



Study of relationship between stress and adjustment among adolescents

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Abstract

In present study aims to understand the relationship between the level of stress and adjustment among adolescents. A total number of 60 adolescents (30 boys and 30 girls) in the age group of 13 – 19 years, from schools in different areas of Sirsa selected at random. The Stress scale by Puri, Kaur and Mehta, and Adjustment Scale by H.S. Asthana (2011) were administrated on the adolescents. The results revealed that girls have more stress than boys. Boys have more adjustment than Girls. Adolescents exhibited a varying degree of adjustments patterns on account of stress. It may be due to social insecurity, lack of moral support, economic backwardness, inadequate teacher involvement, increased peer pressure, lower self esteem and self confidence etc.

Key words: Stress, Adjustment, Adolescents.

Introduction

Adolescence is the period of life from late childhood until physical growth is relatively complete and also marks the beginning of early adulthood. Age 13 through 16 is considered early adolescence and 17 through 21 is late adolescence (Wolman, 1989). The term adolescence is commonly used to describe the transitional stage of physical and psychological development between childhood and adulthood. There is no one scientific definition of adolescence or set age boundary. There is a key development change that nearly all adolescents experience during their transition from childhood to adulthood. This time frame, however, not only describes a very diverse reality, but adolescence varies considerably across cultures, over time, and within individuals (Kaplan, 2004).

Adolescence is the period of storm and stress in which adolescents suffer from more stress. Stress typically describes negative concept that can have an impact on one's mental and physical well-being. Difficulties occur however, when stress becomes excessive. Then the person experiences disrupted emotional, cognitive and physiological functioning. Stress can be defined as feeling overwhelmed and/or unable to cope effectively with people or events in one's life. Researchers have found developmental differences in coping with stress. Older adolescents tend to use a greater array of coping strategies, especially cognitive-oriented strategies, to reduce the impact of the stressor compared to younger adolescents (Williams & McGillicuddy-De, 1999). However, even early adolescence period, people use a variety of coping strategies, such as seeking support and using social relationships, ruminating, venting,

distracting, problem-solving, as well as using humor (Broderick & Korteland, 2002). Research findings are mixed regarding gender differences in coping during adolescence (Broderick & Korteland, 2002; Williams & McGillicuddy-De, 1999). Stress is related to anger in that the more distressed a person is, the more likely she/he is to feel angry and express it or control it in some way. A person's worldview, including his or her spiritual beliefs, may also influence stress (i.e., anxiety; Beck et al., 1985) and the experience and expression of anger (i.e., anger and hostility; Beck, 1999). The gender difference seems to increase in middle to late adolescence (Compas et al., 2004). In this regard, girls appear to be more vulnerable to the negative psychological health effects of stress than boys (Charbonneau et al., 2009). Studies also provide evidences that stressful life experiences predict increase in psychological problems over time (Carter et al., 2006). Stress is a negative state which leads to anger of an adolescent. Anger is one of the basic human emotions. It is neither "good" nor "bad," but is an emotion innate to humans (Daldrup & Gust, 1990). Anger is an intense emotional reaction elicited by covert or overt threats such as interference, attack, aggression and frustration and characterized by an acute reaction of the autonomic nervous system (Wolman, 1989). Anger comes from various ways such as inadequacy in family life, exposure to violence at home, expectations or attitudes at home. With violent crime rising among adolescents wide spread familial abuse, continuing racial discord and recent acts of terrorism, attention has turned to anger as a major problem in human relations (Koop & Lundberg, 1992). Adolescents are angered when their physical or social activities are prevented or in the case of an attack on their personalities, positions, or status in society. Adolescent may display anger when he or she is criticized, embarrassed, underestimated, or ignored and perceive such situations as threats to his/her extremely sensitive personality (Yazgan-Inanc et al., 2007).

