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Study on Relationship between Stress and Adjustment among Adolescents

Ramya Bhaskar* , Rudramma** and M. Komala
Human Development, Department of Studies in Food Science and Nutrition, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Mysore, Karnataka, India
*Corresponding author: Ramya Bhaskar
** Rtd. Prof.

Abstract

In present study an attempt has been made to understand the relationship between the level of stress and adjustment among adolescents. A total number of 600 adolescents (300 boys and 300 girls) in the age group of 15 – 16 years, studying in PUC colleges of Mysore city were selected at random. The Perceived Life Events Scale and the Bells Adjustment Scale was administered to assess the stress and adjustment levels of adolescents respectively. The results revealed that more boys experienced significantly higher level of severe and total stress as compared to girls. The mean scores on adjustments showed that both boys and girls have unsatisfactory and average levels of adjustments. Highly significant gender difference was shown with regard to home and social adjustment areas. Highly significant correlation was noticed between stress and social, emotional and total adjustment areas. Adolescents have exhibited a varying degree of adjustments patterns on account of stress 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, Environment, Adolescents

Introduction

The great risk of behavioral and adjustment problems occur in the personality of adolescents. Various kinds of behavioral and adjustment problems encountered by the adolescents with parents, siblings, peers, friends, teachers and other members of the society. Adolescents also face several problems while trying to build successful personal, family and community lives since they live in a so called 'problem age'. There are numerous manifestations of the severity and breadth of the problems besetting adolescents, families, educational institutions, governments and communities. Behavior is a set of human conduct and actions in a specified manner by analysis of stimulus and response. Adjustment is a process through which the organism moulds itself in response to the environmental conditions it faces. Adolescents are at risk for behavioral and adjustment difficulties if developmental changes are accompanied by an accumulation of various stresses and complexities spanning multiple spheres of the lives of adolescents. Studies have shown that family support, friendship support and school climate appear to have similar effects in the process of psychological adjustment. The quality of the neighborhood, after-school activities and ethnic identity also had profound impact on the psychological adjustment of the students[4]. Adolescents have high frustration score in all the areas of behavior mechanisms such as aggression, fixation, regression and resignation. Girls had higher frustration when compared to boys. The challenges for development faced by youth as they try to attain the knowledge and skills requisite for success in society are many of the same ones adolescents face in trying to build successful personal, family and community lives[2].

A stress situation is one where extreme changes in temperature occur and that noxious substances are injected into the body. Adolescence is indeed, a period of 'storm and stress'. The lengthiness of adolescence, the myriad changes, the uncertainty about the future, the anxiety over choices and other real life situations also bring about stressful conditions and period to the adolescents. The chronic adversities that hinder the healthy behavioral and adjustment patterns of adolescents are environmental stressors that endure for extended periods of time. The intensity of these stressors may vary contextually but the key characteristics that differentiate them from acute trauma are their pervasive and lasting nature[3]. Accumulation of stressful experiences significantly increases an adolescent's vulnerability to negative outcomes. Available coping resources, including social support and problem solving opportunities and capabilities significantly enhanced the morale of the adolescents in times of crisis and stress[5]. The adolescents with different behavior profiles cope differently in response to environmental stress including that of peer stress. Aggressive and unpopular adolescents were more likely to use negative coping strategies. The adolescent girls were more likely to use coping strategies aimed at minimizing the emotional impact of certain events[1]. The deficiency of parental income also leads to poverty, inadequate food, malnutrition, ill-health, poor housing, educational backwardness, family problems, frustration among children, sexuality, unhealthy environment and other problems[7,8]. Economic and social stresses have significant effect on the behavior and adjustment patterns of adolescents. The family's economic status is associated with the quality of adolescents' relations with peers, school performance, and self confidence[6]. There has been increased interest in environment-adolescent relationships and that a number of behavior scientists have made notable contributions in this regard. Hence, in the present study an attempt has been made to study the relation between the stress and adjustment level of adolescents.

Materials and Methods

The present study aimed at understanding the relationship between level of stress and adjustment of adolescents. The participants for the study were drawn from the selected institutions in Mysore City, Karnataka State at random. The selected participants were in the age group of 15 – 16 years (middle-adolescent years). A total of 600 participants were selected from pre-university colleges of Mysore City. Out of 600 selected participants 300 were boys and 300 were girls. The adjustment inventory student form developed by Bell (1934) was administered to assess the adjustment of adolescents. This adjustment inventory examines the adjustment level in four important areas that is home, health, social and emotional and total regarding overall adjustment, which includes all the four areas. The Perceived Stressful Life Events Scale developed by Venkatesh Kumar (1983) measures the level of stress experienced by an individual in his/her day to day life situations was used to assess the level of stress. The collected data were scored and tabulated according to the manual of the standardized tools. Statistical analysis tests such as independent sample't' test and correlation coefficient were employed to know the significant difference among the genders and the relationship between the stress and adjustment levels of adolescents.

