

## Sources of Stress and Coping Strategies – A study on adolescent students

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### **Abstract**

The Adolescent is the transition from childhood to adulthood. In this adolescent age, students are facing more problems related to the changes in their biological system and psychological issues. This study aims to explore the sources of stress among the adolescence group of students. The core intention of this study was made to find the most influencing factors affecting adolescence. The four major factors namely Academic stress, Environmental Stress, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Stress were identified and taken into consideration. The coping strategies for different stress measures are also presented as a model in this study which may help to reduce the level of stress among the adolescent age group of students.

**Keywords :** Stress, Adolescence, Coping Strategies

### **1. Introduction :**

Stress is a part of everybody's life. Many day-to-day situations of our lives involve stress. "Lazarus and Folkman" described stress as the problems or strains that people encounter throughout their life. (Lazarus, R. S., and Folkman, S. 1984) Stress produces many changes in the physical and mental systems of each individual according to their situational factors. Then it may lead to physical health decline as well as depression. The key factor for the happy and successful life of an individual is to overcome the stress from their life although life provides several demands. Stresses are of two types i.e. Eustress and Distress. Stress resulted from negative events is distress while eustress is stress caused by positive events. Regardless of the negativity or positivity of stress, a certain level is required for well being (Hau Jett Lin 2013).

The effects of stress among adolescent age are more significant. Adolescence is the transitional phase of growth from childhood to adulthood. The World Health Organisation defines an adolescence is the age group of persons between 10 and 19 years. Adolescence is understood in broader terms that is bounded by psychological, social and moral terrain as well as the strictly Physical aspects of maturation. (Britannica.com) "I am stressed out" is a phrase that has been echoed by teens down through the ages. Adolescents experience a spectrum of stress from ordinary to severe (Nikitah etal 2014). They are facing parents, teachers, friends as well as their studies in day to day life. Adolescents' students are having commitment in their studies and to meet out their own demands. This is an age that stimulates them to tune into a life style.

## 2. Literature Review

The existence of stress depends on the existence of the Stressor. Feng (1992) and Volpe (2000) defined Stressor as anything that challenges an individual's adaptability or stimulates an individual's body or mentality.

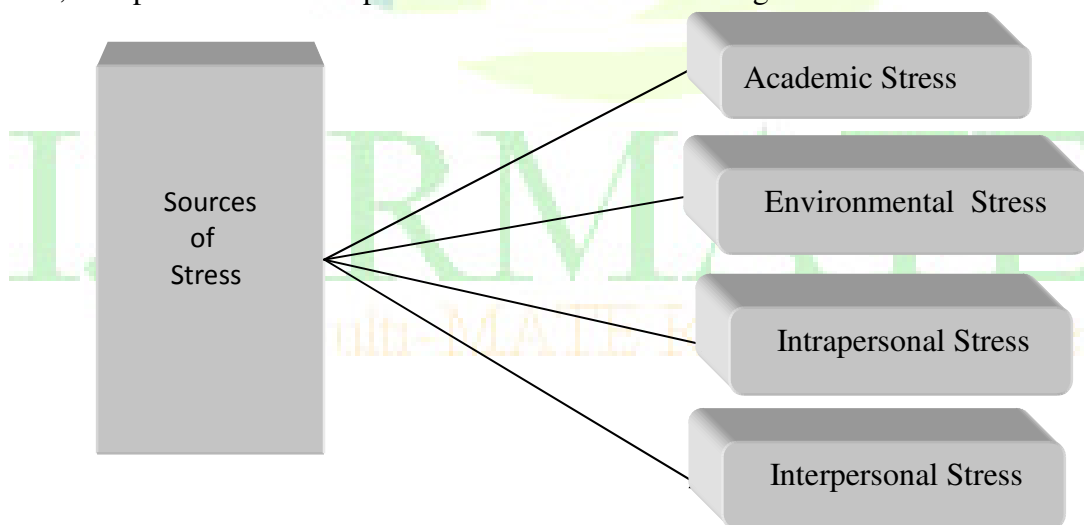
Of all life-stages, except childhood, adolescence is the one most marked by rapid and potentially tumultuous transition (Williams, Holmbeck, & Greenly, 2002). Because the domain of biological development are physically externally manifest as well as in the progression of both cognitive and psychosocial maturity from that of childhood to adulthood. (Byrne, Davenport, & Mazanov, 2007).

