

A Pilot Study on Causes of Stress among School Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the causes of stress among school-going students. In today's competitive world, every student wants to become an all-rounder and wants to achieve success in a limited period, while doing so they intentionally or unintentionally get trapped in a vicious circle of stress. Stress, in general, can be explained in terms of sadness, worries, tension, and frustration which leads to depression which is temporary or may last for a long time. Depending on the intensity and duration of the stress, the person's personality, how they think about the stress, and their social support, stress can be either negative or positive for them. To find out the causes of stress among students, a short survey was conducted on 50 eleventh standard students of private schools in Delhi, using the Student Stress Rating Scale (Dr. D. K. Kumaran and M. Balamurugan, 2008). The finding revealed that out of 50 students, 30 students (60%) feel stressed out due to physiological factors, 11 students (22 %) due to examination, 04 students (08%) due to social factors, 03 students (06%) due to emotional factors, and 02 students (04 %) due to behavioural factors.

1. Introduction

In modern society, stress has become a part and parcel of life. Stress may not affect everyone in the same way, but it can cause good and bad experiences in someone's life. Student life could be the happiest time of a person's life. It is a life devoid of the stresses of the outside world. But stress has nearly become a way of life for some students. Allowing stress to become a student's way of life is extremely dangerous because high levels can have a devastating influence on a student's life, leading to failure. Several challenges like papers and projects, exams and the competition among students can cause an emotional imbalance. Also trials within chosen areas of study, and financial worries about school and future employment opportunities can add to the stress (Ross et al., 1999; Herold, 2018). The presence of stress depends on the presence of **stressors**. Feng (1992) and Volpe (2000) define a "stressor as anything that challenges a person's adaptive capacity or stimulates the person's body or mind." Stress can be caused by various factors like environmental, psychological, biological, and social. It could be of any nature, either favourable or unfavourable for an individual, depending on the intensity of the stress. Challenging events can result in good effects such as increased motivation and task performance (Rheinberg & Engeser, 2018). Whereas negative or distressing events can cause anxiety, sadness, social dysfunction, and even suicidal tendencies. Students are frequently under pressure from a variety of sources, resulting in one or more forms of stress (Strong et al., 2008). To help them, the higher authorities, as well as they themselves, must be aware of the causes of their stress so that proper steps may be taken to reduce the stress.

2. Review of Literature

Bernstein et al. (2008) define the sources of stress as any circumstances or events that threaten to disturb the day-to-day functioning of an individual and force them to make adjustments. These sources of stress are called "Stressors". Wills and Shiffman (1985) categorised three different categories of stressors. The first category is referred to as important life events, which are acute but only last for a brief period of time, such as a serious sickness, a change of schools, or the loss of a close relative. The second category consists of issues that people encounter daily, such as inconveniences caused by crowded buses, standing in lines, or tussling with store employees. A third category is enduring life strain, which refers to the ongoing difficulties that come with playing certain roles, like being a student or a teenage son or daughter. Stress may arise from a feeling that the course being studied will not help in shaping a bright future, the pressure of studies, examination (Dahlin et al., 2005; Baldwin et al., 2009; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006), fear of failure and negative evaluation of future (Busari, 2012; Bataineh, 2012), language problem making it difficult to understand lessons, lecture schedules, missing classes, inadequate infrastructure (Agolla and Ongori, 2009), meeting deadlines and time management (Macan et al., 1990; Misra et al., 2000). Too many time-consuming assignments, no time to relax, need to help parents/guardians along with studies may give rise to a sense of inability to cope with the workload efficiently (Bataineh, 2013). The performance of their children in exams is very important to Indian parents and this can cause stress among children. Parents anticipate that to achieve their goals, they will work hard. Some children could feel anxious about these expectations (Deb et al., 2015; Kumar & Jadaun, 2018).

3. Methodology

The present study was a school-based study conducted in two private schools in northwest Delhi. The schools were selected using purposive sampling. In both Schools, 25 students each, comprising a total sample of 50 students, were randomly selected. Authorities in the school were explained the nature and procedure of the study. Selected classes were approached on the pre-fixed days and times to collect information from the students.

Student Stress Rating Scale (Dr. D. K. Kumaran and M. Balamurugan, 2008), was used to find out the causes of stress among students. This scale is a seven-point scale with 35 items. The items were given under five factors "viz Physiological, Emotional, Social, Examination and Behavioural Stress." Respondents are asked to tick the most appropriate option according to their feelings or thoughts.

4. Results

- From the data collected, it emerged that most students feel stressed out due to Physiological factors.
- Out of 50 students, 30 students (60%) feel stressed out due to Physiological factors, 11 students (22 %) due to Examination, 04 students (08%) due to social factors, 03 students (06%) due to Emotional factors, and 02 students (04 %) due to Behavioural factors.

- Girls reported more Physiological stress in comparison to boys.
- Fear of examination came out as the second highest stress-causing factor among school students.

5. Conclusion

Students are undergoing high levels of stress in many walks of life. The combination of a hectic schedule with high demands of education is causing stress and depression. Minimal stress can be useful and can lead to better performance. However, uncontrolled stress can lead to exhaustion, depression and several other sicknesses. The occurrence of stress depends on the presence of the stressors. Stressors can be internal or external that may tilt the balance, affecting the overall physiological and psychological equilibrium of an individual which requires immediate action to maintain homeostasis (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977). Stress can result from environmental, psychological, biological and social factors. Students can make wrong decisions, under the influence of stress. For a gliding effectively into adulthood, students require proper direction, care, encouragement, and supervision from significant adults. The stress that students experience can impact their ability to cope and adapt. Therefore, it becomes imperative to recognize the source and degree of stress, the nature of stressors and develop appropriate coping skills and strategies to combat the stress of students.

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