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INTRODUCTION

The mental health of academic staff faces significant challenges due to accumulating job demands and contractual instability, which may increase psychological distress (Dani & Rohman, 2025).

However, few studies have examined perceived and physiological stress considering parental status. From the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), parenting may act as an additional demand, while personal resources may buffer stress.

METHOD

This ex post facto cross-sectional study examined perceived and physiological stress by parental status. The sample comprised 69 academics from the Faculty of Psychology and Speech Therapy at the University of Valencia (25 parents, 44 non-parents); participants were recruited via convenience (non-probability) sampling.

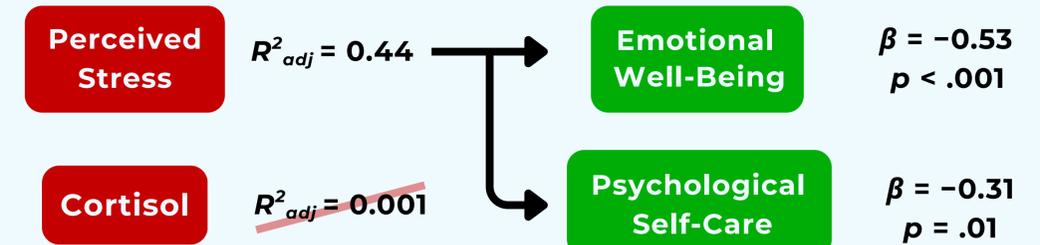
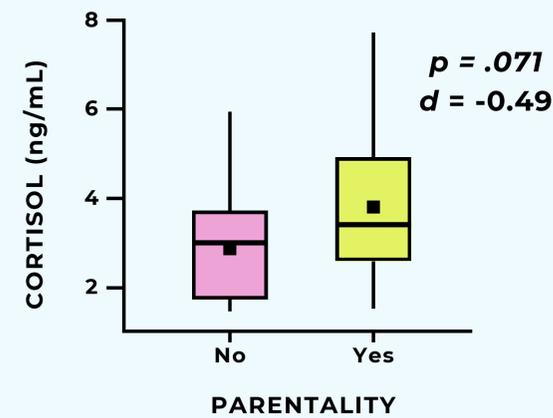
Perceived stress and personal resources were measured using validated self-report instruments and salivary cortisol was collected and analyzed by immunoassay. Cortisol analyses were restricted to a subsample of $N = 38$ (19 parents, 19 non-parents) due to logistical limitations.



Group comparisons used Welch's t and Student's t tests; multiple linear regressions tested whether personal resources predicted perceived stress and cortisol.

RESULTS

Group comparisons were non-significant (Welch's t for Perceived Stress: $t(39.7) = -0.41, p = .34$; Student's t for Cortisol: $t(36) = -1.50, p = .071$), although the Cohen's d for cortisol indicated a moderate effect ($d = -0.49$) suggesting a trend toward higher cortisol in parents compared with non-parents. Multiple regression on perceived stress was significant ($R^2_{adj} = 0.44$), showing that emotional well-being ($\beta = -0.53, p < .001$) and psychological self-care ($\beta = -0.31, p = .01$) were the only significant predictors. The regression model for cortisol was not significant ($R^2_{adj} = 0.001$) and had no significant predictors.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Findings suggest that parental status did not substantially increase perceived or physiological stress in this sample, while emotional well-being and psychological self-care emerged as protective factors and practical targets for interventions to reduce stress among academic staff.

Limitations: the cortisol subsample was purposively selected to yield 19 parents and 19 non-parents from the original sample rather than drawn at random, which may have introduced selection or investigator bias likely reducing power to detect physiological effects. Replication with larger, more diverse, and longitudinal samples is needed to clarify causal pathways and inform institutional wellbeing programs.

REFERENCES

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