

Young Adult Parents' Work-Family Stress: The Roles of Children's Behavior and Parental Conflict

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Background

- High levels of stress are associated with balancing work and family roles, and this seems to be especially for those with young children.
- While potentially important, to date, little to no recent research has examined how child behavior and parenting conflict are associated with work-family stress.

Current Investigation

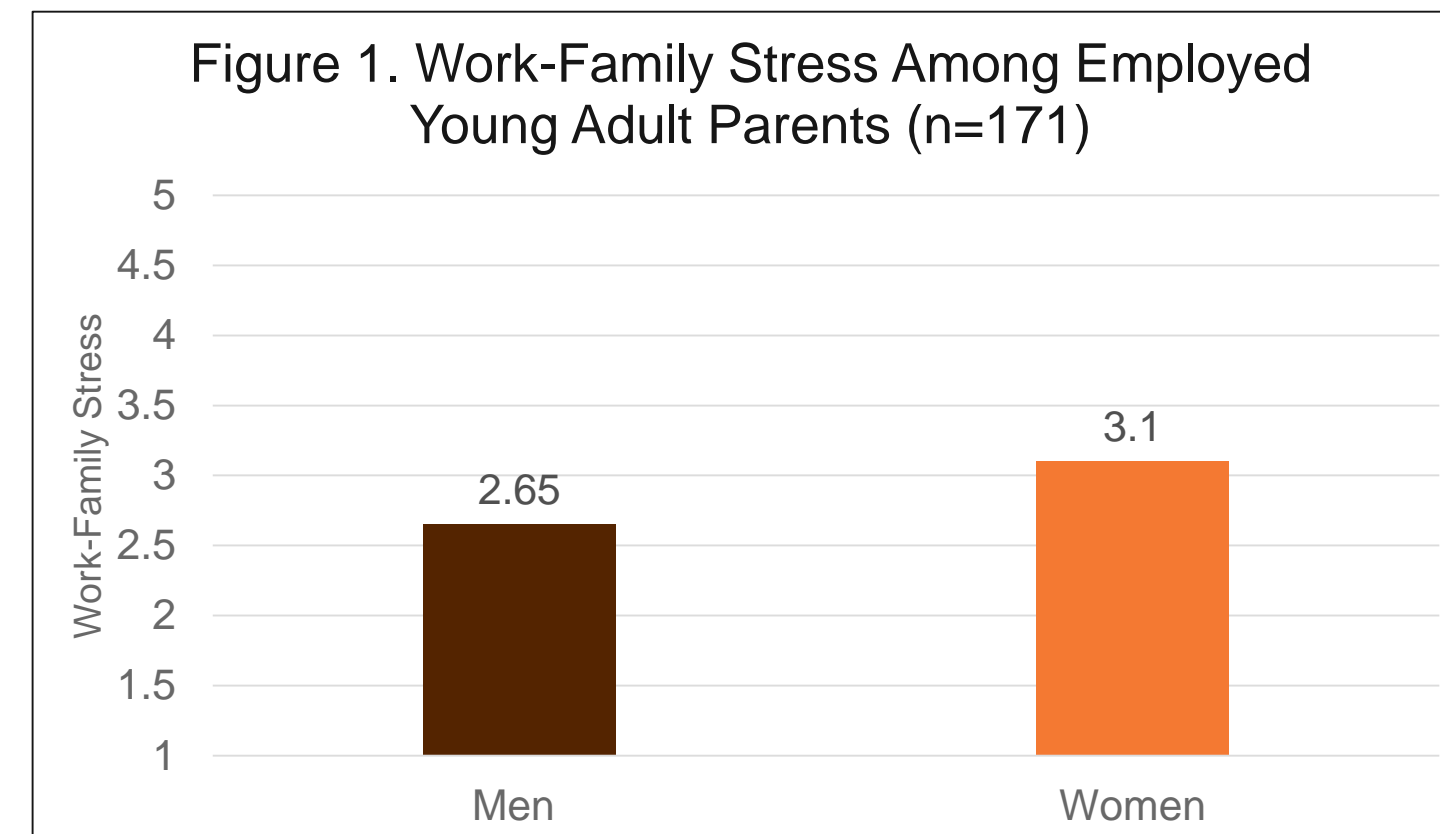
- We evaluated the association between children's behavior, parental conflict, and work-family stress among young adult parents.
- We examined gender differentials in the role of a difficult child on work-family stress.
- This study focused on young cohabiting or married parents who are both employed.

Data and Sample

- Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS)
 - Fifth wave of data collected (2011)
 - Respondents aged 22-29 at the fifth interview
- Analytic Sample of cohabiting and married employed parents (n=171)

Key Measures

- Work-Family Stress (1-5)
 - How much stress do you face in balancing your paid work and family life?
- Difficult Child ($\alpha=.81$)
 - your child is [children are] much harder to care for than most
 - your child does [children do] things that really bother you
 - you are giving up more of your life to meet your child's[children's] needs than you expected
 - felt angry with your child[children]
- Parenting Conflict (1-5)
 - During your relationship, how often have you and [name of partner] fought about doing more to help with the kids?