Results and Discussion

Table – 1: The mean score on perceived level of stress reveals that the adolescent boys (28.66) have experienced highly severe stress as compared to the adolescent girls (20.59). There is highly significant gender difference ('t' value – 4.132, P<.0001) with regard to severe stresses of adolescents. The mean score on perceived level of stress reveals that the adolescent girls (28.97) have experienced highly moderate stress as compared to the adolescent boys (27.91). There is no

significant gender difference with respect to moderate stresses of adolescents. The mean score on perceived level of stress reveals that the adolescent boys (56.82) have experienced high degree of total stress ranging from severe to moderate levels as compared to the adolescent girls (49.74). There is highly significant difference ('t' value – 2.773, P<.0001) between the gender with regard to total stresses of adolescents.

Table -2: The data revealed that gender of the adolescents had a bearing on adjustment pattern. The mean score on home adjustment pattern of adolescents reveals that the adolescent boys (11.58), adolescent girls (12.75) and total subjects (12.17) have exhibited an unsatisfactory level of home adjustment. There is a highly significant difference ('t' value – 2.963, P<.003) between the gender with respect to home adjustment pattern of adolescents. The mean score on health adjustment pattern of adolescents reveals that the adolescent boys (10.46), adolescent girls (10.43) and total subjects (10.45) have exhibited an unsatisfactory level of health adjustment. There is no significant gender difference was observed under health adjustment pattern of adolescents. The mean score on social behavior and adjustment pattern of adolescents reveals that the adolescent boys (18.21), adolescent girls (16.44) and total subjects (17.33) have exhibited an average level of social behavior and adjustment. There is a highly significant difference ('t' value –4.498, P<.0001) between the gender was noticed in social behavior pattern of adolescents. The mean score on emotional adjustment pattern of adolescents reveals that the adolescent boys (15.31), adolescent girls (16.10) and total subjects (15.70) have exhibited an unsatisfactory level of emotional adjustment. There is no significant gender difference between was found emotional adjustment pattern of adolescents. The mean score on total adjustment pattern of adolescents reveals that the adolescent boys (55.52), adolescent girls (55.81) and total subjects (55.66) have exhibited an unsatisfactory level of total adjustment. There is no significant gender difference was observed with respect to total adjustment pattern of adolescents. There was unsatisfactory level of behavior and adjustment pattern with respect to most of the adjustment areas regardless of the gender. A highly significant difference is noted between the gender and home ('t' value – 2.963, P<.003) and social ('t' value – 4.498 P<.0001) areas of behavior and adjustment patterns.

Table – 3: The correlation coefficient value with respect to adolescent boys shows a significant and a highly significant relationship between severe level of stress and health (r – .121, P<.036), social (r – .222, P<.0001), emotional (r – .273, P<.0001) and total (r - .131, P<.023) areas of adjustment. Similarly the correlation coefficient value exhibits a significant and a highly significant relationship between moderate level of stress and social (r – .173, P>.003), emotional (r – .134, P<.020) and total (r - .157, P<.007) areas of adjustment. The correlation coefficient value also shows a significant relationship between total stress and home (r – .118, P<.041), health (r - .135, P<.019) and emotional (r – .147, P<.011) areas of adjustment.

Table – 4: The correlation coefficient value with respect to adolescent girls exhibits a highly significant relationship between severe level of stress and home (r – .216, P<.0001), emotional (r – .260, P<.0001) and total (r - .170, P<.003) areas of adjustment. The correlation coefficient value does not show any significant relationship between moderate level of stress and adjustment areas. The correlation coefficient value among the adolescent girls showed a highly significant relationship between total stress and home (r – .171, P<.003) and emotional (r – .186, P<.001) areas of adjustment areas.

Table – 5: The correlation and coefficient value with respect to adolescents shows a highly significant relationship between severe level of stress and social (r – .161, P<.0001), emotional (r – .250, P<.0001) and total (r - .144, P<.0001) areas of adjustment. Similarly the correlation coefficient value among the adolescents also shows a highly significant and a significant relationship between moderate level of stress and social (r – -.124, P<.002) and total (r - -.091, P<.026) areas of

adjustment. The correlation coefficient value among the adolescents show a significant and a highly significant relationship between total stress and health (r - -.106, P<.010) and emotional (r – .158, P<.0001) areas of adjustment.

