



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

### STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN PRIVATE SCHOOL, CHITWAN, NEPAL

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#### ABSTRACT

Changing emotional and physical status along with increasing social, family and academic pressure adolescents experience stress and their coping abilities determine the outcome. The objective of the study was to find out the level of stress and coping strategies among adolescents studying at Sky rider Higher Secondary English Boarding School, Ratnanagar-12, Chitwan. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was used in which a total of 50 adolescence studying in grade 9 and 10 were selected by using non- probability purposive sampling technique. The study findings revealed that the mean age of respondents was  $15.26 \pm 0.96$ , 48% respondents had high level of stress. Statistically, there was significant association between respondents' level of stress and sex ( $P= 0.025$ ), type of residence ( $P=0.049$ ) and father's education level ( $P= 0.045$ ). "Investing in close friends" is the most common and "Avoiding" is the least common coping strategy used by adolescents. Overall study concluded that the adolescents has high stress level whereas as they use various coping strategies.

**Key words:** Adolescence, Coping strategies, Stress.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Most mental health problems which are diagnosed in adulthood actually begin in adolescents. Some of these stressors include fitting in, academic performance, peer relationships, and family relationships. Being unfamiliar with ways to identify and cope with such stressors, adolescents may be coping in negative ways.<sup>3</sup>

It has been reported that around 20 percent of the world's adolescents have a mental health or behavioral problem. Depression is said to be single largest contributor to the global burden of disease among people aged 15–19 years.<sup>6</sup>

According to a survey conducted on adolescence in Taipei Area found that 56.7% considered that their depression comes from school stress, 50.9% thought that their depression is caused by interpersonal relations, and 45.6% attributed their depression to academic tests. Besides, the survey also revealed that depressed people are eight times more likely to commit suicide than normal people.<sup>1</sup>

Out of 51 physiotherapy students it was found that 89.7% had moderate level of stress and 10.3% had high level of stress as measured by Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). "Seeking diversion" is the most common and "Seeking professional support" is the least common coping strategy identified in students as measured by Adolescent Coping Strategies for Problem Experiences.<sup>4</sup>

Stress in adolescence and less coping strategies may leads to negative effect on adolescence life. As a result, adolescents face different behavioral problem like depression, anxiety, substance abuse, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and eating disorders. So, in this stage of life it is very necessary to find out the level of stress and coping strategies to overcome the stress.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

It was a descriptive cross sectional study. 50 adolescence of grade 9 and 10 (25 from each class) of Sky rider Higher Secondary English Boarding School, Ratnanagar-12, Chitwan were the study population and study area respectively. Non-probability, purposive sampling technique was used for data collection from 28<sup>th</sup> November- 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

The respondents aged between 14 to 17 years, available at the time of data collection and willing to participate were included. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (ACOPE) were used as an instrument.

The data was analyzed by using SPSS 16 version. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

**RESULTS**

**TABLE 1: Distribution of Stress during the Last Month by Adolescents’ as Measured on Perceived Stress Scale (n=50)**

S.N.	Statements	Responses				
		Never n (%)	Almost Never n (%)	Some- times n (%)	Fairly Often n (%)	Very Often n (%)
1.	Being upset that happened unexpectedly	12 (24)	3 (6)	28 (56)	5 (10)	2 (4)
2.	Feeling of unable to control the important things in life	11 (22)	8 (16)	15 (30)	14 (28)	2 (4)
3.	Feeling nervous and stressed	13 (26)	2 (4)	10 (20)	7 (14)	18 (36)
4.	Feeling confident about ability to handle personal problems	2 (4)	4 (8)	13 (26)	13 (26)	18 (36)
5.	Feel that things were going according to own way	4 (8)	4 (8)	14 (28)	14 (28)	14 (28)
6.	Feeling unable to could not cope with all things that should be do	8 (16)	3 (6)	17 (34)	12 (24)	10 (20)
7.	Able to control irritation in life	6 (12)	3 (6)	19 (38)	10 (20)	12 (24)
8.	Feeling on top of things	4 (8)	5 (10)	17 (34)	12 (24)	12 (24)
9.	Being angered because things were happening outside of control	3 (6)	2 (4)	16 (32)	10 (20)	19 (38)
10.	Feeling that difficulties were piling up so high that they could not be overcome	8 (16)	6 (12)	19 (38)	10 (20)	7 (14)

Mean ± SD: 18.54 ± 5.07

Table 1 show that, among 50 respondents, 13 (26%) respondents answered that they never felt nervous and stressed, 8 (16%) respondents answered that they almost never felt unable to control the important things in life, 28 (56%) respondents answered that sometimes they became upset that happened unexpectedly, 14 (28%) respondents answered that fairly often they felt unable to control the important things in life and felt that things were going according to their way respectively, 19 (38%) respondents answered that very often they became angered because things were outside of control.

**TABLE 2: Respondents’ Level of Stress (n=50)**

Level of Stress	Frequency	Percentage
High	24	48
Average	19	38
Low	7	14

Above table 2 shows that among 50 respondents, 48% respondents had high level of stress and 14% respondents had low level of stress.

