Relationship among Stress, Adjustment and Homesickness in University Students

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Abstract: The objective of the current study was to examine the relationship among stress, adjustment and homesickness among University students. Total 100 subjects (N =100, 47 Males, 53 Females) participated in the current study from Lovely Professional University, Punjab. The age of the subjects ranged from 18 to 25 years with a mean age of 20.83 years. The tools for data collection were Perceived Stress Scale and College Adjustment Test in the present study. The statistics Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Independent samples t test were used to find out the relationships and gender differences among the variables, respectively. The results indicated a negative relationship between stress and adjustment (r = -.299, p < .001) and homesickness and adjustment (r = -.590, p < .001). A positive relationship was also observed between stress and homesickness (r = .265, p < .01). The findings provide an evidence for the negative role of stress and homesickness in adjustment in young adults. Further, the results also indicated no gender differences among stress, adjustment and homesickness being all t ratios below the level of .05 level of probability. The findings favor the notion that in modern times both the genders experience stress and homesickness equally and their adjustment level is also quite similar.

Key Words: stress, adjustment, homesickness, young adults.

Introduction:

Stress is our usual way of responding to the needs of the world around us which comes in the form of stressors. All the events whether internal or external may not be stressful in the same way to everybody, it differs from person to person to the degree to which one feels stress, what may seem stressful to you may not be the same to your friend and so on. Baum, (1990) emphasized that stress is a negative emotional experience that is accompanied by expected physiological, biochemical, and behavioral changes that are directed either toward altering the stressful event or the accommodating to its effects.

Academic pressure is one of the strongest causes of stress among the school students (Hashim, 2003). Stress management has become very vital to reduce the negative psychological and physiological impacts of stress. Stress can be constructively channelized to decrease the stress. Controlling stress is also an ability which we all have to build up for better adjustment. Stress amongst the adolescents and young adults can be critical in the well being of the family altogether. Stress can be caused due to many factors and can change the relationships dynamics in the family. Particularly stress in the adolescence can be very tough Stress is being experienced by everyone nowadays. Stress on the parents part and the adolescents themselves. Through adolescence period both the boys and girls go through lot of confusion. The reasons for stress and maladjustment during young age, as per the review of literature,

are because of distressed family dynamics, peer demands, incapability to manage with studies, drug abuse, and lack of skill. One of the significant trends which are being observed is attainment of immediate gratification are from the electronic media and gadgets, the participation of youth in getting instant gratification of needs has led to lot of stress in them and in their relationships with family and peers. Stress leads to maladaptive behavior and creates lots of problems in their adjustment. Stevenson and Harper (2006) suggested that in an academic institutions stress plays both negative and positive results on an individual if it is not properly managed. Chang and Lu (2007) said that the causes, affect and symptoms are different in academic institutions and in non-academic institutions. Fairbrother and Warn (2003) said that academic stress as too much competition with other students, too many assignments, and poor bond with other students or teachers is the stressors in the academic.

Young adulthood is said to be, a time of 'stress and storm'. In the period of young adulthood, there are many changes taking place physically, emotionally, the worry over choice, there are insecurities about the future, many other life situations which bring about stressful circumstances. The on-going adversity that hinders the healthy behavioral and adjustment pattern of young adults is environmental stressors that go on for extensive periods of time. The strength of these stressors may differ contextually but the main features that differentiate them from severe strain are their persistent, lasting nature. Increase of stressful experiences considerably increases a young adults' weakness to negative outcomes. The young adults with different behavior profiles manage in a different way in response to environmental stress counting that of peer stress. Aggressive young adults are more prone to use negative coping strategies. The young girls were more possible to use coping strategies intended at minimizing the psychological impact of definite events. The absence of parental income also leads to paucity, insufficient food, underfeeding, sickness, illiteracy, family issues, aggravation among children, sexuality, unhealthy environment and other problems that increase stress and create maladjustment among young adults. Economic and social stresses have important effect on the behavior and adjustment patterns of young adults. There has been increased interest in environment and young adult relationships and that a number of behavior scientists have made prominent offerings in this regard in the west. But in Indian context, the understanding is not much clear about the correlates of stress with adjustment among young adult population. The present study is an effort to examine the relation between the stress adjustment and homesickness in University students.

