

Cultural Differences in Stress and Coping Strategies of Adolescents

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Striding towards 21st century, youth is more and more competition oriented and adolescence is the time of awakening, vibrating to new urges and possibilities. Adolescents are wracked by inner storm and attacked by outer stress. Advancement of present century towards cosmopolitan life, advances towards the "Age of Anxiety and Stress". Soares et al. (1992) in his research on gender and temporal differences found that problems arising from current life styles seem to be significant causes of stress in everyday living.

A particular culture at a particular moment in its history might be offering either a relatively severe or a relatively stressful bridge for the adolescents to cross. And the culture of a particular area may also create a difference in their personality development. When studied the child anxiety to replicate race-related differences, African-American children rated themselves as more anxious than Euro American children (Walton et al., 1999). But within any particular culture, there are also differences with respect to which adolescents are in the most favourable situation. "Adolescence is least stormy in that segment of youth which is gifted and well trained in the pursuit of expanding technological trends, and thus able to identify with new roles of competency and invention", which may lead to stressful situations. The effects of acculturation and grade have proved to be significant on intelligence and academic achievement (Panda and Nath, 1992). Stress is part of ones response to any challenge, any demand or any change.

But stress is not the result of any individual factor rather is the outcome of environmental factors like economic uncertainty or technological uncertainty mainly due to overpopulation leading to competition. In this process, one feels psychologically disturbed, emotionally drained, physically sapped out and may even sweat heavily without being subjected to any physical exertion (Shah and Kanwar, 1999). Hence to relieve human beings from such stressful situations, guidance and counselling should be provided to them at

this tender age of adolescence so as to avoid its hindrance in the sound personality development of the individual. Keeping in view this emerging problem and its severity, the present study was undertaken with the objective to study the level of stress and coping style among male adolescents on cultural grounds.

METHODOLOGY

Sample: The sample for the present study was purposively considered from Hisar city of Haryana State and Hyderabad city of Andhra Pradesh State. A list of all the schools in Hyderabad city and Hisar city was prepared. Then one school each from both the cities was selected randomly. Out of the selected two schools, a sample of 80 adolescent boys of 12th standard, 40 each from both cities were selected.

Measures: The tools used were – "A Life Stress Scale for University students" by Agrawal and Naidu (1986) for measuring the level of children stress and children coping style was measured by Revised version of Coping Questionnaire by Folkman and Lazarus (1985). A self-structured and pretested "Interview Schedule" was used to get information on socio-economic variables. Levels of stress and coping styles were analyzed using frequency and percentages. 't' test was also computed to test the differences in stress and coping level.

RESULTS

The personal profile of the parents of the selected adolescents describe that half of the fathers of Hyderabad students were of the older age group (51-60 years) and 65 per cent of mothers of these students were of the younger age group (41-50 years) against fathers of Hisar students of which majority were of younger age groups (41-50 years) and mothers in youngest age group (30-40 years). Further, fathers of both cities were almost equally educated but higher percentage of mothers of Hyderabad city had

higher level of education than Hisar mothers. Hence being older and more educated, parents of Hyderabad city were more experienced and knowledgeable in guiding their wards in a better way. Moreover 50 per cent of Hyderabad parents had either high or middle-income level while 70 per cent of Hisar parents had lower monthly income.

Table 1 depicts the level of stress of the selected adolescents. Comparative analysis of

Table 1: Frequency distribution of children stress level

S. Variables No.	Hyderabad (n=40)	Hisar (n=40)	Total (N=80)
1. Family Stress			
Low	6(15.00)	8(20.00)	14(17.50)
Moderate	23(57.50)	23(57.50)	46(57.50)
High	11(27.50)	9(22.50)	20(25.00)
2. Financial Stress			
Low	5(12.50)	14(35.00)	19(23.75)
Moderate	21(52.50)	19(47.50)	40(50.00)
High	14(35.00)	7(17.50)	21(26.25)
3. Social Stress			
Low	12(30.00)	11(27.50)	23(28.75)
Moderate	25(62.50)	23(57.50)	48(60.00)
High	3(7.50)	6(15.00)	9(11.25)
4. Educational Stress			
Low	5(12.50)	12(30.00)	17(21.25)
Moderate	31(77.50)	25(62.50)	56(70.00)
High	4(10.00)	3(7.50)	7(8.75)
5. Ego Threat			
Low	16(40.00)	10(25.00)	26(32.50)
Moderate	15(37.50)	19(47.50)	34(42.50)
High	9(22.50)	11(27.50)	20(25.00)
6. Bereavement			
Low	2(5.00)	9(22.50)	11(13.75)
Moderate	26(65.00)	20(50.00)	46(57.50)
High	12(30.00)	11(27.50)	23(28.75)
7. Separation			
Low	17(42.50)	10(25.00)	27(33.75)
Moderate	21(52.50)	25(62.50)	46(57.50)
High	2(5.00)	5(12.50)	7(8.75)
8. Personal Set Back			
Low	6(15.00)	10(25.00)	16(20.00)
Moderate	29(72.50)	22(55.00)	51(63.75)
High	5(12.50)	8(20.00)	13(16.25)
9. Health of Others			
Low	7(17.50)	9(22.50)	16(20.00)
Moderate	20(50.00)	23(57.50)	43(53.75)
High	13(32.50)	8(20.00)	21(26.25)
10. Total Stress			
Low	13(32.50)	16(40.00)	29(36.25)
Moderate	27(67.50)	21(52.50)	48(60.00)
High	-	3(7.50)	3(3.75)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