Although the age range of adolescence can vary with cultural and historical circumstances, in western societies, the adolescent period begins at approximately 10 to 13 years of age and ends between the ages of 18 and 22 (Santrock, 2008). However, the exact ages that mark the beginning and the end of this period are not precisely defined. The stage of adolescence has lengthened, both at the beginning and the end, because young people mature earlier physically and because the most delay entering into work and marriage until their mid-20s. (Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Steinberg, 2008).

According to Lazarus (1999), the more confident we are of our capacity to overcome obstacles and dangers, the more likely we are to be challenged rather than threatened and vice versa. An important ingredient in Lazarus's theory of stress is thus the ability or inability to cope with a stressful situation and coping is interwoven with the appraisal process.

## 3. Sources of Stress

Adolescent students' stress can be caused by academic related factors, environmental factors, intrapersonal and interpersonal factors as shown in fig.1.



**Fig. 1 The factors influencing each source of adolescent students' stresses were identified.**

### **3.1 Academic Stress**

Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even unawareness to the possibility of such failure. Academic Stress is an important factor accounting for variation in academic achievement. It also contributes to major mental health hazards, problems both physical and mental stress related diseases. (Krishanlal 2014) Adolescent Students found difficulty in facing many academic demands such as progressive performance in the examinations, classroom attention for longer periods, a lot of home work, competing with their classmates, fulfilling the expectations of the teachers and parents, upholding the name of the school by achieving top level, maintaining attendance percentage.

Academic stress among students doing higher secondary is highly significant when compared to other students in adolescent age group due to our examination system. Students who are studying class 10 and class 12 are writing public examination. Also, they are in the entering stage of choosing a path for their life in both the above two situations.

Another important factor for academic stress is the poor academic performance of the students. (Bjorkman, 2007b; Li, et al. 2007) have proved in their study that students with lower grades are more likely to be stressed than higher academic achievers.

### **3.2 Environmental Stress**

The important factors influencing the Environmental stress in the adolescent students are Change in living environment and socioeconomic status.

Adolescent students experienced to move away from home for their best studies in good schools or colleges in different areas. Being in a different environment at first time can cause them a great deal of stress. According to the studies (Altmaier, 1983; Pancer et al., 2000; Fisher, 1994), the period of the greatest stress among the undergraduate students was occurring during the transition to the college and it was sustained up to the first weeks and months of classes. Change and transition are stressful because a person can experience a loss of control over the new environment (Fisher, 1994).

Adolescent students are in a position to adapt the new places, faces and routines and concentrate on their studies for higher scoring.

The socioeconomic status includes infrastructural facilities, availability of civic amenities, sources of income generation, occupational patterns, educational status and living standards of the family concerned. The socioeconomic status is obviously a deciding factor as far as the personality of the adolescent is concerned. According to (Ramya Bhaskar and Rudramma, 2014), adolescent boys have experienced a high degree of stress ranging from severe to moderate levels as compared to the adolescent girls.

