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Parentification, Perceived Stress, and Disruptive Behavior in Adolescents

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how parentification and perceived stress impact adolescents' psychological and behavioural adjustment. This study explored the associations between parentification, perceived stress, and disruptive behaviour, and the predictive and mediating effects of these variables. The method of the research was descriptive cross sectional, purposive sampling was used for gathering samples, the number of samples obtained was 250.The methods used were descriptive cross sectional design, purposive sampling was used for sampling. The Parentification Inventory, Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and Disruptive Behaviour Scale were used to collect the data. The SPSS Version 26 was used for descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression analysis and Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4). Results showed that parentification was not a significant predictor of perceived stress and disruptive behaviour. Perceived stress, however, was a strong predictor of disruptive behaviour.

Indirect effect of parentification on disruptive behaviour via perceived stress was also non-significant. Impression of stress seems to be a key factor related to disruptive behaviour among adolescents, while the impact of parentification could differ based on contextual and cultural factors. The results emphasize the need for stress reduction and psychological health promotion initiatives for youth in Pakistan.

Keywords: Parentification, Perceived Stress, Disruptive Behaviour, Adolescents, Mediation

Introduction

Adolescence is a time of significant changes in the body, mind, feelings, and lives. In this phase, young people increasingly become independent, but are still very much shaped by the family environment. Family dynamics, expectations and responsibilities may influence adolescents' interpretations of stressful experiences and the way they manage their emotions and behaviors. Family participation can help to encourage responsibility and maturity, but when adolescents are expected to take on responsibilities that are beyond their capabilities it may create issues. These experiences have the potential to affect young people's psychological adjustment, especially if they are asked to assume a parental role for which they are under-equipped.

Parentification is a family phenomenon that has been coming into focus within developmental and family psychology. Parentification is when children and/or teens take on roles that typically are considered to be the responsibility of a parent or another adult in the family system, whether it is a practical or emotional role. There may be a role-reversal when parents are ill or face emotional strain or marital difficulties, financial problems or other situations that prevent them from caring for their children (Hooper, 2017; Jurkovic, 2019; Tedgard et al., 2019; Burton et al., 2021). Consequently adolescents can take on care of an older sibling, chores at home, emotional support for parents, or striving for family harmony. Excessive and/or developmentally inappropriate family responsibilities could be psychologically burdensome for adolescents, in addition to providing support for their competence and maturity.

There are two main types of parentification discussed: instrumental and emotional. Instrumental parentification is defined as practical duties such as housework, money, cooking, cleaning, and sibling care. Emotional parentification refers to parents or other family members who turn emotional problems over to the adolescent, expecting them to solve the issue for the family member, or to provide emotional support or advice (Tedgard et al., 2019; Hooper, 2017). Adolescent parentification can be especially stressful due to the emotional support required to

keep the family emotionally balanced. These obligations can become routine and exhausting for teens, leading to emotional fatigue and challenges in managing both their own needs and the expectations of their families.

Perceived stress is one potential psychological outcome linked to challenging family roles. Perceived stress is defined as the individual's appraisals of how life situations are perceived as being unpredictable, uncontrollable or overwhelming. Adolescents who have similar family situations do not necessarily make similar interpretations of the situation. Family responsibilities can seem like a good and important thing for some people, and a difficult thing for others. Adolescents who are experiencing these heavy care-giving responsibilities may also be experiencing care-giving responsibilities that are similar to adult responsibilities, which can contribute to increased stress (Compas et al., 2017; McLaughlin et al., 2019).

Prior studies have linked increases in adolescents' perceived stress to various psychological and behavioral problems. Stress can affect emotional states and reactions, coping, decision making and behavior control. High levels of perceived stress have been associated with anxiety, depression, emotional regulation problems, and externalizing of behavioral issues (Evans et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2021). Adolescents may find it more challenging to adapt to the stress and frustration of a situation when it is demanding or difficult to handle, as well as to cope with interpersonal problems. The variable of perceived stress is significant in the study of psychological and behavioural adjustment in adolescents.

