

Level of Stress Among Adolescents and Socio-Personal Correlates



Home Science

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Rajni Rana

M.Sc. Student, Human Development and Family Studies, IC College of Home Science, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana – 125004

Shanti Balda

Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, IC College of Home Science, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana – 125004

Nomita Punia

Ph.D Scholar, Human Development and Family Studies, IC College of Home Science, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana – 125004

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in Hisar district of Haryana state. The sample comprised of 160, 14-16 years old rural and urban adolescents studying in 9th and 10th classes. This sample included 80 adolescent boys and 80 adolescent girls. These adolescents were selected from two rural and two urban Govt. High Schools. The stress among adolescents was assessed using Stress Scale developed by Lakshmi and Narain (2008). The scale has 40 items and measures four dimensions of stress: pressure, physical stress, anxiety and frustration and overall stress. Three levels of stress in different dimensions and overall stress- high, moderate and low were computed on the basis of standards given in the scale. Results of the present study revealed that majority of adolescents experienced moderate level of overall stress. Stress among adolescents was negatively correlated with socio-personal variables. Adolescents who had less educated parents, lower family income, belonged to small families and lower caste were more likely to experience stress. Adolescents who achieved poor in academics were also more likely to experience stress.

Introduction

Adolescence is the developmental period of transition between childhood and adulthood. It involves biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes. Adolescence is considered as a period of storm and stress. With the demands of globalization, youth, particularly adolescents, are facing challenges in their day to day life. These challenges are giving rise to many psychological problems and stress is one of them. Jones (2001) reported that stress is a feeling of strain and pressure. Positive stress helps improve our performance. It also plays a factor in motivation, adaptation, and reaction to the environment. Excessive amounts of stress, however, may lead to bodily harm. Stress can increase the risk of mental illnesses such as depression. It can be external and related to the environment, but may also be created by internal perceptions that cause an individual to experience anxiety or other negative emotions surrounding a situation, such as pressure, discomfort, etc., which they then believe stressful.

Stress arises when there are burden on the person which exceed his available assets. If stress is harsh and extended, it can lessen academic performance, hinder with a student's capability to involve in academic and other activities, and raise the probability of substance abuse and other potentially destructive behaviors (Richlin-Klonsky & Hoe, 2003). Stress can have a significant effect on an adolescent's long term physical and mental well-being. Adolescent stress is a pivotal health issue because of its abilities to disrupt an adolescent's capacity to handle demands of daily life (Chandra & Batada, 2006).

Adolescents of today are living in an increasingly stress-ridden atmosphere. Be it about self, carrier, academics or any other issue, the youth undergo feelings of anxiety at some phases of their lives. The all-pervasive competitive atmosphere, be it social or academic, encourages adolescents to constantly compare themselves with their peers. Consequently, their self-image is in a continual state of re-definition. Stress is partly created by parental pressure too when they expect the adolescents to perform and stand out among their groups. When they can't rise up to their expectations or are in a process of meeting it, adolescents suffer from frustration, physical stress, aggression, undesirable complexes, anxiety and depression

Keeping in view the impact of stress in adolescents' life, the present study was conducted to study level of stress and to examine socio-personal correlates of stress among adolescents. It was hypothesized that socio-personal variables will be negatively correlated with stress experienced by adolescents.

Methodology

Locale of the study and sample selection

The present study was conducted in two villages of Hisar district and Hisar city of Haryana state. From District Education Office, Hisar a list of villages having government higher secondary schools with co-education system was prepared. Two villages were selected at random to represent rural sample. A list of government higher secondary schools with co-education system was also prepared for Hisar city. Two Government High Schools were selected at random. Separate lists of boys and girls in the age group of 14 to 16 years were prepared from all the four schools. From each school 20 boys and 20 girls were selected at random. Total sample constituted 160 adolescents, 80 from rural area and 80 from urban area. This sample constituted of 80 adolescent boys and 80 adolescent girls.

Measures and Method for Data Collection

An interview schedule was developed to obtain information on socio-personal variables of adolescents. This information included age, gender, parental education, family income, caste, size of family and academic achievement of adolescents. Stress Scale developed by Lakshmi and Narain (2008) was used to assess stress among adolescents. Stress was assessed in four areas pressure, physical stress, anxiety and frustration. Total scores in these four areas were computed and totaled to obtain overall stress.

