

The Impact of General Trait Self-Control on Parental Burnout

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ABSTRACT

General trait self-control refers to the ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in pursuit of long-term goals, while parental burnout is characterized by physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion arising from parenting demands. With increasing modern pressures and changing family dynamics, understanding factors influencing parental well-being has become important. The present study was undertaken to examine the relationship between general trait self-control and parental burnout among parents. A sample of 229 participants was selected using snowball sampling, and the normative survey research method was employed. Data were collected using the Brief Self-Control Scale (Tangney et al., 2004) and the Parental Burnout Assessment (Roskam et al., 2018). Statistical analyses, including t-test, ANOVA, and correlation, were used. The findings revealed low levels of parental burnout, moderate levels of general trait self-control, no significant gender differences, significant age differences, and a negative significant relationship between the variables.

Keywords: General Trait Self-Control, Parental Burnout, Parenting, Self-Regulation, Parental Well-Being.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rise in societal changes, dual-career demands, and adoption of flexible family models across the globe, different aspects of family life, with parenting particularly, have redefined their roles radically. Parental burnout is now a ubiquitous phenomenon in this post-COVID-19 world. Parent-child interactions have changed dramatically, with more remote schooling, online demands, and household responsibilities taking place, which has left a rich area of research on the effectiveness of managing parental roles. Parental burnout has both short-term and long-term consequences. These issues are connected with time management, emotional regulation, family interaction, and overall parenting efficiency. Individual disparities play a big role in influencing burnout levels in parenting environments. Among other psychological attributes, general trait self-control has been found to be influential in the determination of parental behaviour and well-being. General trait self-control is widely recognised as a key personality dimension that reflects the capacity to override impulses, resist temptations, and persist in goal-directed behaviour (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). This trait enables parents to manage stress effectively or poorly in the demanding context of child-rearing; they regulate emotions to a certain degree and respond adaptively to daily parenting challenges. Past studies have indicated that self-control is a good predictor

of psychological adjustment and reduced burnout in various high-stress situations. However, the research that particularly examines general trait self-control and parental burnout is limited. Most existing studies have primarily focused on external stressors such as workload, social support, and family demands, with limited attention to internal personality factors like general trait self-control. Modern parenting is more likely to be the intersection of work demands, digital pressures, and caregiving responsibilities, which makes the role of self-control in burnout all the more crucial. This research focuses on the relationship between general trait self-control and parental burnout. This result may be useful in the context of the increased impact of individual differences in family psychology.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 Trait Theory of Self-Control

Trait Theory explains individual differences in behaviour based on stable personality characteristics. Self-control is considered a relatively enduring trait that reflects an individual's ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and actions. People with high trait self-control are generally better at resisting impulses, delaying gratification, and maintaining goal-directed behaviour. In the context of parenting, which involves continuous emotional and behavioural regulation, self-control plays a crucial role. Parents with high levels of trait self-control are more likely to remain patient, manage stress effectively, and respond to their children in a consistent and controlled manner. They are also less likely to react impulsively during challenging situations. In contrast, parents with low self-control may struggle to regulate their emotions and behaviour, leading to increased frustration, irritability, and difficulty managing parenting demands. Over time, these difficulties can accumulate and contribute to higher levels of parental burnout. Thus, Trait Theory helps explain how stable differences in self-control can influence the way parents experience and cope with the demands of parenting.

2.2 Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory suggests that individuals strive to obtain, maintain, and protect valuable resources such as energy, emotional stability, and personal capacities. Stress occurs when these resources are depleted or when demands exceed available resources. Parenting requires significant emotional, cognitive, and physical resources. Continuous caregiving responsibilities, lack of rest, and high expectations can lead to resource depletion. When parents are unable to recover or replenish these resources, they may experience chronic stress, eventually leading to parental burnout. Trait self-control can be viewed as an important personal resource within this framework. Parents with high self-control are better able to manage their energy, regulate emotions, and cope with stress effectively, thereby conserving their resources. This reduces the likelihood of burnout. On the other hand, parents with low self-control may use their resources inefficiently, experience greater emotional exhaustion, and become more vulnerable to burnout. Therefore, COR Theory explains how self-control acts as a protective factor against parental burnout by helping individuals manage and conserve their resources.

Why These Theories Are Important

The present study is based on Trait Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory. Trait Theory explains how general trait self-control influences behaviour and emotional regulation in parenting situations. COR Theory explains how self-control functions as a personal resource that helps individuals cope with stress and prevents burnout. Together, these theories provide a clear understanding of how general trait self-control can influence the development of parental burnout.

