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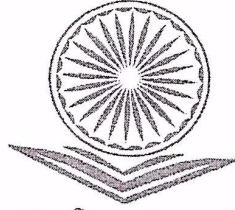
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❧ CONTENTS OF ENGLISH PART - I ❧

Sr. No.	Name & Author Name	Page No.
1	A Study on the Effect of Stress Management the on Academic Performance of Undergraduate Girl Students of Home Science Degree College from Mumbai City Prof. Aasia Ahmed Radiowala Dr. Manjusha Molwane	1-8
2	The Psychological Impact of Beauty Product Advertisement on College Going Girls Dr. Gokula Y. Dhokey Dr. G. A. Bhalerao	9-15
3	Effect of Stress on Adolescent Girl Dr. Rajani Ramesh Senad	16-22
4	Nutritional Problems of Adolescent Girls Dr. Jija Raut	23-28
5	To Study the Current Diet and Nutritional Status of Rural Adolescent Girls Asst. Prof. Aasim Momin	29-36
6	Impact of Junk Food on Health of Adolescent Girls Mrs. Amruta Suhas Misal	37-41
7	Health Adjustments of Adolescents of Working and Non Working Mothers Dr. Anjali Lakhe	42-46
8	Effect of Peer Pressure and Social Media on Adolescent Girls Health Dr. Anvita Agrawal	47-51
9	Adolescent Health : Present Status and Its Related Programmes In India Dr. Archana R. Choudhari	52-57
10	Effect of Stress on Health of Adolescent Girls Asha Mohan Kitake	58-63
11	Assessment of Nutritional Status of Selected Adolescent Girls (16 to 18 Years) of Baramati City Chaitali Bapurao Kalbande	64-67
12	Nutritional Status of Adolescent Girls Chaya Balasaheb Bansode	68-71
13	Nutritional Status and Factors Affecting on the Health of Adolescent Girls in Rural Area of Kolhapur, Maharashtra Deepali Maske Jyoti Munde	72-78



10. Effect of Stress on Health of Adolescent Girls

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Abstract

Adolescents; the bright hope of the future are characterized by many physical, emotional and developmental changes. However, during this stage, some of adolescents, experience anxious feeling, overwhelming sense of fear, depression and academic stress. Adolescents can experience various life stresses ranging from catastrophic or traumatic life events, persistent strain and daily hassles. Thus Present study was carried out to check the depression, anxiety and stress in this population.

Key words: Adolescents, depression, anxiety, stress

Introduction

Adolescents are the energy of today and the bright hope of the future. The stage of adolescence is characterized by significant physical, emotional and intellectual changes, and changes in social roles, relationships and expectations. During this stage some of adolescents experience anxious feeling and overwhelming sense of fear. Anxiety disorders in adolescents have significant impairment in social and academic functioning; produces a substantial distress for both students and family. If not treated, these disorders tend to persist, and increase the risk for medical illnesses, impaired well-being, and various psychiatric disorders particularly depression and substance abuse.

Anxiety in adolescents seems an important issue that draw researchers' attention since it is related to numerous problems. Previous studies revealed that anxiety is associated with substantial negative effects on children's social, emotional and academic functioning poor social and coping skills; loneliness, low self-esteem school avoidance, decreased problem-solving abilities, and poor academic achievement also found as negative consequences Earlier research reported that adolescents are at highest risk for onset of social anxiety disorder or social phobia. In a review of the main studies carried out in the general population it was concluded that there had been a one standard deviation increase in rates of anxiety, in children, adolescents, and



young adults. Depression has serious impact on every person, adolescents have not any exception. This can lower the quality of life and wellbeing, increases the risks of suicide and can harm mental or physical health. It is well proven by research that depression in adolescent is strongly associated with increased risk of suicidal behavior, homicidal ideation, tobacco use and substance abuse into adulthood

Objective

1. To examine the relationship between academic stress and depression among adolescents.
2. To determine the adolescent stress, identify manifestations, and also to determine the effect of Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique (PMRT) on stress and stress manifestations.