One of the most significant behavioral outcomes in this situation is disruptive behavior. Disruptive behavior is defined as patterns of behavior that may include aggressiveness, defiant behavior, impulsivity, and rule breaking, which can affect social and academic functioning (Beauchaine & Hinshaw, 2020; Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Young people who are stressed are more likely to have issues with emotional control and impulse control that could lead to dysregulated behavioral reactions. Past studies have therefore indicated that perceived stress may have a positive association with externalizing or disruptive behaviors.

The link between parentification, perceived stress, and disruptive behaviors is a possible conceptualization that explains the family role relationship of adolescent adjustment. Youth who take on too much emotional and/or practical family responsibility can have higher psychological needs. These demands may lead to high perceived stress and may be linked to disruptive behavioral reactions. Previous studies have focused on each of these relationships separately, indicating that parentification may be related to psychological distress and

behavioral problems, and that perceived stress may be related to behavioral dysregulation (Mika et al., 2020; Burton et al., 2021; Van Parys et al., 2022).

Despite growing academic research, there have been only a few studies that have investigated the relationship between parentification, perceived stress and disruptive behaviors in one empirical model, and very little of this research has explored this relationship at the adolescent level. Past studies have tended to either look at the psychological effect of parentification, or the behaviour of stress. The possible mediating effect of perceived stress between parentification and disruptive behaviour has been investigated less extensively compared to other psychological processes (Mika et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2021). Furthermore, most parentification research has taken place in a western cultural context which may restrict the applicability of the findings to societies with varying family structures, caregiving expectations and patterns of interdependency (Jurkovic, 2018).

Collective family structures and expectations of interdependency and care-taking norms may be relevant to the Pakistani context, as it is in this situation that family relationships and responsibilities can be influenced by this gap. The psychological connotations of taking on family roles can thus vary from one culture to another. Investigating these variables in the context of Pakistani adolescent population can help in understanding the relationship of the role dynamics with the adjustment of the adolescents and their subjective stress.

Therefore, the present study investigated the interrelationship between parentification, perceived stress and disruptive behavior among adolescent samples. Additionally, the study examined if parentification and perceived stress would relate to disruptive behaviors and if perceived stress would mediate the relationship between parentification and disruptive behaviors. The study sought to add to the growing body of literature by looking at these variables together to examine aspects of family dynamics and psychological and behavioral adjustment in adolescence.

Literature Review

Parentification and Adolescents Development

Parentification is the breaking apart of traditional inter-generational roles and the role reversal of children or young people taking on the duties traditionally held by parents or adults. The idea is very controversial in family psychology, as it signifies shifts in family roles and responsibilities, which can have an impact on children's and adolescents' psychological growth

(Hooper, 2017; Jurkovic, 2019). Parentification can arise when parents are not able to carry out their caregiver role due to issues like illness, emotional problems, marital conflict, financial issues, and other family factors (Tedgard et al., 2019; Burton et al., 2021).

Under these conditions, adolescents can take on duties such as taking care of younger siblings, handling household tasks, doing practical tasks, giving emotional support, or settling disputes between family members. These roles can be adaptive in nature and may be a response to family situations. However, issues can arise when adolescents are required to play roles that are beyond their developmental level and coping resources (Mika et al., 2020; Van Parys et al., 2022). This means the impact of parentification will vary according to the intensity, duration, the emotional demands of the responsibilities, and the family context in which they occur.

Parentification can be placed into two categories: instrumental parentification, which tends to be more transactional, and emotional parentification, which has an emotional undertone. Instrumental parentification has to do with hands-on care and household duties: cooks, cleans, does household chores, looks after siblings. Emotional parentification refers to duties in the context of the emotional needs of the family. Adolescents can hear the concerns of parents, give reassurance, give advice, feel responsible for keeping the family emotionally stable (Hooper, 2017; Tedgard et al., 2019).

