

## Impact of Gender and and Socio-Economic Status on Stress



### Psychology

**KEYWORDS :** Gender, Socio-economic status, Stress, Adolescents.

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study aims to examine the impact of gender and socio-economic status on stress of adolescents. For this purpose 30 school students (15 male & 15 female) aged 13-14 years were selected as a sample. Abha Rani Bisht Battery scale for measuring different dimensions ( existential, achievement, academic, self-concept, self-actualization, physical, social, role, institutional, family, financial, vocational, superstition) of stress was used to see the level of stress in adolescents. This battery consists of 800 items. In the present study, type of gender and socio-economic status were independent variables and stress was dependent variable. The result was analyzed and it was found that there is a significant difference between male and female students only on three dimensions of stress scale (physical  $t=3.21 P<.01$  ), (role  $t=3.18 P<.01$  ) & (superstition  $t= 3.58 P<.01$  ). Further result indicated that there is no significant difference between high and low socio-economic groups of adolescents on different dimensions of stress scale.*

### Introduction:-

Recent researches indicate that stress is highly prevalent in our adolescent and young adult populations. Reasons for stress in adolescents are mainly examination, teenage love relationships, peer pressure, demands or expectations of parents and living up to society's expectation. Stress may lead to hopelessness, frustration, depression and suicide. Studies shows that students with learning disabilities are subject to a higher risk for increased stress during the school years and that such stress may lead to increased depression and perhaps suicide (Geisthardt & Munsch 1996; Guetzloe, 1998; Huntington & Bender 1993; Maag & Behrens 1989; McBride & Seigel 1997; Peck, 1985; Rourke et.al, 1989; Wright – Strawderman & Watson, 1992). One major factor that makes adolescents highly prone to heightened stress level is rapid changes in their physiological state (e.g. biological and hormonal changes). Similarly pressure from social change (e.g. increasing responsibility of education, career choices and peer relationship) can impact strongly on the adolescents' sense of wellness and add to their stress levels. Untreated academic stress may result in academic failure, behavioural or emotional problems, health problems, drug or alcohol abuse, depression and ultimately, suicide. In the last two decades, many reports have indicated that the level of stress in young people is increasing dramatically (Hunter 1999, Mc Namara 2000; Moon et al., 1999).

Mangal (1984) defined Stress "as the state of psychological upset or disequilibrium in the human beings causal by frustration, conflicts and other internal as well as external strains and pressure".

Stress is any situation that evokes negative thoughts and feelings in a person. The same situation is not evocative or stressful for all people, and all people do not experience the same negative thoughts and feelings when stressed. Paul et.al (2001) reported that men and women are exposed to different types of stress. Takashi et.al (1999) found that significantly physical stress response was seen only in men. Misra and Costillo (2004) found "that men and women differ in their perceptions and reactions to stress.

There are various material and psychosocial reasons why people living in disadvantaged areas experience stressful life. Socio-economic status may be an even better indicator of the impact of status stress. Goodman et al., (2005) found stress is also even higher for those with low socio-economic status. Masten et al., (2006) recognized that disadvantaged children, with less positive family qualities were generally less competent and more

likely to be disruptive with high stress levels. Gronlund, Renck and Weibull (2005) reported that adolescents from low socio-economic background experience all kinds of stress.

Thus above mentioned findings present equivocal situation of gender & socio-economic status and stress. Hence the present study was undertaken to examine or see the impact of gender and SES on stress score of adolescents.

### Hypotheses:-

The following hypotheses were framed for verification  
Male students will be more stress prone than female students.  
Students belonging to higher socio-economic status will show lower level of stress.

### Sample:-

The study was conducted on a sample of 30 (15 male and 15 female) students of different schools of Ranchi district. These two groups were further divided according to their socio-economic status. There age ranged between 13-14 years. Stratified random sampling technique had been used for the selection of the sample.

### Tools:-

In order to measure the stress among adolescents following tools were used.

**Personal Data Questionnaire:-** Personal Data Questionnaire developed by researcher. It included the information about each student's name, age, class and name of the school.

### Bisht Battery of Stress Scale:-

This battery of stress scales was developed by Abha Rani Bisht (1987). It measures exclusive stress types having all the four components of stress, i.e., frustration, conflict, pressure and anxiety in them. The battery of scale is in Hindi and the age group on which it was standardized is 13+ to 17 years. This battery consists of thirteen scales which measures thirteen types of stresses listed as following :-

1. Existential stress
2. Achievement stress
3. Academic stress
4. Self-concept stress
5. Self-actualization stress
6. Physical stress
7. Social stress
8. Role stress

- 9. Institutional stress
- 10. Family stress
- 11. Financial stress
- 12. Vocational stress
- 13. Superstition stress

This is a five point scale for scoring as it takes into account the average category too. Two continua are located in terms of frequency i.e., Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely and Never. Other is of quantity i.e. Very Much, So-So, Little and Not at all.

