



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Stress Management

UNDERSTANDING STRESS: CAUSES AND STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIAN CULTURE

KEY WORDS: Stress, Stress Management, Anxiety, Mental Health, Mental Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

Stress is one of the important hurdles in one's life for the development and growth. Today's life is full of stress and anxiety be it is the life of students, academicians, employees, businessmen, professionals or even housewives. The demand of role, social surroundings, peer pressures or fast pace of life events make one person under stress. It is not that in past people do not have stress in their lives but today's life is putting one person under continuous challenging situations. Almost 77% Indian suffering from stress and 88% from anxiety. It is thus very important to understand stressors and strategies to manage the stress. One can get cue from symptoms of stress to understand one's level of stress. This paper explains the concept of stress, symptoms and causes of stress and finally try to suggest some stress management techniques with reference to Indian culture.

INTRODUCTION

Today's life is full of stress and anxiety be it is the life of students, academicians, employees, businessmen, professionals or even housewives. The demand of role, social surroundings, peer pressures or fast pace of life events make one person under stress. It is not that in past people do not have stress in their lives but today's life is putting one person under continuous challenging situations.

Eustress gives positive results as it gives excitement due to challenging situations, but distress normally adversely affect our thinking patterns, behavior, reflections and actions. It is very important thus for us to understand stress, stressors and stress management techniques we can use in our day to day life.

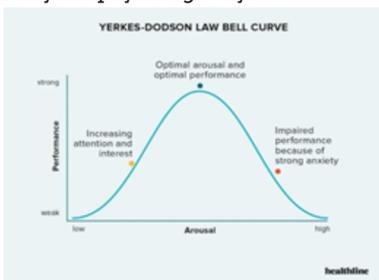
This paper will try to help understand stress, stressors and some stress management techniques to deal with stress.

Concept of Stress

According to World Health Organisation "Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being." (Reference)

American psychological association defines stress as "The physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors. Stress involves changes affecting nearly every system of the body, influencing how people feel and behave. For example, it may be manifested by palpitations, sweating, dry mouth, shortness of breath, fidgeting, accelerated speech, augmentation of negative emotions (if already being experienced), and longer duration of stress fatigue. (Reference)

Thus in one aspect stress can be considered as a natural human response to face difficult situations, but it affects us psychologically and physiologically.



Yerkes-Dodson Curve

The Yerkes–Dodson law (often called the Yerkes–Dodson Stress Curve) explains the relationship between stress (arousal) and performance. It suggests that performance increases with moderate levels of stress, but only up to a certain point. After that point, too much stress causes performance to decline.

Literature Review

Girija, C. and Ramni D. (2024) showed changing job conditions and the insecurity of employment, which can lead to job dissatisfaction and increased stress levels. Other factors includes work load, role conflict and powerlessness.

Sujaritha et al., (2022) observed that stress is a major individual and public health issue that are linked to a variety of physical and mental health issue. Stress-related disorders are thought to account for 75% to 90% of primary care physician visits.

Manoj Kumar A., and Bawthra, R. (2020) observed that young age is the critical period because at this time youth faces lots of changes in his/ her life. It was found that the stress mainly comes from academic tests, and career exploration.

Miedziun, P., and Czeslaw, J. (2015) showed that of all the stress management techniques people used mostly those included in the categories of "problem solving", "vicarious gratification" and "distancing".

Esch, T., and Stefano, G. B. (2010) observed that there exist a common neurobiological mechanism, i.e., limbic autoregulation, that involves dopamine, morphine and other endogenous signaling molecules, e.g., other opioid receptor agonists, endocannabinoids, oxytocin or serotonin, many of which act via NO release, and this share seems to be of critical importance for self-regulation and management of stress: stress management is an endogenous potential.