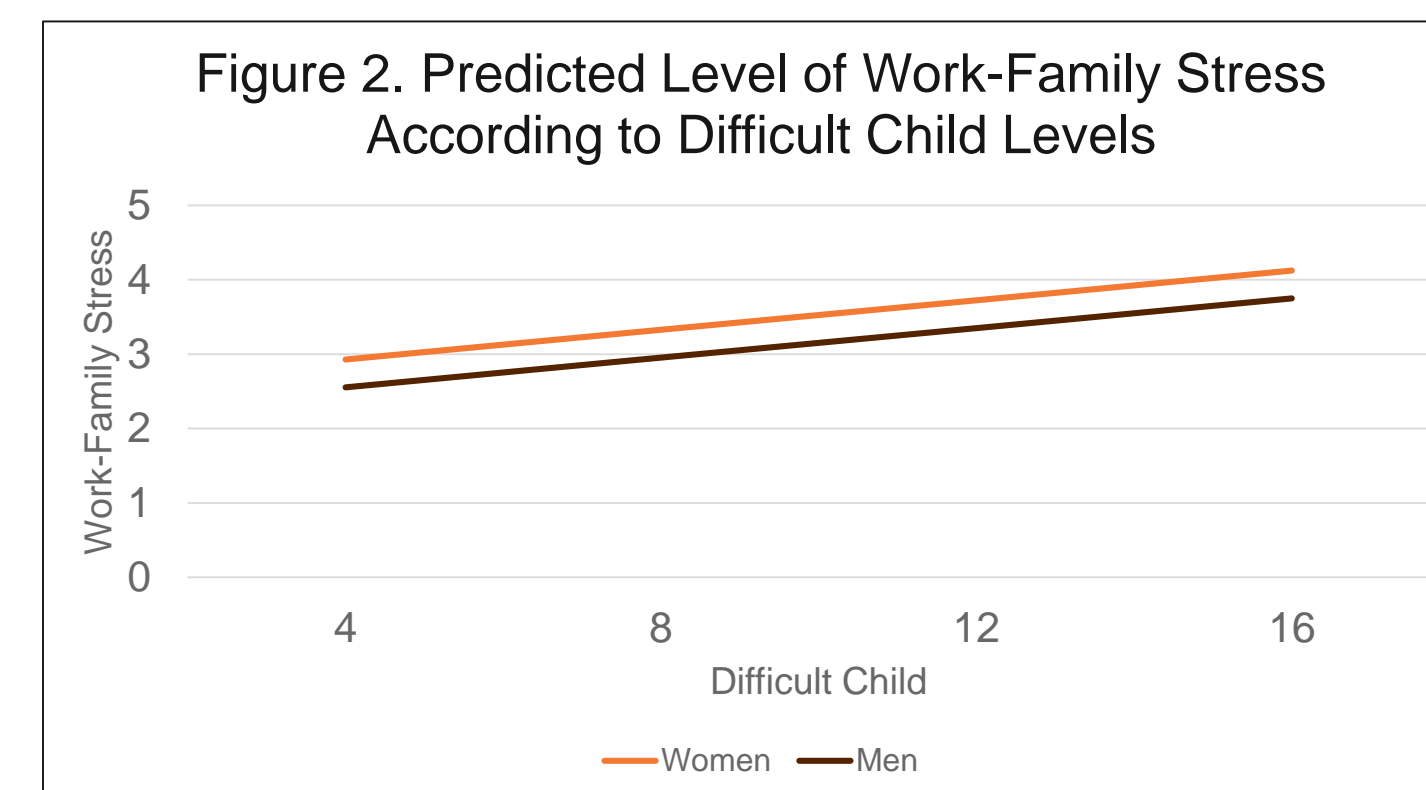
Analyses

Table 1. OLS Regression of Work-Family Stress of Co-Residential Employed Parents on Child Behavior and Control Variables (n=171)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Difficult Child	.10**	---	.10*
Parenting Conflict	---	.15*	.06
R ²	.04	.02	.07

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS)
Note: p<.05*, p<.01**, p<.001***

- Note: Multivariate models include controls for age of youngest child, number of children, union status, race/ethnicity, age, employment status, and education.



Results

- Parents' perceptions of having a difficult child are associated with higher levels of work-family stress, net of sociodemographic controls.
- Greater frequency of parental conflict is related to increased work-family stress, but is explained by the presence of a difficult child.
- While women have greater work-family stress, the association between a difficult child and work-family stress is similar for men and women (results not shown).

Discussion

Contributions

- Focused on young adult parents who are just starting out rather than parents who are middle-aged or older.
- Included cohabiting and married biological parents.

Conclusions

- The perception of having a difficult child and characteristics of the child are associated with work-family stress.