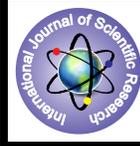


Does Stress Impact Adolescents' Academic Performance?



Psychology

KEYWORDS : stress, adolescence, academic performance, counseling

Ratna Ruba Robinson

PhD Scholar, Department of Psychology, Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikanal 624 101

Dr. B. William Dharma Raja

Head i/c., Department of Education, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli - 627 012

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a stressful time. This period of transition from childhood to adulthood can be a difficult time in the child's and the parents' lives. Stress is inevitable during this stage; many authors consider this stage "a problem age". They go through changes physically, emotionally and psychologically. This is a phase of frustration, and confusion in the lives of adolescents, other external factors and experiences only add to it causing stress. The main objective of this study was to find out how stress among adolescents impacts their academic performance. A sample of 150 boys and 150 girls of 11th graders studying in Salem district were selected. Stress Questionnaire by Latha Satish was used to obtain data on stress level, and Academic Performance Test was used to obtain data on academic performance. The findings revealed that two-fifth of the adolescents had moderate level of stress with regard to the personal and familial variables and no significant correlation was found between stress in adolescents and their academic performance. However, children of college educated mothers had higher academic performance than those of school educated mothers. Special attention in schools to reduce stress levels are discussed and enhancing family relationships through counseling is recommended.

Although some amount of stress can be a motivating factor to accomplishing a task and a drive to complete tasks before deadlines, most of the time stress has proven to be harmful to the mental health of an individual. According to Piaget, "Psychologically, adolescence is the age when the individual becomes integrated into the society of adults, the age when the child no longer feels that he/she is below the level of his elders but equal, at least in rights... This integration into adult society has many affective aspects, more or less linked with puberty... It also includes very profound intellectual changes... These intellectual transformations typical of the adolescent's thinking enable him not only to achieve his integration into the social relationships of adults, which is, in fact, the most general characteristic of this period of development" (Hurlock,1997).

Adolescents, being in this vulnerable age with lot of pressure are preparing to face their government exams and the objective of the study was to find out how stress among adolescents affects their academic performance. It is evident that there is stress among adolescents, for some more than others. It can also be established that adolescent stress does affect academic performance. It is necessary to remember that adolescents constitute a substantial section of the population, their physical, mental, and spiritual health determines, to a large extent, the current and future vitality of the country (Agochiya, 2010).

In the light of this, the present study focuses on the stress among adolescents of Salem district. It studies how their stress level affects academic performance.

Kumari and Gartia (2012) found that positive correlation exists between stress and academic achievement of senior secondary students. Malhotra and Sihotra (2013) studied that there is no significant difference in the anxiety level and academic achievement scores of adolescents. Bharti (2013) investigated that there is no significant relationships between levels of institutional stress and academic achievement of adolescents. The undergraduate fourth year medical students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia with a high and severe stress level were observed to have higher cumulative grade point average (CGPA) thus denying the negative effect of stress towards their academic performance (Siraj et al., 2014).

Statement of the problem

Stress is an inevitable part of every one's life. It is more so for the adolescent age. The world health report has quoted India as having a substantial prevalence of childhood and adolescent mental health disorders (Bhasin, Sharma & Saini, 2010). Stress affects academic performance of students. When students are stressed, their ability to concentrate, and focus on academics may be hindered. Severe stress may cause mental health problems for these students as well. It is when stress increases to a level that is beyond the ability of an individual to cope, it becomes a problem. Adolescents have many questions, confusions, and seek clarity and almost every adolescent is looking for a guide, a listener, a friend who will understand and guide them without judging them.

The intention of the investigators is not to undermine the value of education or hard work of adolescents, but to find out how far stress affects academic performance. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relation among stress and academic performance.

This study will be significant in understanding the influence of the stress on academic performance. It will also enable us to understand the level of stress and academic performance among adolescents.

Objectives of the study

To find out the significant difference, if any, in stress in adolescents with regard to the personal and familial variables;

To find out the significant difference, if any, in academic performance in adolescents with regard to the personal and familial variables; and

To study the relation between stress and academic performance of adolescents.

Hypotheses of the study

There is no significant difference in stress in adolescents with regard to personal and familial variables.

There is no significant difference in academic performance in adolescents with regard to personal and familial variables.

There is no significant relation between stress and academic performance of adolescents.

Method

In this present study, the investigators used the survey method.

Sample

150 boys and 150 girls of Salem District studying in Standard 11 were selected as sample.

Tools Used

Stress Questionnaire (SQ) by Latha Satish (1997) was used to obtain data on stress level of adolescents. SQ contains 52 items that studies the day to day problems experienced by people and the way they react to it. The content validity based on judges' rating was 0.86. The item reliability of SQ was 0.86. The test reliability on a sample of 30 subjects was found to be 0.96.

An Academic Performance Test (APT) was constructed by the investigators which contained 50 multiple choice questions, each from Biology and Zoology taken from 11th standard covering seven chapters in Botany and seven chapters in Zoology. The scores in APT were treated as academic performance of the adolescents. The test contained easy, difficult and very difficult questions.

