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A Study on Mental Stress among Adolescent Students

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Abstract

The present study is aimed at assessing the mental stress among adolescent students in the context of certain demographic variables. A sample of 250 adolescent students aged 16 to 18 years from the city of Vijayawada was selected using a stratified random sampling method. The investigator used the normative survey method for conducting the study. The Mental Stress Measurement Scale constructed and standardized by Trusha S. Koradiya (2018) was employed in this investigation. This scale consists of 30 items with five alternative options, such as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. It consists of 3 positive and 27 negative items. The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.91 according to the Spearman-Brown formula. The content validity of the scale was established through careful and critical scrutinization conducted by a team of experts in the field of psychology and education. The findings revealed that nearly 15% of the sample of adolescent students has low level of mental stress, 76% of the sample has moderate level of mental stress and the remaining 9% of the sample has high level of mental stress. Hence, this shows that adolescent students differ in their levels of mental stress. The gender and locality of living of adolescent students don't make a significant difference in their mental stress, whereas type of management and academic stream of adolescent students make a significant difference in their mental stress.

Keywords: *Mental Stress and Adolescents*

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Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial period in human life. Adolescents often have to cope with a high rate of stress, as evidenced by the psychological factors associated with their development, which show a gradual increase in stress levels. Stress can trigger feelings of depression, fear, conflict, suffering, anger, sadness, incompetence, guilt, loneliness, and confusion. Students experience stress due to several circumstances. Adolescent stress is the result of family conflicts, negative relationships with peers, academic pressure, financial instability, and violence in families and society. Long-term stress can lead to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety among the students. An individual's response against stress is based on whether they perceive an issue as a threat or challenge. Challenging stimuli results in motivation and good performance, but threatening them or suffering can also cause anxiety, depression, social dysfunction, and suicidal ideation.

Stress

According to Rosenham and Seligman, 1989; Selye, 1974, stress is generally defined as the general response or reaction of the human body to various demands made on it or disturbing events that occur in the surrounding environment. Kaplan and Saddock, (2000) defined stress as a simply change caused by mental disorders or stress. Good stress can facilitate the learning process. Bad stress inhibits the learning process (Linn and Zeppa, 1984). Arria, et al. (2009) defined stress as a negative factor that can change body balance, also known as distress.

Distress occurs when doing the work of daily targets with no fun and relief. Common symptoms of a distressed person are over-arousal, tension, inability to rest, touching, lightheadedness, irritability, nervousness, jumping, jerking, and impatience of interruption or delay. As we discussed, high stress can lead to depression, anxiety, drug abuse, and psychological problems such as suicidal ideation (as cited in Snehlata D. Ghatol, 2017).

Types of Mental Stress

Acute stress is the kind of stress caused by a particular, transient circumstance or incident. It is a severe, unpleasant, temporary condition that starts soon after a traumatic incident and lasts less than a month. For instance, a severe accident, an unexpected death, or other traumatic experiences could be the cause of acute stress. Symptoms of acute stress include headache, chest pain, palpitations, nausea, anxiety, irritability, poor sleep, etc.

Chronic stress *is* the stress that lasts for a considerable time, even months or years. Numerous factors, including financial troubles, marital issues, work-related difficulties, and health issues, can lead to chronic stress. Chronic stress may be due to different factors such as concern about their career, role of ambiguity, conflict, lack of interest in participation in decision-making, work under load, poor learning conditions, lack of group cohesiveness, interpersonal and intergroup conflict, school atmosphere changes, and lack of social support.

Need and Significance of the Study

Mental stress is a complex reaction that encompasses psychological, physiological, and behavioral responses when a person feels overwhelmed by the demands they face compared to their capacity to handle those demands. Today, mental stress has become an integral part of every person's daily life, and its results can be seen in suicides at a young age, addictions to physical disorders, etc. Therefore, stress issues have become a part and parcel of the lives of students and young people. Life pressures were not uncommon in ancient times, but society engaged life education as part of daily routines, particularly in the context of child-rearing practices. Although life skills education is given a special place in the modern curriculum, it is not enough to know what is going on to deal with stressful challenges. Research indicates that Indian adolescents face distinct pressures arising from cultural influences, such as high parental expectations, constrained living conditions, and academic stress, among other factors. Hence, there is an urgent need for this research.

