

STRESS AMONG SCHOOL-GOING ADOLESCENTS IN RELATION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL HARDINESS

By

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ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to investigate the stress among school-going adolescents in relation to psychological hardiness and also to study the gender and locale-wise differences in various dimensions and components of stress. The study was conducted over a sample of 200 (100 rural and 100 urban) adolescents studying in 10+1 and 10+2 classes in four schools (2 rural and 2 urban) of the Muktsar Sahib District of Punjab. Dr. Abha Rani Bisht's Battery of Stress Scales (1992) and Nowack's Psychological Hardiness Scale (1990) were employed to measure the adolescents' various dimensions and components of stress and psychological hardiness respectively. The results reported that there exist significant gender differences among school-going adolescents in terms of their existential stress, achievement stress, academic stress, self-concept stress, self-actualization stress, physical stress, social stress, institutional stress, financial stress and superstition stress, whereas significant locale-wise differences among school-going adolescents were found only in terms of existential stress, role stress, institutional stress and financial stress. Apart from the above, stress among school-going adolescents was found to be significantly negatively correlated with the psychological hardiness of the adolescents.

Keywords: Stress, School-going Adolescents, Psychological Hardiness.

INTRODUCTION

Stresses and strains have become the part of modern life. In this modern world, everybody is making various kinds of adjustments in their social, psychological, economic and other spheres of life. Those adjustment problems have become manifold in the recent years due to multi-factorial causes such as individualization, urbanization, industrialization and many more. Even school going children are under constant stress due to cut throat competition and parental demands.

Stress is a fact of life. It is all around us at work, in our environment and personal lives. Stress has become an inevitable companion today in all fields of life whether a person in an office goes getting late for office or over burdened teacher or student or overworked house-wife or a farmer tilling the field under the hot sun or a soldier standing guard on snow clad mountains or a patient waiting endlessly for his turn to meet the doctor, etc. Its management and coping has become a great concern

for physiologists, psychologists, psychiatrists or clinicians. In serious condition of the stress, the individual reaches a point where the physical processes are seriously affected, the mental processes are confused and the emotional state is chaotic. The questions like: "What to do and what not to do? How to do? Why to do? Where to do?" depict the state of stress.

Majority of the adolescents undergo stress, whatever the sources may be, internal or external, it hampers the major functioning of the body. Most of the youngsters face multiple problems in their life. Each adolescent has to cope with different kinds of pressures laid down by the society and family. On the verge of coping those pressures, an adolescent himself unconsciously frames a net and is caught in the same.

It is high time now that, we may find methods and techniques to make them stress free as far as possible. This is only possible through rigorous research on various psychological variables related to stress.

Theoretical and Empirical Framework

The word 'stress' is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a state of affairs involving demand on physical or mental energy; a condition for circumstances (not always adverse), which can disturb the normal psychological and physiological functioning of an individual". In Medical parlance, 'stress' is defined as a perturbation of the body's homeostatic. This demand on mind-body occurs when it tries to cope with incessant change in life.

Stress is regarded as a class of stimuli which threaten an individual in some way and thus cause disturbances in his behavior. According to Saracen (1980), Brown and McGill (1989), stress is defined as the response events that threaten or challenge a person. There are two dimensions of stress. First is a positive dimension of stress, which is known as 'eustress'. Eustress leads to creativity and productivity. Second is a negative dimension, which is of a very severe nature lasting longer and may threaten to damage the organism.

Basically, there are three components of stress which are frustration, conflict and pressure. Biological conditions and Psychological barriers may obstruct in fulfilling our needs and achieving our motives, which leads to frustration. In choosing of either alternative from the contradictory needs, a person may be forced to postpone a decision for days, weeks or perhaps months before he decides what to do. An approach avoidance conflict is likely to cause more severe stress. Apart from frustration and conflicts, internal as well as external pressures also prove a major source of causing stress.

Signs of stress may be cognitive, emotional, physical or behavioural. Selye Hans (1976) states that, mental tensions, frustrations, insecurity, aimlessness are among the most damaging stressors and psychosomatic studies have shown that, how often they cause migraine headaches, peptic ulcers, heart attacks, hypertension, mental disease, suicide or just hopeless unhappiness. Researches by some researchers (Kobasa et. al., 1982 & Maddi et. al., 2002) suggest that, individuals differ in many ways, as far as their responses to various types of stress are concerned.

On the other hand, 'psychological hardiness' is the resistance we have to stress, anxiety and depression, including the ability to withstand grief. According to Kobasa et. al. (1982), "Hardiness is an individual trait that acts as a buffer between life stressors and an individual's reaction to them".