Hyderabad students and Hisar students highlighted a greater percentage of Hyderabad students experiencing moderate levels of stress followed by low levels of stress in all stress categories. The reason for higher percentage of stress among Hyderabad students may be due to the cosmopolitanity of the city in comparison to Hisar.

A perusal of data regarding all the categories of stress showed that almost half of the respondents (50-65%) in both settings were in the moderate levels of stress in almost all the categories like family, financial, social, bereavement, separation and health of others. Educa-

Table 2: Frequency distribution of children coping level

S. Variables No.	Hyderabad (n=40)	Hisar (n=40)	Total (N=80)
1. Confrontive Coping			
Low	4(10.00)	5(12.50)	9(11.25)
Moderate	34(85.00)	26(65.00)	60(75.00)
High	2(5.00)	9(22.50)	11(13.75)
2. Distancing			
Low	12(30.00)	11(27.50)	23(28.75)
Moderate	26(65.00)	28(70.00)	54(67.50)
High	2(5.00)	1(2.50)	3(3.75)
3. Self Controlling			
Low	6(15.00)	7(17.50)	13(16.25)
Moderate	29(72.50)	23(57.50)	52(65.00)
High	5(12.50)	10(25.00)	15(18.75)
4. Seeking Social Support			
Low	3(7.50)	4(10.00)	7(8.75)
Moderate	33(82.50)	31(77.50)	64(80.00)
High	4(10.00)	5(12.50)	9(11.25)
5. Accepting Responsibility			
Low	8(20.00)	11(27.50)	19(23.75)
Moderate	25(62.50)	23(57.50)	48(60.00)
High	7(17.50)	6(15.00)	13(16.25)
6. Escape Avoidance			
Low	16(40.00)	14(35.00)	30(37.50)
Moderate	23(57.50)	18(45.00)	41(51.25)
High	1(2.50)	8(20.00)	9(11.25)
7. Planful Problem Solving			
Low	6(15.00)	6(15.00)	12(15.00)
Moderate	24(60.00)	24(60.00)	48(60.00)
High	10(25.00)	10(25.00)	20(25.00)
8. Positive Reappraisal			
Low	4(10.00)	3(7.50)	7(8.75)
Moderate	29(72.00)	25(62.50)	54(67.50)
High	7(17.50)	12(30.00)	19(23.75)
9. Total coping Style			
Low	2(5.00)	5(12.50)	7(8.75)
Moderate	34(85.00)	24(60.00)	58(72.50)
High	4(10.00)	11(27.50)	15(18.75)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

tional stress and personal set back were the categories where higher percentage of Hyderabad students (70-80%) against Hisar students (55-65%) were in moderate level of stress. Ego threat was the only category where less than half (37-47%) of students in both settings were moderately stressful.

It is obvious from table 2 that in the strategies of coping styles like confrontive coping, self controlling, seeking social support, and positive reappraisal, more than half of the Hyderabad students (70-80%) had shown to adopt moderate levels of stress as against a lower percent of Hisar students in the same level of coping i.e. 55-65 per cent. Whereas in the remaining aspects of coping like distancing, accepting responsibility, escape avoidance and planful problem solving, nearly half of the students of both the settings (55-65%) reflected moderate levels of stress.

It is apparent from the data in table 3 that there are statistical differences in children stress on cultural grounds in the aspects of educational stress ($t=1.96^*$), $p<0.05$, financial stress ($t=3.30^{**}$), $p<0.01$. The Table further throws light on the mean scores indicating that the students of Hyderabad city were stressful in almost all the aspects of stress. The mean scores of total stress for Hyderabad students ($\bar{X}=221.62$) was higher than the students of Hisar city ($\bar{X}=218.82$).