Review of Related Literature

Manikandan, K., and Nirmala Devi, S. (2015) conducted a study on stress in adolescent learners. A sample of 350 adolescent learners (boys and girls aged 13-19 years) studying in various high schools in and around Madurai city indicates the moderate stress among adolescent learners, and it depends on gender, medium of instruction, location of residence, and type of school.

Patel Manisha, M. (2019) studied students of higher secondary schools in Ahmedabad in context to certain variables. In this research, 556 students from high secondary schools in the city of Ahmedabad were selected through a stratified random sampling method. The findings revealed that the students of the whole sample group have a medium level of mental stress. Higher secondary school girls experienced more mental stress than boys.

Statement of the Problem

The topic of the present research is *"A Study on Mental Stress among Adolescent Students."*

Objectives of the study

- To observe the levels of mental stress among adolescent students.
- To find out the mental stress among adolescent students due to variation in their gender, locality of the student, type of management, and academic Stream.

Hypotheses of the Study

- The adolescent students do not differ in their levels of mental stress.
- Gender of adolescent students makes no significant difference in their mental stress.
- Locality of adolescent students makes no significant difference in their mental stress.
- Type of management of adolescent students makes no significant difference in their mental stress.
- Academic stream of adolescent students makes no significant difference in their mental stress.

Delimitations of the Present Study

- The geographical area of the investigation is limited to the city of Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh.
- The size of the sample is restricted to 250 adolescent students.
- The study is confined to science and arts groups of higher secondary adolescent students.

Methodology of the Study

A. Method of study

The normative survey method was adopted in this research as it is the appropriate method for the present research.

B. Sample

A sample of 250 adolescent students aged 16 to 18 years from the city of Vijayawada in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh was selected using a stratified random sampling method.

C. Tool used

The Mental Stress Measurement Scale was constructed and standardized by Trusha S. Koradiya (2018). This scale consists of 30 items. There are 3 positive and 27 negative items. It is a 5-point Likert scale. If a respondent marks 'strongly agree', it is given a weight of 5 points for positive items. Similarly, 4, 3, 2, and 1 point are given for marking on 'agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree, respectively, and in the case of negative items, the scoring is reversed, i.e., from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The range of scores is from 30 to 150. The reliability coefficient according to the Spearman-Brown formula is 0.91. The content validity of the scale was established through careful and critical scrutinization conducted by a team of experts in the field of psychology and education.

D. Statistical Techniques Used

The following statistical methods, such as Mean, Standard Deviation and Critical Ratio were used in this research to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

The calculated values of mean and standard deviation for the total sample on mental stress are 101 and 11, respectively. Based on the Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) calculated, the total sample was classified into three categories, i.e., low (below M - 1 SD), moderate (in between M - 1 SD and M + 1 SD), and high (above M +1 SD) mental stress groups. The respondents whose scores are less than [Mean - 1SD = 101 - 11] 90 are considered a low mental stress group. Their number is 38, i.e., 15%. The respondents whose scores are above [M + 1SD = 101+11] 112 are considered a high mental stress group. Their number is 23, i.e., 9%, and the remaining 76% have moderate mental stress. The data about the above three categories, along with their verbal descriptions, is presented in Table No. 1.

Table 1: Levels of Mental Stress among Adolescent Students

Sr. No.	Score Range	Size (N)	%	Verbal Description
1	< 90	038	15.20	Low
2	Between 90 and 112	189	75.60	Moderate
3	>112	023	09.20	High
Total		250	100.00	

From table 1, it is noted that nearly 15% of the sample of adolescent students has a low level of mental stress. 76% of the sample has a moderate level of mental stress, and the remaining 9% of the sample has a high level of mental stress. Hence, this shows that adolescent students differ in their levels of mental stress.

