Strategies For Managing Academic Stress Among College Students

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Abstract: The present study aims to explore the levels of stress experienced by college students and the various strategies they employ to manage that stress. To gather relevant data, a stress questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 200 college students, comprising both males and females. These students were aged between 13 and 21 years. The sample was selected through convenience sampling from a specific educational institution located in Muzaffarpur. The collected data were analyzed using frequency and percentage methods to derive meaningful insights. The findings revealed that a majority of the participants reported experiencing either normal or low levels of stress; however, a notable portion indicated they faced high levels of academic stress. Additionally, the research identified that the stress levels were significantly influenced by the college preparation efforts of both the students and their parents.

Keywords : Academic stress, Management's strategies, college students.

I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, stress has evolved into a pervasive aspect of daily life, affecting individuals across various demographics and lifestyles. The experiences encountered during the adolescent years significantly influence individuals, serving as a foundational period that shapes both their emotional and physical well-being in later life. Studies have shown that the challenges and stressors experienced during adolescence are widespread, with early trauma and stress leading to recognizable patterns in mental health, personality traits, and behavioral tendencies. Adolescence is a critical transitional stage that bridges childhood and adulthood, marked by considerable stress and challenges, as noted by Byrne, Davenport, and Mazanov in their 2007[1] research.

Academic stress serves as a major source of anxiety for many students (Hashim, 2003)[3], and it has been noted that academic failure and low achievement are associated with feelings of distress. Factors such as preparing for exams, falling behind on homework, writing assignments, managing individual and group projects, time constraints, lack of financial support, concerns regarding academic abilities, and class scheduling are also recognized as stressors for students. There is substantial empirical evidence established regarding the impact of various independent and combined stressors, particularly in the context of interpersonal relationships during adolescence. Psychological symptoms, including signs of depression (Charbonneau et al, 2009)[2] and stress, have been found to be related to these factors.

Most adolescents experience stress, stemming from both internal and external sources, which can hinder the body's essential functions. Young people often confront a multitude of challenges as they navigate through life. Each individual must learn to manage various pressures that society places upon them. Stress has a profound impact not only on physical health but also on mental well-being. To effectively cope with

stress in everyday life, individuals can adopt strategies to relax and find joy in their experiences. While the ideal approach to managing stress is to prevent it from occurring in the first place, this is not always possible. Consequently, the next best strategies involve reducing stress levels and simplifying one's life to create a more manageable environment.

Mental stress often brings about a range of emotional responses, including feelings of resentment, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, a sense of pressure, and overall fatigue. On the other hand, physical stress can present itself through various health issues such as hypertension, digestive disorders, ulcers, heartburn, palpitations, abdominal discomfort, skin problems, muscle tension, headaches, decreased appetite, heightened eagerness, irregular menstrual cycles, male fertility challenges, and a reduction in essential vitamins like C, B, and D within the body. Behavioral stress can be observed through certain actions, which may include overeating or undereating, feelings of loneliness, restlessness, frequent absenteeism, increased consumption of alcohol, elevated smoking habits, and potential drug abuse.

Secondary school students often recognize the daily challenges of their educational experience, such as the pressures of tests, the pursuit of good grades, the burden of homework, and their academic goals, as some of the most significant sources of stress in their lives (Sinha, V.K. (2000)[6]). Various forms of school-related stress can arise from interactions with teachers and the difficulty of managing leisure activities alongside academic obligations (NCERT 2007)[5]. Past surveys examining school-related stressors have categorized these pressures into nine distinct types, which include ineffective teaching methods, the dynamics of teacher-student relationships, an overwhelming academic workload, subpar physical conditions in classrooms, and various disruptions that interfere with academic tasks and schedules. One notable source of academic stress is standardized testing, which has become increasingly common in American educational institutions (Misra, R., Michelle, M. (2000)[4]).