In the frequency continuum of positive items, scoring will be from 4 to 0 whereas in the negative items it will be 0 to 4. Similarly in the quantity continuum, the positive items will be scored from 4 to 0 and the negative items will be scored from 0 to 4. The total will be separate for frequency and quantity. The grand total will be the sum of frequency score and quantity score

**Reliability:-** reliability of the scale of the battery was calculated by three ways for knowing a) dependability b) stability c) internal consistency

**Validity:-** all the scales appear to be having content validity and item validity.

**Procedure:-**

The researcher visited different high schools of Ranchi and approached the students, to get their responses. Bisht battery stress scale was applied on selected sample of students. Researcher also briefed that their responses would be kept confidential by the researcher. The obtained data were tabulated and analysed with the help of mean, SD and 't'.

**Result and discussion:-**

After scoring all the questionnaires various statistical methods were applied on the scores.

**Table-1**  
**Table 1 Comparison of the male and female adolescents on the mean stress scores.**

Scales	Male students (N=15)		Female students (N=15)		't' ratio
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
SES	212.8	56.54	216.8	78.75	0.16
SAchS	179.13	38.68	165.47	61.48	0.73
SAS	264.13	71.50	265.47	62.37	0.05
SSCS	207.27	47.40	180.53	59.73	1.36
SSAS	168.2	35.98	166	40.69	0.16
SPS	212.2	59.12	139.73	64.39	3.21**
SSS	290.2	70.15	243.87	67.67	1.84
SRS	192.8	27.30	157.53	33.09	3.18**
SIS	250.87	56.80	230.53	72.65	0.85
SFS	266.67	80.07	271.33	72.38	0.17
FSS	235.8	61.23	203.07	80.83	1.25
SVS	251	46.11	205.67	73.51	2.02
SSUS	223.33	63.04	145.13	56.32	3.58**

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

**The following tendencies may be noted in this analysis:-**

Male and female students differ significantly only on three dimensions of stress scale (Physical stress 't'=3.21, P<.01), (Role stress 't'=3.18, P<.01) & (Superstition stress 't'= 3.58, P<.01).

In all these comparisons between male and female adolescents, males have obtained higher mean scores as compared to female adolescents except two dimensions academic and family stress. Which indicated that males are more stress prone than the females.

The mean score of academic ( Mean=265.47) and family stress(

Mean=271.33) is higher for the female group but it does not differ significantly from the male group on t test. So it can be said very well that family issues are very frequently evoked and factors such as expressed emotion and hostile environment may have a role to play. The present finding is supported by the earlier studies conducted by Prachi (2013).

Thus the hypothesis that male students will be more stress prone than female students is accepted.

**Table: 2**  
**Table 2 Comparison of the high and low socio-economic status group of adolescents on the mean stress scores.**

Scales	HSES group of students (N=15)		LSES group of students (N=15)		't' ratio
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
SES	212	68.18	212.67	60.33	0.41
SAchS	162.73	56.44	187.67	44.21	0.35
SAS	260.67	74.53	288.47	48.68	1.22
SSCS	178.13	59.83	200	56.36	1.03
SSAS	156.2	33.80	187.27	32.16	2.60
SPS	165.67	74.14	178	78.72	0.44
SSS	256.73	77.76	272.87	72.29	0.62
SRS	168.5	35.47	171.6	42.92	0.22
SIS	239.73	71.62	244.2	58.78	0.18
SFS	262.67	71.80	277.47	61.94	0.60
FSS	219.6	60.05	213.13	78.56	0.25
SVS	227.73	55.34	234	68.03	0.28
SSUS	174.53	60.42	175.47	80.56	0.04

The result from table 2 showed that the low socioeconomic status groups mean score were higher than high socio-economic status groups, but the difference are not significant in any of the stress domains as evident through the independent sample t-test. So the hypothesis that students belonging to higher socio-economic status will show lower level of stress is not accepted.

**Conclusions:-**

It may be said that stress is not only influenced by gender and socio-economic status of the individual. Rather there are many factors such as family pressure, parent's expectation, socialization process etc.

Male and female students differ significantly in the physical, role and superstitious dimension of the stress scale. Male groups are more stressful in all this dimensions.

Female students feel more academic and family stress.

Low socio-economic group of students are more stressful than high socio-economic group of students but difference is not statistically significant.

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