3. Review of literature:

3.1 Review of literature based on Parental Burnout

Griffith AK (2022) reviewed parental burnout and child maltreatment amid COVID-19 in “Parental Burnout and Child Maltreatment During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” published in *Journal of Family Violence*. The pandemic disrupted life via lockdowns, school closures, remote work, economic strain, and health fears, increasing parenting demands while reducing supports. Parental burnout is chronic exhaustion from demand-resource imbalances, leading to overwhelm, detachment, and inefficacy. It heightens maltreatment risks through poor regulation and irritability. Pandemic stressors like confinement, lost routines, insecurity, isolation, and blurred boundaries exacerbated burnout, potentially causing neglect or abuse. Implications include screening for burnout, mental health support, parenting resources, respite care, and community aid to protect families during crises.

Meussen L and Van Laar C (2018) examined societal pressure for perfect motherhood linked to parental burnout and career ambitions in working mothers via “Feeling Pressure to Be a Perfect Mother Relates to Parental Burnout and Career Ambitions,” published in *Frontiers in Psychology*. Intensive norms demand child prioritization, increasing stress. In 169 full-time UK/US mothers with children at home, mediation analyses showed perfect-mother pressure predicted burnout (exhaustion, distancing, reduced efficacy) via higher stress, prevention focus (avoiding mistakes), and maternal gatekeeping (limiting partner involvement). Pressure directly boosted ambitions (compensation) but indirectly lowered them through poor work-family balance. Results highlight harms to well-being, dynamics, and careers, recommending reduced pressures, shared parenting, and work-family support.

Dhanoa SK (2017) investigated the inter-relationships between parental burnout, personality traits, and parental stress among parents of neonates with hyperbilirubinemia in her study “Relationship of Parental Burnout with Parental Stress and Personality among Parents of Neonates with Hyperbilirubinemia,” published in the *International Journal of Indian Psychology*. In a sample of 200 parents (100 with male neonates and 100 with female neonates, equally split between mothers and fathers), results showed significant positive correlations between parental burnout and parental stress across all groups. Personality played a key role: neuroticism was positively associated with higher burnout (a risk factor), while extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness negatively correlated with burnout (protective factors). Parental stress was influenced by child health factors, parental well-being, and life events, with burnout linked to caregiver role overload and emotional exhaustion. No major gender differences in burnout emerged, though mothers reported slightly higher stress. These findings highlight the need for stress management and personality-informed support to reduce burnout risks in families with medically vulnerable infants, suggesting further research on cultural and longitudinal aspects.

3.2 Reviews based on Self control

Koi, P. (2022) conducted a theoretical commentary titled *Self-Control Modulates Information Salience* to examine how cognitive framing and information processing influence self-control. The study explored how individuals successfully regulate behaviour by focusing attention on certain aspects of a situation while ignoring others. The author analysed theoretical perspectives on self-control and proposed that framing strategies work because they alter the salience of information, thereby guiding decision-making and behavioural regulation. The findings suggested that self-control can be strengthened when individuals modify how they interpret or frame situations, making goal-relevant information more prominent than tempting alternatives. By shifting attention toward long-term goals and away from immediate temptations, individuals are better able to maintain self-regulated behaviour. The study also questioned whether

traditional dual-process theories of self-control fully explain these processes, emphasizing that cognitive framing and information salience may play a crucial role in successful self-regulation.

Duckworth AL, Taxer JL, Eskreis-Winkler L, Galla BM, and Gross JJ (2019) reviewed the role of self-control in academic achievement, distinguishing it from related constructs like grit and executive function, in their article “Self-Control and Academic Achievement,” published in the Annual Review of Psychology. Self-control involves aligning thoughts, feelings, and actions with long-term academic goals over immediate temptations, with evidence showing nearly all students face such conflicts. Longitudinal studies link higher self-control to better grades, attainment, and test performance. Using the process model, the authors illustrate impulse generation and regulation strategies, such as situation selection, modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation, to strengthen goal-congruent impulses and dampen distractions. Future directions emphasize integrating self-control with motivation, exploring developmental trajectories, and designing interventions to foster adaptive habits for sustained academic success.

Berkman ET, Hutcherson CA, Livingston JL, Kahn LE, and Inzlicht M (2017) reconceptualized self-control as a form of value-based choice rather than a duality of impulsive “hot” versus deliberative “cold” processes in their article “Self-Control as Value-Based Choice,” published in Current Directions in Psychological Science. They argue that self-control decisions involve assigning subjective values to options and integrating them dynamically, explaining phenomenology, behavioural, and neuroscientific data (e.g., vmPFC’s role in valuation modulated by lateral prefrontal regions). This model bridges divergent approaches, enables precise hypotheses, and suggests novel interventions like enhancing goal-congruent values to boost self-control, with future directions emphasizing computational modelling and evidence accumulation.

