

Sources of Stress among Students Preparing in Coaching Institutes for Admission to Professional Courses

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ABSTRACT Adolescents entering a new academic world are confronted with multiple transition challenges. The challenges are compounded as they experience higher academic work load. In short, failure to cope effectively with these challenges can result in major problems, but since a number of problems seem to be faced simultaneously, they feel particularly stressed. Due to their immaturity and future uncertainties, they seem not to have any control over the situation. The present research investigated the stress of such adolescents. A sample of 300 adolescents was drawn randomly from the Coaching Institutes of Agra city. Self-prepared Adolescent Stress Inventory (ASI) was administered to get information from the subjects. The result of the present study revealed that adolescents are affected by self-inflicted, parent inflicted, and peer inflicted stress and they also experience a high amount of these stresses.

INTRODUCTION

Stress and tension form a part of human life. Life is lived through different phases. It is generally considered that getting education is one of the paramount phases of human life because it is education which opens the door of success and develops qualities of a good citizen. By and large, it is accepted that success and quality in life are predicted upon the individual's performance. The performance is evaluated through examinations. Therefore, examination becomes a powerful instrument of certifying the quality or potential of an individual. The worth of an individual is measured on the basis of getting admission in desirable courses having employment potential. Due to limited employment opportunities and less number of lucrative jobs, competition has shot up to an undesirable level resulting in a stressful situation globally.

According to Singh (2005:47-49), educational experts unanimously agree that the present structure of board and competitive examination needs to be replaced with a system friendly to students. Something needs to be done to lessen the huge load of entrance examination stress on students but without lowering the quality of education. Thus, stress is the buzzword. It has emerged as an issue, which needs to be discussed threadbare.

It is a common experience that the student is

subjected to a variety of stresses in addition to examinations, which are related to the competitive environment, the student's feeling of having made a doubt about his vocational choice, and often his fears of acceptance into medical, engineering and other graduate school. All of this and more (sports, extra-curricular activities, etc.) can put the burgeoning stress on even the smartest student. Blaine (1963: 25) states that "stress can be particularly acute for students because of their stage of development. It has also been found that adolescents are more vulnerable to stress than adults and younger children. Ordinary stresses can be monumental at this stage of development".

Life is only worse for those students who are not academically gifted or inclined. They still have to prove themselves against the formidable standards set by the better performing students. Caught in the mass hysteria that grips the nation every year around examination time, they too do the endless rounds of tuitions and coaching classes in the hope of getting that magical entrance to a prestigious course. Given the number of students in the country and the woefully limited number of seats, it is not surprising that the whole nation goes berserk in an attempt to get admission in a desired course at a renowned institute. Even ordinary courses in local colleges tend to have high cut-off marks. This aggravates the problems students face when they prepare for entrance examinations thereby

increasing their stress levels which arise from sources all around them.

Objectives

- To assess the self-inflicted stress among adolescents.
- To assess the parent inflicted stress among adolescents.
- To assess the peer inflicted stress among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample: A sample of 300 adolescents studying in XI and XII class between the age ranges of 16-19 years was selected randomly from coaching institutes of Agra city. These subjects were those who attended full time coaching to prepare for entrance examination and did not attend school to prepare for board examinations.

Tool: Self-made questionnaire was used to assess stress. The questionnaire of stress assessment was based on Bisht Battery of Stress, which is a standardized tool prepared by Bisht (1971). Discussions and literature revealed that adolescents are exposed to self-inflicted stress, peer inflicted stress and parent inflicted stress, which have been accepted as components of stress in the present study. The calculated reliability and validity of stress questionnaire was 0.83 and 0.91 respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 clearly reveals that 90.6% adolescents have study stress which is evident from their report that they put extra effort so that they can build a good career. These adolescents make their own targets and work towards meeting them and in this process they worry about the failures (60.4%). As adolescents move through the educational system, they typically experience a greater frequency of testing and if they perform poor in one exam they resolve to score better next time (81.3%), which causes additional stress. The adolescents are self-compelled to fulfill parental expectations (85%) because parents have invested a lot of money on their education and they feel that they have to do incredibly well which increases their stress. Adolescents (72%) of the present study also had jobs related stress. During the preparation time, 88.6% adolescent often think about the adoption of measures and

methods by which they can improve their performance.

Table 1: Self-inflicted stress among adolescents studying in coaching institutes

S.No.	Self-inflicted stress	Number	Percentage
A.	Puts extra effort for success	272	90.6
B.	Bothered about failures	181	60.4
C.	Resolves to score better	244	81.3
D.	Pressure to fulfill parental expectation	255	85.0
E.	Worried about jobs	216	72.0
F.	Think of ways to adopt for the improvement in performance	266	88.6

Stress may be experienced due to pressure from within (self-inflicted), from one's beliefs, attitudes and expectations from oneself and others (for example, pressure to fulfill parental expectations), from one's habits, behaviour and personality. According to Acharya (2003), self-inflicted stress starts because of uncertainty and insecurity about future academic and professional life. After every examination these adolescents resolve to score better marks next time. Perhaps the pressure to improve one's own performance each time is strongest in adolescents of coaching institute. This type of pressure may be very useful for them, because it motivates them for better achievement. According to Cohen and Hoberman (1983: 99-125), stressed individuals are benefited by improving their achievement if this stress does not exceed the optimal level. According to Chauhan (2006: 223-231), in many cases adolescents may not be aware of their attitudes and they tend to be controlled by them.

