

# Stress Level and Coping Strategies of Secondary School Students: A Case Study of Kupwara District of Jammu and Kashmir

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## Abstract

This research article aims at studying the stress level and coping strategies among the students of physical education and science students in secondary schools of Kashmir valley. A sample size of 70 students have been taken from the secondary school of Kupwara district in Kashmir valley. Among the sample size 40 boys and 30 girls have been selected randomly. This study tries to cover the stress scores due to frustration and inhibition, Aggressive behaviour, overload and compulsion. A well-developed questionnaire has been framed with the help of experts in order to get the desired result. Data has been analyzed with the help of SPSS 17 version. (ANNOVA) Analysis of variance has been used which shows that stress among girls remains higher as compared to boys were the stress level has been found significantly lower. The study found that the coping strategy among girls of physical education is higher as compared to boys. The study found that physical education girls possess higher coping strategy than Science boys and girls. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students belonging to physical education had better coping strategy as compared to science students.

**Keywords:** *Coping Strategy, Frustration and Inhibition, Overload, Time-Urgent and Aggressive Behavior.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents in education system are those receiving education in Vocational High Schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, colleges or universities. Due to fast changes in physical and mental development at this stage, usually students sometimes experience incompatibility of their mental health with their physical changes or social environment which in turn leads to problems arising from inadequate adaptations. Such problems further cause psychological troubles and even leads to deviant behaviors. In modern times, stress has become part and parcel of life. Pinel (2003) defines stress as a physiological response to perceived threat which leads to negative effects on life's pressures and events which generally can be viewed as a set of neurological and physiological reactions that serve an adaptive function indicated that any change in life that requires numerous readjustments can be perceived as stressful. Today's teens face many challenges in life that parents and traditional educators may not have experience when they had grown up.

Due to heavy pressures of the 21st century, youths have enormous difficulty in coping, and are requesting educational programs in schools to teach them how to cope with such stressors (Frydenberg et al., 2004). Majority of the students are facing stress as they try to mix up busy lives, school and work and are also trying to have time with family and friends. For certain student, stress becomes almost a way of living which is really dangerous to let stress become student's way of living in colleges because there are certain stress levels which can lead to a terrible effect that changes student's life and may lead to failure. When the brain is familiar to stress, it triggers a physical reaction and easily damages the memory, which leads to further mental reactions or misconduct. The life of a student is subjected to different kinds of stressors such as the pressure of academics with obligations of success, uncertainty in future and difficulties for integration into the college system. Such students face social, physical and emotional family problems which affects their learning ability and academic performance (Fish and Nies, 1996; Chew-Graham et al., 2003). Stress levels among the students of college level are higher than people at any other stage of life found

by a poll. In addition to this the poll found that college students have a higher predisposition towards experiencing depression during their four years at college (David, 2009).

A healthy and sound lifestyle is an important companion to any stress-reduction program. When pressure exceeds Stress occurs beyond its perceived ability to cope. Stress is actually the body's reaction to a change which requires a physical, mental and emotional adjustment or response. Due to the pressure of academic and large syllabus content in a limited span of time and with the high expectations from parents the stress level among children have been going up. This high level of stress will ultimately affect the health of the students (Elizabeth, 2003). It has been further found that women face certain chronic burdens in everyday life which is a result of their social status and roles relative to men, which could contribute to their higher rates of depressive anxiety. The anxiety and Depression has a strong relationship as prolonged stress can lead to depression (Sarafino, 2002). For majority of the students, managing stress during the time of college can be extremely challenging. Learning how to manage stress could help students cope with daily social and academic pressures, which may have a better college experience. Effective time management strategies could increase academic performance (Campbell and Svenson, 1992) which are frequently suggested by academic assistance personnel as aids to increase achievement for students of college level. The variety of the learned component stress management techniques could find out expression in social learning theories which includes bio feedback, behavior modification, cognitive restructuring and even relaxation techniques such as meditation.

The coping concept is based on three theoretical components which include: cognitive, physiological and learned. Physiologically, the body's systems have its own way of coping with distressing events. Challenges or Threats that an individual perceives in the environment could cause emotional arousal and neuro endocrine events which involve secretion of catecholamine (epinephrine, norepinephrine) and corticosteroids (Frankenhaeuser, 1986). Studies from the United Kingdom examined their coping strategies of medical students with stresses of undergraduate education have identified use of alcohol as a coping strategy (Guthrie et al., 1995; Campbell et al., 1998), but some studies reported use of other substances such as tobacco and drugs (Miller and Surtees, 1991; Ashton and Kamali, 1995). A report from study of Pakistan reported that music, sports and hanging out with friends were common coping strategies (Shaikh et al., 2004). Managing responsibilities, problems, or difficulties in a calm and thoughtful manner is a way of coping. Students are pressured frequently by a certain factors which cause stress in one or more ways (Strong et al., 2008).

