

## ADOLESCENT STRESS : CAUSES & REMEDIES

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Received : 20/05/2017

1st BPR : 25/05/2017

2nd BPR : 06/06/2017

Accepted : 15/06/2017

### ABSTRACT

Media reports and interviews with counsellors indicate that academic stress of adolescent is a significant problem in India, but little systematic research has been conducted on the issue. Academic stress problems refers to the pressure to perform well in final school examinations and competitive college entrance examinations that is experienced by 11th standard students. For some students, the experience of academic stress, which is generally manifested in a variety of psychological and behavioural problems. The experience of academic stress and adolescent has been identified and explored by researchers in Korea (Lee & Larson, 1996, 2000) and Japan (Hill, 1996; Lock, 1988; Schoolland, 1990).

With the exception of a few research studies (Verma & Gupta, 1990; Verma, Sharma & Larson, 2002), academic stress has not been explored in great detail in India. It is important to note that this issue is one that affects a small proportion of Indian youth, i.e., those who are fortunate enough to attend and graduate from high school (about 12-15 million students per year) (Shukla, 2005). Mental health professionals in India, however, have identified academic pressure as an acute stress factor that leads to mental distress, and in extreme cases, to suicide. "Children," psychologist Dr. Matthew Kurien says, "are under pressure to deliver at school; they are under pressure to appear for competitive exams" (Iype, 2004). Around exam time and when exam results are announced, when academic stress is very high, suicide hotlines in many cities across the country are swamped with calls. "I get hundreds of calls from students who are contemplating suicide because they could not achieve the good scores expected by their parents," says phone counsellor Elizabeth Vadakkekara (Iype, 2004).

Youth suicide, however, is only the tip of the iceberg, which marks the generalized anxiety and depression experienced by many high school students. Studies conducted in Korea and Japan have found that students who experience academic stress express their distress in a variety of ways, including in terms of depression, anxiety, and somatic symptoms (Lee & Larson, 1996; Schoolland, 1990). Research studies in India have not explored these particular forms of mental health with respect to academic stress, so the extent and prevalence of the problem is unknown. Furthermore, there have been no studies, conducted in India or elsewhere, that explore the issue from the perspective of the student, so academic stress problems remains relatively unexplored.

### INTRODUCTION

Secondary school education occupies a very unique position in the educational system in India, because it is that level determine the academic and professional career of students. According to the National education police of 1986, the boards aims of secondary education within the overall objectives are preparing students for useful living within the society and preparing them for higher education.

Precisely the aims of secondary education is to provide opportunity for qualitative education for primary school leavers, cater for the difference in talents of the pupils, develop country heritage, produce a generating of people who respect the dignity of labour, foster country unity and to inspire its with the desire for achievement and self improvement both at school and in later life. It must be stated that only the provision of qualitative education can guarantee the accomplishment of the above-stated goals. The extent to which the secondary school system is able to accomplish its objectives determines its effectiveness.

School effectiveness in this study refers to the extent to which secondary schools achieve its goals by producing students who have sound Mental Health and without stress, who are disciplined and have developed appropriate skills and moral value system that can make them good in academic achievement. Over the years, the cognitive approach has been the only criterion used to measure the effectiveness of a school system.

Experience has also shown that some of the products of today's secondary school system in India can neither usefully live in the society nor move into higher institutions because of poor academic performance. It appears some of the products of the secondary schools do not respect the students labour, but have the desire for things that will give them quick money.

The ineffectiveness of the secondary schools could be attributed to several factors but this study was restricted to parents' involvement in school administration as a potential factor in academic achievement. It appears in some cases, parents are no longer allowed to participate in school programmes and parents are no longer allowed to visit their children in school regularly to see how they fare.

Adolescence, popularly known as phase of storm and drang (storm and stress) is an area of great concern to members of the community at large. The significance of stress during this phase of life is that, if not adequately coped with, it can produce a long-lasting influence upon the individual, the costs of which include low actualization of potentials, underachievement, inadequate coping styles which may be continued throughout later life, feeling of inferiority poor self-concept, low self-esteem, deviant behaviours, and increased risk for psychosocial pathologies.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMWORK OF STRESS

Stress is your bodys way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be causes by both good and bad experiences. When people feel stressed by something going on around them, their bodies react by releasing chemicals into the blood. These chemicals give people more energy and strength, which can be a good thing if their stress is caused by physical danger. But this can also be a bad thing, if their stress is in response to something emotional and there is no outlet for this extra energy and strength. This class will discuss different causes of stress, how stress affects you, the difference between good or positive stress and bad or negative stress, and some common facts about how stress affects people today.

