

## A Study of Life Stress and Coping Styles among Adolescent Girls

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**KEYWORDS** Bereavement; personal set back; ego; threat; family stress; coping styles; confrontive coping.

**ABSTRACT** The study was undertaken purposively in Hisar city of Haryana state and Hyderabad city of Andhra Pradesh state. Two schools (one CBSE and one State Board Education) were selected at random each from Hyderabad and Hisar. In all 80 students of 12th standard 20 each from both the affiliated schools of selected cities were taken at random. In the process of investigation, A life stress scale, General role stress scale and coping questionnaire were used. Results highlight that most of the adolescent respondents experienced moderate stress followed by high level of stress in the categories of family stress, ego threat, bereavement, personal set back and health of others. Most of the adolescents adopted moderate to low level of negative coping styles and moderate to high levels of positive coping styles.

### INTRODUCTION

Life today is becoming increasingly complex, tension ridden and a great source of stress. What exactly stress is? "It is the sum total of all nonspecific biological phenomena elicited by adverse external Influences" (Sudha Gurubabu, 1999). Right from the time of birth till the last breath drawn, an individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situations. "Stress spares none, not even those who advise how to prevent it" (Shah and Kanwar, 1999). It is an inevitable part of life, as has been expressed "the state of stresslessness comes only after death". Stress is part of ones response to any challenge, any demand or any change. It mobilizes one's untapped potentials. It can generate the impetus necessary to convert thought into action and can motivate an individual to accept a challenge. Thus stress not only aids man's continued survival but also facilitates his growth. Stress helps in converting a "Passive existence" into an "Active business" of living by shaping ones life-styles, setting the tempo and determining the rhythm at which one lives. But stress is not the result of any individual factor rather is the outcome of environmental factors like economic or technological uncertainty mainly due to overpopulation leading to competition. In this process, one feels psychologically disturbed, emotionally drained, physically stepped out and may even sweat heavily without being subjected to any physical exertion (Shah and Kanwar, 1999). The consequences of these causes can show its direct or indirect impact on physiological symptoms like Headache, High B.P. and Heart

diseases etc. Organizational factors like overburden of work, hazardous working conditions, role conflict, role ambiguity etc. are also source of stress, the consequences of which may give rise to psychological symptoms like sleep disturbances, depression etc. Also the individual factors like marital difficulty, breaking of a relationship or bereavement etc lead to stressful situations for children. The present study therefore was planned to study the levels of adolescents stress and coping strategies adopted to deal with the same.

### METHODOLOGY

The study involved exploring the stress and coping strategy levels of randomly selected 12th standard adolescent girls. The research was conducted at two places namely Hyderabad and Hisar. In the process of investigation, "A life stress scale by Agarwal and Naidu (1986), General role stress scale by Pareek (1981)" and coping questionnaire by Folkman and Lazarus (1985) were used. The responses were quantified giving appropriate weightage. The highest possible score was 3 and lowest was 1. Frequency and percentage were used for data analysis.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Adolescents Stress Level:** Stress and coping are internally webbed within all individuals and is ongoing process. So it is of great concern for all individuals whether adolescents or parents. Stress is found everywhere, within the family, business organizational/enterprise or any other

social or economic activity. Stress can be experienced from a variety of sources. Table 1 gives the distribution of adolescent girls according to their stress level. The results indicate that 47.50 per cent and 72.50 per cent adolescent girls from Hisar and Hyderabad respectively were in moderate stress category followed by high level of families stress. Financial stress was reported by 50 and 60 percent of Hyderabad and Hisar adolescents respectively. Surprisingly majority of the girl students of both Hyderabad and Hisar city (85% and 90% respectively) had moderate level of social stress. Educational stress was encountered by majority of the adolescents from both the cities. Stress due to ego threat was reported by 42.5 per cent adolescents from Hyderabad and 60 per cent from Hisar. Bereavement i.e. departure of somebody due to death, was reported to be the cause of stress by half of the adolescents from Hyderabad and 40 per cent from Hisar followed by 30 per cent from Hyderabad and 55 per cent from Hisar who had moderate stress. Similarly separation

lead to moderate level of stress in almost equal percentage (70 % and 72.50 %) of adolescents in both Hyderabad and Hisar city respectively. Moderate and high stress due to personal set back, was reported by 30 per cent and 40 per cent adolescent from Hyderabad and 65 per cent and 30 per cent adolescents from Hisar respectively. Due to health of others 57.50 per cent adolescent from Hyderabad city were in high level stress category, whereas highest percentage. Hisar respondents had moderate level of stress.

