiness and loneliness in their marital lives. Additionally, it is imperative to consider the responsibilities of the parents as well. A mother is responsible for the initial education of her children in India and later allows them to be more independent and self-reliant (Mila, 2012). For Barnhart, Raval, et al. (2013), one of the parents' goals is to make the children autonomous, competent, and self-expressive.

The concept of parenthood by the parents with the adult children is understood by parental responsibility, parental integrity, and being for the children. Firstly, parental responsibility is a vital aspect of parenthood. It begins even before the marriage about being parents and having their own family. Some did not have any idea about marital life or expectation about having children, while others wanted to establish themselves before entering their family lives and having children. They prepare themselves to be teachers and great influencers for their children. They fulfill the needs and expectations of the children. They provide a conducive atmosphere for shelter and education. The other areas the parents concentrated on fulfilling the needs of the children, the data revealed, are taking care of the children, making opportunities for their studies and job and providing security to their children. They instill values and skills like making them vital to surviving in society independently, making their own living, taking responsibility for their lives and growing with maturity. They toil hard to seek a reasonable settlement, deal with health issues, and establish a good family. They struggled to be with the children despite having situations like work-family conflict and separation from the family due to work. They had challenges in dealing with financial issues, in-laws' issues, and remaining faithful to their partner.

Secondly, parental integrity is another factor in understanding the concept of parenthood. The disposition of the parents plays a role in bringing up the children. The religion and spirituality of the parents contributed to their mental well-being, especially in times of trials and life challenges. They thank God for the children and pray to God for their health and a happy family. They made prayer a part of their lifestyle. The parents received enough support from their parents and partially, from their siblings. Since they were good and had integrity in society and the workplace, they could get financial and moral support from their boss and neighbors. The extension of support received from others helped to care for the children and themselves. The parents could adapt to changing life situations for the sake of their children.

Thirdly, parenthood is being for and with the children. It is also connected with them physically and being in communion with them when they are at a distance and after they are married. Togetherness is the fruit of true love and trust. It is the bond established between the parents and the children during life's journey with love and respect. It is a gift of God; through this, the children become better than their parents in their own space.

Mental Well-Being of Parents: The nature of mental well-being and self-esteem of parents varies according to parental styles, and there is interconnectedness between parental types and well-being (Milevsky, Schlechter, & Keehn, 2007). Parental satisfaction and mental well-being are attached to the achievement of adult children, which removes the loneliness from their parents. Such parents get satisfied with health, education, good relationships, and spirituality rather than job and salary (Olawa & Idemudia, 2019). The mental well-being of the parents and their children depends on their togetherness in the family (Stack, Serbin, & Barrieau, 2010).

The mental well-being of the parents highly depends on the presence of children, the progressive parent-child relationship, and their impending concerns. Firstly, the mental well-being of the parents is highly enhanced by the presence of children, being sources and resources for the parents. The children are the sources of mental well-being because of the way they are. They see their children as gifts from God. Their physical presence due to the birth in the family, academic excellency with achievements and rewards they received from the school, the maturity of growth in the family and society, and gaining of reputation make the parents more fulfilled and satisfied. The parents also expect the children to be their resources of future and continuous well-being in terms of being well-mannered and loyal to them after they have their own families. They are the resources to take care of them in their old age, at the time of sickness and difficulties.

Secondly, parents' mental well-being relies on the impending concerns of children's future well-being and parents' desires and dreams. Children's future well-being is one of the major concerns of parents. The circumstances include getting a proper job, marrying, forming new families, remaining united with siblings and parents, continuing to grow in good character, remaining God-fearing, and making wise decisions for their lives. Parents have their concerns, like being healthy and happy. They are eager to see their children run their families, play with grandchildren, and re-establish the family bonds in their native palaces. The parents want to spend more time with their life partners and fulfill their dreams of doing something for society.

Finally, the relationship between parents and children differs in their developmental stages. The stages were children, adolescents, and adults. There is gradual progress in the relationship between parents and children. As children, they are obedient, disciplined, listen to their parents, and behave maturely. During their adolescent years, though they share and consult their parents to a certain level, they behave strangely getting irritated and angry at times and get involved in gadgets, and are influenced by friends. As adults, they are serious about their further studies, job, and their future lives. Some are away from their families for studies and employment, while some don't show any regard for their parents.

Similarly, the parents also had different ways to relate with them during their developmental stages. When the children were small, the parents provided all that was required; as they grew into adolescents, they supported and guided them; they gave space and freedom to their adult children and related with them as friends, though they expected their presence and care. Generally, the children relate to their mothers more than their fathers in a friendly manner. Sometimes when children are corrected, they react to their fathers; at the same time, they share everything with their mothers.

In understanding parenthood, parents show mutual and complementary contributions in fulfilling the responsibilities and handling the challenges. Fathers establish stability for forming families, while mothers have parental integrity. They both share mutually in handling challenges like educating children, protecting them, providing shelter and hygiene, and offering integral support. They are satisfied with the presence of the children. They have future concerns for the children, while the mothers have more personal impending concerns.

Conclusion with Significance and Limitations

The present study served to understand parenthood and the mental well-being of parents in the context of Indian families. This study also brought forth the beliefs, expectations, and views of parenthood understood separately by parents and their mental well-being. Parenthood is about fulfilling responsibilities and being there for the children physically and even when they are away. Parents' mental well-being lies in the way they relate to their children and the presence of the children. They are also satisfied with their achievements and when they become parental resources. This study also enumerated how the parents related to the children in their developmental stages. It contributed significantly to the body of literature with concepts, ideas, and definitions. The study's findings invigorated future researchers to investigate this subject phenomenon.

The available related literature on conceptions of parenthood and the mental well-being of the parents was minimal. Since the sample number of participant families was small and, families were just from three states of India, there were difficulties in generalizing the themes explored. The participant's ability to express and communicate their feelings and thoughts in their mother tongues and online platform and translate the data into English must have possibly affected the quality of the study.

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