

Stress and Coping Strategies among College Students

***Dr. Mathew C.P.**

*(Principal, Indore School of Social Work, 13/14 Old Sehore Road, Indore, 452001, Madhya Pradesh, India
Corresponding Author: Dr. Mathew C.P.*

ABSTRACT: Stress is a common factor among college students. A student's life is subjected to different kinds of stressors, such as the pressure of academics with an obligation of success, uncertain future and difficulties envisaged for integration into the system. These students face social, emotional, physical and family problems which may affect their learning ability and academic performance. This study aims to know the level of stress among college students and the coping strategies they use to manage stress. The study design was descriptive and the samples for the study were selected through purposive sampling method. The participants of the study were 100 college students who are between the age group of 18 to 21 years. The study was conducted in Bangalore city of India. Perceived stress scale developed by Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., and Mermelstein, R. (1983) and brief coping scale to understand the coping patterns of the college students were administered to collect the data. The study findings shows that average score of the participant stress level scored is 26.94 which means the average number of participant have moderate level of stress and the coping strategies level scored is 48.40, i.e., the average number of participant have average level of coping strategies.

Keywords: *Stress, Coping Strategies, College Students*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Stress and anxiety is normal part of each individual's life. We can feel physical stress when we have too much work and when we are not getting proper sleep or we are not able to eat properly and when we are becoming ill. Stress is causing most persons in similar way. Acute stress leads to quick changes all through the body. Stress is generally defined as the body's common response or reaction to demands made on it, or to disturbing events in the environment. It is a process by which we perceive and cope with environmental threats and challenges. Personal and environmental events that cause stress are known as stressors.

A student's life is subjected to different kinds of stressors, such as the pressure of academics with an obligation of success, uncertain future and difficulties envisaged for integration into the system. These students face social, emotional, physical and family problems which may affect their learning ability and academic performance (Shaikh et.al, 2004). Some of them find it hard to cope with the stress and lag behind, while others see the pressure as challenge to work harder. Stress can lead to disruptions in both physical and mental health. Stress reduction and adopting a healthier life style have been major concerns of the students (Striker et.al., 1999). The importance of awareness about the stress level has a major effect on one's mental and physical capacity (Hargreaves, 1998).

Individuals are experience stress from outside and inside factors. Outside factors include poor physical situation (like cold and hot weather) or worrying psychological atmosphere (like deprived working situation, bad relationships. Inside stress factors can also be physical (sickness and illness, irritation) psychological tension about the future and unsafe events that may or may not take place. We all experience the stress in our everyday life. Stresses will effects our body in different ways. The stresses have different kind of symptoms like body symptoms, emotional symptoms and behaviour symptoms. Stress can be visible emotionally, behaviourally and physically but all symptoms are different in each person (Freidman & Booth, 1987).

Many believes that stress experience only by academically not by any other situations among adolescent girls. But many other facts are there such as family related issues, financial stress, stress due to ego threats, appearance related, stress while bodily changes happens, withdrawal, over burden of too many responsibilities leads to the stressful life. The main causes in the stress factors are like time concerns, fear of failure, classroom interactions, and economic issues are the some of the academic factors for stress in students. Moreover these factors, unlimited expectation of parents upon their children also make stress to the students. The impact of this stress will result in emotional problems, anxiety, stress, and other neurotic problems, frightening, abusive, depressing, threatening, competitive, unpredictable, and confusing situations (Remya &

Parthasarathy 2009). In the level of education, the educators force on acquisition of knowledge, neglecting the emotional calibre. So if the teachers do not give an attention towards over stressed students then these students might show some unusual behaviour. To maintain a healthy body and mind one needs to be cared for his or her stressful events of life (Hong, Zhang, Lei, 2011).

Another major source of stress is romantic relationship. The common stressors are leading to the negative effects such as depression, aggression, sleeplessness, negative interpersonal interactions, rejection, conflicts, and jealousy and so on. These are the outcome of the common stressors. A stressful event can appraisal as loss, threat or challenge (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Adolescence & Stress

Adolescence is a stage in between childhood and adulthood i.e., age in between 12-25, where the body and mentality maturity is occurred. So, the half of the education is taken place during this stage of a human being. Due to the physical changes in this stage arise many psychological problems among the students. Physical factors, Family factor, school factor, relationship factor and social factors are the main sources of stress (Kai-Wen Cheng, 2009). Adolescence is a dangerous period of time where young people experience self organization and role confusion. For them, stress mainly comes from academic tests, interpersonal relations, relationship problems, life changes, and career exploration. Such stress may usually cause psychological, physical, and behavioural problems (Kai-Wen, Cheng (2009). The college students face a grand deal of stress as they work together with their environments (Lee, Kang, Yum, 2005).

Coping strategies

Coping strategies emphasizes a range of emotional regulation strategies, thought process, and behaviours. This means that coping is founded in an individual's psychological response to stress, their appraisals of events of, their attention and their goals or outcomes they desire. Coping also depends on the social contexts and interpersonal relationships. The coping strategies which adolescence uses are seeking social support, problem solving, distraction, emotional focused problem solving, self reliance etc. The college students have more responsibility or few worries like the need to perform, the competition for grades, fear of failure, career choice, peer relationships, and many other aspects of the college environments are real life challenges that will leads to mental stress (Baqutayan, Shadiya, Mohamed (2012). Coping strategies of adolescents are mainly focus on some major stressors college students face and the interplay among stress, social support and the coping strategies. Major stressors included social life, financial hardship, relationships etc. Females reported a higher level of perceived stress than males (Welle, Paul D.; Graf Helen M.2011). The common stressors are leading to the negative effects such as depression, aggression, sleeplessness, negative interpersonal interactions, rejection, conflicts, and jealousy and so on. These are the outcome of the common stressors. A stressful event can appraisal as loss, threat or challenge (Gamble, 1994). It is increasingly recognized that how people cope is the most significant mediating factor in the consequences of stress (Sorensen, 1993). The ways in which individuals cope are as varied as the individuals who are doing the coping. However, some general observations and research findings suggest that many adolescent girls' coping repertoires in response to stress include solitude spending unstructured, inordinate amounts of time in their room, socializing with friends, and talking with family members (Arnett, J. J. (1999).