Results

Socio-personal profile of adolescents:

In total sample, majority of the respondents belonged to scheduled caste (55.0%) followed by backward class (22.5%) and higher caste categories (22.5%). The data with regard to paternal education showed that higher percentage of respondents' fathers had education from primary to high school level (41.3%), 25.6% fathers had education up to senior secondary level, small percentage of respondents'

fathers' were graduate or post-graduate (11.3%) and 19.4% fathers were illiterate. As far as maternal education is concerned, majority of respondents' mothers were illiterate (52.5%), 39.4% were primary to high school educated, 5.6% of the mothers were educated up to senior secondary level, and only one mothers was graduate and one was post-graduate.

Level of stress among adolescents

Low, moderate and high levels of stress in different aspects and overall stress were computed as per norms of the scale for adolescent boys and girls. Minimum and maximum scores of different aspects were used to calculate status of stress as per norms of the scale.

Table 1 reveals that 70.0% of the adolescents experienced moderate level of pressure, 51.3% experienced low level of physical stress, 40.6% experienced moderate level of anxiety and 47.5% of the adolescents experienced moderate level of frustration. For overall stress, 55.0% adolescents experienced moderate level of overall stress, 36.3% of the adolescents experienced low level of overall stress and 8.8% experienced high level of overall stress.

Table 4: Level of stress among adolescents as per norms (n=160)

Dimensions of stress	Low	Moderate	High
Pressure	20 (12.5)	112 (70.0)	28 (17.5)
Physical stress	82 (51.3)	31 (19.4)	47 (29.4)
Anxiety	60 (37.5)	65 (40.6)	35 (21.9)
Frustration	68 (42.5)	76 (47.5)	16 (10.0)
Overall stress	58 (36.3)	88 (55.0)	14 (8.8)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

It can be inferred from these results that majority of adolescents experienced moderate level of overall stress.

Correlations between socio-personal variables and stress among adolescents:

Correlation coefficients were computed between different dimensions of stress, overall stress and socio-personal variables. As depicted in Table 2, fathers' education was negatively correlated with pressure (-0.16*) and overall stress (-0.18*); negative trend was observed between education of fathers and physical stress, anxiety and frustration. Maternal education was negatively correlated with pressure (-0.16*) and negative trend was observed for physical stress, anxiety, frustration and overall stress. Family income was negatively correlated with pressure (-0.26**), physical stress (-0.19*), anxiety (-0.22**), frustration (-0.21*) and overall stress (-0.29**). Caste was negatively correlated with pressure (-0.23*), physical stress (-0.20*), anxiety (-0.27**) and overall stress (-0.29**) and a negative trend was observed for frustration. Size of the family was negatively correlated with anxiety (-0.17*), frustration (-0.20*) and overall stress (-0.21*) and negative trend was observed for pressure and physical stress.

Academic achievement of adolescents was negatively correlated with pressure (-0.16*), physical stress (-0.28**) and overall stress (-0.21*). A negative trend was observed between academic achievement and anxiety and frustration aspects of stress.

These results clearly indicate that socio-personal variables

were negatively correlated with stress. Hence, the hypothesis that stress will be negatively correlated with socio-personal variables was accepted.

It can be interpreted from these results that adolescents who had less educated parents and from lower income families were more likely to experience stress. Adolescents who belonged to lower caste were also more likely to experience stress. Adolescents from larger families were less likely to experience stress. Finally, adolescents who achieved poor in academics were more likely to experience stress.

Table 2: Correlations between socio-personal variables and stress among adolescents (n=160)

Socio-personal variables	Dimensions of stress	Pressure	Physical stress	Anxiety	Frustration	Overall stress
		Fathers' education	-0.16*	-0.12	-0.13	-0.13
Mothers' education	-0.16*	-0.10	-0.09	-0.10	-0.12	
Family income	-0.26**	-0.19*	-0.22**	-0.21*	-0.29**	
Caste	-0.23**	-0.20*	-0.27**	-0.15	-0.29**	
Size of family	-0.15	-0.13	-0.17*	-0.20*	-0.21*	
Academic achievement	-0.16*	-0.28**	-0.12	-0.13	-0.21*	

Note: Significant at *5% and **1% level of significance

Discussion

The present study was conducted with the aim to assess level of stress among adolescents and to study socio-personal correlates of stress. It was hypothesized that overall stress will be negatively correlated with socio-personal variables.