On aspects like ego threat, bereavement, personal set back and health of other adolescent from Hisar city experienced high level of stress as compared to Hyderabad city. Only in family stress Hyderabad adolescents had high stress level in comparison to Hisar adolescents. But overall stress was high in Hisar adolescents. The associated reason for higher level of stress in the students of Hisar city may be the cultural differences and educational status of their parents. The girls of Hisar are still guided by cultural value which does not allow them to take

**Table 1: Frequency distribution of adolescents stress level**

S. No.	Variables	Hyderabad (N=40)	Hisar (N=40)	Total (N=80)
1.	Family stress			
	Low	6 (15.00)	3 (7.50)	9 (11.25)
	Moderate	19 (47.50)	29 (72.50)	48 (60.00)
2.	Financial stress			
	High	15 (37.50)	8 (20.00)	23 (28.75)
	Low	14 (35.00)	10 (25.00)	24 (30.00)
3.	Social stress			
	Moderate	20 (50.00)	24 (60.00)	44 (55.00)
	High	6 (15.00)	6 (15.00)	12 (15.00)
4.	Educational stress			
	Low	4 (10.00)	2 (5.00)	6 (7.50)
	Moderate	34 (85.00)	36 (90.00)	70 (87.50)
5.	Ego threat			
	High	2 (5.00)	2 (5.00)	4 (5.00)
	Low	9 (22.50)	6 (15.00)	15 (18.75)
6.	Bereavement			
	Moderate	26 (65.00)	32 (80.00)	58 (72.50)
	High	5 (12.50)	2 (5.00)	7 (8.75)
7.	Separation			
	Low	8 (20.00)	3 (7.50)	11 (13.75)
	Moderate	17 (42.50)	24 (60.00)	41 (51.25)
8.	Personal set back			
	High	15 (37.50)	13 (32.50)	28 (35.00)
	Low	8 (20.00)	2 (5.00)	10 (12.50)
9.	Health of other			
	Moderate	12 (30.00)	22 (55.00)	34 (42.50)
	High	20 (50.00)	16 (40.00)	36 (45.00)
10.	Total life stress score			
	Low	9 (22.50)	8 (20.00)	17 (21.25)
	Moderate	28 (70.00)	29 (72.50)	57 (71.25)
11.	Family stress			
	High	3 (7.50)	3 (7.50)	6 (7.50)
	Low	12 (30.00)	6 (15.00)	18 (22.50)
12.	Financial stress			
	Moderate	12 (30.00)	26 (65.00)	38 (47.50)
	High	16 (40.00)	8 (20.00)	24 (30.00)
13.	Health of other			
	Low	6 (15.00)	3 (7.50)	9 (11.25)
	Moderate	11 (27.50)	20 (50.00)	31 (38.75)
14.	Total life stress score			
	High	23 (57.50)	12 (42.50)	40 (50.00)
	Low	11 (27.50)	7 (17.50)	18 (22.50)
15.	Personal set back			
	Moderate	26 (65.00)	33 (82.50)	59 (73.75)
	High	3 (7.50)	-	3 (3.75)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

their own decisions. Students, parents and teacher were more conscious towards their academic achievements so interferences of elders makes stressful situation for adolescents. These results are in agreement with those of Caroli et al. (1992).

**Adolescents Coping Level:** Coping styles are methods of coping used by the adolescents. Table 2 gives details of the coping methods used by adolescents to deal with stressful situation. Majority of the adolescent in either settings (82.50% Hyderabad and 70% of Hisar) could moderately cope by using confrontive method followed by 10 per cent of Hyderabad and 17.50 per cent of Hisar who used the coping strategy to a lower level. Distancing coping technique was adopted by most of the adolescent i.e. 65 per cent of Hyderabad and 67.50 per cent of Hisar to moderate level followed by low level of distancing coping method. Similarly, the method of self controlling was very common as equal percentage (77.50%) of adolescents from Hisar and Hyderabad respectively used this method to moderate level. Rest of adolescents (20%) used this coping method to a high level. Seeking social support to deal with stress was used to a moderate level by equal percentage of adoles-

