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A comparative study on stress level between government and private school students in Delhi

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to compare the stress level between government and private school students in Delhi. The study was delimited to the age group 15 to 17 years. By applying simple random sampling 200 students (100 govt. + 100 private) were selected, constituting 50 male and 50 female students each from both government and private schools. The study was confined to the North Delhi area only. The variable for the study was stress; Student-life Stress Inventory modulated by Gadzella (1991) was used for the collection of data. The statistical techniques employed were descriptive statistics and 't' test. The result of the study showed that 70% of the students were having a low-stress level and 30% of the students were having moderate stress levels and none of the students was experiencing a high-stress level. The results for 't' test employed showed a significant difference between government and private school students for stress level, as the calculated value was found 4.19 against the tabulated value of 1.96. The mean value for stress levels of government and private school students were 1.1 and 1.45 respectively. A significant difference was also found for male and female students stress levels, as the calculated value was 2.55 against the tabulated value of 1.96. The mean values for male and female students were 1.123 and 1.345 respectively. It was concluded that students from both government and private schools experienced stress at different levels and there was a significant difference in the stress levels of government and private school students. The difference may be due to the level of exertion (Physical, Physiological and Psychological) being given to the students in private schools as compared to government schools.

Keywords: Stress, student-life, physical, physiological and psychological

Introduction

Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress isn't always bad. In small doses, it can help you perform under pressure and motivate you to do your best. But when you're constantly running in emergency mode, your mind and body pay the price. If you frequently find yourself feeling frazzled and overwhelmed, it's time to take action to bring your nervous system back into balance. You can protect yourself by learning how to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and taking steps to reduce its harmful effects.

Stress in Children: Why it happens?

Major life changes can cause stress in children. Even positive life events like home changes, job changes, new baby, relocating or school changes can cause stress in children. Other life stressors for children are death, divorce, marital conflict, violence, and peer pressure. Only when the stress is more than what the children can cope with, it leads to imbalance in a child's life. The stress will then be noticeable as an unhealthy response. For children, it becomes difficult to express or to understand that they are stressed. Stress in children can lead to emotional reactions, they might get aggressive, irritable, nervous, cry, panicky or may even complain about a stomachache. Stress in children can also lead to health problems.

Now, when children are in stress, there comes the role of parents. Parents can do their share like they always do! As adults, we can recognize stressful situations and keep children away from them. Not expecting children to become adults and lots of love and encouragement in difficult times can help children seek positive solutions to deal with stress.

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As parents you must be concerned find out What Can Parents Do when their child is facing a stressful situation.

Research indicates that the negative impact of stress is more profound on children who are younger than age 10, have a genetic temperament that is "slow-to-warm-up" or "difficult," were born premature, are male, have limited cognitive capacity, or have experienced prenatal stress (Monk *et al.*, 2000) [7]. Children who live in poverty, who live in violent communities, or who are bullied in school settings are also subject to more external stress (McLoyd, 1998) [8] than other children. Children who have lower thresholds for external and internal stimuli will find a wider variety of events and conditions to be negatively stressful (Stansbury & Harris, 2000) [9].

How Do Children Experience Stress?

Specialists have identified two categories of stressful experiences. *Acute stress* is defined as a sudden, intense onset (e.g., short-term parental illness) and then the subsidence of stressful stimuli. *Chronic stress* (e.g., loss through death or prolonged separation of a significant person in the child's life-grandparent, caregiver, and sibling) is, on the other hand, ongoing and has the most significant and detrimental effects on children, including changing brain chemistry and function, and lowering resistance to disease (Gunnar & Barr, 1998; Lombroso & Sapolsky, 1998) [10, 11].

Zegans (1982) [12] theorizes that stress is experienced in four somewhat distinct stages:

1. Alarm and physical reaction;
2. Appraisal, as a child attempts to make meaning from the event;
3. Searching for adaptation and coping strategies; and finally
4. Implementation of a strategy or strategies.

This implementation stage may be a one-time action or may be extended over hours or days. Children's appraisal of stressful events and their choices of viable coping strategies are different from those used by adults (e.g., leaving a favorite toy at child care overnight may have a negative impact on children who cannot "find" a way to "wait" until they are reunited; this reaction and fear of its recurrence may last for several days). In addition, experts have observed that children's physical responses to stress are also different from adult responses in that they may be more intense and involve the whole body (Zegans, 1982) [12].

How Do Children Adapt to Stress?