Table 4 unveils the difference in children coping style. Surprisingly no statistical difference was found in any of the approaches of coping

style except for escape avoidance ($t=2.25^*$), $p<0.05$. However, the students of Hisar city reflected higher mean scores ($\bar{X}=81.55$) against Hyderabad students ($\bar{X}=77.30$).

Table 4: Mean differences in children coping on the basis of city

Variables	Hyderabad (N=40)		Hisar (N=40)		't' calcu- lated
	Mean score	Std. Devia- tion	Mean score	Std. devia- tion	
Confrontive Coping	9.32	2.45	9.92	3.13	0.95
Distancing	8.07	2.75	8.87	3.07	1.22
Self Controlling	11.00	3.74	10.87	3.98	0.14
Seeking Social Support	10.37	2.80	9.87	3.09	0.75
Accepting Responsibility	6.87	2.75	7.05	3.03	0.26
Escape Avoidance	9.50	3.65	11.70	4.98	2.25*
Planful Problem Solving	10.72	3.75	10.75	3.73	0.02
Positive Reappraisal	12.05	3.35	12.45	4.10	0.47
Total coping Style	77.30	16.86	81.55	23.42	0.93

* Significant at 5 per cent level.

DISCUSSION

In this study, it was found that the students of Hyderabad city were more stressful in comparison to the students of Hisar city. The reason behind this may be due to the fact that Hyderabad being a metropolitan city, has a wider opportunity for career and hence competition is tough for the students. There is a significant difference in the intelligence of boys and girls of urban setting from that of rural students in the aspects of creativity and educational achievement (Gupta and Kiran, 1991). The results indicate a higher percent of Hyderabad students in moderate and high levels of stress against Hisar students in the arenas of financial, social and educational stress.

Further, on an average, more than half to three fourth students had moderate or low levels of coping in negative coping styles like confrontive coping, distancing and escape avoidance. Whereas three fourth of them reflected moderate to high levels of coping through positive styles like self controlling, seeking social support and accepting responsibility. It implies that the

Table3: Mean differences in children stress on the basis of city

Variables	Hyderabad (N=40)		Hisar (N=40)		't' calcu- lated
	Mean score	Std. Devia- tion	Mean score	Std. devia- tion	
Family Stress	39.22	8.69	36.42	11.04	1.25
Financial Stress	14.75	3.93	11.45	4.93	3.30**
Social Stress	21.60	5.66	23.02	6.98	1.00
Educational Stress	36.55	7.08	33.12	8.41	1.96*
Ego Threat	19.25	6.98	21.92	8.49	1.53
Bereavement	32.17	6.52	29.92	9.31	1.25
Separation	7.15	2.74	7.80	2.98	1.01
Personal Set Back	32.57	7.49	32.55	9.35	0.01
Health of Others	22.22	6.89	22.25	6.47	0.01
Total Stress	221.62	40.46	218.82	53.49	0.26

*Significant at 5 per cent level

**Significant at 1 per cent

students were not much influenced by negative approaches of coping style, thus reflecting normal personality development due to better parenting styles.

To find out the differences in the stress and coping levels among the students of both cities, 't' test analysed depicts significant differences in educational stress and financial stress, where Hyderabad students were more stressful may be Hyderabad being a cosmopolitan city. The results are in accordance with results of Chambers et al. (1998) who analysed the Africentric cultural identity and stress experience of African American College students and found the most efficacious cluster group had significantly higher Africentric identity, self-esteem and anger control and lower perceived stress, suppressed anger, experienced anger and depression. But for the adoption of coping styles, Hisar students reflected better adoption, may be because these students being more attached by their families receive constant guidance from their parents and can better cope up. But for positive coping styles like self-controlling, seeking social support, Hyderabad students conveyed more independence and receive support from parents and friends.

It can be concluded that students of Hyderabad city were more stressful but students of Hisar city reflected better adoption of coping strategies.

KEY WORDS Stress. Coping Style. Adolescents. Cultural Differences

ABSTRACT The present study was undertaken to analyse the stress and coping level in adolescents of 12th standard. The study was conducted in purposively selected Hyderabad city of Andhra Pradesh and Hisar city of Haryana State. A list of all the schools of Hyderabad city and Hisar city was prepared and then one school

each from the lists was selected randomly. Forty adolescents from each setting or school were randomly selected. A self-structured, pretested interview schedule, A Life Stress Scale for University students by Agrawal and Naidu (1986) and Revised version of Coping Questionnaire by Folkman and Lazarus (1985) were used to collect the data. Comparative analysis revealed that students of Hyderabad city were more stressful but students of Hisar city reflected better adoption of coping styles. 't' test was applied and results showed that there were significant differences in few aspects of stress like educational stress and financial stress of adolescents in both settings.

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