In the education system which ranges from elementary to tertiary level, students are faced with several challenges. Study conducted by Aasra found that depression in youth has increased in the last five years from 2 to 12%. Worldwide 3 out of every 5 visits to doctor are having stress related problems. 76% of people under stress are of the opinion that they face sleeping disorders and 58% suffer headaches. As more as 85% of people under stress tend to have strained relations with family and friends. As more as 70% of people under stress say they become short tempered. All over the world 1 out of every 10 students suffers significant distress. As more as 66% of CEO's in India are stressed out and as more as 11% find it too much to handle. As more as 72% students in our country are unaware regarding how to deal with stress and its ill-effects. Only in 2006 alone, 5,857 students committed suicide owing to exam stress. As more as 27% of IT professionals in India are addicted to narcotic drugs.

College students are at a critical period when they enters adulthood because after completing study they look for a good job for supporting their family and they expects to be the elites in the society. Thus, they try to enhance stress management abilities so as to live a healthy life after entering vocation. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to assess the stress level of Physical Education and science students belonging to two different secondary schools of district Kupwara.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sixty undergraduate residential students (girls and boys) of physical education and science Institute from, Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir were randomly selected as subjects for the study during 2012 to 2015. Each student group had 30 subjects (15 girls and 15 boys) with age group from 24 years and all the subjects voluntarily participated. Every student who participated were informed about the objectives of the study. Approval in order to conduct the study was obtained from principals of Institutes. Stress scores with 1, inhibition and frustration 2, overload 3, Compulsive, time-urgent and aggressive behavior has been measured for selected subjects using the well framed questionnaire. Responses from respondents have been filled up before six month of final examination, so

that examination stress would not affect the responses of students. In the questionnaire there were thirty questions asked to give response by choosing one of the option out of four which is "almost always true", "either true either false" and "almost always false".

By using the score key, scores were obtained for each subject on each of the three sources of stress. After getting the scores of each subject on stress due to all three sources and on the coping strategy, the data has been analyzed using (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) SPSS. A descriptive statistics tool has been applied to the responses of students with regard to different levels of coping strategies, (ANNOVA) two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) used to compare various sources of stresses between gender and profession.

### 3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows that the F-ratio for gender in all the four variables that is, frustration and inhibition, overload, time urgent, aggressive behavior, and coping strategy, is significant at 0.05 level. In order to find out whether stress from all different stimuli is higher in girls or boys, and to find out whether coping strategy was higher in boys or girls of their respective profession, post-hoc analysis was done by using the least significance difference (LSD) test. The findings have been shown in Table 2 which shows the stress level of girls arising with different stimuli that is, frustration and inhibition; time-urgent; overload and aggressive behavior were higher than that of boys irrespective of their profession. While, coping strategy of boys was significantly higher than that of girls. In addition to this descriptive statistics was applied to the responses of students of both the professions with regard to different level of coping strategies and the findings have been shown in Table 3. In Physical Education profession as more as 80% boys and 68% girls were having adequate coping strategy, while in the science profession, 62% boys and 50% girls had adequate or good coping strategy. Furthermore in both professions none among the students had excellent coping strategy.