Table 2: Mental Stress among Boys and Girls Adolescent Students- Mean, S.D. and C.R.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	C.R.
Male	123	100.23	10.91	0.91#
Female	127	101.47	10.66	

Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 reveals the obtained C.R. value (0.91) is lower than 1.96. It is not significant at the 0.05 level. So, the null hypothesis is accepted. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference in mental stress among boys and girls adolescent students.

Table 3: Mental Stress among Rural and Urban Adolescent Students- Mean, S.D. and C.R.

Locality of living	N	Mean	SD	C.R.
Rural	111	100.14	11.19	0.88#
Urban	139	101.36	10.39	

Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 reveals the obtained C.R. value (0.88) is lower than 1.96. It is not significant at the 0.05 level. So, the null hypothesis is accepted. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference in mental stress among rural and urban adolescent students.

Table 4: Mental Stress among Govt. and Private Adolescent Students-Mean, S.D. and C.R.

Type of management	N	Mean	SD	C.R.
Govt.	104	096.93	10.42	2.97**
Private	146	101.50	08.43	

** Significant at 0.01 level

It is observed from table 4 that the obtained C.R. value (2.97) is greater than 2.58 at the 0.01 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it can be observed that there were notable differences in the mental stress levels among adolescent students attending government and private higher secondary schools. The mean difference (4.57) is in favour of the adolescent students who are studying in the private higher secondary schools. It can be said that private adolescent students possess high level of mental stress when compared to their counterparts.

Table 5: Mental Stress among Science and Arts Adolescent Students- Mean, S.D. and C.R.

Academic stream	N	Mean	SD	C.R.
Science	138	105.15	09.93	5.37**
Arts	112	096.61	11.37	

** Significant at 0.01 level

It is observed from table 5 that the obtained C.R. value (5.37) is greater than 2.58. It is significant at the 0.01 level. The null hypothesis is rejected. As a result, the science group had a significantly different experience of mental stress than the arts group. The mean difference (8.54) is in favour of the science group adolescent students. It can be said that science group adolescent students possessed a high level of mental stress when compared to their counterparts.

Major Findings of the Study

- Nearly 15% of the sample of adolescent students has a low level of mental stress. 76% of the sample has a moderate level of mental stress and the remaining 9% of the sample has a high level of mental stress. Hence, this shows that adolescent students differ in their levels of mental stress.
- There is no significant difference in mental stress among male and female adolescent students.
- There is no significant difference in mental stress among rural and urban adolescent students.
- There is a significant difference in mental stress among government and private higher secondary school adolescent students. Private higher secondary school adolescent students possessed a high level of mental stress when compared to government higher secondary school adolescent students.
- There is a significant difference in mental stress among the science and arts group adolescent students. Science group adolescent students possessed a high level of mental stress when compared to arts group adolescent students.

Recommendations for Further Studies

- A similar study can be made on a sample of thirteen (13) large amounts in different districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- The same study can be done for degree, postgraduate, engineering students, and single-parent adolescent students, as well as other grade students pursuing education in various schools or colleges in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
- A comparison study can be conducted with a large sample in two different geographical regions of India.

Educational Implications

- As adolescents differ in their levels of mental stress, it is necessary to identify the specific causes of the stress and take up suitable remedial measures.
- Male and female students do not differ in the levels of mental stress; intervention strategies should be designed effectively to address the gender-based requirements.
- The finding that rural and urban students do not differ in the levels of mental stress indicates that there should not be any urban or rural demarcation in addressing the problem of mental stress.
- Different intervention methods need to be adopted as stress levels are associated with the type of management.
- The academic stream has influenced the mental stress level of adolescent students. It indicates that suitable guidance and counseling techniques are to be incorporated in school practices to help the adolescents learn to manage stress effectively.

Conclusion

The present study is aimed at assessing the mental stress among adolescent students in the context of certain demographic variables. It showed that adolescent students differ in their levels of mental stress, and the variables like locality of living and gender do not result in a major difference in the levels of mental stress. It has further shown that type of management and academic stream have influenced the levels of mental stress of the adolescent students. The fast-paced world and highly competitive academic and work culture need better interventions to train individuals to face mental stress and lead a better life. This study once again stresses the need for effective counseling for adolescents to meet the stressful challenges of life.

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