

Stress Coping of Adolescents in Schools

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Abstract

Children during adolescence period face a lot of stress, that's why this adolescence period is considered as a period of stress and storm. During adolescence, the individual comes under social pressure and faces new conditions for which he received little training during childhood. He experiences conflicts between himself and society and even within himself. Change in the role in the society, unfavourable relations at home, inability to decide his status in social settings, difficulty in adjusting with opposite sex and unnecessary restrictions on movement give rise to tensions and worries. The emotions fluctuate very frequently. He tries to oppose the view of parents. But he is not always successful. It makes him restless, moody and emotionally disturbed. He develops unrealistic aspirations. All these create a considerable degree of stress and storm in the individual during adolescence period. The recent educational policies and plans give emphasis on psychological way of treating the children in the institutions. The recent researches also suggest the psychological approaches such as emotional management, stress coping, etc., that are to be concentrated in the institutions for the betterment of children for their learning and future life. After analyzing the literatures on stress thoroughly, the investigator has also understood the importance of stress coping essential for the children in schools. Hence, the investigator was shown interest to do investigation on stress coping of adolescents in the schools.

Keywords: *Adolescence, Stress and Storm, Emotional Disturbance, Social Pressure, Stress Coping, Psychological Approaches, Emotional Management, Educational Policies, School Adjustment*

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Research Problem

The title for investigation was "A study of the stress coping of adolescent students in selected schools of Chennai district". Stress coping in the present study means, "a state of imbalance between demands made on the adolescents from outside sources and their capabilities to cope with them." The term 'stress coping' is used in the sense that what are the issues that cause stress in the minds of the students during adolescence period and how they adjust themselves to overcome the strain caused by the stress.

Adolescents are the children in the adolescence period of development ' which falls between the age of 12 and 18. This adolescence is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Manivannan (2007) defines, "Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood where all the changes- biological, physical, social, and cognitive changes occur rapidly."

Objectives

The objectives of the study are listed as follows.

1. To investigate the stress coping of adolescents at schools in Chennai district.
2. To find out the interaction effects of variables such as gender, nature of schools, occupation of parents, and types of schools on stress coping of adolescents.
3. To identify the stressors during adolescence period.
4. To focus the educational implications of stress coping.
5. To suggest the potential areas for further researches on stress and stress coping.

Hypotheses

The investigator formulated hypotheses which are given below in the form of null hypotheses.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between male and female adolescent students on the stress coping.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference between the students of high schools and higher secondary schools on the stress coping.

H_{03} : There is no significant difference between the students of corporation schools and management schools on the stress coping.

H_{04} : There is no significant difference between students from parents of low income and students from parents of high income on the stress coping.

Sample

The investigator applied random sampling procedures to ensure adequacy of sample in each level of the independent variables selected for the analysis of collected data. A total of 400 students were selected as a sample from 20 schools in Chennai district, for the study. They were classified according to gender, nature of school, type of school and income level of parents. Out of these students, 200 are from Corporation schools and 200 from Management schools were selected.

Instrumentation

The investigator developed one attitude scale on the basis of Likert type attitude scale viz., Adolescent Stress Coping Scale (ASCS)- providing five points value as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), No Opinion (NP), Disagree (DA) and Strongly Disagree (DA). The reliability (Test-Retest correlation coefficient 0.89 indicated high reliability) and validity (Content validity and Face validity) were established for the scale. The final form of the scale consisted of 50 statements including 25 favourable statements and 25 unfavourable statements.

The focused interview schedule was also constructed to elicit the information about the stressors during adolescence period.

Research design and data collection

The investigator wanted to collect data which give the basic information reflecting the basic issues and problems faced by the students during adolescence period in school environment. To elicit the responses of the students, the scale was used. Therefore, an exploratory research approach similar to that of a survey was found to more appropriate for the present investigation. The investigator visited schools and collected the data.

Data analysis and findings

The quantitative analysis was done by applying 't' test for the data collected through the ASC Scale. The qualitative analysis was also done for the data collected through focused interview.

Differential Studies

The data analysed by using 't' test are presented in the following table.

