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TOPIC- Stress, Mental Health and Coping among Early and Late Adolescents

ABSTRACT

Adolescence has been considered, a period of heightened stress due to the many changes experienced concomitantly, including physical maturation, drive for independence, increased salience of social and peer interactions, and brain development. During the childhood and adolescence, a number of challenges are to be faced like peer pressure, school changes, parental substance abuse and social expectations and they face problem in coping up with these stresses. Stressful life experiences, including major events and common hassles, threaten the well-being of adolescents. Approximately 25% will experience at least one significant stressor, including the death of a loved one or witnessing a traumatic event. An even greater number of adolescents experience chronic stressors and daily hassles. The most common of these are related to school (e.g., bullying by peers, problems with teachers, and academic difficulties) and interpersonal relationships (e.g., conflicts or problems with parents, siblings, and peer).

The main objective of the research was to examine the stress, mental health and coping in relation to age, gender and SES. Sample consisted of 240, and divided into equal number in early and late adolescents (120 each), which was further equally divided in 60 male and 60 female and 30 low SES and 30 high SES. The sample was collected from four different English medium public schools from Meerut city. The tools used in the research were

1. Adolescent life event stress scale (ALESS) developed by Agarwal, Prabhu, Anand   and Kotwal (2007)
2. Youth Self Report (YSR) developed by Achenbach (1991)

3. Adolescent coping orientation of problem experiences (A-COPE) by Patterson and Mc Cubbin(1985).

Mean, SDs were calculated for each dimension across groups and a 2x2x2 ANOVA representing three independent variables of age (i.e. early and late adolescents), gender (i.e. male and female) and SES (low and high SES) are included. Significant two way interaction effects were analyzed by Duncan's post hoc mean comparison test.

Results indicated that high level of stress and mental health problems was observed in late adolescents than in early adolescents. Mean scores of stress and on dimensions on mental health were higher in low SES adolescents as compared to high SES ones. Female's adolescents on stress were highest from all the comparison groups. Mean stress scores and on mental health dimensions, late adolescents belonging to low SES group were highest than other comparison groups. Late adolescents belonging to low SES group exhibited poor mental health and high level of stress. Whereas, on the measure of coping patterns, the mean scores of late adolescents of high SES were higher than mean scores of early adolescents, which show that at late adolescents age at 16 to 17 years, became more capable to use different coping strategies.

The findings suggest that significant changes during a relatively short period during adolescence may affect adaptive processes and have implications for intervention efforts aimed at reducing the negative effects of stress during this period of development. The current scenario of adolescents is revealed by increased depression, increased suicidal rates, increased drug use is the clear indication of the challenges that adolescent's are facing. Thus providing an experience that would strengthen adolescent's coping abilities to counter environmental stress and disadvantages with which they sometimes have to cope with while experiencing is an essential need.