Literature Review

A study conducted by Kai –Wen, Cheng (2009) on the stress among the college students in Taiwan explains that due to the physical changes in the adolescent age arise many psychological problems among the students. Physical factors, Family factor, school factor, relationship factor and social factors are the main sources of stress. Study conducted by Remya & Parthasarathy (2009) on the coping patterns of the junior college student's found that time concerns, fear of failure, classroom interactions, and economic issues are some of the academic factors for stress in students. Moreover these factors, unlimited expectation of parents upon their children also make stress to the students. The impact of this stress will result in emotional problems, anxiety, stress, and other neurotic problems, frightening, abusive, depressing, threatening, competitive, unpredictable, and confusing situations. The suicide percentage of the college is also high when compared to others. According to Sinha et.al. (2000) the Canadian students are more irritable than the Indian students. Study concluded that the Indian students are using emotional focused coping strategies and the Canadian students are not using the coping strategies more effectively. The Indian students have low self esteem compare to Canadian students. Indian students are taking more support and confrontation to deal with the stress. Another study conducted on Stress coping strategies of students at universities and colleges of technology by Lin Ying Ming, Wang and Ming. (2010) found that in the level of education, the educators force on acquisition of knowledge, neglecting the emotional calibre. The study concluded that if the teachers do not give an attention towards over stressed students then these students might show some unusual behaviour. To maintain a healthy body and mind

one needs to be cared for his or her stressful events of life. A study conducted by Ji, Hong & Zhang, (2011) tried to understand the mental stress of the college students and the coping methods to overcome the stress. The study showed a positive correlation between mental stress of the college students and employment situations and study conditions and mental stress. The various coping strategies given by the authors are Adapt to college life as soon as possible and improve the effect of study, Improve college students' ability of starting a career and establish a correct concept of career, Ease the mental stress caused by family conditions etc. Vacek, Coyle & Vera (2010) say about the gender differences which were found for negative effect, with girls experiencing higher levels of negative stress than boys. The study found that may be boys also undergoing same effect of negative stress but girls are willing to reveal it through study. Uncontrollable stress was found only to be related to negative effect, and not positive affect or life satisfaction. It is mentioned because uncontrollable stress related to negative effect and coping strategies can be active coping.

A study conducted by Misra & Renjitha (2000) on the College student's academic stress and its relation to their anxiety, time management and leisure satisfaction. The study was on the basis of academic stress of undergraduate students by age and gender and its interrelationship to various factors such as anxiety, time management and leisure satisfaction. Gender differences have a significant impact on all the measures considered for the study. Also age difference or the junior senior differences has an impact on the level of stress. In Multivariate analysis anxiety, time management, leisure satisfactions were all predictors of academic stress. Stresses affecting students can be classified to academic, financial, time etc. The methods to reduce stress in students include effective time management, social support, positive reappraisal etc.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

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III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted to study the stress and coping strategies among the college students. The researcher looked in to the socio democratic profile of the participants, the level of stress among college students and the coping strategies used by college students to deal with stress. There are more specific explanatory studies available to the researcher regarding the various dimensions of the study. The research has ample fact finding investigations and adequate interpretations. Hence, descriptive design was applied in the study. Universe of the study consists of all the undergraduate college students in the colleges of Bangalore city who are falling in the age group of 18 to 21. The sample size of 100 was selected through purposive sampling technique from 5 colleges in the city. Two sets of structured Questionnaires used for data collection. One is to understand the stress level (Perceived stress scale - Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., and Mermelstein, R. (1994) and Brief cope scale is to understand how the students cope with their stress.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, participants are male and female college going students. All the participants belong to the age group of 18-21 years i.e. 4% of participants of 18 years, 26% of participants of 19 years, 28% of participants of 20 years and 42% of participants of 21 years. Out of 100 participants, the number of male participation was 46 and the female participation was 54, the percentage of participation was 46% and 54% respectively for male and female. In this research the stress among college students is divided into three categories i.e. mild, moderate and medium. The study found that 4% (4) participants have mild level of stress, 82% (82) participants have moderate level of stress and 14% (14) participants have medium level of stress. The coping strategies in the study describe three domains i.e. Low, average and high. Majority of the participants (76%) use average coping mechanism. 8 % of participants use low and 16% participants use high coping mechanisms.

Descriptive Statistics

	n	Mean	Std Deviation
Stress	100	26.94	.41650
Coping strategies	100	48.40	.48823

From the above table it can be concluded that the average score of the participant stress level scored is 26.94 which means that the average number of participant have moderate level of stress and the coping strategies level scored is 48.40 which means that the average number of participant have average level of coping strategies.

V. CONCLUSION

The study shows that each student is suffering from different kinds of stress and they don't have proper level of coping strategies. The main stress for the students are time concerns, fear of failure, classroom interactions, and economic issues and some of the academic factors for stress in students. Other than that, unlimited expectations of parents upon their children also make them stressed. The study found that these problems had highly affected with the person have stress and poor coping strategies Use of effective coping strategies helps the college students to deal with their stress.

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