Therefore, it becomes pertinent and requires an intensive analysis on the part of the Educational Psychologist to study the differences in various components and dimensions of stress among different groups of individuals and establish the relationship, if any, between psychological hardiness and stress.

Review of Related Literature

Polus-Szaniawski (1990) assessed the psychological stress of the students by means of standardized inquiry form containing 77 questions grouped, so that it was possible to evaluate psychological stress connected with +1 school work, home work, timing of work during the day, situation of the student in class and family, and with psychic state. It was found that in girls, the stress resulting from the objectively existing stressful situation from school work and timing of work during the day was greater. The stress experienced by boys was increased in the aspects of school work, situation of the student in his class and family, and psychic state, as well as subjective experiencing of stresses.

Mates and Allison (1992) identified the major sources of stress and coping responses of grade 10 students. Relationships with parents and family, work, and lack of money were found to be the important sources of stress. Major coping responses included substance use and diversionary activities.

Li and Yen (1998) conducted a study to assess high school students' perception of stress from daily events and to identify its associated factors. From the principal component analysis, school work, concern with prospects, parent-teen relationship and peer relationship were found to be the main sources of daily life stress perceived. Screening by personality trait and social support questionnaire was suggested to be a routine at school to find out the high risk individuals and give them

assistance in coping with stress.

Ande et. al., (2000) conducted a survey to determine the degree of stress experienced. The stressors encountered most frequently and the frequency with which specific coping strategies were employed along with their perceived effectiveness. Gender and ethnic differences were found in the degree of stress and the coping strategies.

Klag and Bradley (2004) examined the main moderating and mediating effects of hardiness in a sample of 130 (50 males and 80 females) from randomly selected necessity staff members. Controlling for negativity, limited evidence was obtained for the direct effect of hardiness on stress and illness.

Petosa and Old Field (2005) conducted a study to understand why some students avoid challenging academic course work at the risk of harming their academic standing, whereas others are willing to pursue these types of challenges. The findings suggested that, psychological hardiness among students enables them to pursue the challenging academic course work.

Rationale and Need of the Study

Adolescents are more prone to stress; because, they are undergoing transformation in terms of physical, mental and social changes which make them over-conscious about their self. How can they be able to cope up stress is an important question that this study seeks to answer. Many studies (Polus-Szaniawski, 1990; Ande et. al., 2000) suggest that, different types of individuals differ in many ways, as far as their responses to various types of stress are concerned. These differences may be based on gender, locale, age and so on. But, the results of various studies fluctuate from one study to another too frequently, that it becomes essential to deeply investigate the gender and locale differences in stress, especially among adolescents.

Further, psychological hardiness is an emerging area of research in personality, affecting not only ill or stress-prone individuals, but also contributes to mental health and well-being of normal individuals. The study of psychological hardiness has become imperative; because, stress has

become a part and parcel of everyone's life due to present highly industrialized, competitive and challenging era. Therefore, the investigator felt the need to examine and analyze the relationship of stress among school going adolescents in relation to their psychological hardiness.

Moreover, the findings of the present study will be helpful in building the theoretical understanding of hardiness and stress. Furthermore, the study will also be helpful to the teachers, parents, counselors, guidance workers and wardens in understanding the behavior of the adolescents under stress and in helping them to adjust with it.

Objectives

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To study the gender differences in various components and dimensions of stress among school-going adolescents.
- To study the locale-wise differences in various components and dimensions of stress in rural and urban adolescents.
- To study stress among adolescents in relation to psychological hardiness.

Hypotheses

H₁: There will be no significant gender differences among school going adolescents in terms of the following dimensions of stress.

- Existential stress
- Achievement stress
- Academic stress
- Self-concept stress
- Self-actualization stress
- Physical stress
- Social stress
- Role stress
- Institutional stress
- Family stress
- Financial stress

- Vocational stress
- Superstition stress

H₂: There will be no significant gender differences among school-going adolescents in terms of four components of stress, i.e. frustration, conflicts, pressure and anxiety.

H₃: There will be no significant locale-wise differences among school-going adolescents in terms of stress and its thirteen dimensions (as mentioned earlier).

H₄: There will be no significant locale-wise differences among school-going adolescents in terms of four components of stress, i.e. frustration, conflicts, pressure and anxiety.