II. METHODOLOGY

The present research included a sample of 100 boys and 100 girls, all aged between 13 and 21, who were in the ninth to twelfth grades. These participants were chosen through convenience sampling from a group of college students in Muzaffarpur. To collect data, a questionnaire was distributed among the participants to capture their responses. This stress questionnaire consisted of 16 items, each offering alternative responses, such as 'stress always.' The data gathered were analyzed in line with the study's objectives, utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to illustrate the socioeconomic status, academic stress, levels of stress, and the stress management strategies employed by the participants.

III. RESULTS

The results of the ongoing research concerning academic stress and the management strategies employed by college students underwent thorough statistical analysis. The findings related to the frequency of these stressors and management techniques were subsequently presented in a detailed manner.

A. Socio- economic status of the respondents.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to the age.

Age	Male % N=100	Female % N=100	Total % N=200
13-15	9	20	29(14.5)
16-18	71	75)	146(73.0
19-21	20	5	25(12.5)

The results revealed that a notable percentage, precisely 73%, of the participants, which included both male and female respondents, were aged between 16 and 18 years old.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to the Family type

Family type	Male N=100	Female N=100	Total % N=200
nuclear	60	61	121(60.5)
joint	40	39	79(39.5)

The data presented in this table reveals that a significant portion of the respondents, specifically 60.5%, consisted of male and female students who come from nuclear family backgrounds.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents according to the Education

Education	Male N=100	Female N=100	Total % N=200
High school	50	65	115(57.5)
Intermediate	50	35	85(42.5)

The data presented in this table reveals that a significant portion of the respondents, specifically 57.5%, consisted of male and female students who are currently enrolled in high school.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to the marital status

Marital status	Male N=100	Female N=100	Total % N=200
unmarried	92	73	165(82.5)
married	8	27	35(17.5)

The data reveals that a considerable segment of the respondents, specifically 82.5% of individuals who are not married and 17.5% of those who are married, were sorted according to their marital status.

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents according to the Family income group.

Family income group	Male N=100	Female N=100	Total % N=200
Low	19	45	64(32)
Medium	51	39	90(45)
High	30	16	46(23)

The findings suggest that a significant portion of respondents, specifically 45% from the medium income group and 32% from the low income group, were associated with family income.

B. Academic stress

Table 6: Distribution of respondent on score of Academic stress

	Male % n=100	Female% n=100	Total % n=200
Yes	65	60	125(62.5)
No	35	40	75(37.5)

The results indicated that a significant majority of respondents, specifically 62.5 percent, experienced academic stress, while a lesser majority, comprising 37.5 percent of respondents, did not encounter academic stress.

Table 7: Distribution of the respondents according to the level of stress.

Level of stress	male frequency %n=100	female frequency %	Total n=200
Very low stress	20	25	45(22.5)
Low stress	71	60	131(65.5)
Moderate stress	9	15	24(12)
High stress	0	0	0(0)

The research findings indicate that a considerable percentage, specifically 65.5%, of both male and female participants report experiencing low levels of stress. Additionally, 22.5% of all respondents indicate that they experience very low stress levels. Notably, there were no respondents who reported experiencing high levels of stress.

C. Stress management strategies and therapies adopted by the respondents

A. Physical stress

Table 8: distribution of the respondents according to the Relaxation

Relaxation	Male n=100 Frequency%	Female n=100 Frequency%	Total n=200
Take rest	31	51	82(41)
Take out time for leisure	40	22	62(31)
Drinking water	20	17	37(18.5)
Deep breathing	9	10	19(9.5)

The table reveals that a significant portion of the respondents, accounting for 41% of both male and female participants, opted to take a break and rest. Furthermore, an additional 9.5% of the respondents, regardless of gender, reported using breathing techniques as a method of relaxation.

Table 9: Distribution of the respondents according to the Diet

Diet	Male n=100 Frequency%	female n=100 Frequency%	Total n=200
Take balance diet	62	52	114(57)
Eat less	30	39	69(34.5)
Consume more food	4	6	10(5)
None of these above	4	3	7(3.5)

The data presented in the table reveals that a significant portion of the respondents, specifically 57% of both male and female participants, maintain a balanced diet. This suggests a strong inclination towards healthy eating habits among the majority. In contrast, a very small percentage, amounting to just 3.5% of

both male and female respondents, reported that they do not engage in any of the dietary options previously mentioned. This highlights the rarity of individuals who completely disregard dietary guidelines.