This is important to differentiate between these types as the emotional responsibilities can have different psychological implications than the practical responsibilities. There can be clear and limited instrumental responsibilities, and there can be emotional responsibilities that are hard to pinpoint and are ongoing, psychological responsibilities. Depending on how adolescents feel about themselves and their parents' emotional needs, they might be subjected to more psychological stress as they are asked to deal with emotions that go beyond what they are developmentally equipped to handle.

Some research has indicated that the consequences of parentification need not be consistent. Competence, responsibility, empathy and practical skills can develop through family responsibilities, if they are developmentally appropriate and within supportive family relationships. Too much or too much of a strain on any aspect of the responsibilities can, however, cause psychological stress if the adolescent's perception of the responsibility is that it is unfair, overwhelming or hard to manage. The context of family support, cultural norms, coping mechanisms, and the perceived responsibility fairness may, therefore, shape adolescent experiences of parentification (Hooper, 2017; Van Parys et al., 2022).

Parentification and Perceived Stress

Parentification has been in recent focus with regard to the association between parentification and perceived stress, as youth with parentification responsibilities might have further psychological stressors. Adolescent kids have developmental difficulties with education, peer relations, identity development and growing independence. If these demands are compounded by considerable caregiving needs, adolescents can find it even more challenging to strike a balance among the various parts of their lives.

Burton et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between parentification and adolescent adjustment and found that adolescents who reported high levels of emotional parentification had more psychological problems. Likewise, Mika et al. (2020) examined parentification and psychological wellbeing and discovered that youngsters engaged in substantial amounts of parentification exhibited higher psychological distress and emotional exhaustion. The results indicate that over-responsibility can disrupt adolescents' emotional adjustment when families' demands are greater than their developmental and emotional capacities.

Tedgard et al. (2019) used qualitative interviews to examine adolescents' experience of parentification. They found that there was often a strong sense of responsibility and engagement with the family members that was linked to caregiving responsibilities. Meanwhile, the participants mentioned emotional burden and restricted opportunities for personal development. The results indicate that parentification can be a burden and a responsibility to parents. How adolescents feel about the roles of caregiver could thus be related to whether the situation is manageable and supported, or is too much and too demanding.

This emotional parentification may be important for perceived stress. Those young people who are responsible for managing emotions of parents, offering emotional support to parents, or maintaining family harmony can be subjected to psychological expectations which can be challenging to distinguish from their own emotional growth. This can lead to emotional fatigue and sensitivity to stress (Hooper et al., 2020; Mika et al., 2020).

Thus, previous studies have theoretically and empirically justified the exploration of parentification in relation to perceived stress. But there are contextual variables that may affect the relationship. Family roles can be perceived as stressful or not depending on family support, coping resources, and family beliefs and values, as well as the youth's interpretation of their role. The complexity of this is important as it is necessary to look at the relationship empirically

rather than make assumptions about the psychological effects of different types of parentification.

Parentification has also been suggested as a possible factor linked with behavioral problems. Children in adolescence who have too many responsibilities in the family may have to deal with emotional overload, chronic stress or not being able to get the developmental support that they need from their parents. Such experiences can impact emotional regulation and behavioral functioning.

The literature has demonstrated that adolescents who face stressful and emotionally challenging family roles might exhibit higher psychological and behavioral problems (Mika et al., 2020). There can be a rise in frustration and emotional exhaustion in adolescents when demands from the family persist. The challenges around these experiences can lead to an externalization of response, such as aggression, impulsivity, defiance and other disruptive behaviours.

But parentification is not necessarily directly or universally linked to disruptive behaviour. Parentification impacts can vary with the nature of the parentifying role and the setting of the parentifying. Adolescents with emotional support and appreciation may have different interpretations of family responsibilities compared to adolescents who feel neglected, loaded, and/or excessively responsible for family functioning.

Theoretical information regarding family dynamics also indicates that role disruption could affect behavior indirectly, by way of psychological processes. Parentification can impact stress, emotional regulation, coping or family relations and then impact behavioral adjustment. The reasons why this is important are that it is important to examine parentification as related to possible psychological mechanisms to understand the association between parentification and disruptive behavior.