H₅: There will be no significant relationship between stress and psychological hardiness of school-going adolescents.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method of research was used to conduct the present study. The data were collected using two rating scales, one for measuring stress and the other for measuring psychological hardiness which was administered on the school going adolescents of 10+1 and 10+2 classes. The detailed procedure has been discussed in the following sections.

Sample

When the population is very large, it becomes difficult to collect data from all the members in order to study the population characteristics. So, sampling is an essential item in the field of research. Keeping in mind of time, energy and financial constraints, four schools were selected for data collection. The method of stratified random sampling was employed to select four schools (two from rural areas and two from urban areas) from the Sri Muktsar Sahib District of Punjab. From these four schools, 200 (100 rural & 100 urban) adolescents studying in 10+1 and 10+2 classes were selected in such a way that half of them were girls. Thus, the sample comprised of 50 boys and 50 girls from rural areas and the same number of boys and girls from the urban areas.

Tools Used

1. Dr. Abha Rani Bisht's Battery of Stress Scales (1992) was used to measure various dimensions and components of stress.
2. Nowack's Psychological Hardiness Scale (1990) was used for measuring the hardiness of the school going adolescents.

Collection of Data

In order to collect data for the present study, the author took permission from the principals of various schools. The written consent of the students was obtained before the collection of data. Bisht's Battery of Stress Scales and Nowack's Psychological Hardiness Scale were administered to the adolescents studying in 10+1 and 10+2 in groups in a real classroom situation. The respondents were assured that, the information provided by them would be used only for the research purpose. The instructions given in the manuals and the test booklets were strictly adhered to.

Data Analysis Techniques

In order to analyse the data, first, the descriptive statistics such as Mean, Median, Standard Deviation, Kurtosis and Skewness were calculated. After this, t-test was applied to find out the significance of mean differences on the basis of gender and locale in various dimensions and components of stress. Further coefficient of correlation was calculated to find out the relationship of stress among adolescents in relation to their psychological hardiness.

Results and Discussion

The study of mean, median, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness revealed that, the nature of data obtained for thirteen dimensions and four components of stress as well as the data obtained for psychological hardiness from male, female, rural and urban school going adolescents was nearly normal.

Gender Differences in Various Dimensions of Stress

The value of mean score for existential stress for school-going male adolescents was found to be 267.40 and that for school-going female adolescents was found to be 319.25 as given in Table 1. The t-value was found to be

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Group	N	M	SD	df	t-Value
1	Existential Stress	Male	100	267.40	88.38	198	4.45**
		Female	100	319.25	76.13	198	
2	Achievement Stress	Male	100	258.46	106.00	198	3.45**
		Female	100	301.59	66.03	198	
3	Academic Stress	Male	100	281.65	97.81	198	2.67*
		Female	100	297.68	64.18	198	
4	Self-concept Stress	Male	100	269.69	113.93	198	2.11*
		Female	100	297.68	67.56	198	
5	Self-actualization Stress	Male	100	259.83	84.16	198	2.21*
		Female	100	284.68	73.99	198	
6	Physical Stress	Male	100	264.73	81.72	198	3.94**
		Female	100	306.53	67.47	198	
7	Social Stress	Male	100	289.62	90.42	198	2.38*
		Female	100	318.59	80.81	198	
8	Role Stress	Male	100	265.39	89.20	198	1.52
		Female	100	283.12	74.85	198	
9	Institutional Stress	Male	100	270.63	79.68	198	3.54**
		Female	100	308.89	72.81	198	
10	Family Stress	Male	100	326.61	84.09	198	0.41
		Female	100	308.83	63.93	198	
11	Financial Stress	Male	100	284.32	74.66	198	2.95*
		Female	100	315.86	76.43	198	
12	Vocational Stress	Male	100	285.41	82.47	198	1.66
		Female	100	304.27	77.94	198	
13	Superstition Stress	Male	100	267.18	94.76	198	2.95*
		Female	100	309.39	107.21	198	

**p<.01 *p<.05

Table 1. Gender Difference in Different Dimensions of Stress among School-going Adolescents

4.45 which was significant at 0.01 level. Thus the gender difference in the existential stress of school going adolescents was found to be significant which clearly shows that the male students were having significantly higher existential stress.

