

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Behavioral Problems in School Children: Assessment of Stress in Schools

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Abstract

Introduction: Adolescence is the period in human development during which several dramatic changes at biological, social, psychological and cognitive levels take place. Hardly any research has been done in the area of adolescent's mental health in Nepal, especially in the area of adolescent stress. In the study, an effort has been made to find the level of stress in the school students in Kathmandu.

Method: Study sample was 250 students drawn from government and private schools of the valley. Self-report measures were used for the child. Student Stress Scale was used for the research.

Results: This study showed that the male students of government school faced highest level of stress (413.99) in comparison to any other group of adolescents. In the same way the female students from government schools were facing lesser level of stress (307.98), than female students from Private schools (318.78). Children of the second birth order of the broken families were facing maximum level of stress (518.67). Children of the joint families were facing more stress (424.67) than children living in other types of family.

Conclusion: Stress level was higher in both male and female children of mothers who were housewives and lower in the female children of working mothers. Stress level was below the cutoff range in female children of working mothers (258.09).

Keywords: Stress level, Behavioral problems, Student Stress Scale.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of change for the adolescents and their families. The phrase, "storm and stress" has long been employed as a description of adolescence¹. Although it is no longer believed that it is a period of universal storm and stress for all young people, the many biological, cognitive, psychological and social changes that take place during a relatively short period of time, exposes the adolescent to

more life stresses than they had experienced as children. A modern approach to the psychosocial changes of these phases is based on age appropriate and stage appropriate way.

Stress in adolescence has been a subject of debate for almost a hundred years. According to Hall adolescence is the period of stress and storm during which abrupt biological changes take place². These

biological changes cause disruption in psychological states. The adolescents may pass through a near psychotic state. They see adolescence as an inevitable and culturally universal stage of psychological stress. Anna Freud describes adolescent mood as oscillating between contradictory mood-states and this view is very similar to Hall's concept of adolescence.³ Please format all the references as JNMA

Spiegel⁴ has also emphasized on the disturbed state of adolescence but in an exaggerated manner. He has compared it with conditions almost psychotic like episodes with significant degree of ego dysfunction. Stone and Church define adolescence as a vulnerable period involving painful problem and reawakening of those past developmental issues which are only partially resolved⁵. Rube believed that in childhood a person is sheltered, and protected by elders but as they grows old the protection is withdrawn⁶. This change may cause emotional disturbance in the adolescents.

Rosenberg argues that adolescence is a period of stress because of abrupt physiological and psychological changes⁷. Greenacre regards adolescents as a time when painful evaluation has to take place⁸. This, according to him, produces a variety of external manifestation and causes inner stress. Brim sees adolescent stress as discrepancy between what the adolescent believes himself to be and what he perceives other think of him⁹. This cognitive discrepancy that exists within the adolescent leads to stress. Durkheim in contrast to Brim, sees teenage stress, particularly deviance as a result of discrepancy between the adolescent's expectation and the actual adolescent roles, regardless of the teenager's perception of beliefs¹⁰.

In the Indian subcontinent, some authors report that the time of adolescence is observed as a period of calm transition from childhood to maturity¹¹. Female adolescents reported greater life stress and although they received significantly more

social support from peers, they also reported significantly poorer emotional and physical wellbeing than males¹².

METHOD

This study was done in two schools in Kathmandu valley. Sampling was done in two stages, stratified - random followed by purposive. While doing this, attention was given to pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The total sample size was limited to 250 students.

Following research tools were used for the research:

- **Semi structured Questionnaire - A** semi structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher to record the socio-demographic profile of the subject.
- **Student Stress Scale (Paul & Walton, 1985) - Student stress scale (SSS)** was developed by the adaptation of Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire (SRRQ) originated by the Holmes and Rahe¹³.

The scale consists of 31 items of stressful life events encountered by students. Subjects have to rate whether the events occurred in their life during the last one-year. The scale can be administered easily to literate and illiterate subjects. Norms obtained in the study on Indian population suggests that an average individual experiences an average of ten common stressful events in a lifetime without suffering any obvious adverse physical or psychological disturbances. Similarly, the mean number of stressful events experienced is approximately two (1.90 ± 2.62). Weighted mean score for each stressful event were derived by the relative stress experienced by the subjects on particular events. The total sums of all weighted scores of positive events are calculated. The authors have mentioned that the cut-off score for the Indian population is 300. If a person scores less

than 300, then he/she is considered to be under a manageable level of stress.

RESULT

Table 1: The mean level of stress in relation to the gender of student and the type of school

Gender	Type of school	Mean	SD	t
Male	Government School (N= 73)	413.99	167.6	2.22**
	Private School (N= 74)	350.11	179.5	
Female	Government School (N= 49)	307.98	169.0	0.34
	Private School (N= 54)	318.78	169.0	

(** $p < 0.01$)

Table 1 shows the comparison of levels of stress in different groups of students. Male students going to government school showed the highest level of stress. Lowest level of stress recorded was of female students going to government school. As a group male students were experiencing more stress than female students.