Perceived Stress and Disruptive Behavior

Perceived stress was considered an important factor associated to the behavior adjustment of the adolescents. Stress can impact emotional control, decision making, frustration tolerance and impulse control. Adolescents who are stressed out can then be less capable of dealing with situations that are stressful.

Evans et al. (2018) investigated how perceived stress is correlated with behavioural problems among adolescents, and found that increased stress correlated with increased disruptive

behavioural tendencies. Likewise, Wadsworth et al. (2019) investigated the connection between adolescent behavioral outcomes and stress exposure, and their results showed that adolescents who had higher stress levels had more externalizing behaviors. Lippold et al. (2016) also found that when stress levels were higher among the adolescents, behavioral difficulties were higher as well.

These results support the hypothesis that perceived stress could be related to disruptive behavior. Young people who face significant psychological stressors could be at higher risk for emotional vulnerability and behavioral dyscontrol. Stress can diminish the capacity to manage emotional reactions, and heighten impulsive responses to difficult situations.

The connection is especially applicable in educational and social settings. Disruptive behaviour may affect one's performance in the classroom, socialization with peers, and social functioning in general. If this is the case, then being able to understand the psychological causes of disruptive behaviour can aid in the development of better interventions. In addition to targeting observable behaviors, interventions may need to reach the subjective perception of stress a teenager feels and/or his or her skills in psychologically handling stress.

Theoretical Framework: Family Systems Theory

In this research, the theories that were used were Family Systems Theory which considers the family as a dynamic system of connected people whose roles, relationships, and emotional reactions impact each other. The roles of children and parents are changing for example, when kids take on parental responsibilities which can impact generational boundaries and psychological adjustment.

As viewed from this perspective, over-parentification can cause psychological burden, especially if parents are unable to provide sufficient emotional support for adolescents, which can impact their emotional and behavioral functioning. The theory also lends itself to the study of indirect pathways, in which changes in family roles come to impact behavior through psychological experiences. Thus, the present study investigated the possible mediation of perceived stress between parentification and disruptive behaviour.

Perceived Stress is a possible mediator

Parentification can lead to higher levels of emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents, as well as higher levels of psychological demands and perceived stress. Some past work

indicates that psychological strain can result from excessive emotional and/or practical responsibilities (Mika et al., 2020; Burton et al., 2021), and that greater perceived stress is linked to externalizing and behavioural dysregulation (Evans et al., 2018; Wadsworth et al., 2019).

These relationships have been studied individually, but there is not much research that has looked at the role of perceived stress as a mediator between parentification and disruptive behaviour. This is similar to the relationship in different cultures, where family roles and expectations vary from one culture to another between individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Jurkovic, 2018). For this reason, the present study looked at the relationship between parentification, perceived stress, and disruptive behaviour together, and specifically if perceived stress would mediate the link between parentification and disruptive behaviour for adolescents.

Rationale of the Study

The individual links between parentification and perceived stress have been explored in previous studies, and so have been the links between parentification and behavioural outcomes. Behavioural problems in adolescents have been linked to higher parentification (Mika et al., 2020), and emotional and behavioural dysregulation to perceived stress (Compas et al., 2017). But, there is limited research that has investigated perceived stress as a mediator between parentification and disruptive behaviours. The relationship between family role and adolescent behaviour could be explored to gain insights into psychological mechanisms that underlie this relationship (Van Parys et al., 2022; Burton et al., 2021).

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the relationship between parentification, perceived stress, and disruptive behaviours in adolescents.
- To determine whether parentification and perceived stress predict disruptive behaviours in adolescents.
- To examine whether perceived stress mediates the relationship between parentification and disruptive behaviours.

Hypothesis of the Study

H1. Parentification is likely to be positively associated with perceived stress and disruptive behaviours among adolescents.

H2. Parentification and perceived stress are likely to positively predict disruptive behaviours.

H3. Perceived stress is likely to mediate the relationship between parentification and disruptive behaviours.

Method

Research Design: A quantitative cross-sectional correlational research design was used in this study to examine the connection between parentification, perceived stress, and disruptive behaviours in adolescents.