Hussain et al. (2008) examined levels of academic stress and overall adjustment in government and private schools. Results showed that the level of academic stress was much higher among the private school students than government school students who showed good level of adjustment. Further, the results showed an inverse but significant relationship between the scales of stress and adjustment in the student of both the schools. Bhaskar et al. (2014) suggested that a high level of stress is experienced by more boys as compared to girls. In their study, significant gender difference had been seen in respect to social and home adjustments. Further, high level of correlation was observed among social and stress, emotional and total adjustment areas. Bovier et al. (2004) found that mental health was negatively associated with stress and positively associated with social support and internal resources in young adults. Friedlander (2007) suggested that there is an important role of potential mechanism by which support and self esteem works in managing stress and adjustment. Struthers et al. (2000) indicated that students who engage in problems focused coping had more chances to be motivated and to perform better than students who engage in coping which is based on emotions. Alvan et al. (1996) conducted a study on stress, social support and college adjustment in Latino students to examine the role of social support and stress on their adjustment. The results indicate negative relationship between stress and adjustment suggests that presence of stress interacts with tolerable

adjustment. Though, stress did not significantly add to adjustment when included with social support in multivariate analyses. Ashwini et al. (2014) suggested that there has been a varied difference in level of stress experienced by the students. Significant difference was seen among arts and science students' adjustment areas, also between the boys and girls on academic performance. But there was no significance gender difference noted among the science and arts boys and girls. Martin et al. (2001) conducted a study on 256 first year students to examine the effects of academic self efficacy that is the ability of the student to perform well academically, optimistically and to measure their stress and adjustment level .The result showed that self efficacy has a direct and a indirect relationship with the academic performance and also with their adjustment. It was found that academically confident and optimistic students found the university experience as a challenge and not as a threat and they also experienced less stress.

Agarwal et al. (2007) conducted a research on engineering and management students. The results showed that role stagnant, self-role, role overload were found to be the major cause of stress faced by the students. Female students faced less role stagnation than the males. The results did not show any important differences on any of the role stressors, between first year students and their seniors, or between engineering and management students.

Pardeep Kumar et al. (2016) also examined the relationships and gender differences among social relationships with stress, adjustment and homesickness among 279 university students. The data was collected by using Social Relationships Scale, Perceived Stress Scale and College Adjustment. The results of their study indicated no significant gender and locality differences on the measures of social relationships, stress, adjustment and homesickness. Further, the results also suggested that overall adjustment show a strong negative relationship with homesickness (p <.001) and stress (p <.001) which suggests the negative role of stress and homesickness in adjustment.

Method:

Sample

The total sample include 100 university students (N = 100, 47 Males and 53 Females)   aging from 18 to 25 (Mean Age = 20.83) years. The sample is selected randomly from Lovely Professional University (LPU) in the current study.

Research Tools

Perceived Stress Scale by Sheldon Cohen (1983): This scale is mostly used by as a psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress of the individual. The questions in the scale ask about their feeling, thoughts which they experience the last month, so the respondents are told to fill the scale the way they felt in certain way.

College Adjustment Test (CAT): This test is developed by Pennebaker in 1990 to assess the degree to which students have experienced various thoughts and feelings and their adjustment to college/ university during the last week. The test includes total 19 items. This test give home sickness score for college/ university students and its reliability is .79.