Theorists believe that these behaviors represent children's struggles to manage and react to stressful events. They believe that children generally distance themselves emotionally from stressful situations by behaving in ways to diminish the stress (e.g., crying and being upset in order to show feelings of abandonment when parents go to work) or acting in ways to cover or conceal feelings of vulnerability (e.g., acting out and being aggressive or disruptive when it's time for toys to be put away or play to stop). With age, children increasingly use cognitive problem-solving strategies to cope with negative stress by asking questions about events, circumstances, and expectations for what will happen and clarification of what has happened (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002) [13].

Prolonged exposure to stress and a child's continued use of coping strategies may result in behavior patterns that are difficult to change if the child perceives the strategy as being effective (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Stansbury &

Harris, 2000) [13, 9]. Keeping in mind the severe effects of stress in children the scholar has chosen the study, to assess and compare the level of stress among children of government schools and private schools in Delhi state.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the level of stress experienced by school students.
2. To compare the stress levels between government and private school students.
3. To compare stress levels between sexes among government and private school students.

Hypothesis of the study

1. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in stress levels between government and private school students.
2. It was also hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in stress levels between male and female school students.

Procedure and Methodology

The research pattern being used was descriptive survey research comparing chosen government and private senior secondary school students. The study was delimited to the age group 15 to 17 years. By applying simple random sampling a total of 200 students (100 govt. + 100 private) were selected, which ultimately constitutes 50 male and 50 females students from each sector. The study was confined to north Delhi area only. The variable for the study was stress; Student-life Stress Inventory modulated by Gadzella (1991) [4] was used for the collection of data. The statistical techniques employed were descriptive statistics followed by 't' test.

Results and Discussions

Stress level experienced by students

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Students Stress Level

Category	Score	f	%
High	121-180	0	0%
Moderate	61-120	60	30%
low	0-60	140	70%

Based on the decided stress level, High, Moderate and Low, the researcher found that 70% of students have low-stress levels, 30% with moderate stress levels and none of the students experience high stress levels as shown in Table 1.

Difference in Stress Levels between Genders

Table 2: Mean Score and T-test for Stress Level between Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	't'
Male	100	1.123	0.541	2.55*
Female	100	1.345	0.528	

* Significant level 0.05

From Table 2, it was determined that male and female students have significant differences in stress levels, as the calculated value was 2.55 against the tabulated value of 1.96. This difference can be seen based on the mean score for both groups. The mean for male students was 1.123 compared to that for female students 1.345. However, the mean difference is small even though the difference was significant.

Difference in Stress Level between Government and Private school Students

Table 3: Mean Score and t-test for Stress Level between government school and private school Students

Category	N	Mean	SD	't'
Government	100	1.1	0.50	4.19*
Private	100	1.45	0.53	

* Significant level .05

Based on Table 3, government school students and private school students had a significant difference in stress level, as the calculated value was found to be 4.19 against the tabulated value of 1.96. This difference can be seen based on the mean score for both groups. However, the difference is small when comparing the two groups. Mean stress level of government school students was 1.1 compared to that of private school students which was found to be 1.45

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn on

1. It was concluded that there was a significant difference in the stress levels of government and private school students. The difference may be due to the level of exertion (Physical, Physiological and Psychological) being given to the students in private schools as compared to government schools.
2. The research also finds that different stress levels exist between male and female students. This finding supports a few past researches as carried out by Gadzella dan Baloglu (2001) ^[14] and a few other researchers who said that there is a different level of stress in different gender. In this research, male students experience less stress compared to female students. This might be a result from the fact that male students reach maturity later than female students (Azizi, Jaafar, Shahrin dan Yusof, 2005) ^[15]. Male students divert the immaturity with other activities and some withdraw themselves by not doing anything causing them to think less of what is going to happen to them and their surroundings. This caused less stress to male students compared to female students.
3. Female students have different stress compared to male students. This may be caused of female students tend to be more emotional and sensitive toward what is happening in their surroundings. Some of the female students mature earlier than friends of their own age. In the process of reaching puberty, they will experience a visible change in self-image, actions towards others and have better perception. They also need to adjust themselves accordingly to the changes that they are experiencing such as body shape, sexual maturity and their social status. Although even if they looked mature physically, that does not mean that they are ready emotionally to hold the responsibilities of an adult. These things are also a contributor of stress in female students (Azizi *et al*, 2005) ^[15].
4. As a whole, this research has produced important information about stress according to factors such as gender and location of students. It is proposed that this information is to be looked at by students in facing anything that is considered to them as stress. This information shall also give benefit parents and teachers in helping students to manage stress in the right way. Further studies can be made using different variables to see different aspects of factors affecting stress such as

age, race, socio-economic status, surroundings, location and others so that the research can be generalized to all. Use of different types of methods such as experimental and longitudinal will strengthen the findings of the research.

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