Sample and Sampling Strategy: The population of this present research consisted of adolescents aged 13 to 19 years both male and female studying in high school. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants for the study. The sample size for the present study was 250 participants.

Inclusion Criteria: Individuals in adolescence aged 13 - 19 at the time of participation (Male & Female). Residing with family members or maintaining regular interaction with the family system. Informed consent provided by the participant, with parental or guardian consent obtained where required by ethical regulations.

Exclusion Criteria: Participants were excluded if they had severe psychiatric disorders, intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, substance dependence, current psychiatric hospitalization or intensive psychological treatment, significant emotional distress, or if their responses were incomplete, inconsistent, or invalid.

Assessment Measures

The parentification, perceived stress and disruptive behaviour scales were standardized, while a demographic information sheet was developed by the researcher.

Demographic Information Sheet: The demographic sheet included data on age, gender, class/grade, type of school, family system, birth order, number of siblings, parents' education and job.

Parentification: Parentification is defined as children taking on parental roles and responsibilities (Jurkovic, 2018). The Parentification Inventory (PI; Hooper, 2009) was used to assess parentification. This 22-item self-report scale is rated on a 5 point Likert scale ranging

from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) with higher scores reflecting higher levels of parentification. In the current study, the scale had an acceptable internal consistency of α = .83.

Perceived Stress: Perceived Stress is how individuals feel they are experiencing stress in their life as being unpredictable, stressful and too overwhelming (Cohen et al., 2016). The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10; Cohen et al., 1983) is a 10-item scale that is rated on a scale of 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often) and higher scores are reflective of increased perceived stress. The internal consistency of the present study was relatively low (α = .59).

Disruptive Behaviour: The Disruptive Behaviour Scale Professed by Students (DBSPS; Gotzens et al., 2010) was used to assess disruptive classroom behaviours. Each item on this scale has a rating from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) with higher scores reflecting more disruptive behaviour. In the current study the scale had an internal consistency of α.84.

Ethical Considerations: All ethical requirements were observed in the study. Relevant school administration have given permission and participants have been informed about the study prior to participation. It was voluntary and consent was obtained and confidentiality and anonymity was maintained. The participants were notified that they could drop out at any time without consequences. No identifying information was gathered and the data were only used for academic purposes.

Procedure: The study was approved by the relevant institution and Ethical Review Committee (ERC) and the permission of the university and school administration was taken. The students who were eligible for the study were informed about the study and they participated voluntarily after giving consent. The participants filled out a demographic sheet with the instructions of the researcher and the Parentification Inventory, Perceived Stress Scale, and Disruptive Behaviour Scale. Questionnaires were administered in the classrooms, and were completed in about 15–20 minutes. Confidentiality was guaranteed and questionnaires that were completed were checked for completeness before data was entered into SPSS for analysis.

Results

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of the relationships among parentification, perceived stress, and disruptive behaviour in adolescents. Data from 250 participants were analysed using SPSS. The results are presented in the following order: demographic characteristics, descriptive statistics, reliability, correlations, regression, and mediation analysis.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	*M (SD)*	*f (%)*
Age	*15.07 (1.67)*	
Gender		
Female		70 (28.0)
Male		180 (72.0)
Birth Order		
First Born		63 (25.0)
Middle Born		130 (52.0)
Last Born		52 (20.8)
Only Child		5 (2.0)
Family System		
Nuclear		67 (26.8)
Joint		183 (73.2)
School Type		
Government		224 (89.6)
Private		26 (10.4)

Participants were aged 13–19 years, with middle-aged adolescents comprising the majority of the sample. Males represented the larger proportion of participants. Most participants were middle-born, followed by first- and last-born children. The majority belonged to joint families and attended government schools, while only 26 participants attended private schools.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics & Reliability of Study Measures
Parentification (PI), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and Disruptive Behaviour Scale (DBS)

Scales	*M*	*SD*	Ranges		Cronbach's Alpha (*α*)
			Min	Max	
Parentification Inventory (PI)	70.42	14.11	23.00	110.00	.82
Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)	16.46	6.19	00.00	33.00	.59
Disruptive Behaviour Scale (DBS)	39.59	11.52	16.00	69.00	.83