sents i.e. 70% from Hyderabad and Hisar city followed by 27.50 per cent of Hyderabad and 17.50 per cent of Hisar adolescents who used this method to a lower level. Majority of the adolescents (72.50% of Hyderabad and 80% of Hisar) coped with stress by accepting the responsibility to a moderate level. Escape avoidance was adopted as a technique to a moderate level by more than half of the adolescents i.e. 67.50 per cent from Hyderabad and 87.50 per cent adolescents from Hisar. Painful problem solving technique was used by 87.50 per cent of Hyderabad and 80 Per cent of Hisar adolescents to a moderate level and positive reappraisal coping strategy was adopted by 85 per cent of Hyderabad and 70 per cent of Hisar to a moderate level against 20 per cent from Hisar who used this method to a higher level. When coping strategy were analyzed for total sample it was found that majority of the adolescents had moderate or low level of coping in confrontive coping, distancing, escape avoidance, painful problem solving and positive reappraisal. The percentage of Hyderabad adolescents in comparisons to the Hisar adolescents was slightly higher using these techniques. From the table it is concluded that above 70 per cent

**Table 2: Frequency distribution of adolescents coping level**

S. No.	Variables		Hyderabad (N=40)	Hisar (N=40)	Total (N=80)
1.	Confrontive coping	Low	4 (10.00)	7 (17.50)	11 (13.75)
		Moderate	33 (82.50)	28 (70.00)	61 (76.25)
		High	3 (7.50)	5 (12.50)	8 (10.00)
2.	Distancing	Low	7 (17.50)	10 (20.00)	17 (21.25)
		Moderate	26 (65.00)	27 (67.50)	53 (66.25)
		High	7 (17.50)	3 (7.50)	10 (12.50)
3.	Self controlling	Low	1 (2.50)	6 (15.00)	7 (8.75)
		Moderate	31 (77.50)	31 (77.50)	62 (77.50)
		High	8 (20.00)	3 (7.50)	11 (13.75)
4.	Seeking social support	Low	1 (2.50)	5 (12.50)	6 (7.50)
		Moderate	28 (70.00)	28 (70.00)	56 (70.00)
		High	11 (27.50)	7 (17.50)	18 (22.50)
5.	Accepting responsibility	Low	7 (17.50)	4 (10.00)	11 (13.75)
		Moderate	29 (72.50)	32 (80.00)	61 (76.25)
		High	4 (10.00)	4 (10.00)	8 (10.00)
6.	Escape avoidance	Low	11 (27.50)	3 (7.50)	14 (17.50)
		Moderate	27 (67.50)	35 (80.00)	62 (77.50)
		High	2 (5.00)	2 (5.00)	4 (5.00)
7.	Planful problem solving	Low	-	7 (17.50)	7 (8.75)
		Moderate	35 (87.50)	32 (80.00)	67 (83.75)
		High	5 (12.50)	1 (2.50)	6 (7.50)
8.	Positive reappraisal	Low	1 (2.50)	4 (10.00)	5 (6.25)
		Moderate	34 (85.00)	28 (70.00)	62 (72.50)
		High	5 (12.50)	8 (20.00)	13 (16.25)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

students used moderate level of confrontive coping, self controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape avoidance, painful problem solving, positive reappraisal, Hyderabad girl students used different coping methods to a higher level as compared to Hisar adolescents and these methods are confrontive, distancing, self controlling, seeking social support, painful problem solving, and positive reappraisal. Only in accepting responsibility and escape avoidance the girl students of Hisar city used these methods to high level. It can be said that Hyderabad students frequently used positive methods of coping than Hisar students. Reasons attributed for these differences may be that the students of Hyderabad city are more independent in their decisions due to the cultural differences and educational status of the parents. The interaction between the parents and adolescents may be closer and free which provide scope for independent decisions. The reasons for the results which indicated that the students of Hisar city accept their responsibility for any situation may be that being the girl student that to from the Haryanvi culture, they are still guided by the cultural values, which do not allow them to point out the mistake of elders in the family. These findings get support from Albuquerque (1987) and Jerusalem and Ralf (1989).

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