



ASIAN JOURNAL
ISSN: 0976-3376

Available Online at <http://www.journalajst.com>

ASIAN JOURNAL OF
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Asian Journal of Science and Technology
Vol. 2, Issue, 1, pp.005-008, January, 2011

RESEARCH ARTICLE

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN ADOLESCENTS

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Received 21st October, 2010; Received in revised form; 22nd November, 2010; Accepted 15th December, 2010; Published online 19th January, 2011

Adolescence is a time in ones' life when the mind expands and lives on joyful emotions. They need to be prepared to handle life's challenges. Adolescents are exposed to very stressful life events. Stress reactions of adolescents have to be managed. These reactions can be handled with support from care givers, friends, and teachers. One such attempt was made through this study to create awareness among adolescents. The factors leading to stress were identified, the type and level of stress were found out and they were educated to cope up with stress to lead a comfortable and happy life.

Key words: Adolescence, Stress level, Management, Awareness, Impact

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents today live in a very competitive world. It is more important than ever to succeed at school if adolescents hope to have a chance in the job market afterwards. It's no wonder that many young people worry about letting down their parents, their peers and themselves (Arnetz, 1996). Adolescents take on too many tasks until it becomes harder and harder to balance homework assignments, parties, sports activities and friends. The result is that young people suffer from stress (Mishra, 1997).

Adolescents will continue to be exposed to very stressful life events. Stress reactions of adolescents frequently have to be managed. Usually these reactions can be handled with support from caregivers, friends and teacher, but sometimes, professional intervention may be necessary if reaction are extreme (John, 2007).

Life for many adolescents is a painful tug of war filled with mixed messages and conflicting demands from parents, teachers, coaches, employers, friends and oneself. Stress is characterized by feeling of tension, frustration, worry, sadness and withdrawal that commonly last from a few hours to a few days. The common signs and symptoms of stress in adolescents fall in two major categories – physical/behavioural signs and emotional signs (Lavallo and Williar, 2005). Adolescents experience stress from three general sources; the environment, body and thought and specifically from parents, peers and society. Since stress is an inevitable fact of life of adolescents that cannot always prevent, efforts need to be focused on coping with stress more effectively since response narrows the ability to think clearly and function effectively it has to be managed to bring the modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of stress. It is not surprising that interest in the issue has been rising with the advancement of the present century which has been called the “Age of Anxiety as stress”

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(John, 2005). Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceived that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. Each individual needs a moderate amount of stress to be alert and capable of functioning effectively in day to day life (Kumar, 1996). Stress is not dependent upon whether one is young or old, boy or girl, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, servant or master.

Hence adolescents need to receive appropriate direction, nurturing, encouragement and guidance from significant adults for their successful transition into adult life (Linden, 2005). Adolescents must learn and practice coping skills to get them through an immediate conflict or problem. Coping strategies must emphasize self-responsibility to find positive, non – destruction ways to find relief. Communication skills involve being able to talk and selecting a good listener (Chand and Sethi 1997). It is important to express feelings, vent emotions and talk about the problems and issues. They need help to learn problem – solving skills, sorting out the issues, setting goals and making plans to move forward, are skills that can be taught and practiced (Pestonjee, 1999). Hence a study on “Stress Management in Adolescents” had been planned and conducted with the following objectives to: Assess the level of stress among adolescents; Examine the relation between selected variables and level of stress of adolescents; Educate the adolescents on stress management skills; Evaluate the impact of the education on adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology pertaining to the study comprises of two phases:

- a) Assessment of Stress Level of Adolescents
- b) Awareness Programme on Stress Management
- c)
- a) **Assessment of stress level of adolescents**

Totally 200 students were selected by purposive random sampling to find out stress level. Questionnaire was used as a tool for collecting data. It consisted of questions pertaining to family background of the adolescents and a stress

assessment scale to assess the stress level. Scores were given for each response like one mark for each positive response. The scores were added and assessed as very high to very low as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Scores

Scores	Stress level
25 – 30	Very high
19 – 24	High
13 – 18	Moderate
7 – 12	Low
0 – 6	Very low

The scores obtained by the selected adolescents were analysed against selected factors like type of family, size of family, parents’ education, family income and resident status of students in order to find out the factors enhancing the stressful situation.

b) Awareness programme on stress management

Among the 200 adolescents selected for finding out the stress level, 50 whose stress level was high were selected as sample for the awareness programme. The awareness programme was conducted systematically with a well developed course content for a period of one month and six hours per week. The impact of the programme was studied using a checklist.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are summarized below:

1. Family profile:

- a) A majority of 67.5 per cent of the families belonged to nuclear family, 33 per cent of the families belonged to joint family.
- b) The size of the family revealed that 50 per cent of the families belonged to small family having one to four members.
- c) A majority of fathers had secondary education while mothers had primary education and very few fathers had post graduate degree.

- d) A majority of fathers (63.5 per cent) were businessmen whereas majority of the mothers (95.5per cent) were homemakers.
- e) A majority of the families (73.5 per cent) belonged to middle income group.
- f) A majority of the adolescents were first child in the family.

Stress level of adolescents

Table 2 presents the stress level of selected adolescents.

Table 2. Stress level

Stress level	Percentage of Adolescents
Very high	22.5
High	28.0
Moderate	23.5
Low	11.0
Very low	15.0

It is clear from the above Table that more than 50 per cent of adolescents secured scores which grouped them under high stress level. More than 50 per cent of the adolescents' stress level was high. Nearly 75 per cent of them had come under high risk group.

3. Factors affecting stress level

- 1) Type of family had a significant impact on the stress level of adolescents at one per cent level.
- 2) There was a significant impact of size of family on the stress level of adolescents at one per cent level.
- 3) Family income had a significant impact on the stress level of adolescents at one per cent level.
- 4) There was no significant influence of fathers' education on the stress level of the adolescents.
- 5) Mothers' education had a significant impact on the stress level of adolescents at one per cent level.
- 6) There was a significant difference in the stress level between hostel students and day scholars.

4. Impact of stress awareness programme

Fifty adolescents whose stress level was high were selected to educate on stress management.

- 1) There was a significant increase in knowledge regarding meaning of stress after awareness programme.
- 2) Statistical analysis revealed that there was a significant improvement in knowledge gained by the adolescents at one per cent level after awareness programme.
- 3) Statistical analysis showed that there was a significant improvement in awareness on the signs and symptoms of stressful situation at one per cent level.
- 4) The understanding on the impact of stress on the health condition was improved after awareness programme. It was statistically significant at one per cent level.
- 5) There was a significant improvement in knowledge on stress management methods at one per cent level after attending the programme.

Conclusion

Stress is not always bad. Every one need some amount of stress in life which motivates to achieve in life. One must learn to differentiate good and bad stress. One perceive a stress – provoking event and how one react to it determine its impact on the health. One may be motivated and invigorated by the events in lives, or may see some as "stressful" and respond in a manner that may have a negative effect on physical, mental and social well-being. If one always respond in a negative way health and happiness may suffer. By understanding one self and reactions to stress provoking situation, one can learn to handle stress more effectively.

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