Conclusion

The adolescent boys exhibited comparatively high degree of stress ranging from severe to moderate levels as compared to adolescent girls. Highly significant gender difference was found with regard to home and social adjustment areas and highly significant correlation was noticed between stress and social, emotional and total adjustment areas. Adolescents have exhibited a varying degree of adjustments patterns on account of stress possibly due to economic backwardness, inadequate teachers' involvement, social insecurity, lack of moral support, increased peer relations, high risk behaviors and other environmental factors. It may be also noted that the adolescent girls have exhibited a varying degree of adjustment levels on account of stress may be due to gender stereotyping and cultural influences.

The parents should also effectively monitor and evaluate the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors for a better adjustment pattern of the adolescents. Parents must be always vigilant to protect their children from the potential threats that seem increasingly complex in the modern society. The teachers should also actively involve in the curricular and extra-curricular activities of the adolescents. Teachers-adolescent relationship is widely regarded as a significant bondage all over the world. The teachers unlike parents should also effectively evaluate the behavior and adjustment patterns of the adolescents. The teachers should also organize necessary medicare, psychotherapy, guidance and counseling services in their institutions willingly and voluntarily.

Adolescence is indeed, a double-edged sword. It is a critical stage of human development wherein myriad risk behaviors are bound to exist mainly due to personal differences, socio-economic factors, family environment, school environment, social environment and other factors. The future agenda for the government, non-government, educational and health organizations must deal with the processes of human resources development and human rights protection of adolescents in India.

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Table – 1

Distribution of Mean/SD, 't' Value and Significance Level and Perceived Stress Levels of Boys and Girls

Perceived Stress Level	Boys N = 300	Girls N = 300	't' Value	P value
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD		
Severe	28.66 ± 26.12	20.59 ± 21.52	4.132	.0001**
Moderate	27.91 ± 17.34	28.97 ± 16.55	.766	.444
Nil	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	56.82 ± 31.58	49.74 ± 30.91	2.773	.006**

P = Probability; * sig. At .05; ** highly sig. at .01 levels

Table – 2

Distribution of Mean and SD, 't' Value and Significance Level of Adjustment Areas of the Total Subjects According to Gender

Adjustment Areas	Boys (N= 300)	Girls (N= 300)	Total N=600	't' Value	P value
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD		
Home	11.58 ± 4.17	12.75 ± 5.45	12.17 ± 4.88	2.963	.003**
Health	10.46 ± 4.11	10.43 ± 4.71	10.45 ± 4.42	.068	.948
Social	18.21 ± 5.42	16.44 ± 4.19	17.33 ± 4.92	4.498	.0001**
Emotional	15.31 ± 5.87	16.10 ± 5.97	15.70 ± 5.93	1.627	.104
Total	55.52 ± 14.57	55.81 ± 14.99	55.66 ± 14.77	.238	.812

P = Probability; * sig. At .05; ** highly sig. at .01 levels

Table – 3

The Correlation Coefficient of Perceived Stress Level and Adjustment Areas among Boys

Perceived Stress Level	Correlation Coefficient	Adjustment Areas N = 300				
		Home	**Health**	**Social**	**Emotional**	**Total**
Severe	r	.087	.121	.222	.273	.131
	p	.131	.036*	.0001**	.0001**	.023*
Moderate	r	.073	.055	.173	.134	.157
	p	.205	.345	.003**	.020*	.007**
Nil	r	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	p	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	r	.118	.135	.81	.147	.013
	p	.041*	.019*	.159	.011*	.819

r = Correlation coefficient

P = Probability; * sig. At .05; ** highly sig. at .01 levels

Table – 4

The Correlation Coefficient of Perceived Stress Level and Adjustment Areas among Girls

Perceived Stress Level	Correlation Coefficient	Adjustment Areas N = 300				
		Home	**Health**	**Social**	**Emotional**	**Total**
Severe	r	.216	.044	.002	.260	.170
	p	.0001**	.446	.977	.0001**	.003**
Moderate	r	.031	.092	.050	.004	.024
	p	.593	.113	.387	.948	.693
Nil	r	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	p	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	r	.171	.082	.037	.186	.105
	p	.003**	.158	.529	.001**	.070

r = Correlation coefficient
P = Probability; * sig. At .05; ** highly sig. at .01 levels

Table – 5

The Correlation Coefficient of Perceived Stress Level and Adjustment Areas among Total Subjects

Perceived Stress Level	Correlation Coefficient	Adjustment Areas N = 600				
		Home	**Health**	**Social**	**Emotional**	**Total**
Severe	r	.047	-.081	.161	.250	.144
	p	.253	.047	.0001**	.0001**	.0001**
Moderate	r	-.011	-.074	-.124	-.064	-.091
	p	.781	.071	.002**	.118	.026*
Nil	r	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	p	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Total	r	.030	-.106	.050	.158	.058
	p	.467	.010*	.221	.0001**	.158

r = Correlation coefficient
P = Probability; * sig. At .05; ** highly sig. at .01 levels