Symptoms of Stress

According to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, stress sometimes create adverse impact in one's physical and mental health like feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, frustration. It also sometimes changes in appetite, energy, desires and interests. Because of stress person feels difficulties in concentrating and making decisions. It also creates nightmares or problems sleeping. It also causes physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems or skin rashes. (Managing Stress (2025)

Causes of Stress

In the past two decades, India's disease epidemiology has transitioned from a high burden of communicable diseases to an increased burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). According to an estimate by the World Health Organization

(WHO), NCDs account for 74 percent of deaths worldwide and 66 percent in India. NCDs, are chronic diseases that can be attributed to physiological, genetic, environmental, or behavioral factors. Stress is known to be a major contributing factor to NCDs. (Statista Research Department, Dec 19, 2023).

Common Causes of Stress

Work Load

Normally one of the common reason of stress is heavy workloads, tight deadlines, job insecurity or poor work cultures.

Life Events

stress might be created in the individual due to major life changes like death of a loved one, divorce, job loss etc.

Financial Issues

People feel chronic worry about debt, poverty or the inability to afford basic needs.

Relationship Issues

Many times people feel stress regarding ongoing conflict with family members, friends or partners as well as feelings of loneliness or lack of social support.

Environment

Living in an unsafe neighborhood, exposure to constant noise (like traffic), or overcrowding may create continuous stress in the person's life.

Social Issues

In some cases social issues may create stress like experiencing discrimination, harassment, or prejudice based on race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Stress Management Techniques:

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a scientifically supported, two-stage method designed to decrease stress, anxiety, and bodily tension. It involves deliberately tightening and then releasing different muscle groups. Created by Edmund Jacobson in the 1920s, this technique is based on the idea that relaxing the body leads to a calmer mind, thereby interrupting the stress cycle.

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing consists of inhaling slowly through the nose and exhaling through the mouth while engaging the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. This method increases oxygen supply to the bloodstream, helps lower heart rate and blood pressure, and eases muscular tension.

Effective Time Management

Managing time efficiently plays a vital role in reducing stress by bringing order to daily responsibilities. By setting achievable goals, prioritizing tasks, and minimizing distractions, individuals can stay organized. Tools such as planners, task lists, and the Eisenhower Matrix (urgent versus important tasks) help prevent last-minute stress, avoid burnout, and create time for personal well-being.

Yoga

Yoga supports stress relief by combining physical postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), and meditation practices. This holistic approach soothes the nervous system, decreases blood pressure, and reduces cortisol levels. Poses like Child's Pose, Savasana, and forward bends help relax the body, while mindful breathing enhances awareness and calmness.

Pranayama

Pranayama refers to yogic breathing techniques that help control stress by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, improving vagal tone, and decreasing anxiety-

related brain activity. Effective techniques for quick stress relief include alternate nostril breathing (Nadi Shodhana), ocean breath (Ujjayi), bee breath (Bhramari), and cooling breath (Shitali).

Mantra Chanting

Chanting mantras serves as a beneficial stress reduction practice by quieting the mind and improving concentration through rhythmic repetition. It stimulates the vagus nerve, lowers cortisol levels, and enhances alpha brain wave activity, promoting deep relaxation.

Meditation

Meditation helps manage stress by directing attention inward, often through mindful breathing, body awareness, or focused attention techniques. It reduces cortisol and activates the body's relaxation response. Practicing meditation for even 15 minutes daily can decrease anxiety, improve emotional balance, and strengthen mental resilience.

Nutrition

Healthy eating is an effective strategy for stress control, as it helps balance hormones and reduce inflammation. Consuming whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and lean proteins supports lower cortisol levels and reduces anxiety. Important practices include increasing omega-3 fatty acids for brain function, incorporating fermented foods for gut health, and limiting caffeine and sugar intake to prevent energy crashes.

Music

Music is an easy and powerful way to manage stress, as it can reduce cortisol, slow the heart rate, and elevate mood by stimulating dopamine release. Listening to soothing music at around 60 beats per minute promotes relaxation, while actively playing instruments or singing provides a creative way to release tension.

CONCLUSION

Stress is the important issue in daily lives of majority people. We can identify stress in our life with stress related symptoms, there are some common causes of stress we can understand with reference to our lives and finally there are some stress management techniques we can use in our day to day life to manage stress and can live the life more peacefully and productively.

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