Adolescents assess themselves primarily on academic success. This can distort their perception of reality and cause them to blow things out of proportion. The stress of academic performance may not even be noticeable to close friends because students who begin to feel overwhelmed and hopeless tend to hide their feeling by immersing themselves in work thereby increasing self-inflicted stress. Sometimes adolescents do not seek the help because they do not want to seem weak. Thus, the self-inflicted stress can become a big problem in situations where students are expected to perform beyond their biological limit which is the criterion referenced for evaluation by self and others.

Table 2 shows the peer inflicted stress among adolescents. When adolescents experience peer inflicted stress they start making comparison with peers. Adolescents often compare study hours of peers with that of themselves (56%) and try to find out how much course has been covered by their peers (59%). Adolescents in a large number (73%) blamed themselves for putting poor effort when they performed badly in comparison to peers. Stress is also evident as poor performing adolescents (38.3%) show reluctance to tell their marks to better performers (38.3%). Most of the adolescents of the present study take peer inflicted stress positively which is evident when their peers get higher marks, they resolve to rectify their careless mistakes (81.6%).

Table 2: Shows the peer inflicted stress among adolescents studying in coaching institutes

S. No.	Peer inflicted stress	Number	Percentage
A.	Compare study hours with that of peers	168	56.0
B.	Comparison of course coverage by peers	177	59.0
C.	Comparing efforts of self with peer group on poor performance	219	73.0
D.	Not revealing marks to better performers	115	38.3
E.	Resolution to improve performance	245	81.6
F.	Desire to outperform peers	158	52.6

According to Natriello and McDill (1986: 18-31), attitudes of peers as well as peer expectations and standards affect individual's efforts in an academic setting. For many students their achievement increases the indirect conflict with peers which results in stress (Fordham and Ogbu 1986:176-206 and Fordham 1988: 54-84). Anxious adolescents may be effected by unfavorable comparisons with others (on getting fewer marks you think that you had put less effort then your peers), resulting in doubt about their abilities and negative beliefs about the consequences of poor test performance (for example, on scoring fewer marks reluctant to tell your mark to adolescent who performed better). These thoughts are present during the whole period of preparation, with both quantitative and qualitative differences in cognition being related to level of test anxiety (Zatz and Chassim 1985:393-401; Prins and Hanewald 1997:

440-447). Thus, the students are known to be frequently pressurized by other students and more so when there is little or no family support (Anderson and Wallace 2007). They are, thus, at increased risk of stress due to peer group also.

A student lives in an environment where everyone expects him to achieve more and more. Thus, he is constantly pressurized by parents and society causing parent inflicted stress which has been shown in Table 3. These adolescents (71%) feel pressurized by parental enquiry of amount of course covered by them and the marks obtained by their peers (57.3%). Parents also express their own expectation from them (73.3%) which is a stress creator. Parental enquiries for the reasons of getting poor marks 83.3% is also demotivating and frustrating causing stress. Parents seem worried about the adolescent future and they transfer their worry to them by suggesting the way of studying (78%) and give the example of study pattern followed by selected students (63%). Parents' well intended statements that their selection will reduce half of their stresses (66.3%) also is stressful for them.

Table 3: Parent inflicted stress among adolescents studying in coaching institutes

S. No.	Parent inflicted stress	Number	Percentage
A.	Parental enquiry of course covered	213	71.0
B.	Parents enquire the marks of peers	172	57.3
C.	Expression of high expectations	220	73.3
D.	Parents enquire for reason of poor performance	250	83.3
E.	Parents suggest ways to study	234	78.0
F.	Give example how selected adolescents study	189	63.0
G.	Parents proclaim that their stress will reduce on selection	199	66.3

Adolescents of the present study also experience parent inflicted stress. Most students feel that parental pressure is largely responsible for enhancing stress level. In an article published in The Times of India (Feb. 24, 2004, p.7), a student stated that parents must understand that examinations and academics are not the be-all-and end-all of life. It is a common ob-

servation that when parents talk to their children they focus all on negative ideas and they say things as “If you don’t get selected then———.” This makes the adolescents apprehensive and they generally feel anxious and stressed. Adolescent’s stress is usually expressed in terms of loss of self esteem, self worth, self confidence or the sudden changes in the way he/she perceives him/her self (Diener and Diener 2002). Although peer influence is an important factor for adolescent’s education yet educational aspiration is one area where parental influence is more important than peer influence (Davies and Kandel 1981: 363-387).

Thus, both parents and peers play an important role in influencing adolescent’s stress. Positive support from parents may offset some negative influence of peers on academic performance and supportive peers may similarly provide offsetting effects on negative parental influences.

CONCLUSION

In the end, it can be concluded that adolescents who have joined coaching institutes for admission in professional courses experience self-inflicted stress, parent inflicted stress and peer inflicted stress. The highly competitive education and the learning processes are affecting adolescents’ mental state. The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievement, is also a world of stress. One finds stress everywhere, whether it is within the family, academics or any social and economic activity. Stress can occur if there is mismatch between the reality of the work environment (objective) and individual’s perception of the work environment (subjective). Likewise, lack of fit between the demands placed on individuals and their abilities to meet those demands can result in stress. The stress can be parent inflicted, peer inflicted and self- inflicted. Higher frequency of these stresses was reported by adolescents of the present study.

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