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A PILOT STUDY TO FIND THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF STRESS, COPING STRATEGIES AND THEIR CORRELATION AMONG THE RETIRED PERSONS OF DIBRUGARH DISTRICT, ASSAM.

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ABSTRACT A quantitative research study was conducted to assess the perceived level of stress, coping strategies and their correlation among the retired persons of Dibrugarh district, Assam. An analytic cross-sectional study design was used. The sample size was 40 which was selected by simple random sampling technique. Data collected through structured interview schedule. The study revealed that majority, 23(57.5%) of subjects had moderate stress ,15(37.5%) had mild stress and 2(5%) had severe stress. Regarding coping strategy majority 24(60%) of the subjects had low coping, 15(37.5%) had average coping and only 1(2.5%) had good coping strategies. The study indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived level of stress and coping strategies among retired persons, $r = 0.705$, $p<0.001$. The significant association found between socio-economic class with perceived level of stress which was statistically significant at $p<0.05$ level. Type of family was significantly associated with the coping strategies at the level of $p<0.01$.

KEYWORDS : Perceived level of Stress, Coping Strategies

INTRODUCTION

""The greatest weapon against stress is the ability to choose one thought over the another." – William James.

In global demographic transition, aging is an inescapable reality of human existence on the planet of earth and plays a crucial role. By 2050, the greying population is forecasted to reach 2 billion. India has 104 million older people (60 + years) constituting 8.6% of total population.[1]

Stress is the universal human experience that bridges personalities, culture and time. An individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situation from the time of birth till the last breath drawn. Psychological stress is a condition when an individual perceives that his abilities to cope have exceeded the demand place on him, which is characterize by poor attention, inability to focus, difficulties with friends and family, anxiety, poor sleep and minor illness.[2]

Nearly 6% of the urban and 7.2% of the rural older adult primarily suffers from neurotic stress related disorder. The major psychological problems reported by the elderly was anxiety followed by loneliness (58.5%), isolation (55.3%), stress (52.1%), feeling of guilt (51.1%) of affection and irritation.[3]

In daily life, several changes occur to elderly people due to age, physical, mental or social alteration thus constituting a stress factor simulating behavioral and neuro-vegetative responses to adapt with stress.[1] It has been postulated that the moment retirement comes knocking on the door of an employee, it enters with challenges and expectation.

Retirement is typically associated with stress for the average employee. Retirement can be broadly grouped into three kinds, namely compulsory/involuntary retirement, voluntary retirement and mandatory/regular retirement. Retirement involve a lot of changes in values, monetary involvements and social aspects of life, it leads to termination of a pattern of life and a transition to a new one. Retirement is described as the transition from first adulthood to second adulthood which often a jarring and unsettling experience.[4]

Globally these categories of population were 382 million in 1980 which hiked more than twice as large as 962 million in 2017 and it is expected to reach closely 2.1 billion by 2050.[5] As people become aged, the ability to achieve a relaxation or coping response after a stressful event becomes more difficult.

The term coping is used to refer to the process by which a person attempts to manage stressful demands.[5] Retirement involves a lot of changes in values, financial conditions and social aspects of life, also leads to the termination of a pattern of life and a transition to a new one. Thus, retirement requires older adults not only to cope with changes and transition resulting from retirement from work, but also with the constantly changing phenomenon of retirement itself.

As per census of 2011, the population of India is 1,210,854,977 in which there are 623,724,248 males and 586,469,174 females. India has 104 million older people (60+ years) constituting 8.6% of total population.[6]

According to a survey done in 2019, stress is one major mental health problem affecting a sizeable proportion (10–55%) of the elderly population. The prevalence of stress and anxiety among the elderly population is gradually increasing and expected to reach double in the next one decade. It was noticed that over 40% of peoples are at risk of going into depression. The "life event scale" was used by the psychologists to assess the level of stress in that it indicated that retirement is rated as the 10th most stressful event.[7]

A study conducted by Isfahan Illias, et. al., to assess the level of stress, coping strategies among the elderly people in year 2018 revealed that near 40% of the respondents had moderate level of stress, 15% had severe level, 10% had extreme severe level of stress and around 35% had no stress. Majority of retired employee (85%) used good level of coping strategies. A significant positive correlation was found between stress with gender, education and year of experience. However, statistically no significant correlation found between coping and demographic variables.[8]

In Assam, total population comprises of 3.63 crore and among that 29 lakhs are elderly people. While in Dibrugarh district the total population comprises of 13,26,335 in which 6,76,434 are male and 6,49,901 are female. And 8% among them are elderly.[6]

A community based cross sectional study done by the department of community medicine of GMCH in Guwahati (2016) found that amongst the 400 elderly persons, 69 (17.25%) were in depression due to high level of stress. The researcher further recommended that as prevalence of depression found to be very high so it is necessary to do study for the larger sample size.[9]

While in another study conducted by Sharma Krishnakshi in year 2018 on emotional problem and coping strategies among the senior citizens concluded that high level of stress and mild depression of elderly living in Old Age Home and mild depression of elderly living in family should be considered as important concern for geriatric group of population in Assam.[01]

A district level difference in distribution of mental disorder stated that proportional distribution of CMD among the person with mental morbidity was significantly higher in Dibrugarh district (79%) and among them 10% were elderly.[11]

As the investigator tried to find the root cause of mental morbidity, many studies suggested that stress and inappropriate coping mechanism are one of the factors which leads to some of the mental issues. However, no such studies have been conducted among the retired persons in Dibrugarh district of Assam and as such the investigator felt the need to explore the sources of stress and coping strategies among the retired person residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam.