Note. *α = Cronbach's Alpha; n = Sample Size. α ≥ .70 indicates acceptable internal consistency.*

The study variable's descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2 suggesting that middles-aged adolescents made up the majority of the sample. Standard Deviation Statistics show that participant responses varied sufficiently across all study variables. The Parentification Inventory showed acceptable reliability and adequate internal consistency among the items, the Disruptive Behaviour Scale likewise demonstrated strong reliability, and the Perceived Stress Scale revealed very low internal consistency in the current sample.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4.3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation among Parentification, Perceived Stress, and Disruptive Behaviour

Variables	1	2	3
1. Parentification	—	.068	.048
2. Perceived Stress		—	.352**
3. Disruptive Behaviour			—

Note. N=250. p *< .05.* ***p*** *< .01**.*

Parentification was not significantly associated with perceived stress or disruptive behaviour. In contrast, perceived stress showed a significant positive association with disruptive behaviour in adolescents.

Table 4.4: Simple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Disruptive Behaviour from Parentification

Variables	***B***	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	**95%CI**	
						Minimum	**Maximum**
Constant	36.81	__	3.72	9.90	<.001	29.48	44.13
Parentification	0.040	.048	0.05	0.76	.446	-0.06	0.14
R^2	.002						
Adjusted R^2	-.002						
F	0.582						

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether parentification predicted disruptive behaviour. The model was not statistically significant. Parentification was not a significant predictor of disruptive behaviour.

Table 4.5: Direct and Indirect Effects of Parentification on Disruptive Behaviour through Perceived Stress

Effects	***B***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	**95% *CI***
Total Effects (c)	0.04	0.05	0.76	.446	[-0.06, 0.14]
Direct Effect (c')	0.02	0.05	0.41	.679	[-0.08, 0.12]
Indirect Effect (ab)	0.019	0.025	__	__	[-0.031, 0.070]

Note. *Bootstrap sample = 5000; CI = Confidence Interval; Path a = Parentification's Effect on Perceived Stress; Path b = Perceived Stress's Effect on Disruptive Behaviour, and Path c' = Parentification's Direct Effect on Disruptive Behaviour after Perceived Stress has been controlled for.*

To determine whether perceived stress was a mediator between parentification and disruptive behaviour, PROCESS Model 4 was examined. Perceived stress was not significantly predicted by parentification, but disruptive behaviour was significantly predicted by perceived stress. Parentification's influence on disruption was also not significant. The indirect effect was not significant since its bootstrap confidence interval contained a 0. Therefore, there was no mediation effect of perceived stress between parentification and disruptive behaviour.

Conclusion

There was no support for the mediation hypothesis. Perceived stress significantly predicted disruptive behaviour, while parentification did not significantly predict perceived stress or disruptive behaviour, and it did not have an indirect effect on disruptive behaviour through perceived stress.

Table 4.6: Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	**Decision**
H1: Parentification is likely to be positively related with perceived stress and disruptive behaviours among adolescents.	Not Supported
H2: Parentification and perceived stress are likely to positively predict disruptive behaviours.	Partially Supported
H3: Perceived stress will mediate the relationship between parentification and disruptive behaviours.	Not Supported

The findings partially supported the proposed hypotheses. Parentification did not significantly predict perceived stress. Therefore, the proposed mediating pathway was not established. However, the findings partially supported H2. Perceived stress significantly predicted disruptive behaviour, whereas parentification was not a significant predictor of disruptive behaviours.

Discussion

This study sought to investigate the association between adolescent disruptive behaviour, perceived stress and parentification. In addition the study also explored whether perceived

stress was a mediator between parentification and disruptive behaviour. Adolescence is a very important developmental stage characterized by changes in the body, thoughts, feelings, and social interactions. Psychological and behavioural adjustment in the context of family experience is highly influential during this time. It was found that parentification, the taking on of emotional and care-giving roles by children in the family that are developmentally inappropriate, may be a risk factor for negative psychological outcomes. Based on this, the present study explored the relationship between parentification, perceived stress and disruptive behaviour among adolescents.