Technically Adolescence is the period from the beginning of sexual maturity (puberty) to the completion of physical growth. The teenage years are also called Adolescence. During this period there will be great amount of growth in height and weight. It is also time for puberty changes. Some adolescents may experience these signs of maturity sooner or later than others. Stress is a very uneasy feeling that we all go through in our life. During adolescence they imbibe both positive and negative things from their parents and environment. The choice they make in this phase is very much dependent upon the upbringing they get and expectations from Family, Society, Peers, and more importantly their own „Self". The problem arises when the adolescents are unable to cope with stressful situations and end-up themselves in the distressed state of mind. In this distressed situation they indulge themselves in Anti-Social and Self-Destructive Activities.

Stress

The concept of stress has emerged in behavioral science research and also in physiological research to understand and to deal with the state of human beings' existence. Stress contributes to rapid social changes, ecological changes thereby affecting the related psychological factors and life styles of all human beings. Life, in technologically advanced societies, imposes new demands on the same resources that once helped our ancestors to cope up from circumstances. Stress is related to different environmental factors or events of a personal nature like loss of a job, loss of a dear one, the fear of failure, or a financial loss or a service of crisis, etc, such factors contributed to stress are called stressors. The create of a need for the individual to change his habits, behaviors, attitudes, interests, motives, etc, which in turn enhance the stress level. By increase in stream, and finally one reaches a stage

called a complete psychological break down. Human beings differ in their reaction to the stress. Some react more intensely where as others seem to overcome the stress while some people do not appear to be bothered at all. The onset and effects of stress are imperceptible, not visible and perhaps not consciously experienced by the person himself. When sufficient amount of stress accumulates, it can result in a breakdown.

Adjustment

Adjustment is a continuous process in which a person varies his behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship between himself and his environment. (Gates & Jersild) The relationship which becomes established among the biological heritage or organism the environment and the personality is adjustment. It is sort of shifting to more defensive position in order to face the challenges or circumstances after failing in earlier attempt or attempts. This special factor of the living organism is termed as adjustment. Adjustment refers to the behavioural process of balancing conflicting needs, or needs against obstacles in the environment. Humans and animals regularly do this, for example, when they are stimulated by their physiological state to seek food, they eat (if possible) to reduce their hunger and thus adjust to the hunger stimulus. Adjustment disorder occurs when there is an inability to make a normal adjustment to some need or stress in the environment. Adjustment is a signal harmonious relationship between man and his environment. One has to adjust oneself to the prevailing circumstances. When we adjust ourselves, we are changing in some way to adapt or accommodate ourselves in order to meet certain demands of our environment. The conditions in the environment are in a continuous realm of changes. We change our nature in order to fit ourselves in the realm of nature. Thus the process of Adjustment is a continuous one. In general, the adjustment process involves four parts: (1) a need or motive in the form of a strong persistent stimulus, (2) the thwarting or no fulfillment of this need, (3) varied activity, or exploratory behaviour accompanied by problem solving, and (4) some response that removes or at least reduces the initiating stimulus and completes the adjustment. Adjustment, is a psychological variable, is an index of integration between needs and satisfaction, related to achievement, social acceptance, age, sex, economic security and moral standards. (Chouhan, Tiwari and Khatter - 1972) Adjustment in college students is dynamic rather than static in quality. They change and bring changes in their environments too. Students adopt to some minor adjustments, techniques to reduce conflicts, anxiety and frustration in their colleges to avoid any interruptions in their study atmosphere. Adjustment is a persistent feature of human personality. The biological concept of adaptation has been borrowed and changed somewhat by the psychologist and renamed it as adjustment. It emphasizes the individual's struggle to get along or survive in his/ her social and physical environment. There are many influencing factors for the adjustment of college student's e.g. environmental factors, social pressure, role change, parental expectations and college system. Effective adjustment includes the adequateness's in home, health, emotional, social and educational area. Adjustment is a process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. Adjustment is harmonious relationship with the environment involving the ability to satisfy most of one's needs and most of the demands, both physical and social that are put upon one (Anonymous, 1968). Adjustment is a state in which the needs of the individual on the one hand and the claims of the environment on the other are fully satisfied (Anonymous, 1972)

Adjustment and Stress:

Stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response. But too much stress can cause a lot of discomfort and can get in the way of being able to focus and achieve. As a college student all have a lot of demands on them, which it can be difficult to balance. Stress is caused by an existing stress-causing factor or "stressor." All are aware of fearfulness of examinations and especially about practical examination in a medical college. Whether it is a test or an annual promotion examination, it does cause to lose some sleep which leads to anxiety. Reem Rachel A. (2009) confirmed the general impression that there is a considerable amount of stress among medical students. Perceived stress was significantly higher among female students. Physiological studies have shown that stress can affect the vital parameters. These changes include increase in pulse rate and blood pressure. The present study was aimed to assess the stress and its effect on vital parameters during academic examination in final year medical students. For many young adults, college is the best time of life. These critical years of adjustment can also be undermined by depression, anxiety, substance abuse and eating disorders. Researchers are finding that many mental illnesses are traced to trauma, whose damage surfaces in times of stress and change, such as the college years. The statistics listed below are evidence that stress in ourselves or in someone about whom we care – should be taken and treated seriously. A stressful situation has been considered little to do with our emotional responses. In fact it is our appraisal of the situation. Along with this appraisal it is also important how we interpret our own body's responses that create our anxiety. In other words it is our thought process about a particular situation which is critical factor in evaluating whether we feel stressed or not. Present study focused on stress and adjustment and their interaction effect among college students. A lot of studies examined various stressors common for all students and stressor which are specific, lack of time, availability of resource , finance, unclear expectations and assignments' how to study for tests are common stressors. Students who are studying abroad have to face more common stressor like language problems, home sickness, adjustment stress, loneliness and lack of social support due to racial discriminations. Male and female students might have different perspectives of adjustment and related stress. In some of the studies female students were found to be having higher stress levels than the male students and having poorer adaptation (Bang, Muruiki, & Hodges, 2008; Virta et al., 2004). However, in other studies it was found that gender has no effect in adjustment (Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, & Pisecco, 2001; Sumer, Poyrazli, Grahame, 2008).

Review of literature

When talking about adjustment and stress, the issue of stress management and coping strategies cannot be avoided. The review of literature given the importance of coping strategy and its implication to student's adjustment, this chapter provides an overview of literature on sources of stress that how perceived stress and coping strategies are related to adjustment. The chapter includes three sections. First deals the stress related to adjustment, second cover the stress related to coping strategies, and third deals the relationship of coping strategies and adjustment.

Martin, Chemers & Garcia (2001) examined the effects of academic self efficacy that is confidence in ability to perform well academically, optimism, and stress on the academic performance and adjustment of first year university students. The sample was composed of

256 first year students. Result indicated that self-efficacy yielded of direct and indirect powerful relationships with academic performance and adjustment of first year college students. Optimism was also found to be related to academic performance adjustment. Academically confident and optimistic students were more likely to see the university experience as a challenger rather than a threat and they experienced less stress

Brennan, Christopher & Karen (2004) examined the influence of congruence between partners perceived infertility related stress, and its impacts on depression and marital adjustment in infertile men and women. Couples belong to infertility treatments at a University affiliated teaching hospital. Fertility Problem Inventory FPI, the Beck Depression Inventory BDI, and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale DAS have been completed by couples. Results of study provided that the couples who understanding equal levels of social infertility stress reported higher levels of marital adjustment compared with couples who perceived the stress differently. Whereas, women in couples who felt a similar need for parenthood reported significantly higher levels of marital satisfaction, compared with women in couples where the males reported a greater need for parenthood. Moreover, there is no related between couple incongruence and depression in males. In addition, there is related between incongruence over relationship concerns and need for parenthood in favor of female depression. Akbar Hussain, Ashutosh Kumar & Abid Husain (2008) examined the level of academic stress and overall adjustment among Public and Government high school students and also to see relationship between the two variables (academic stress and adjustment). For that purpose 100 students of class IX were selected randomly from two different schools out of which 50 were taken from Public and the remaining 50 were taken from Government school Sinha. And Sinha scale for measuring academic stress was used to see the magnitude of stress and Sinha and Singh Adjustment Inventory for school students was used to examine level of adjustment among the students. Results indicated that magnitude of academic stress was significantly higher among the Public school students where as Government school students were significantly better in terms of their level of adjustment. However, inverse but significant relationships between academic stress and adjustment were found for both the group of students and for each type of school. Hampel & Petermann (2004) investigated the perceived stress, coping, and adjustment in adolescents. The total sample was 286 Austrian adolescents aged between lower on maladaptive coping strategies and externalizing problems and reported more adaptive coping strategies than sixth and seventh graders. Compared with boys, girls evaluated higher amount of perceived interpersonal stress and used more social support.