**TABLE 3: Association between Respondents' Level of Stress and Selected Variables**

Variables	Level of Stress		P-value
	Low n (%)	High n (%)	
<b>Sex (n=50)</b>			
Male	19 (65.5)	10 (34.5)	0.025*
Female	7 (33.3)	14 (66.7)	
<b>Type of residence (n=50)</b>			
Living in hostel	9 (37.5)	15 (62.5)	0.049*
Living with parents	17 (65.4)	9 (34.6)	
<b>Father's education level(n=48)</b>			
Low level	18 (64.3)	10 (35.7)	0.045*
High level	7 (35.0)	13 (65.0)	

\*Significance level at 0.05  $\chi^2$  = Fisher's exact test  $\chi^2$  is computed for p-value

Above table 3 shows that, Average and low level of stress was merged together as low level of stress to see the significance of the study. There is significant association between respondents' level of stress and sex ( $P=0.025$ ), type of residence ( $P=0.049$ ) and father's education level.

**TABLE 4: Coping Strategies used by Adolescents: Investing in Close Friends, Avoiding (n=50)**

S.N.	Statement	Responses				
		Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n(%)	Most of the time n(%)
1	<b>Investing in close friends</b>					
	Be close with someone you care about	1 (2)	0	8 (16)	11 (22)	30 (60)
	Be with a boyfriend or girlfriend	3 (6)	0	13 (26)	14 (28)	20 (40)
2	<b>Avoiding</b>					
	Smoke	49(98)	0	0	1 (2)	0
	Use drugs prescribe by doctors	4 (8)	0	13 (26)	11 (22)	22 (44)
	Try to stay away from home as much as possible	29 (58)	4 (8)	8 (16)	4 (8)	5 (10)
	Try to see the good things	4 (8)	0	2 (4)	16 (32)	28 (56)
	Drink beer, wine, liquor	42 (84)	1 (2)	7 (14)	0	0

Above table 4 shows the Coping Strategies used by Adolescents (Investing in close friends, Avoiding). Regarding Investing in close friends, 30 (60%) respondents said that most of the time they used to be close with someone whom they care about and regarding Avoiding, 28 (56%) respondents said that most of the time they try to see the good things.

**TABLE 5: Coping Strategies Used by Adolescence (n=50)**

S.N	Statements	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Ventilating feelings	56.86	14.00
2.	Seeking diversions	68.55	9.54
3.	Relaxing	67.1	12.93
4.	Self-reliance	77.2	11.03
5.	Developing social support	76.73	8.61
6.	Solving family problems	70.86	14.94
7.	Avoiding	50.48	8.54
8.	Seeking spiritual support	58.93	18.96
9.	Investing in close friends	83.40	16.48
10.	Seeking professional support	62.80	16.90
11.	Engaging in demanding activities	83.1	16.48
12.	Being humorous	83.00	15.15

Above Table 5 shows that, "Investing in close friends" is the most common ( $83.40 \pm 16.40$ ) and "Avoiding" is the least common ( $50.48 \pm 8.54$ ) coping strategies used by adolescents.

## DISCUSSION

The mean for Perceived Stress Scale is 18.54 and standard deviation is 5.07. The finding is supported by the study of Saffari, Ghofranipour, Mahmoudi & Montazeri (2011) which revealed that the mean for Perceived Stress Scale is 17.99 and standard deviation is 6.02. [5]

Regarding respondent's level of stress, 48% had high level of stress, 38% had average level of stress and 14% had low level of stress as measured by perceived stress scale. This finding is inconsistent with the study conducted by Padmanathan, Ali & Kumar (2013) which stated that 89.7% had moderate stress and 10.3% had severe stress as measured by perceived stress scale. [4]

There is significant association between sex ( $P=0.025$ ) and respondents level of stress where there is higher stress in female than in male adolescents. The findings is supported by the study conducted by Yeresyan & Lohaus (2014) which states that there is significant association between sex ( $P=0.001$ ) and level of stress among adolescents where there is higher stress in female than in male adolescents. [7]

The findings of the study states that there is significant association between the type of residence ( $P=0.049$ ) and respondents level of stress. In contrast to this study, a study conducted by Kumar (2011) states that there is no significant association between type of residence ( $P=0.776$ ) and respondents level of stress. [2]

The finding of the study states that majority of adolescents tends to use more of the healthy coping strategies as compared to negative or unhealthy ones. "Investing in the close friends" is the most common and "Avoiding" is the least common coping strategy used by adolescents. In contrast to this study, a study conducted by Kumar (2011) and Padmanathan, Ali & Kumar (2013) which states that "seeking diversion is the most common and seeking professional support is the least common coping strategies used by students. [2] [4]

## CONCLUSION

The finding of the study states that adolescence has high stress level whereas as they use various coping

strategies. There was significant association between respondents' level of stress and sex ( $p = 0.025$ ), type of residence ( $p = 0.049$ ) and father's education level ( $p = 0.045$ ) i.e. female, respondents' living in hostel and respondents' with higher father educational level have high level of stress. So, it is important that adolescents should be aware of stress and different coping strategies so that they can be helped to cope well with upcoming problems and situations

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