It is also clear from Table 1 that there were significant gender differences in Achievement Stress (t=3.45, significant at 0.01 level), Academic Stress (t=2.67, significant at 0.05 level), Self-concept Stress (t=2.11, significant at 0.05 level), Self-actualization Stress (t=2.21,

significant at 0.05 level), Physical Stress (t=3.94, significant at 0.01 level), Social Stress (t = 2.38, significant at 0.05 level), Institutional Stress (t = 3.54 significant at 0.01 level), Financial Stress (t= 2.95, significant at 0.05 level) and Institutional Stress (t= 2.95, significant at 0.05 level). Thus except in the role stress, family stress and vocational stress, there were significant gender differences in all other ten dimensions of stress. Female adolescents were found to experience more stress in almost all the dimensions as compared to the male students. This may be due to the fact that, females are more sensitive and psychologically delicate as compared to the males and in the Indian situation, they remain at home and face the outside world or go to school and face various types of new situations and problems, they experience more stress. Thus the hypothesis H₁: 'There will be no significant gender difference in the thirteen dimensions of stress' was partially accepted. These results are in conformity with the results of Polus-Szaniawski (1990) as in case of academic stress, stress in female adolescents was found to be significantly more as compared to the males.

Gender Differences in Components of Stress

The perusal of Table 2 shows that, the t-ratio testing the significance of mean difference between frustration component of stress for school going male and female adolescents was found to be 4.08 which was significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the male adolescents were having higher rate of frustration as compared to the female adolescents.

It is also clear from Table 2 that, significant gender

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Group	N	M	SD	df	t-Value
1	Frustration	Male	100	929.64	222.40	198	4.08**
		Female	100	1047.74	184.15	198	
2	Conflict	Male	100	818.33	208.78	198	3.43**
		Female	100	919.81	209.37	198	
3	Pressure	Male	100	969.32	450.76	198	1.45
		Female	100	1039.57	169.84	198	
4	Anxiety	Male	100	873.59	206.49	198	3.02**
		Female	100	964.49	217.71	198	

**p<.01 *p<.05

Table 2. Gender Differences in Components of Stress among School-going Adolescents

differences were also found to exist in the conflict component ($t=3.43$, significant at 0.01 level). But, the females were having a higher rate of conflict. The anxiety component ($t= 3.02$, significant at 0.01 level) also showed significantly higher value in case of the females as compared to the males. However, there was no significant gender differences in the pressure component. Thus the hypothesis H_2 : 'There will be no significant gender differences in the four components of stress' was partially accepted. These results are also in agreement with the results of Polus-Szaniawski (1990) and

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Group	N	M	SD	df	t-Value
1	Existential Stress	Urban	100	306.52	90.63	198	2.18*
		Rural	100	280.12	79.98	198	
2	Achievement Stress	Urban	100	284.35	73.25	198	0.67
		Rural	100	275.70	105.51	198	
3	Academic Stress	Urban	100	300.32	73.24	198	0.50
		Rural	100	294.26	93.77	198	
4	Self-actualization Stress	Urban	100	286.93	77.49	198	0.48
		Rural	100	280.42	109.14	198	
5	Self-concept Stress	Urban	100	277.21	83.19	198	0.87
		Rural	100	267.30	76.79	198	
6	Physical Stress	Urban	100	289.82	84.68	198	0.76
		Rural	100	281.44	70.02	198	
7	Social Stress	Urban	100	310.38	66.18	198	1.02
		Rural	100	297.83	103.28	198	
8	Role Stress	Urban	100	286.38	78.93	198	2.09*
		Rural	100	262.13	84.78	198	
9	Institutional Stress	Urban	100	302.40	74.82	198	2.30*
		Rural	100	277.11	80.41	198	
10	Family Stress	Urban	100	307.58	75.98	198	0.47
		Rural	100	327.86	42.22	198	
11	Financial Stress	Urban	100	312.33	82.13	198	2.27*
		Rural	100	287.85	69.76	198	
12	Vocational Stress	Urban	100	300.33	74.24	198	0.96
		Rural	100	289.35	86.46	198	
13	Superstition Stress	Urban	100	301.60	112.72	198	1.83
		Rural	100	274.97	91.14	198	

**p<.01 *p<.05

Table 3. Locale-wise Differences in Various Dimensions of Stress among School going Adolescents

Acharya (2003).

Locale-wise Differences in Various Dimensions of Stress

It is observed from Table 3 that, the value of mean score for Existential Stress for school going urban adolescents was found to be 306.52 and that for school going rural adolescents, it was 280.12. The t-ratio testing the significance of mean difference of perceived dimension of Existential Stress between school going urban and rural adolescents turned out to be 2.18, which was significant at 0.05 level. Thus in locale-wise, there was a significant difference in the Existential Stress among the school going adolescents.