Data Analysis

The statistical techniques employed for the analysis of the collected data were t-test for independent and large groups, one-way ANOVA and Pearson's product moment correlation.

Table 1
Significance of Difference in Stress in Adolescents with regard to Personal Variables

Personal Variable		N	Mean	S.D	t- value	p- value
Gender	Male	150	11.341	5.640	1.839	0.097 ^{NS}
	Female	150	10.222	4.879		
Locale of Residence	Urban	271	10.5923	5.25978	1.906	0.767 ^{NS}
	Rural	29	12.555	5.38101		

NS – Not Significant

Table 2
Significance of Difference in Stress in Adolescents with regard to Familial Variables

Familial Variable	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p- value
Father's Education	Between	64.78	3	21.595	0.769	0.512 ^{NS}
	Within	8316.56	296	28.097		
	Total	8381.35	299			

Mother's Education	Between	210.44	3	70.15	2.541	0.057 ^{NS}
	Within	8170.91	296	27.60		
	Total	8381.35	299			
Monthly Income of the family	Between	55.995	2	27.997	0.999	0.370 ^{NS}
	Within	8325.35	297	28.031		
	Total	8381.35	299			

NS – Not Significant

Table 3
Significance of Difference in Academic performance in Adolescents with regard to Personal Variables

Personal Variable		N	Mean	S.D	t- value	p- value
Gender	Male	150	43.707	11.341	6.574	0.292 ^{NS}
	Female	150	52.767	12.499		
Locale	Urban	271	48.1550	12.639	0.339	0.253 ^{NS}
	Rural	29	49.000	13.946		

NS – Not Significant

Table 4
Significance of Difference in Academic Performance in Adolescents with regard to Familial Variables

Familial Variables		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p- value
Mother's Education	Between	1837.37	3	612.46	3.877	0.010 ^{**}
	Within	46762.83	296	157.98		
	Total	48600.197	299			
Father's Education	Between	1575.63	3	525.211	3.306	0.021 ^{**}
	Within	47024.56	296	158.867		
	Total	48600.197	299			
Monthly Income of the family	Between	560.46	2	280.23	1.732	0.179 ^{NS}
	Within	48039.74	297	161.75		
	Total	48600.197	299			

**-Significant at 1% level

NS – Not Significant

Table 4 (a)
Scheffe test results showing the significant difference in academic performance in adolescents with regard to Mothers Education.

Mean values of mothers education			
Illiterate	School	College	p- value
42.000	36.619	-	0.829 ^{NS}
-	36.619	38.984	0.027 ^{NS}
42.000	-	38.984	0.984 ^{NS}
NS – Not Significant at 5% level		*- Significant	

Table 5
Correlation between Stress and Academic performance in Adolescents

Variables	N	R	p-value
Stress and academic performance	300	-0.110	0.058 ^{NS}

NS – Not Significant

Findings

Table 1 shows that there is no significant difference in stress in adolescents with regard to personal variables, namely, gender and locale of residence.

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference in stress in adolescents with regard to familial variables namely father’s education, mother’s education, and monthly income of the family.

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in academic performance in adolescents with regard to personal variables namely, gender and local of residence.

Table 4 shows that there is significant difference in academic performance in adolescents with regard to familial variables.

Table 4(a) shows the Scheffe test results that there is significant difference in academic performance in adolescents with regard to mother’s education.

Table 5 shows that there is no significant correlation between stress in adolescents and their academic performance.

Recommendations

The findings of the study gave room for some recommendations that can be made to those who are entrusted with the responsibility of caring for children. One finding of this study show that majority of adolescents has moderate level of stress, which implies that intervention is necessary, the need to address problems of this age group is thus evident.

Counselling and guidance centres in schools could help address this concern. Employment of professional counsellors would be helpful to assist the students and enable them to cope with stressful situations of daily life. Stress can be minimized when there is a listening ear in the form of a confidant, who will guide students in appropriate ways. Care at the class room level, with focus on preventing peer pressure and bullying, ensuring that children are not stressed. It is recommended that schools have time set apart for addressing key issues of adolescents.

Involvement of parents is essential. Counseling services may help improve parent child relationship thereby paving way for reducing conflicts and stress. School management must give utmost consideration to providing counseling facility in school. Topics on healthy parenting, understanding adolescents, appropriate family environment etc. may be addressed among parents. Positive ways of handling problem behaviour through the counseling cell may be considered rather than punishment. Motivation camps and career guidance programs could help improve confidence level and thus improve academic performance.

This fast growing world, adolescent are exposed the new problems such as internet, networking sites, mobile phones etc. Adolescents must be given guidance with regard to how to use these sites wisely. Any problems that may arise need to be addressed. Taboo topics such as prevention of child sexual abuse must be addressed by way of prevention education programmes in all the class, in order to equip our children with knowledge on how to safeguard themselves at times of danger. This could reduce stress levels of the adolescent in some areas thereby enhancing academic performance.

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