According to the 1st hypothesis, parentification was expected to be positively correlated with disruptive behaviour.H1 predicted a positive correlation between parentification and disruptive behaviour. Unexpectedly, the results showed that parentification was not significantly related to disruptive behaviour. Analysis of the regression further revealed parentification was not significantly related to disruptive behaviour. Thus, there was no evidence to support the first hypothesis. The present findings could be attributed to cultural and contextual factors. Adolescents frequently participate in domestic duties and caregiving activities as part of normal family functioning in collectivistic societies such as Pakistan. Family responsibilities needn't always be seen as a burden or a bad thing; family responsibilities can also be seen as a sense of duty, cooperation and commitment. Adolescents can thus adapt to these responsibilities without resorting to externalizing behavioural problems.

The results support evidence showing that some parentification experiences do not necessarily lead to maladjustment. The authors of the study (Hooper et al., 2018) suggest that moderate levels of instrumental parentification can be linked to resilience, competence, maturity and responsibility. Adolescents might have positive developmental outcomes if family members recognize and back their caregiving responsibilities, instead of facing behavioral issues. As such, the impact of parentification can be different based on the intensity, length, and emotional dimension of the experience. Jurkovic (2014) proposed that extended parentification may cause disruptions in normal emotional development and result in behaviour issues, but the current study indicated that parentification does not automatically result in disruptive behaviour. Family caregiving experiences may have been a context for developing responsivity, resilience, and adaptive coping, which could buffer adolescents from developing behavioural problems. Thus, cultural expectations, emotional context, and family support may influence the relationship between parentification and adolescent adjustment.

The second hypothesis was that parentification would be positively correlated with adolescents' perception of stress. The results showed a positive, but non-significant relationship between parentification and perceived stress. Likewise, in this regression analysis, parentification was not significantly associated with perceived stress. So, the second hypothesis was rejected. This discovery might be linked to the concept of caring duties in family life among adolescents. Brother/sisterhood and paternalism are culturally expected behaviors in many Pakistani families. These responsibilities might thus be perceived as normal family duties, not sources of stress, for adolescents. The relationship between caregiving and increased perceived stress is not direct.

The second hypothesis further suggested that disruptive behaviour would be positively predicted by parentification and perceived stress. The results indicated that the perceived stress was a significant positive predictor of disruptive behaviour, whereas parentification was not a significant predictor. However, the hypothesis was partially supported. The results indicate that the subjective evaluation of stress has a stronger association with adolescent behavioural adjustment than does the actual presence of family responsibilities. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping suggests that how someone reacts to a stressor will depend on how they think about the stressor and how they think they can cope. Thus, given similar caregiving situations, two adolescents can show varying behavioural outcomes depending on their coping styles and perceived social support.

The results for the perceived stress and disruptive behaviour are also significant with regard to previous studies. Compas et al. (2017) found that adolescent adolescents who experience high levels of stress may exhibit poor emotional regulation and behavioral problems. Likewise, Evans et al. (2018) reported that excessive stress can lead to higher levels of impulsivity, aggression and externalizing behaviors. Stress can impact adolescents' ability to effectively manage their emotions and adolescents under psychological stress may engage in distressing behaviours as maladaptive coping mechanisms. Therefore, it seems that perceived stress is more directly related to disruptive behaviour in the current sample.

The research findings also indicate that interventions targeting disruptive behaviors should not be limited to decreasing family responsibilities. Rather, psychological resources, such as stress management, emotional regulation and adaptive coping strategies, could be a key part of interventions for adolescents. School Psychologists and mental health professionals can

consider strategies that build adolescents' skills at managing stress and emotions, even if they continue to have responsibilities as family caregivers.