It is also evident from Table 3 that, locale-wise differences existed in Role Stress ($t=2.09$, significant at 0.05 level), Institutional Stress ($t = 2.30$, significant at 0.05 level) and the Financial Stress ($t = 2.27$, significant at 0.05 level) among the school going students. Thus urban adolescents experienced more stress in all dimensions as compared to the rural adolescents. It might be due to the more complex atmosphere, more competition in studies, and comparatively higher standard of living in the urban areas as compared to the rural areas. Thus, the hypothesis H_3 : 'There will be no significant locale-wise differences in the thirteen dimensions of stress among the school going adolescents' was partially accepted.

Locale-wise Differences in Various Components of Stress

Table 4 shows that, the value of mean score for Frustration component of stress for school-going urban adolescents was 1013.50 and for rural adolescents was 963.88. Table

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Group	N	M	SD	df	t-Value
1	Frustration	Urban	100	1013.50	214.55	198	1.66
		Rural	100	963.88	207.70	198	
2	Conflict	Urban	100	896.70	230.03	198	1.83
		Rural	100	841.44	195.38	198	
3	Pressure	Urban	100	1008.02	191.23	198	0.14
		Rural	100	1000.87	444.89	198	
4	Anxiety	Urban	100	947.93	238.31	198	1.89
		Rural	100	890.15	189.03	198	

**p<.01 *p<.05

Table 4. Locale-wise Differences in Components of Stress among School-going Adolescents

4 further shows that, the t-ratio testing locale-differences in Frustration component of stress among school-going adolescents turned out to be 1.66, which was not significant. It indicates that there was no significant locale-wise difference in the Frustration components among the school-going adolescents.

Further, Table 4 also showed that, there were no significant locale-differences in the Conflict ($t=1.83$, non-significant), Pressure ($t=0.14$, non-significant) and Anxiety ($t=1.89$, non-significant) components of stress. Thus the hypothesis H_4 : 'There will be no significant locale-wise difference in the four components of stress among the school-going adolescents' was accepted. It may be noted that, as in case of various dimensions of stress, the mean score of all the four components of stress is also higher for the urban adolescents in comparison to the rural adolescents.

Relationship of Stress and Psychological Hardiness

From Table 5, it is clear that, the value of Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation was found to be -0.139, which was significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, there was a significant negative correlation between Stress and Psychological Hardiness. It means if an adolescent was psychologically harder, he or she would experience less stress and vice-versa.

Hence, the hypothesis H_5 : 'There will be no significant relationship between the stress among school going adolescents and their psychological hardiness' was rejected. Thus, we can conclude that, harder adolescents experience less stress. Hence, there is a need of the hardiness training for the adolescents so that they may cope up with various types of stress in their life.

These results are in conformity with the results of Collins (1992), Younin (1992), Penguilly (1997) and Pollachek (2001).

Conclusions

Correlation between Stress and Psychological Hardiness	N	Level of Significance
$r=0.139$	200	Significant at 0.05 level

Table 5. The Value of Coefficient of Correlation between Stress among School-going Adolescents and their Psychological Hardiness

The present study clearly shows that, there are significant gender differences in school-going adolescents in their existential stress, achievement stress, academic stress, self-concept stress, self-actualization stress, physical stress, social stress, institutional stress, financial stress and superstition stress. The female adolescents experience more stress as compared to their female counterparts in all the above components. Thus, female adolescents need special training to cope up with all the types of stress mentioned above.

On the other hand, significant locale-wise differences have been found to exist in the existential stress, role stress, institutional stress and financial stress among the school-going adolescents. The urban adolescents who experience higher stress in the above said dimensions of the stress badly need the stress coping training.

Apart from the above, the study also suggests that, the female adolescents and the urban adolescents experience more frustration, conflict, pressure and anxiety as compared to their male/rural counterparts. Thus, the urban female adolescents are experiencing maximum stress. Hence, their needs of coping with all types of stress must be addressed properly by their parents, teachers, guidance workers, counselors and the society at large.

Further the study reveals that, there has been a significant negative relationship between the stress and psychological hardiness. Thus, we need to start rigorous hardiness training for the adolescents in our schools so that they may face the stresses and strains of life.

Educational Implications

Adolescence period being a period of 'stress and strain', one needs assistance to adjust with all types of physical, psychological and personal problems. Therefore, the parents, family members, teachers, guidance workers and counselors are required to provide proper assistance and guidance to the adolescents, especially the urban adolescents and the girls. Hardiness training to cope up with various types of stress can be an important aspect of school enrichment programme and the families do need to be strengthened in this regard.

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