4. RESEARCH GAP

Although parental burnout has received growing attention in recent years, most research has primarily focused on external stressors such as workload, social support, family demands, and situational factors like dual-career pressures or post-COVID-19 changes in family dynamics. Limited studies have examined the role of internal personality factors, particularly general trait self-control, in influencing parents’ vulnerability to burnout. Moreover, the majority of existing work has been conducted in Western contexts or has explored self-control mainly in relation to academic achievement, workplace performance, or general psychological adjustment, with little consideration given to its specific impact within the high-stakes, emotionally demanding domain of parenting. Furthermore, a substantial number of studies were carried out during the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, making it difficult to understand the long-term dynamics of parental burnout in more stable yet still demanding modern family environments. Therefore, additional research is required to investigate how general trait self-control affects parental burnout among diverse groups of parents. This gap highlights the need to better understand protective psychological factors that may reduce burnout risk and promote healthier family functioning.

5. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Modern parenting demands and dual-career family models have emerged as a more common practice, and it is necessary to know what factors can affect the well-being of parents and reduce the risk of parental burnout. Parenting brings a great level of responsibility and emotional investment, but it does not suit all individuals equally, and here general trait self-control may play a crucial role. The majority of studies on

the subject have primarily focused on external stressors such as workload, social support, and family demands, and there is still a gap in our knowledge of how internal psychological factors like general trait self-control influence burnout in the demanding context of parenting. The proposed study seeks to address the existing gap by investigating the relationship between general trait self-control and parental burnout among parents. By examining these psychological drivers, we will be in a better position to understand more about what protects parents from exhaustion and promotes resilience in a family environment that is changing very fast. So, the researcher started investigation on “the impact of general trait self-control on parental burnout”.

6. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

6.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the level of parental burnout among parents
2. To study the level of general trait self- control among parents
3. To find out whether there is any significant difference in general trait self-control and parental burnout with respect to their:
 - Gender
 - Age
4. To find out whether there is any significant relationship between general trait self-control and parental burnout.

6.2. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. There is a significant difference in general trait self-control and parental burnout with respect to their:
 - Gender
 - Age
2. There is a significant relationship between general trait self-control and parental burnout.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1 RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher has used a quantitative correlational research approach in the current study.

7.2 SAMPLE

The participants were 229 parents aged 22-65 years. Snowball sampling was used to recruit the participants. This study included parents from various family backgrounds. All the people and individuals involved, including data collection participants, were subject to voluntary participation and informed consent.

7.3 TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY

The instruments of the current investigation are discussed below.

- Brief Self-Control Scale (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004).
- Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA; Roskam et al., 2018).

7.4 SCORING PROCEDURE

- The Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004) is a 13-item self-report measure of general trait self-control. All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all like me to 5 = Very much like me). Five items are reverse-scored, and the total self-control score is obtained by summing the responses after reverse scoring; higher scores indicate higher levels of general trait self-control.

- The Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA; Roskam et al., 2018) contains 23 items that assess parental burnout across four dimensions: exhaustion in the parental role, contrast with previous parental self, feelings of being fed up with parenting, and emotional distancing from children. Responses are rated on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = Never to 6 = Always). The total parental burnout score is obtained by summing all item responses, with higher scores indicating greater levels of parental burnout.

7.5 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The obtained data were handled and analysed with the help of adequate statistical analysis and interpretation of the study. The statistical methods used to analyse the data and test the hypotheses were one-way ANOVA, correlation, student’s t-test and measures of central tendency.

8. TESTING OF OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

Objective 1: To study the level of parental burnout and their dimensions among parents

Table 1: Level of Parental Burnout among Parents

Dimensions of Parental Burnout	N	Maximum Score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage of Mean
Exhaustion in Parental Burnout	229	54	11.81	11.662	21.87
Contrast with Previous Parental Self	229	36	5.02	6.441	13.94
Feelings of Being Fed Up	229	21	2.13	3.893	10.14
Emotional Distancing	229	18	3.17	3.791	17.61
Parental Burnout Total	229	129	22.13	23.082	17.16

The mean and standard deviation of the level of parental burnout among parents are presented in the table 1. The results indicate that parents exhibit a low level of parental burnout overall (M = 22.13,17,16%). Among the dimensions, Exhaustion in parental role (M = 11.81, 21.87%), Contrast with previous parental self (M = 5.02, 13.94), Feelings of being fed up (M = 2.13, 10.14%), Emotional distancing (M = 3.17, 17.61 %), indicating a low level of parental burnout.

Objective 2: To study the level of general trait self-control among parents

Table 2: Level of general trait self-control among parents

Variable	N	Maximum Score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage of Mean
General Trait Self-Control	229	65	47.16	7.214	72.55%

The mean and standard deviation of the level of general trait self-control among parents are presented in the table 2. The maximum possible score in the level of general trait self-control is 65. The mean score for

the level of general trait self-control is 47.16, and the percentage is 72.55%. Hence, from the mean score and its percentage, it is clear that the parents have a moderate level of general trait self-control.