Hypothesis

H_1: There is a significant correlation between perceived levels of stress and coping strategies among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam.

H_2: There is a significant association between perceived levels of stress and selected demographic variables among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam.

H_3: There is a significant association between coping strategies and selected demographic variables among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam.

OBJECTIVES

a) General Objective

The present study aims to analyze the perceived levels of stress and coping strategies among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam and to find out the correlation among the level of stress and coping strategies.

b) Specific Objective

1. To find out the perceived levels of stress among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam.
2. To find out the coping strategies among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam.
3. To find out the correlation between perceived levels of stress and coping strategies among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam.
4. To determine the association between perceived levels of stress and coping strategies with selected demographic variables among the retired person residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach: Quantitative approach

Research Design: Analytic cross-sectional study design

Setting: The pilot study has been conducted in Dibrugarh district, Assam

Study Population: Retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam

Sample Size: The sample size for the present study is calculated and rounded off to 40

For Actual Study

Accessible population 17,155 (October 2025)

Sample size, $n_0 = Z^2pq/e^2$

$Z = 1.96$

$P = 0.5$

$e = 0.05$

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)}{0.05} = 385$$

Adjusted sample size,

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0 - 1}{N}} = \frac{385}{1 + \frac{385 - 1}{17,155}}$$

$$= 377.4 \simeq 377$$

For actual study = 377

For pilot study = 10% of 377 = 37

40 samples were taken for convenient to conduct the pilot study

Inclusion criteria

1. Retired person who are residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam after their retirement.
2. Retired person aged 60 years and above irrespective of gender.
3. Retired person who are willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria

1. Retired person who are engaged in jobs after his/her retirement.
2. Retired person who are critically ill at the time of data collection.
3. Retired person with known history of psychiatric illness.
4. Retired person who are not present at the time of data collection.

Selection and Development of too

Based on the objectives of the study, the tool is developed and divided into three sections;

Section A: Demographic variables

Section B: PSS-10

Section C: Brief Cope Scale

Data collection procedure

Prior to the data collection, permission for conducting the study was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee(H) AMCH, Dibrugarh. Pilot study was conducted from dated 1st November 2025 till 30th November 2025. After a brief introduction of self, the purpose of the study was explained and an informed written consent was obtained from participants before the data collection. Investigator took 45-50minutes per participants to collect the data.

Organization of the study findings

Analysis of the study findings were categorized, organized and presented under following sections

Section I

Frequency and percentage distribution of subjects according to selected socio demographic variables

Among the participants, majority 28 (70%) belonged to the age group of 60-69 years, 10(25%) were 70-79 years,2(5%) were 80-89 years, majority 34(85%) were male, most 33(82.5%) were belonged to Hindu religion, 15(37.5%) had completed intermediate or diploma level of education, 10(25.0%) participants each either retired from clerical positions or as a legislators, senior officials and managers, 7(17.5%) retired as professional , technician and other associate profession, 5(12.5%) worked as a skilled workers. Majority 16(40.0%) of participants had a family monthly income between Rs. 1,06,850-2,13,813. 26(65%) belonged to a nuclear family, most participants, 39(97.5%) were married, 30(75.0%) participant's spouse were alive. Majority 21(52.5%) of participants had 2 children and among them 23(57.5%) participants, reported that their children were not staying with them.

Majority of participants, 36(90%) lived in their own house and 26(65%) reported that household helper unavailable in their house. Majority 38(95%) of participants got mandatory /regular retirement. Majority 34(85%) of the participants, pursued their hobbies. They engaged themselves in either physical activities, yoga, meditation. Majority 22(55%) of the participants, did not consume alcohol but 15(37.5%) of the participants, used smokeless tobacco. Majority 24(60%) of participants, did not have any type of co-morbidity and 34(85%) of the participants, were able to maintain activities of daily living independently.

Section II

Perceived Levels of Stress among Retired Persons

The data revealed that majority 23 (57.5%) of the participants, had moderate level of stress,15(37.5%) had low stress and 2(5%) had severe stress.

Section III

Levels of Coping Strategies among Retired Persons

Majority 24(60%) of participants, had low coping,15(37.5) had average coping and 1(2.5) had good coping

SECTION IV

Table 1 Correlation between Perceived Levels of Stress and Coping Strategies

r Value	0.705
p Value	< 0.001

Table 1 shows a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived levels of stress and coping strategies, $r = 0.705$, $p < 0.001$. Hence, the research hypothesis($\mathbf{H_1}$) stating that there is a significant correlation between perceived levels of stress and coping strategies is accepted.

SECTION V

Association between perceived levels of stress and coping strategies with selected demographic variables.

There was a significant association found between socio-economic class with perceived level of stress which was statistically significant at $p<0.05$ level. Hence, the research hypothesis $\mathbf{H_2}$'There is a significant association between perceived levels of stress and selected demographic variables among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam' was partially accepted. Type of family was significantly associated with the coping strategies at the level of $p<0.01$. Hence, the research hypothesis $\mathbf{H_3}$ "There is a significant association between coping strategies and selected demographic variables among the retired persons residing in Dibrugarh district, Assam" was partially accepted.

SUMMARY

The study revealed that majority, 23(57.5%) of subjects had moderate stress ,15(37.5%) had mild stress and 2(5%) had severe stress. Regarding coping strategy majority 24(60%) of the subjects had low coping, 15(37.5%) had average coping and only 1(2.5%) had good coping strategies. The study indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived level of stress and coping strategies among retired persons, $r = 0.705$, $p<0.001$.

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