Stress Management among Adolescents

The of Indian Psychology manage stress include relaxation techniques which require little effort and may be used at any time. There are several forms of relaxation techniques that include a number of practices such as progressive relaxation, guided imagery, biofeedback, deep breathing exercises etc. Adolescents are often helped by interventions to deal constructively with stressors in their lives. It is very much necessary to understand the stressors faced by them and their management of stress. A self controlled stress management technique such as relaxation technique that adolescents can use themselves is thought to be very much beneficial for them. Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique focuses on tightening and relaxing each muscle group in the body with the goal of consciously producing the body's natural relaxation response, characterized by slower breathing, lower blood pressure, and a feeling of wellbeing.

A surprising finding in our study is that none of the adolescents relied on family support or friends support. Studies have reported that adolescents find great relief when they talk to their parents and friends. One reason could be that these girls may not be finding quality time together with each other, as female mobility is limited within the Saudi culture. Females have to rely on males in the house, either fathers or brothers and drivers for movement and socialization outside the homes, which can be a reason for limited interaction and socialization with their parents, leading to limited discussions and building of a good and open environment for managing personal behaviors and experiences and building trusting friendships among them.



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We would like to make some suggestions based on our findings; first and foremost, we need to create awareness among families, friends, and teachers regarding the fact that about 30% of adolescents are stressed to such an extent that it makes them cry. Second step is to help these adolescents know how they can cope better with the stressors for a better and healthier mental health. There is a need to identify and build in mechanisms for early and timely diagnosis of stress among adolescents and provide support to adolescents to adopt problem solving coping strategies rather than emotion focused, to combat stress, in an attempt to decrease the development of depression and anxiety later on in adulthood. An intervention that has been proved 'effective in this regard, is through schools. Councilors or school teachers can be trained in identifying the early signs of stress and depression among their pupils and provide early interventions.⁵ Adolescents need to be trained to focus on problem-solving strategies and avoid maladaptive coping mechanisms when exposed to stressful situations. They need to be taught how to effectively resolve their daily stressors in order to prevent depression.

Peer groups can be formulated and trained at the school level who can help their colleagues in coping with stress. Also parents can be educated and guided to be supportive and understanding of the common stressors among this age group and how to help their youngsters at the time of stress. The effectiveness of communication with parents, especially mothers can play a positive role in supporting the girl adolescents. Talking about their daily problems, and sharing of experiences in ways to handle stress, needs to be emphasized. Role of media cannot be overlooked. Adolescents are seen to be fascinated and influenced by famous leaders and icons, which can be involved in promoting mental health and its concepts among the youth. They can help in advising adolescents with regard to better ways to address their stress. Lastly but not least religious activities need to be promoted as a source and way to combat stress and depression, in both educational and home environment. We would recommend further research on interventions in which religious activities have been employed and its effects on controlling stress among adolescents. All these need national policies to be formulated targeted towards promoting healthy adolescent mental health.

Limitations: While the study has highlighted the coping strategies and provided important information for policy and program development. We can mention some limitations to the generalizability of our findings. Most important being that the study has been conducted among educated adolescent girls from city and for that reason the findings may not be the same

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when rural adolescents, or adolescent boys are studied. The cultural and social factors in smaller cities and towns and rural areas.

Complex Pathways

Each of the three paradigms above have guided studies showing that stress affects our physiology, emotions and behavior. However, the relationships between stress, physiology, emotions, behavior, and social structure are complex. Exactly how stress translates into outcomes such as harmful behavior is little understood. Hence, it is highly likely that whether or not an environmental stress becomes relevant to an individual does not only depend on how often a stressor occurs and how severe it is, but how strongly the individual physiologically, and emotionally, reacts to stress. To corroborate the view of how complicated this process is, recent studies on disruption of the HPA axis and cortisol production paint an inconsistent picture on its relations with emotional reactions and harmful behavior. In order to come closer than previous work has in estimating how environmental stress and strain may affect biological responses among adolescents, the framework presented in Figure 1 proposes that stress and strain at the community and individual levels affect physiological and emotional reactions along the early life to childhood continuum that can result in harmful behavior during adolescence.