Additionally, girls scored higher on maladaptive coping strategies and emotional distress and scored lower on distraction than boys. Problem-focused and emotion-focused coping were negatively related to emotional and behavioral problems, whereas perceived stress and maladaptive coping was positively associated with adjustment problems. These relations were stronger in female than in male adolescents.

Problems

To study the gender differences on stress in college students.

To study the gender differences on adjustment in college students

Hypotheses:

There is no significant difference between male and female on stress in college students.

There is no significant difference between male and female on adjustment in college students.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The sample of the present study consisted total 60 were (30 male and 30 female) adolescents in different areas of Sirsa district. The age range of the adolescents was 13 - 19 year. The technique of sample selection was used in purposive sampling. They were selected from school in different areas of Sirsa. However, all the respondents were literate adolescents who had different levels of education and were belonging to various socio-economic statuses.

Instruments/TOOLS OF THE STUDY:

The following psychological tools have been used to collect the information from the sample:

Stress scale by Puri, Kaur & Mehta, (2011):-

This scale is useful to assess the stress level of the students of secondary/senior secondary, college and university level. It was developed on the basis of data of 500 college students. It contains 34 items. The students have to respond how often they have gone through the situations under question and indicate it on a 4-point scale (very often, often, sometimes and never). Though there is no time limit but usually the subjects complete it within 15-20 minutes. For each item scores are awarded according to scoring pattern: Very Often (4), often (3), sometimes (2) and never (1)

Adjustment Scale by H.S. Asthana

The inventory compiles 42 items which measures adjustment of the students. The inventory is self administering and it has no fix time limit. The reliability coefficient is .80. It merely attempts to segregate the poorly adjusted from those who are better adjusted and who may stand in need of psycho diagnostic study and counseling. Instructions were provided as in the test booklets and given to the subjects. The scores obtained by the subjects with respect to different variables as measured by the tools were analyzed statistically.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

For this study t test were used and analysis the data with the help of SPSS. Descriptive Statistics were used. For the present study, the main purpose was to collect information about the adolescent's stress and adjustment. For this reason, participants were selected purposively from different areas in sirsa. The questionnaire was administered to each of the 60 respondents individually and at the same time rapport was established through conversation with each of them. The participants were requested to express their actual feelings and thoughts regarding to the stress and adjustment through each question. Those who did not understand properly, then they were given necessary explanations. Upon completion of the questionnaire, the respondents were thanked for co-operation.

Results & Discussion

Table-1
Mean and SD on Adjustment and Stress of Adolescents

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
adjustment	60	111.20	34.79
stress	60	79.93	17.19
Valid N (list wise)	120		

Table 1 shows the Mean and SD value on Adjustment and Emotional Stress. Mean on Adjustment variable is 111.20 and mean on Stress is 79.93 and standard deviation on Adjustment is 34.79 and standard deviation on Stress is 17.19.

Table-2
T-value on Adjustment among Adolescent Male and Female

	string	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-value
adjustment	male	30	127.33	33.85	2.83
	female	30	95.06	28.34	

The above table-2 reveals that the t-value for the difference between the means of the two groups (male and female) was found to be non significant at the both levels of significance. So, it may be inferred that “There is no significant difference of adjustment among type of sex among adolescent students.” hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 levels. The mean of males is more than females; it means that males have more adjustment than females.

Table-3
T-value on Stress among Adolescent Male and Female

	string	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-value
stress	male	30	70.53	17.50	3.54
	female	30	89.33	10.82	

The above table -3 reveals that the t-value for the difference between the means of the two groups (male and female) was found to be non significant at the both levels of significance. So, it may be inferred that “There is no significant difference on Stress among type of sex among adolescent students.” hypothesis is rejected at both level (0.01 & 0.05). The mean of females is more than males; it means that females have more Stress than males.

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