Does Perceived Economic Privilege Act as a Protective Factor for Children and Parents During the COVID-19 Pandemic?



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Introduction

- Through a risk & resilience framework, COVID-19 is conceptualized as a multisystem disaster that has the potential to increase distress due to its threats to individual and larger-scale systems (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020). Economic privilege can be conceptualized as a protective factor in the risk & resilience framework
- Pre-existing family vulnerabilities, including low economic privilege, can have downstream effects on child adjustment and family well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic (Prime et al., 2020)
- Economic circumstances and privilege can also affect problematic media use (PMU), which increased for children during the COVID-19 pandemic (Domoff et al., 2019; Eales et al. 2021), especially in families who were at-risk for more stressors (Kroshus et al., 2022). PMU refers to media use that leads to dysfunction in at least one domain.
- Though income and SES are typically protective, there is a lack of literature discussing how *perceived* economic privilege could serve as a protective factor for families against distress and PMU during the COVID-19 pandemic. The present study aims to identify how perceived economic privilege during the COVID-19 pandemic is related to parent/child distress and PMU.
- HYP 1: Higher parent-reported perceived economic privilege in 2020 will associate with lower levels of parent/child distress
- HYP 2: Lower parent-reported perceived economic privilege will relate to higher levels of child PMU
- HYP 3: Parent-reported daily COVID-19 impact will moderate the relation between perceived economic privilege and distress/PMU: higher COVID-19 impact will be associated with a stronger association between privilege and distress/PMU

Methods

- **Procedure**: Online survey completed by MN parents in summer 2020
- **Participants**: 469 parents filled out the survey
- Parents = 38.21 yrs (SD = 4.45); Children = 5.44 yrs (SD = 2.40; range = 1-13 yrs)
- 238 girls, 228 boys, 1 nonbinary, 1 prefer not to answer
- 85% mono-racially White and non-Hispanic
- **Measures:**
 - <u>Perceived economic privilege:</u> A one-item measure created for this survey asked parents to report on a scale from 0 to 10, "Compared to other people in the U.S., I (0 ' have far less access' to 10 'have far more access') to the resources I need during the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic (e.g., food, toilet paper, healthcare necessities)"
- Problematic Media Use Short Form (Domoff et al., 2019)
- <u>Child distress</u>: Child Life Challenges scale was used to determine how the child has been feeling for the previous couples of weeks from 0 to 100 (Merrick et al., 2020)
- Parent distress: Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (Kroenke et al., 2009)
- Daily COVID-19 impact: Parents answered for themselves and then for their child how much the COVID-19 impacted their day-to-day life from "1 = not at all" to "5 = extremely" (Harkness, 2020)
- <u>Covariates</u>: child age and social desirability (Reynolds, 1982)
- **Data Analysis:** We conducted multiple hierarchical linear regressions predicting parent/child distress and PMU, with social desirability and child age as covariates entered into the first step. Daily COVID-19 impacts ("parent" for parent models and "child" for child models) and perceived economic privilege were then included as main effects in the model, followed by a daily COVID-19 impact X perceived economic privilege interaction term to assess the hypothesized moderation.

Mentors: Lauren Eales, M.A. & Gail M. Ferguson, Ph.D., Culture and Family Life Lab Institute of Child Development | Undergraduate Research Symposium 2023

Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for all Model Variables

Variable Name

Child age

Perceived economic privilege

Child distress

Parent distress

Problematic media use

Daily COVID-19 child impact

Daily COVID-19 parent impact

Family income*

Social desirability scale

*Income: Less than \$25,000 (1); \$25,000-\$49,99 \$75,000-\$99,000 (4); \$100,000-\$124,999 (5); \$2 \$150,000-\$174,999 (7); \$175,000-\$199,999 (8);

Analytic Results (see Table 2):

- Perceived economic privilege was not significantly related to parent/child distress or child PMU
- When replacing perceived economic privilege with income as a measure of objective/actual privilege, higher income was associated with lower parent distress (B = -.14, p < .01)
- Daily COVID-19 parent and/or child impact was significantly associated with parent/child distress and PMU in all models (ps < .001), but there was no significant moderation effect.
- Child age was also significantly associated with higher child distress (B = 1.20, p < .01) and PMU (B = 0.09, p < .001)

Table 2. Regression Models Predicting Parent/Child Distress and PMU

	Mode	els with perc	eived			
	economic privilege			Models with income		
	Parent	Child		Parent	Child	
	distress	distress	PMU	distress	distress	PMU
Child age	-0.05	1.20	0.09	-0.04	1.23	0.09
	(0.05)	(0.44)**	(0.02)***	(0.05)	(0.44)**	(0.02)***
	-0.38	-1.62	-0.06	-0.35	-1.44	-0.06
Social desirability	(0.12)**	(0.95)	(0.04)	(0.12)**	(0.95)	(0.04)
Daily COVID-19 impact	0.57	5.47	0.22	0.59	5.42	0.22
for child/parent	(0.12)***	(0.95)***	(0.04)***	(0.12)***	(0.95)***	(0.04)***
Perceived econ.	0.07	0.34	0.002	-0.14	-0.35	-0.02
privilege <i>or</i> Income	(0.06)	(0.51)	(0.02)	(0.05)**	(0.44)	(0.02)
Perc privilege/income x	-0.05	-0.76	-0.01	-0.003	-0.36	-0.01
Daily COVID-19 impact	(0.06)	(0.46)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.41)	(0.02)
	7.84	16.73	1.69	7.77	16.31	1.68
Constant	(0.35)***	(2.92)***	(0.11)***	(0.35)***	(2.93)***	(0.11)***
R ²	0.08	0.13	0.21	0.09	0.13	0.21
Note: * <i>p</i> <0.05; ** <i>p</i> <0.01; *** <i>p</i>	o< .001. Daily	COVID-19 impa	ct for children	was used for c	hild distress an	d PMU

models; Daily COVID-19 impact for parents was used for parent distress models.

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% or M (SD)			
5.44 (2.40)			
8.21 (1.90)			
20.73 (22.28)			
7.01 (2.67)			
2.10 (0.88)			
3.44 (1.11)			
3.78 (1.04)			
5.79 (2.19)			
1.54 (1.03)			
99 (2); \$50,000-74,999 (3); L25,000-\$149,999 (6); \$200,000 or more (9)			

The results from this study indicated that parent-reported perceived economic privilege was not significantly associated with parent/child distress or child PMU.

In post hoc analyses, when income was used in place of perceived economic privilege to capture objective privilege, higher income was significantly associated with lower levels of parent distress. This indicates that objective vs. perceived economic privilege may be important to measure in future studies. The lack of association between perceived economic privilege and study variables may have been influenced by the relatively low variance of this measure for these participants. Another reason for this lack of association could be the one-item measure of perceived economic privilege (vs. a more indepth, comprehensive measure).

Future directions for this research should aim to replicate the study using a more economically diverse sample of participants. Furthermore, perceived economic privilege should be measured via a more reliable and valid multiitem scale.

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The Screen Media Use and Globalization in and around COVID-19 Project, the study this data comes from, was supported through funding awarded to Dr. Gail M. Ferguson by the Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota. Funds from the Institute of Child Development supported the research mentorship provided by mentors in the Culture and Family Life Lab. We would like to thank Lauren Eales and Dr. Gail Ferguson for all of their thoughtful feedback and assistance throughout the completion of this poster. Their attentive and thorough mentorship was much appreciated.

The authors want to acknowledge the various identities we brought into this project. To view our entire positionality statement, please scan this QR code:



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Conclusion

References

Acknowledgements

Positionality Statement

