



Family Stress Model

Proposes that economic hardship generates stress in families and increases the risk of negative outcomes for parents

This may in turn reduce the resources they have available for children, resulting in less positive parent-child interaction and a greater risk for socio-emotional difficulties in children



Risk factors for economic strain

Having to cut back on basic necessities and/or luxuries

Behind on rent/mortgage and utility bills

Being made redundant

One-parent family Low education



Changes between 9 months and 3 years

Fathers' unemployment increased from 6% to 14%

Two-thirds of families had a reduction in household income due to the recession

Arrears: 9% on mortgage/rent and 14% on utility bills



Economic Strain and Family Stress



More depressive symptoms

Twice as many mothers who were in rent or mortgage arrears were classified as depressed* - compared to those not in arrears

24%

Arrears/depressed

10%

No arrears/depressed



Depression linked to marital dissatisfaction

The strongest predictor of difficulties in the marital relationship was depressive symptoms of the parent.

Economic strain (for mothers) and having working hours reduced (for fathers) were also associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction.



Effects on parenting

Parents who were experiencing depressive symptoms and marital dissatisfaction reported

less warmth and **more hostility**

in their interactions with their 3-year-old children - but there was only a weak link with children's socio-emotional outcomes

*this does not refer to a diagnosis of clinical depression, but rather elevated scores on a measure of depressive symptoms

Source: Growing Up in Ireland - The Effects of Economic Recession and Family Stress on the Adjustment of 3-Year-Olds in Ireland