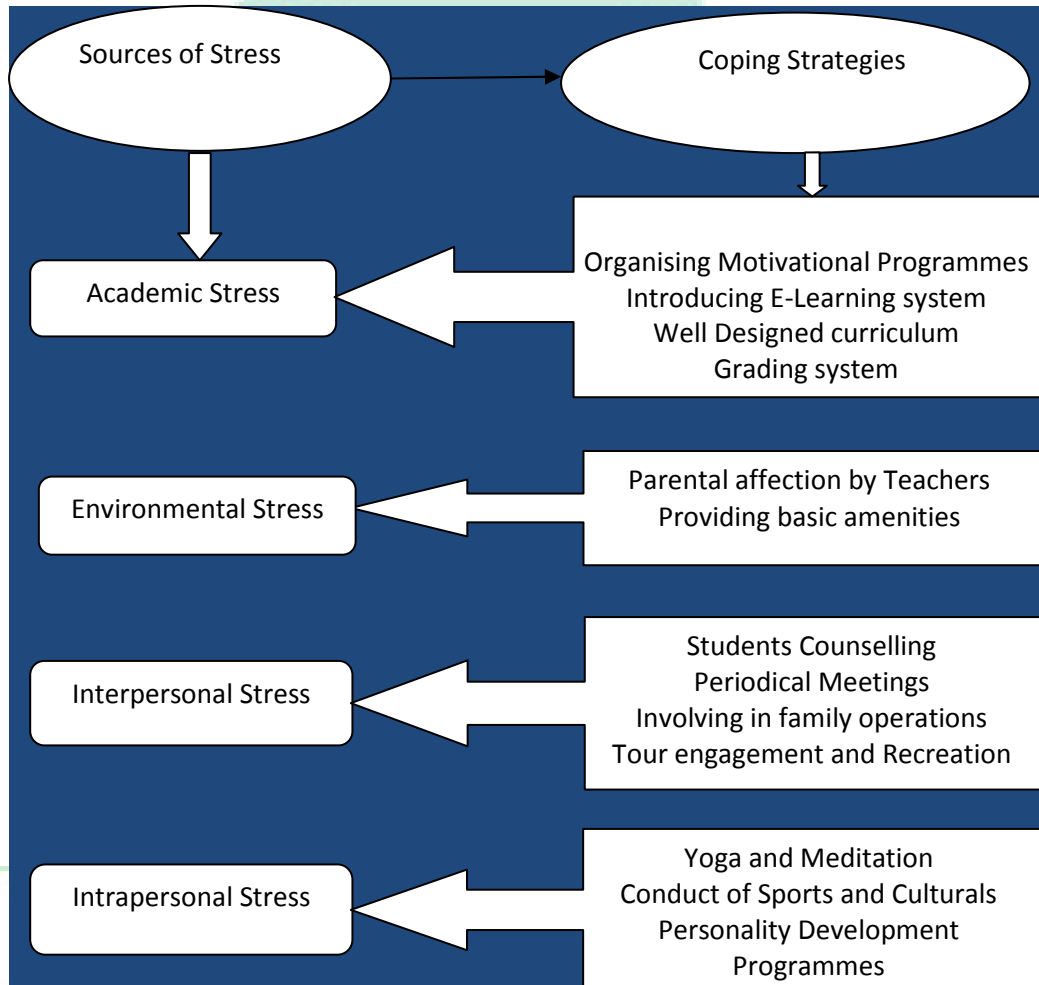
### **3.3 Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Stresses**

Interpersonal Stress is a stress caused between persons like family members, colleagues or peers. Interpersonal stress occurs when one cannot give chance to others, might have to take a longer time to get the recovery they need. The important factors of interpersonal stresses are Conflict with friends, Trouble with parents, Conflict with roommate, Gender etc.

Intrapersonal Stress is a stress caused among the individuals. Intrapersonal Stress occurs when the individual is not satisfied due to some emotional problems. The important factors of intrapersonal stresses are Health complaints, change in food habits and sleeping habits, new assignments, self responsibility, puberty etc.

## **4. Coping Strategies**

Coping strategies is nothing but the stress management methods with a plan of action. Stress should be reduced to some extent, otherwise it will give very negative impact on our mental and physical health. Practicing effective techniques for relaxation has been a good way of reducing stress. The two major sources of studies are identified among adolescent students in this study are cognitive and mental stresses. The Cognitive stress, i.e. academic stress can be coped up with by introducing advanced techniques and methodologies in the study. Likewise the mental stresses such as Environmental Stress, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Stress requires personal counselling and problem solving techniques. The model depicted is as shown in figure 2.



**Fig.2 The paradigm of Adolescent Stress factors and coping strategies**

## 5. Conclusion

Each source of stress among adolescent students are identified and the coping strategies are suggested in this study. When the suggested model such as E-learning system, Students

Counselling, Yoga and Meditation are implemented among the adolescent age group of students between 16 and 19, the stress level is reduced to a moderate extent.

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