Variable	Number of Students (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	't' value	Result
Male	200	153.6	10.4	7.45	Significant

Female	200	161.2	9.89		difference at 0.01 level
High School	200	158.7	9.43	6.16	Significant difference at 0.01 level
Hr. Sec.	200	164.4	8.98		
Corporation	200	156.5	10.42	5.0	Significant difference at 0.01 level
Management	200	151.63	9.15		
Low income	200	159.23	7.92	2.58	Significant difference at 0.01 level
High income	200	156.03	9.56		

The results of the hypotheses testing based on the analysis presented in the above table are presented below:

1. The null hypothesis Ho1: "There is no significant difference between male and female adolescent students on the stress coping" is rejected. The result reveals that the mean value of girls is higher than that of boys, which concludes girls have more stress coping ability than boys.
2. The null hypothesis Ho2: "There is no significant difference between the students of high schools and higher secondary schools on the stress coping" is rejected. The result reveals that the mean value of higher secondary students is higher than that of high school students, which concludes higher secondary students have more stress coping ability than high school students.
3. The null hypothesis Ho3: "There is no significant difference between the students of corporation schools and management schools on the stress coping" is rejected. The result reveals that the mean value of corporation school students is higher than that of management school students, which concludes corporation school students have more stress coping ability than management school students.
4. The null hypothesis Ho4: "There is no significant difference between students from parents of low income and students from parents of high income on the stress coping" is rejected. The result reveals that the mean value of students of low income parents is higher than that of students of higher income parents, which concludes students of low income parents have more stress coping ability than students of higher income parents.

A. Analysis of Focused Interviews

The investigator conducted 20 focused interviews with the adolescent students. The following are the summary of responses of students.

1. All subjects agreed that they face stressful situation in several day-to day activities. Sometimes the stresses hamper their academic performance.
2. The subjects expressed that various factors contribute for the development of stress. Some of the stressors expressed by them are enumerated below.
 - ❖ Severe competition at all academic levels.
 - ❖ Parental pressure for excellence in performance irrespective of the potential of the student.
 - ❖ Uncertainty in choosing right option.
 - ❖ Constant comparison at home, in school and within peer group.
 - ❖ Distraction as a result of media exposure.
 - ❖ Nuclear families
 - ❖ Both parents pursuing careers and not available to their children when they need them.
 - ❖ Lack of awareness about sex related matters.
 - ❖ Facing examination.
3. In the subjects, 70 per cent agreed that they have got wild or frustrated or anger during stressful situation. They express their stress by shouting, breaking some materials, stiffening the body, getting profuse sweating, restlessness, etc. 20 per cent of the subjects said that they have been passive by keeping stress with them without exposing out. 10 per cent said that they get stress but they are unable to express their reaction of stress.
4. All subjects said that they need love and affection, motivation and encouragement from the teachers, parents and peer group to get rid of their stresses. Liberal in getting packet money, allowing going picnic, tour, movies along with friends, allowing to mingle with opposite sex, free from punishments for their academic performance, richness in dressing, vehicle need, etc., are some of their expectations which will pacify their stress arousal.

Educational Implications

The findings of the study have many implications on education and life of adolescent students studying in schools. It has implications on need based curriculum, essential of sex education, value development, guidance and counselling, examination reforms etc.

1. **Curriculum Planning:** The curriculum planning should have the construct activities based on the needs and wants of adolescent students which would pacify the stress occurrence. They can be entrusted several responsibilities like self-learning, leadership, decision-making, participation in curricular and cocurricular activities. The activity based learning can also be promoted.
2. **Sex Education:** A person's sexual behaviour is often influenced by personal and religious values which are communicated directly and indirectly by their parents. What adolescents need is help in guiding their behaviour by their values and more information about the choices they can make to prevent disease and unwanted pregnancies. Therefore, introducing of sex education in schools is essential to get rid of stress of adolescents related to sex gratification and identity.
3. **Values Development:** Morality is viewed as the desire to preserve harmonious interpersonal relationships and to obey existing formal rules, laws and standards in a society. Moral development can be stimulated in the high school classroom. The school value system contributes for the development of students at adolescence period.
4. **Guidance and Counselling:** Sex related issues, academic poor performance, conduct disorders, substance abuse and alcoholism are some of the problems of the adolescents. To avoid socially unaccepted things in life of adolescents, the guidance and counselling programme should be established in every school so as to guide them proper way.
5. **Examination Reforms:** examination stress is more for the students during school end examinations. The parental pressure, teachers' - compulsion and societal expectations are making the students to get more stress which will have influence over academic excellence. To avoid this examination stress, the examination system should be revamped.

Potential Areas of Research for the Future

The investigator suggested some potential areas of research based on the present study.

1. The research done by the investigator can be replicated with students of standards I to XII.

2. A comparative study on stress coping of adolescent non-disabled students and disabled students in integrated or inclusive schools can be conducted to study the extent of relationship between disabled and non-disabled children.
3. Since the present study was confined to the single district Chennai in the State of Tamil Nadu, similar studies can be conducted in other parts of the State and Country.
4. A study can be conducted to identify the stressful events and activities of schools either these make positive effect or negative effect on the academic and social performances of students.
5. A study can be conducted to investigate how stress coping contributes for personality development of adolescent students.

Epilogue

The present study is a valuable one in the field of educational research to look into the psychological perspective of the stress coping of the adolescent learners.

Reference

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