### 4. DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to find out the stress level of physical education and science students belonging to two different colleges of Jammu and Kashmir. The findings of this study revealed that stress was more in girls as compared to boys because of the factuality that girls were expected to observe restrictions and social customs in Indian society comparatively more than boys. Another reasons may be that girls had less freedom and choice in comparison to boys. Stress from high expectations of parents, teachers and self is usually an agony for students who are in schools (Cheng, 1999). Supe (1998) reported that there is considerable amount of stress in the students of medical colleges of India. The young students has always been vulnerable to stressful life conditions particularly in pursuit of higher professional education in a highly competitive world (World Health Organization, 1994; Saipanis, 2003). Coping strategy of boys and girls in Physical Education has been found to be better than that of boys and girls in science profession. It may be because the Physical Education students regularly participate in various physical activities which manages their stress. Science students had more pressure because of their academic and large syllabus content in Several studies which indicates a need for programs in college and schools that students can cope with. This is something that could be done either during classes such as psychology, health, physical education or through after college and school programs. Physical activities socialization and sports are indispensable for growth of an individual and to foster personal development (Azariah and Reichenback, 2001; Durkin et al., 2003). Sports, arts and music could be made a part of the optional curriculum. 'Time management' and 'Stress management' taught along with first and second year curriculum may help students in dealing with stress due to study loads (Lee and Graham, 2001). Students who failed to develop healthy coping strategies were mostly experiencing a higher risk of health problems and anti social behaviors. For example, students can start having issues with anxiety, depression, stress overload and social conflicts. Depending on the psychological health each student needs different ways of understanding and managing stress and conflicts, therefore, college and school-based programs may be useful to teach these strategies to students to help improve the outcomes of their future. such outreach programs for students could provide resources and specialized programs that teach coping strategies for a good and healthy lifestyle and to overcome stress we have to balance the social demands and academic demands of college. Socializing and being surrounded by sound and positive people is an important aspect of overcoming stress.

**Table 1 Two way ANNOVA for the data on stress due to different stimuli and coping strategy**

Variable	Source of variation	df	SS	MSS	F-ratio	Sig.
Frustration and inhibition	Gender	1	107.45	107.45	9.712	0.004*
	Profession	1	27.56	27.56	2.378	0.143
	Interaction	1	00	00	00	1.0
	Error	56	650.12	11.95		
Overload	Gender	1	97.76	97.76	4.852	0.048*
	Profession	1	.26	0.26	0.017	0.942
	Interaction	1	86.50	86.50	3.62	0.063
Time-urgent and aggressive behavior	Error	56	133.75	23.7		
	Gender	1	64.08	64.08	4.36	0.043*
	Profession	1	21.80	21.80	1.49	0.242
	Interaction	1	4.26	4.26	0.26	0.54
Coping strategy	Error	56	845.00	14.85		
	Gender	1	1745.12	1745.12	4.278	0.049*
	Profession	1	42.56	42.56	0.089	0.812
	Interaction	1	42.56	42.56	0.089	0.812
Error	56	23533.21	421.71			

Significant at .05 level of significance

**Table 2. Mean and ( $\pm$ SD) stress scores of Girls and Boys due to different stimuli.**

Variable	Boys	Girls	Mean diff.	CD at 5% level
Frustration and inhibition	27.19( $\pm$ 3.49)	29.67( $\pm$ 3.29)	2.48*	1.78
Overload	28.67( $\pm$ 4.42)	31.32( $\pm$ 5.78)	2.65*	2.513
Time-urgent and aggressive behavior	28.59( $\pm$ 3.61)	30.63( $\pm$ 4.82)	2.04*	1.989
Coping strategy	62.79( $\pm$ 18.10)	49.87( $\pm$ 21.56)	12.92*	10.604

**Table 3. Percentage of physical education and Science students showing different levels of coping strategy.**

Variable	Physical education students (%)		Science students	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Inadequate	20	32	38	50
Adequate	42.6	36	32.4	26.7
Good	37.4	32	29.6	23.3
Excellent	0	0	0	0

## 5. CONCLUSION

It is clear from this study that girls had higher level of stress as compared to boys as the girls have more challenges to follow Indian orthodox customs, prevailing in our society. When stress affects the mind with its many nerve connections, the rest of the body also feels the impact.

Physical activities and other exercises produce endorphins-a chemical in the brain which acts as natural painkiller and also enhances the ability to sleep, which in turn reduces stress. Massage therapy, Meditation, acupuncture, even breathing deeply can cause your body to produce endorphins.

Scientists found that regular participation in aerobic exercise decreases overall levels of tension, elevate and stabilize mood, improve self-esteem and sleep. Albert and Monika (2001) reported that just five minutes of aerobic exercise can stimulate anti-anxiety effects. This study also indicates that coping strategy of physical education students are better than students of science profession because of more opportunities of performing physical exercises. Brown (1991) found that events of life were more likely to cause students to seek medical advice if students were low in physical fitness, as compared to those students who are high in physical fitness. Therefore, parents and College faculty need to attend specific conferences and training regarding stress management in order to guide the students on how to manage stresses in an effective way. Students need guidance from a positive role model and someone whom they can believe to talk about such pressures; otherwise they may choose negative ways to cope with stress in their lives. Parents, Teachers and college administration should work together in order to reduce the level of stress and increase their coping strategy that promote a healthy lifestyle.

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