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Stress Level and Coping Strategies Among the Students Preparing for Common Entrance Test in Coaching Classes of a Selected City

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Abstract

Stress is a natural response of your body to any type of demand, whether it is a positive or negative experience. When individuals experience stress due to external factors, their bodies release chemicals into the bloodstream, which can be beneficial if the stress is caused by physical danger. However, if the stress is a result of an emotional situation and there is no way to channel this additional energy and strength, it can become detrimental. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study to evaluate the degree of stress and the coping mechanisms employed by students preparing for a common entrance test. The study aimed to evaluate the stress level and coping mechanisms among students getting ready for a common entrance test and, therefore, utilized a survey method. The sample size was determined with the help of an open epi software system (sample size for frequency in a population). The determined sample size was 80 at 95% confidence interval. Further 5% attrition rate was considered hence the final sample size was 85. The sample size for t study was 85.

Keywords: Stress, level of stress, coping strategies, emotional situation, bloodstream

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a response of your body towards any type of demand. It can be elicited by either positive or negative encounters. When individuals feel stressed due to any situation happening around them, their bodies produce chemicals that increase energy and strength. In case the stress is caused by a physical threat, this chemical release can be beneficial [1–4]. However, if it is due to emotional reasons and there is no way to release this energy, it can be harmful. Stress can stem from a range of factors, such as physical danger or emotional worries related to family or work [5–12]. Recognizing the origin of stress is essential for effectively dealing with it. Several prevalent stress factors include the following:

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Survival Stress

The phrase "fight or flight" is a well-known response to danger that occurs in both humans and animals. It is a natural reaction in which the body responds to the fear of physical harm by providing a sudden burst of energy, making it easier for you to survive in a dangerous situation by either fighting or fleeing. This type of stress is known as survival stress [13–16].

Internal Stress

Do you ever find yourself worrying about things that are out of your control or feeling anxious for no apparent reason? This is known as internal stress, and it is crucial to understand and manage. Internal stress occurs when individuals bring stress upon themselves, often by worrying about things they

cannot control or knowingly placing themselves in stressful situations. Certain individuals adapt to a fast-paced and tense way of life as a consequence of being under constant stress. They may even seek out stressful situations and feel stressed about things that are not truly stressful [17–21].

Environmental Stress

This refers to the reaction of a person to stressors in their environment, such as loud sounds, overpopulation, and demands from work or family. Recognizing these environmental stressors and finding ways to either avoid them or cope with them effectively can reduce one's stress level [22].

Fatigue and Overwork

This type of stress accumulates gradually over time and can have a negative impact on your physical and mental health. It may result from excessive work demands, either at your job, school, or home, or from inadequate time management skills or relaxation practices. It can be difficult to prevent this type of stress because individuals may feel like they cannot control their workload. However, later in the course, we will provide strategies to manage fatigue. The impact of stress can be felt in both mental and physical aspects, leading to fatigue, sickness, and challenges in concentration. Stress can have negative effects on both the body and mind, and extreme or prolonged stress can lead to physical and mental health problems. However, not all stress is necessarily bad. In fact, some small amounts of stress can be beneficial as it can provide the energy and motivation needed to perform well in certain situations. Gaining awareness of your personal stress level and discovering effective methods to handle it is crucial [23–30]. If you never experience any stress or excitement in your life, you may become bored and unfulfilled. On the other hand, if everything in your life causes you stress, it can negatively affect your health and wellbeing. Short-term stress, such as before an important event, may help you perform better, but long-term stress can drain your energy and harm your performance. Frequently manifesting as brief episodes in response to external stimuli, short-term stress can affect the body in various ways. There are several physical effects of stress, such as increased heart rate and breathing, sweating, cold hands, feet or skin, nausea or butterflies in the stomach, muscle tightness or tension, dry mouth, frequent urination, muscle spasms, headaches, fatigue, and shortness of breath. Although these reactions can be helpful in situations where quick physical reactions are necessary, such as in dangerous situations, they can be detrimental to mental and physical performance if there is no reason or outlet for the stress [31–37].

These impacts can include the following: impairing your ability to make sound decisions, making challenging situations appear more dangerous, decreasing your pleasure and causing negative emotions, making it hard for you to focus or handle interruptions, leaving you feeling anxious, angry or frustrated, causing you to feel rejected, unable to find joy, scared of having free time, unable to work, and unwilling to talk about your issues with others [38, 39].