B. Mental stress

Table 10: Distribution of the respondents according to the Physical exercise.

Physical exercise	Male n=100 Frequency%	female n=100 Frequency%	Total n=200
Walking	27	30	57(28.5)
Yoga	15	20	35(17.5)
Playing game	10	15	25(12.5)
Exercise	15	10	25(12.5)
Sleeping	20	15	35(17.5)
Smoking	13	10	23(11.5)

The data presented in the table reveals that a significant portion of the respondents, specifically 28.5% of both male and female participants, regularly engage in walking as their preferred form of physical activity. In contrast, a lesser percentage, amounting to 11.5% of both males and females, reported that they partake in smoking, which they consider a type of physical exercise. This indicates a clear preference for walking over smoking among the surveyed individuals.

Table 11: Distribution of the respondents according to the Religious/meditation

Religious meditation	Male n=100 Frequency%	Female n=100 Frequency%	Total n=200
Offer prayer	25	30	55(27.5)
meditation	25	25	50(25)
yoga	17	28	45(22.5)
Religious activity	18	12	30(15)
None of these above	15	5	20(15)

The data presented in this table reveals that a significant portion of the respondents, specifically 27.5% of both male and female participants, actively engage in offering prayers. In contrast, a smaller segment, accounting for at least 15% of both male and female respondents, reported that they do not take part in any of the religious or meditation activities previously mentioned.

Table 12: Distribution of the respondents according to the Most liked activities

Most liked activities	Male n=100 Frequency%	female n=100 Frequency%	Total n=200
Watching TV.	20	23	43(21.5)
Listening song	20	26	46(23)
Spending time in park	17	11	28(14)
Going for moves	14	12	26(13)
Singing	11	10	21(10.5)
Gardening	10	5 1	5(7.5)
Panting	4	2	6(3)
Cooking	1	14	15(7.5)

The data presented in this table reveals that a significant portion of the respondents, specifically 23% of both male and female participants, reported that they enjoy listening to music. In contrast, a very small percentage, only 3% of both male and female respondents, indicated that they engage in cooking, making it one of the least popular activities among the surveyed group.

IV. LIMITATION

The results of the study carry considerable weight in terms of their implications for various stakeholders. They highlight the need for educating parents about effective parenting strategies that can foster resilience in children. Additionally, there is a clear necessity for training school staff to recognize early signs of stress in students and to manage these stressors effectively. Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of equipping children with the skills to cope with stress and to manage their emotional responses. Mental health professionals are also called to action, as they must develop and implement child-friendly interventions aimed at shielding children from the negative impacts of stress. However, it is crucial to approach these findings with caution, as they must be understood within the context of certain limitations that may affect their applicability and generalizability. First and foremost, the method for test selection was not arbitrary. Additionally, the results cannot be generalized as only one context was involved. Furthermore, the researcher exclusively employed self-developed, self-report scales for children. Moreover, evaluations from parents or teachers regarding anxiety could not be assessed. Lastly, there was no control group included in the study. Lastly, no follow-up assessment was conducted.

V. CONCLUSION

This research reveals that adolescents experience moderate stress, and a straightforward mediation can be beneficial in alleviating it during the tumultuous transition period of immaturity. Prolonged stress during childhood and adolescence can lead to lasting alterations in the brain's structure and function, as it occurs during critical phases of brain development. There is substantial evidence indicating that traumatic experiences predict an increase in mental health issues over time. Unresolved stress during childhood and adolescence results in both physical and mental health problems, as well as risk-taking behaviors and poor coping skills in adulthood. Therefore, further investigation into stress, its sources, and its consequences is essential for planning and implementing health promotion and preventive strategies during adolescence.

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