Discussion

During the last 20 years, research with children and adolescents has linked stress to poor health and harmful behavior. Research has demonstrated that social conflict at various levels, ranging from societal levels to specific social groups, such as the family or peer groups, can increase stress that has harmful consequences for health and the well-being of children and adolescents. First, research at the societal level has shown how social environments can influence the consequences of stress. Secondly, research at the psychological level has demonstrated how stressful situations and life events interact with personal characteristics to produce harmful stress-related outcomes. Thirdly, research on stress at the biological level casts light on the biological and physiological mechanisms involved in the harmful influences of stress on human health. The diversity of concepts applied in the study of stress and strain mirrors the fact that the domain has been largely investigated and discussed within separate academic disciplines, each focusing on a certain level of analysis; with the biological sciences focusing on the effects of stress on physiological reactions, psychological sciences examining the effects of stress on emotional reactions and social sciences focusing on the effects of stress/strain on

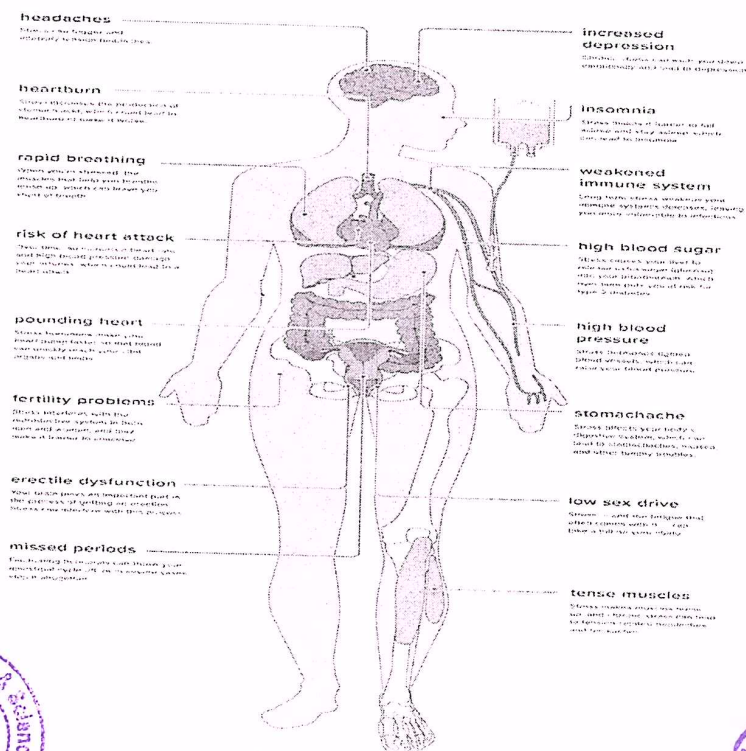


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behavior. Within different fields, the focus has also been on diverse levels at which stress/strain is created, with sociologists and criminologists, for example, focusing on the larger structure of society and the links between social structure and population strain; they have mostly worked with the term strain and its effects on delinquency. Research on stress within health disciplines, however, has placed greater emphasis on different stress exposures experienced by individuals and their effects on individual mental and physical health.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that adolescents experience moderate stress and an economic, easy intervention like PMRT is useful to relieve it. Of all life-stages adolescence is the potentially tumultuous transition period. Chronic stress in childhood and adolescence can lead to lasting changes in the structure and function of the brain because it occurs during sensitive periods of brain growth and development. There is empirical evidence that stressful life experiences predict increases in psychological problems over time. Unresolved stress in childhood and adolescence leads to physical and psychological problems and risk taking behavior and poor coping skills in adulthood. Thus, investigating more on the stress, stressors and its outcomes are helpful for planning and implementing health promotion as well as preventive strategies during adolescence.



Signature

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