When stress lasts for a long time, it can have a more severe impact on both your body and mind. Physically, long-term stress can alter your eating and sleeping patterns, lead to nervous behavior such as fidgeting and pacing, and weaken your immune system, making you more susceptible to illnesses. It can also cause various physical discomforts like headaches, stomach problems, skin issues, and fatigue. On a mental level, prolonged stress can have serious consequences such as affecting your sex life, causing constant tiredness, and leading to various mental health disorders. Experiencing stress for a long time can lead to difficulties in thinking clearly, problem-solving, and completing simple daily tasks. Indications of prolonged stress influencing mental well-being include experiencing anxiety, being overwhelmed, feeling perplexed, and struggling with decision making. Changes in mood, such as depression, anger, frustration, helplessness, irritability, and restlessness, may also occur. There could be an increasing dependence on food, cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs, and neglect of important life responsibilities and personal appearance. Unreasonable phobias of physical ailments, natural calamities, and everyday scenarios such as heights or confined spaces can also emerge [40–44]. Therefore, let all of us join together in working on stress problem among students who are going to future of our nation.

Until that time, we hope that our efforts through the study will help those students for achieving a healthy and prosperous life [45].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Primary Objectives

1. The objective is to evaluate the stress level and coping mechanisms of students who are getting ready for a common entrance exam.

Other Objectives

1 The aim is to determine if there is a relationship between the level of stress and coping strategies among students who are preparing for a common entrance test.

2 The objective is to investigate whether there is a connection between the level of stress and coping strategies among students getting ready for a common entrance test.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey method was employed in the study, given that its aim was to evaluate the stress levels and coping mechanisms utilized by students getting ready for a common entrance test.

Setting of the Study

The study took place within the coaching centers of a specific city.

Sample Size

The sample size was determined with the help of an open epi software system (sample size for frequency in a population). The determined sample size was 80 at 95% confidence interval. Further 5% attrition rate was considered hence the final sample size was 85. The sample size for t study was 85.

Sampling Technique

Non-probability convenience sampling technique.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The means or instruments employed by the researcher to observe or quantify the important variables in the research problem are known as data collection tools. The tools utilized in this study to gather data were as follows:

Tool I: Demographic proforma.

Tool II: Perceived stress scale.

Tool III: Stress coping style inventory scale.

Finding of the Study

Section I: Demographic Variables

The majority of the students who participated in the survey were 18 years old, accounting for 58.8% of the total sample. Around 25.9% of the students were 17 years old and 15.3% were 16 years old. The objective of this survey was to evaluate the stress levels and coping strategies of students who are getting ready for a common entrance test.

The findings of the present study were consistent with the reputed British medical journal, published findings of a survey conducted by Patel et al., which showed suicide is now the second most common cause of death among young people in India between the ages of 15 and 29 years after road accidents, and childbirth complications for women.

- In the study, 78.8% of students were male, whereas 21.2% were females.

- The study majority of the students belonged to Muslim community of about 42.4%, 28.2% belonged to Christian community, 17.6% belonged to Hindu community, and 11.8% belonged to other religions.
- Students according to their medium of schooling showed that about 37.6% students belonged to English medium of schooling, 32.9% belonged to semi-English medium of schooling, and 29.4% belonged to the Marathi medium of schooling. Therefore, it can be inferred that a large portion of the students in the study were educated in English medium schools.
- Students' educational status of their fathers shows about 4.7% father of students were educated up to secondary education, 34.1% were educated up to higher secondary education, 38.8% were educated up to diploma course, 14.1% were graduated, 5.9% were postgraduate, and 2.4% belonged to any other education. Hence, it can be interpreted that majority of them were educated up to diploma course.
- Students' educational status of their mothers shows about 9.4% mother of students were educated up to secondary education, 32.9% were educated up to higher secondary education, 37.6% were educated up to diploma course, 17.6% were graduated, 1.2% were postgraduate, and 1.2% belonged to any other education. Hence, it can be interpreted that majority of them were educated up to diploma course.
- Type of family to which the students belonged in which 36.5% students belonged to nuclear family, 41.2% belonged to joint family, and 28.2% belonged to the extended family. Based on the given information, it can be inferred that a large proportion of the students in the study were from a joint family background.
- Monthly family income in which 21.2% students had monthly family income between Rs 26,000 to Rs 29,000, 27.1% students had monthly family income between Rs 16,000 to Rs 25,000, 22.4% students had monthly family income between Rs 11,000 to Rs 15,000, 15.3% students had monthly family income between Rs 5000 to Rs 10,000, and 14.1% students had monthly family income below Rs 5000. Hence, it can be interpreted that majority of the students belonged to monthly family income that ranged between Rs 16,000 to Rs 25,000.
- The study found that the residential areas of the students were distributed as follows: 23.5% lived in urban areas, 50.6% lived in rural areas, and 25.9% lived in semi-urban areas. Therefore, it can be inferred that the majority of the students in the study came from rural residential areas.
- Students' habits shows that about 74.1% students had no any habit so counted in other, 11.8% had tobacco chewing habit, while 10.6% had smoking habit and about 3.5% had alcohol drinking habit.

Section II: Assessment of Level of Stress and Coping Strategies

The overall assessment of stress level study concluded that 96.47% student had moderate stress level, whereas 3.53% students had mild stress with no severe stress. The assessment of coping strategies in the study concluded that about 95.29% had active problem coping, 4.7% had passive emotional coping whereas there was no any active emotional coping and passive problem coping in the students preparing for common entrance test.