Hypothesis 1(a): There is a significant difference in general trait self-control and parental burnout with respect to their gender

Table 3: Showing there is a significant difference in the dimensions of parental burnout and general trait self-control with respect to gender

SI. No	Dimensions of Parental Burnout	Gender	N	Means	SD	't' Value	Significance
1	Exhaustion Score	Male	102	10.35	10.560	1.699	Not Significant
		Female	127	12.98	12.394		
2	Contrast Score	Male	102	5.11	7.054	0.191	Not Significant
		Female	127	4.94	5.871		
3	Feeling Of Being Fed Up Score	Male	102	2.25	4.036	0.412	Not Significant
		Female	127	2.03	3.788		
4	Emotional Distancing Score	Male	102	2.80	3.607	1.328	Not Significant
		Female	127	3.47	3.922		
Parental Burnout Total Score		Male	102	20.51	22.980	0.950	Not Significant
		Female	127	23.43	23.172		
Self-Control Total Score		Male	102	46.66	7.403	0.940	Not Significant
		Female	127	47.56	7.063		

It is inferred from table 3, that the calculated 't' value for the dimensions of parental burnout and general trait self-control among parents is less than the table value (1.96). It is concluded that there is no significant difference in the dimensions of parental burnout and general trait self-control with respect to gender, namely, exhaustion score (1.699 < 1.96), contrast score (0.191 < 1.96), feeling of being fed up score (0.412 < 1.96), emotional distancing score (1.328 < 1.96), parental burnout total score (0.950 < 1.96), and self-control total score (0.940 < 1.96). Hence, the formulated hypothesis 1(a) is not accepted.

Hypothesis 1(b): There is a significant difference in general trait self-control and parental burnout with respect to their age.

Table 4: Showing there is a significant difference in the parental burnout and self-control with respect to their Age

SI.No	Variables	Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
1	Parental Burnout	Between Groups	9536.977	2	4768.499	9.581	0.01 Significance
		Within Groups	111488.183	224	497.715		
		Total	121025.181	226			

2	Self-Control	Between Groups	562.697	2	281.348	5.587	0.05 Significance
		Within Groups	11280.070	224	50.357		
		Total	11842.767	226			

From table 4, it is inferred that the calculated ‘F’ value 9.581 for the parental burnout total score is greater than the table value (6.64) at a 0.01 level of significance. It is concluded that there is a significant difference among parents based on their age groups in their parental burnout total score. It is also inferred that the calculated ‘F’ value 5.587 for the self-control total score is greater than the table value 3.84 at a 0.05 level of significance. It is concluded that there is a significant difference among parents based on their age groups in their parental burnout and self-control. Hence, the formulated hypothesis that “There is a significant difference in the parental burnout total score and self-control total score with respect to their age” is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between general trait self-control and parental burnout.

Table 5: Showing Correlation Coefficient Values between General Trait Self-Control and Parental Burnout

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
General trait self-control and parental burnout	-0.425	0.01 Significance

From Table 5, it can be observed that the correlation coefficient between general trait self-control and parental burnout is -0.425, which is greater in magnitude than the table value of 0.115 required for significance at the 0.01 level. The correlation is negative and statistically significant. Therefore, it is concluded that there exists a significant negative relationship between general trait self-control and parental burnout. Hence, the formulated hypothesis is accepted.

9. IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

- Parents can identify age-specific needs: younger parents focus on building routines; older parents emphasize long-term resilience.
- They may use phone reminders for short self-care moments like hydration or stretching.
- It is also helpful to adjust expectations realistically — lower perfection standards on chores or parenting tasks.
- Keeping a simple weekly journal noting moments of successful self-control or reduced stress can be effective.
- Engaging in brief mindfulness or grounding activities when feeling mentally distant from children may be effective.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government and NGOs should run awareness campaigns on parental burnout and the importance of self-control through social media and community events.
- They may focus on establishing accessible helplines and counseling services for parents facing burnout.
- Strengthening community peer support groups through NGO initiatives can be effective.

11. SUGGESTIONS

- Studies can be conducted in different cultural or socio-economic groups.
- Longitudinal studies can be done to understand changes over time.
- Future research can compare working vs non-working parents.
- Qualitative methods can be used to gain deeper insights into parental experiences.

12. CONCLUSION

It is actually significant to identify the variables that are affecting parental burnout levels. General trait self-control emerges as an important protective factor, showing a negative relationship with parental burnout. Knowing the relationship between general trait self-control and parental burnout, along with age-related differences, sheds light on how individual self-regulatory abilities influence parenting experiences across different life stages. By considering these connections in family and community settings, support systems can make changes and improve their environment to enhance parental well-being, reduce burnout, and promote healthier family dynamics.

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