The term stress has many definitions. (Lazarus and Folk man 1984). We will define stress as an internal state, which can be caused by physical demands on the body (disease conditions, exercise, extremes of temperature and the like) or by environmental and social situations which is evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable or exceeding our resources for coping. The physical, environmental and social causes of the stress state are termed stressors. Once induced by stressors, the internal stress state can then lead to various responses. On the one hand, it can result in a number of physical bodily responses. On the other hand, psychological responses such as anxiety, hopelessness, depression, irritability and a general feeling of not being able to cope with the world can result from the stress state.

Stress is a general term applied to various mental and physiological pressures experienced by people feel in their lives.

“Stress may be define as “a state of psychological and/or physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual's ability and/or motivation to meet those

demands.”

#### According to “Dr. Hans Selye:-

One of the leading authorities on the concept of stress as “the rate of all wear and tear caused by life.”  
(Kalyan-city. Blog spot. Com.)

#### CAUSES OF STRESS

Many different things can causes stress- from physical (such as fear of something dangerous) to emotional ( such as worry over your family or job.) Identifying what may be causing you stress is often the first step in learning how to better deal with your stress. Some of the most common sources of stress are:

**Survival Stress-** You may have heard the phrase “fight or flight” before. This is a common response to danger in all people and animals. When you are afraid that someone or someone or something may physically hurt you, your body naturally responds with a burst of energy so that you will be better able to survive the dangerous situation (fight) or escape it all together (fight). This is survival stress.

**Internal Stress-** Have you ever caught yourself worrying about things you can do nothing about or worrying for no reason at all? This is internal stress and it is one of the most important kinds of stress to understand and manage. Internal stress is when people make themselves stressed. This often happens when we worry about things we can't control or put ourselves in situations we know will cause us stress. Some people become addicted to the kind of hurried, tense, lifestyle that results from being under stress. They even look for stressful situations and feel stress about things that aren't stressful.

**Environmental Stress-**This is a response to things around you that cause stress, such as noise, crowding, and pressure from work or family. Identifying these environmental stresses and learning to avoid them or deal with them will help lower your stress level.

**Fatigue and Overwork-** This kind of stress builds up over a long time and can take a hard toll on your body. It can be caused by working too much or too hard at your job(s), school, or home. It can also be caused by not knowing how to manage your time well or how to take time out for rest and relaxation. This can be one of the hardest kinds of stress to avoid because many people feel this is out of their control. Later in this course we will show you that you do have options and offer some useful tips for dealing with fatigue.

#### REMEDIES

##### Stress and social support-

Social support has become one of the most important variables in the realm of stress research and it has been recognized as a significant moderator of the effects of stress in a plethora of studies. Integrating the many different conceptualizations of social support, House identifies four types of support behaviours, which seem relevant in different contexts. These interdependent components are emotional support, instrumental support, informational support and appraisal support. The rapid changes taking place at adolescence, the consequent stresses to which adolescence is exposed and the need for help, support and solace from parents, teachers and friends are very important.

##### Short Term Strategies-

- 1 Take a break when you need.
- 2 Take some deep breaths and slow down.
- 3 Relax body by stretching muscles.
- 4 Use coping strategies like
  - I'll try to do better next time.

- This is not the end of the world.
- 5- Keeping sense of perspective by asking ourselves: Is this really worth getting upset about.

### Long Term Strategies-

- 1- Learning time management skills.
- 2- Learning how to get organized.
- 3- Learning good study skills.
- 4- Exercising.
- 5- Getting enough rest/sleep.
- 6- Eating well and nutritiously.
- 7- Having a good support network.
- 8- Avoiding drug and alcohol abuse.
- 9- Setting goals and priorities and living by them.
- 10- Giving up having to be perfect.
- 11- Not trying to please others and live up to their expectations.
- 12- Learning to think rationally and optimistically.
- 13- Yoga and meditation.

### Apart from these children can

- Change the source of the stress. Divert attention by jogging, walking, listening to music etc.
- Talk about the cause of stress. Find a good listener and vent your feelings.
- Take time for enjoyable activities.
- Laugh often. Try to see the humorous side of the situation. Laughter is a great way to put people at ease and reduce stress.

Over the last many years, several strategies have been advocated for stress management in general and also for the management of academic stress. Among them Cognitive Behavioral Approach emerges as the best as there is reduction in anxiety, depression, social isolation etc. Interest and performance in academic areas get improved and efforts towards satisfaction of achievement needs get accelerated; students function with full potential and zeal. Relaxation, biofeedback, cognitive restructuring, self-control training, stress inoculation training, problem-solving skills, assertiveness have also proved as effective tools for managing academic stress. It leads to reduction in negative emotional experiences associated with stress and improvement in creativity, achievement, productivity, quality of life and sense of well being.

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