The t-test computed to compare the mean scores observed for two types of school were significant at 90% confidence interval. The findings of male students clearly showed that there was significant difference with regards to the experience of stress level. The difference in the level of stress experienced by the female students in the two types of school was not statistically significant.

Table 2: Mean stress level of the student in relation to birth order and the type of family.

		Nuclear		
		N	Mean	SD
Birth Order	1st	56	254.29	163.9
	2nd	52	322.46	145.2
	3rd	17	328.41	196.3
	4th	12	281.25	210.1
	Others	8	354.89	160.1
	Total	145	333.97	164.6
		Joint		
		N	Mean	SD
Birth Order	1st	81	385.54	181.5
	2nd	33	386.42	152.1
	3rd	15	478.07	243.4
	4th	20	304.75	163.6
	Others	7	438.43	174.2
	Total	6	257	136
		Broken		
		N	Mean	SD
Birth Order	1st	24	382.14	164.3
	2nd	11	357.5	123.3
	3rd	6	518.67	189
	4th	2	424.5	132.2
	Others	2	225.5	40.31
	Total	3	210	49.5
		Total		
		N	Mean	SD
Birth Order	1st	100	365.32	155.8
	2nd	73	370.56	186.6
	3rd	39	321.21	175.4
	4th	22	315.14	205
	Others	17	338.59	145.2
	Total	250	353.74	172.2

Maximum stress was seen in the second birth of the broken family. The stress level was below the cut off point of 300 only in the first and fourth child in the nuclear family and fourth child of broken family. As group children in the joint family experienced more stress.

Table 3: Mean stress level experienced by students in relation to their gender and the occupational status of mother.

Sex of the student	Occupation of mother	N	Mean	SD	t
Male	House wife	105	402.56	178.93	2.29**
	Working	42	330.00	159.23	
	Total	147	381.83	176.09	
Female	House wife	81	328.73	161.61	2.19**
	Working	22	258.09	138.34	
	Total	103	313.64	158.97	

(** p<0.01)

Table 3 shows the mean level of stress experienced by students in relation to their gender and the occupational status of their mother. As a whole, male child experienced more stress than the female child did and both were above the cut off score of 300. Is this statistically significant. Level of stress was within acceptable range in the female child of working mothers.

The t-test computed to compare the mean scores observed for the two occupational status of mother were significant at 0.01 level of significance. The findings of both male and female children clearly showed that children of housewife and working women differed significantly with regards to their experience of stress level. Both male and female children of housewife experienced more stress level compared to children of working women.

Table 4: Mean level of stress experienced by students in relation to their gender and the family structure.

Sex of Student	Family structure	Levels of stress		
		N	Mean	SD
Male	Nuclear	77	356.31	163.62
	Joint	52	424.67	181.84
	Broken	18	386.59	184.05
	Total	147	381.3	176.09
Female	Nuclear	69	309.04	163.23
	Joint	29	315.38	161.11
	Broken	5	367.00	76.56
	Total	103	313.64	158.97

Table 4 shows the mean of stress level experienced by students in relation to their gender and family structure of origin. The male students of joint family experienced maximum mean level of stress (424.67). As a group, females were experiencing less stress than the male counterpart in all individual type of family structure.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, male students studying in government schools showed the highest levels of stress than any other category of students. This indicated that these students were facing more problems in their daily lives. This may be due to the economic status of the family, because the boys who go to government schools are, on an average, from the lower economic status. It was interesting to note that the stress level in the girl child going to government school was the lowest. It may be because the society has prepared the female child for a lower level of achievement expectation, so the level of tolerance is also higher. In the Nepalese context, girls realize their situation, don't want to revolt and naturally accept any situation which may cause less stress. As a whole group the male children were experiencing more stress than the female children. This finding was similar to the one reported by Mahat ¹⁴, where the

males reported a slightly higher level of stressful life-event than the female.

In relation to birth order and type of family, the maximum stress was found to be in the second birth of the broken family. As in the study of Thenmozhi adolescents from stepfamilies have more behavioral and adjustment problem than the adolescents from intact family¹⁵. This finding shows that family is a source of greatest satisfaction and security of its members.

Stress level was highest among male children whose mothers were housewives and lowest in the female children of working mothers. In fact the level was below the cut-off range. In the girl child group, stress level was high in children of housewife mothers. Stress was within acceptable range in the female children of working mothers. This is similar to the study of Lamborn et al ¹⁶where it was reported that girls experienced more interpersonal stress than did boys. Green & Larson¹⁷, Wagner & Compar¹⁸ further indicated that non-interpersonal stress may be an area of particular sensitivity for adolescent boys.

Conclusion

Nepalese students in the present study showed that that they were under considerable level of stress.

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