The results of this study align with the outcomes of the research conducted by Emily A. Pierceall and Marybelle C. Keim. The findings of the study exhibited that there one of the students 75% were in a moderate stress category, 12% in a high stress category, and 13% in a low stress category. Less desirable coping strategies were drinking alcohol, smoking, and using illegal drugs.

Section III: Correlation Between Level of Stress and Coping Strategies

Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis was performed to examine the relationship between stress levels and coping strategies among students preparing for a common entrance test. The analysis

revealed a significant correlation (r = 1.87), indicating a positive association between stress levels and coping strategies. Hence, it can be interpreted that the level of stress and coping strategies had influence on students preparing for common entrance test.

Section IV: Association Between Level of Stress and Coping Strategies

There was significant association between level of stress with age, gender, medium of schooling and type of family of demographic variables, whereas there was no association between level of stress with religion, educational status of father and mother, monthly income, residential area, and habits of demographic variables. The study revealed that there was a notable connection between coping strategies and the type of family and residential area in terms of demographic variables. However, there was no significant association between coping strategies and other demographic variables such as age, gender, religion, medium of schooling, educational status of parents, monthly income, and habits.

The findings from the present research align with those of a cross-sectional study titled "Prevalence of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among Young Male Adults in India: A Dimensional and Categorical Diagnoses-Based Study." The study revealed that the average age of the student participants was 19.3 years, with an average educational attainment of 14.7 years. The prevalence of depressive symptoms ranged from mild to extremely severe, affecting 18.5% of the population, while anxiety was present in 24.4% and stress in 20%. Clinical depression was detected in 12.1% of the participants, while generalized anxiety disorder was observed in 19%. Notably, a significant proportion (87%) of individuals with depression also experienced comorbid anxiety disorder.

The analysis indicated that certain categories were more likely to experience higher levels of academic stress and adolescent distress compared with others. These results suggest that academic stress and adolescent distress are prevalent issues in Chennai, India (Table 1).

Table 1. Association between the level of stress and coping strategies among students preparing for common entrance test.

S.N.	Variables	Stress level		Coping strategies	
		χ^2 *Value*	*Level of significance*	χ^2 *Value*	*Level of significance*
1	Age	8.54	There is significant association	1.2	No association
2	Gender	30.66	There is significant association	1.78	No association
3	Religion	0.19	No association	2.4	No association
4	Medium of schooling	18.2	There is significant association	0.16	No association
5	Educational status of father	1.46	No association	0.25	No association
6	Educational status of mother	2.72	No association	1.17	No association
7	Type of family	8.24	There is significant association	6.2	There is significant association
8	Monthly income	3.1	No association	0.1	No association
9	Residential area	2.54	No association	4.16	There is significant association
10	Habits	3.45	No association	0.03	No association

(df = 1, table value = 3.84, $p > 0.05$)
(df = 1, table value = 3.84, $p < 0.05$)

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The present study which assessed the level of stress and coping strategies among the students preparing for common entrance test, has the important implication in nursing education, nursing service, nursing administration, and nursing research.

Nursing Education

The findings of the study will help nursing teachers give more emphasis on stress and how to assess stress and its coping strategies empowering nurses to be well prepared to assist self, client, and community to handle and manage stress effectively. Nursing students and teachers should learn more about various stressors in life and their effective management for promotion of mental health. It will help them educate the community and individuals having academic stress.

Nursing Practice

The findings of the study clearly point out the stressful event and can provide an idea in the field of nursing in need of preparing stress management techniques to reduce stress level.

Nursing Administration

It is recommended that nurse administrators offer opportunities for nurses to receive ongoing education and participate in in-service programs and workshops focused on stress management and coping strategies to promote mental health. Adequate administrative support should be given to facilitate these activities, including in-service education and workshops.

Nursing Research

Extensive research must be conducted in the area of stress management and promotion of mental health to identify several more effective methods of promotion of mental health through stress management. This study also brings out the fact that more studies are needed to be done in different settings with different methods to assess stress and coping strategies in stressful population. This study can be baseline for future studies to be built upon.

Limitation of the Study

- The scope of the study was restricted to specific coaching classes located in a particular city.
- The study is limited to the students preparing for common entrance test.
- The sample size.

Recommendation

1. A further study with the help of random sampling can be done for generalization.
2. A similar study can be conducted using different samples and sampling methods.
3. A further study can be done by taking a larger sample size.
4. A further study can be done on stress management and promotion of mental health by involving different method other than assessing stress level and coping strategies.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that assessment of stress and coping strategies was effective in improving awareness regarding the stressors of life among students preparing for common entrance test.

Summary

This article focused on analyzing the obtained findings in light of relevant studies and the researcher's insights gathered during the data collection phase.

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