The third hypothesis was that parentification and disruptive behaviour would be mediated by perceived stress. The mediation analysis did not support this hypothesis. Perceived stress did not significantly mediate the effect of parentification on disruptive behaviour, but rather parentification had a non-significant indirect relation in the prediction of perceived stress. The indirect effect of parentification through perceived stress was B = 0.019, BootSE = 0.025, 95% CI [-0.031, 0.070]. The mediation effect was not statistically significant as the bootstrap confidence interval contained zero. Thus, perceived stress was not a mediator of the link between parentification and disruptive behavior.

These findings are consistent with the Stress Appraisal Model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) that suggests that stressful family situations can have an impact on behavioural outcomes via psychological processes of stress. Other studies have also found indirect links between family role strain and psychological or behavioural adjustment via stress and emotional distress (Hooper et al., 2018). Adolescents in the current sample, however, might not have seen caregiving as a very stressful experience. Cultural values that emphasize family responsibility and interdependence can help alleviate stress related to parentification. It is possible, therefore, that perceived stress does not relate to disruptive behaviour in this group due to parentification.

This is because parentification and disruptive behaviour did not appear to affect each other directly, but rather indirectly via other psychosocial factors. Some factors might account for how adolescents adjust after a difficult family experience including emotional regulation, family cohesiveness, resilience, attachment security, perceived social support, coping, parental support, and self-esteem. In future studies these factors should thus be taken into account as potential mediators or moderators.

Perceived stress seems to be a significant factor in the understanding of disruptive behaviour among adolescents, overall. The parentification was marginally related to perceived stress and disruptive behaviour, and perceived stress was significantly related to disruptive behaviour and significantly predicted disruptive behaviour. Furthermore, the association of parentification and disruptive behaviour was not mediated by perceived stress. The study adds to the literature in that there is limited research on parentification from a non-Western, South Asian perspective. Most literature that is now available has been written in individualistic, western

cultural settings. The present findings thus highlight the need to explore cultural differences when studying the psychological impact of parentification. In individualistic cultures, responsibilities that are considered developmentally inappropriate can be felt as normal family responsibilities by individuals in collectivistic cultures.

The Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, its cross-sectional nature prevents inferences regarding temporal and/or causal relationships between parentification, perceived stress and disruptive behaviour. Second, data were gathered using self-report instruments that could be influenced by social desirability and self-report. Third, the sample consisted of those from a limited area and educational institutions which may limit the generalizability of the findings to students in other geographic areas. Fourth, the current sample had relatively low internal consistency for the Perceived Stress Scale, which could have compromised the measure of perceived stress. Finally, the study focused only on parentification, perceived stress, and disruptive behaviour without considering other factors that could be relevant to the psychological and family dynamics.

The Recommendations of the Study

Longitudinal designs should be employed in future research to look at developmental and temporal links between parentification, perceived stress and disruptive behaviour. More and varied samples from other cities and provinces need to be added to provide better generalizability of findings. Other psychological and family-related constructs including emotion regulation, emotional resilience, family bonding, family support, coping mechanisms, self-esteem and social support should also be explored as mediators or moderators in future studies. Qualitative or mixed-method research could help to provide nuances to adolescents' experiences of parentification and stress. Additionally, interventions that are family-focused and/or school-based, focusing on perceived stress and disruptive behavior should be considered.

Implications of the Study

The results have theoretical, clinical and educational implications. Although parentification was not significantly related to perceived stress or disruptive behaviour, perceived stress was

significantly associated with disruptive behaviour. The subjective psychological experiences of adolescents should be taken into account in understanding behavioural adjustment, which is stressed here. The findings also make a contribution to the literature, by demonstrating that the impact of parentification can be different within various cultural contexts, especially when the responsibilities seen within the family are accepted as normal in more collectivistic cultures.

The results indicate the significance of early detection and intervention for adolescent stress for mental health practitioners and schools. Stress-management, emotional-regulation, coping and resilience-building interventions may be helpful in reducing disruptive behavioural tendencies. Additionally, teachers and school Psychologists can be encouraged to identify the behaviour changes that occur in relation to psychological stress and help to arrange counselling support. Parents need to make sure that the family duties and responsibilities that adolescents have are developmentally appropriate and offer emotional support, appreciation and open communication.

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