The results of the present study indicate that a greater percentage of adolescents experienced moderate level of pressure, anxiety, frustration and overall stress. Adolescents experience stress due to many reasons. Adolescent stage is considered as a stage of storm and stress in the life span of an individual. During this stage there is lot of peer pressure on them, due to transition phase they may have stress related to parent-child relationship, they may have to go through societal pressure and some may have to struggle for academic success. All these factors contribute to stress in adolescents. These findings get support from previous research studies. Fariza (2005) and Sapru (2006) also reported that adolescents experienced stress due to demands and hope for themselves, their parents and teachers to succeed in their life and academic pressure. In another study, Suldo et al. (2009) found that students experienced higher levels of stress associated with parent-child relations, academic struggle, conflict within the family and peers relations, as well as role transitions and societal problems. Simuforosa (2013) reported that stress experienced by adolescence stems from many sources. School stress was clearly articulated as a major source of stress. Students mainly pointed out that too much homework, tests and examination stress them. Due to rapid growth of their bodies, adolescents experience incompatibility of their mental development with their physical changes or with the social environment and as a result they suffer from problems arising from inad-

equate adaptation.

Kumari et al. (2014) conducted a survey on 100 adolescents studying in government and private schools of Delhi. Results indicated that majority of respondents experienced average (moderate) level of stress and few respondents experienced high level of stress.

Results of the present research study clearly revealed that socio-personal variables were negatively correlated with stress among adolescents. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted, as there was significant negative correlation between overall stress experienced by adolescents and socio-personal variables including parental education, family income, caste, family size, and academic achievement.

It can be inferred from these findings that adolescents who had less educated parents and belonged to lower income groups and belonged to lower caste (SC category) were more likely to experience stress. In Indian culture caste plays very important role in determining the socio-economic status of the family or it can be said that lower caste is an indicator of lower SES. These demographic variables are indicators of socio-economic status of families. Hence, it can be interpreted that lower the socio-economic condition of the family, higher the stress experienced by adolescents. These findings also get support from the previous literature. Finkelstein et al. (2007) investigated association between parent education (PE), socio-economic status (SES) and perceived stress among adolescents. Results revealed that adolescents from families with lower parent education were less optimistic than teens from more educated families. This pessimism may be a mechanism through which lower SES increases stress in adolescence. In another study, D'souza (2012) also reported a negative correlation between stress and SES of the family. Feizi et al. (2012) also reported that high perceived stress was associated with low or middle levels of income.

Results further revealed that adolescents who belonged to small families were more likely to experience stress or it can be said that adolescents who belonged to larger families were less likely to experience stress. The reason could be that there are more interpersonal interactions among extended families. Whenever an adolescent experiences stress, he or she might discuss his or her problems within the family or in other words it could be said that in extended families adolescents have more family support. This could be the reason that adolescents from extended families experienced low level of stress as compared to adolescents from nuclear families. These findings get support from a research study conducted by Mojtabaie (2011). The author reported that type of family is related to the level of stress experienced by the adolescents.

Finally, results revealed that academically high achiever adolescents were less likely to experience stress. It can be interpreted from these results that higher academic achievement acts as a protective factor for reducing stress among adolescents. These findings are also in line with previous researches. Feizi et al. (2012) conducted a study on stress and result showed that higher level of education was negatively associated with stress.

Conclusion and suggestions

It can be concluded that majority of adolescents experienced moderate level of overall stress. Parental education, family income and caste, family size and academic achievement were negatively correlated with stress experienced by adolescents. Adolescents whose parents were less educated,

belonged to lower income and lower caste were more likely to experience stress. Adolescents who belonged to large families and achieved high in academics were less likely to experience stress. The results of the present study suggests that there is need to pay attention to adolescent students belonging to the lower socio economic strata of society and educate them to cope up with stress, motivate them to recognize and utilize their potential. Once they are able to cope with stress they encounter and able to utilize their potential then they will be able to lead stress free and healthy life.

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