Procedure

First of all, the participants were selected randomly and perceived stress scale and college adjustment test was given for data collection. Both the tests took about 30 minutes to get completed. All important instructions were given to the participants before filling the forms. It has been kept in mind that the scales are filled as per the steps mentioned in the manual. After data collected, the data is

compiled and the data was analyzed by using Pearson's product moment correlation and independent samples test through SPSS.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1 presents the demographic details of the subjects. From the table we can see that 47% and 53% females participated in the study. The mean age for male participants is 21.19 years and for females is 20.50 years. The total mean age of participants is 20.83 years.

Table 1: Demographic details of the subjects			
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Mean Age**
Males	47	47%	21.19 Years
Females	53	53%	20.50 Years
Total	**100**	**100%**	**20.83 Years**

Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients and significance values for stress, adjustment and home sickness. It is evident from the results that there is a strong negative relationship ($r = -.299$, $p < .001$) between stress and adjustment. These results are supported by Bhaskar et al. (2014) who studied how stress and adjustment are related among the adolescents and stressed a relationship between the two variables. The researchers further concluded that the adolescents in the study showed a different degree of adjustment patterns of stress may be due to various causes including moral support, lower self-esteem and confidence level and economic backwardness. The current findings also shows a similarity to the results of Hussain et al. (2008) which showed an inverse but significant relationship between the scales of stress and adjustment in the students. The results are also in line with researches by Alvan et al. (2006) and Ashwini et al. (2014) where both suggested a negative relationship between stress and adjustment in college students.

Table 2: Correlations among stress, adjustment and home sickness			
	Stress	**Adjustment**	**Home Sickness**
Stress	1.000	-0.299**	0.265**
		0.001	0.004
Adjustment		1.000	-0.590**
			0.000
Home Sickness			1.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).			

Table 2 also suggests a strong negative relationship between homesickness and adjustment ($r = -.590$, $p < .001$) and a positive relationship between stress and homesickness ($r = .265$, $p < .01$). The results are in coordination with the findings of Pardeep Kumar et al. (2016) who suggested that overall adjustment show a strong negative relationship with homesickness and stress indicating that stress and homesickness plays a negative role in adjustment.

Table 3 presents the results for gender differences among stress, adjustment and homesickness in young adults who are studying at a university.

Table 3: Means, SDs and t ratios for independents samples t test for gender differences in stress, adjustment and homesickness in young adults.						
N = 100	**Gender**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t value**	**p value**
Stress	Male	47	21.47	4.72	0.256	0.798
	Female	53	21.25	3.97		
Adjustment	Male	47	77.91	9.78	-0.314	0.754
	Female	53	78.66	13.42		
Home Sickness	Male	47	26.11	6.89	-0.207	0.836
	Female	53	26.40	7.04		

Table 3 suggests that there is no significant gender difference on stress (t = 0.256, p > .05), adjustment (t = -.314, p > .05) and homesickness (t = -.207, p > .05) in young adults. The study by Ashwini et al. (2014) also supports the current finding by suggesting that there is no significance gender difference among the science and arts boys and girls. However, the study by Bhaskar et al. (2014) suggests a contrast to the current findings and as they found that a high level of stress is experienced by more boys as compared to girls. Further, on adjustment also, these researchers differ with the current findings and suggest significant gender difference in respect to social and home adjustments.

However, the results are supported by Pardeep Kumar et al. (2016) who indicated no significant gender and locality differences on the measures of social relationships, stress, adjustment and homesickness.

Conclusion:

In conclusion we can say that stress and adjustment are the key factors in a young adult's life. From the results it is clear that stress and adjustment are strongly related in a negative manner which indicates that if the degree of one variable increases the other one decreases. As it is a motive of a young adult to maximize his or her adjustment, he needs to learn the ways for stress management. As in the presence of high stress, an optimum level of adjustment is difficult to achieve. The findings also suggest a positive relationship between stress and homesickness and negative relationship with adjustment and homesickness. These relationships make the notion strong that stress and homesickness play a negative role in adjustment. Further, we can also conclude that, in modern times, both the gender are experiencing similar amount of stress and also the same adjustment and homesickness, which indicates that on these variables the gender similarities has been increased in recent times.

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