



The impact of stress in Sri Lankan youth

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Abstract

One of the main threats the world is facing is suicides. The world is losing many of its valuable youths because of this stress. This research talks about the symptoms, causes and ways the youth try to over the stress. It is quantitative research where structured questionnaires were distributed among 300 Sri Lankan youth. Young age is the critical period because youth faces lots of changes in his/her life. The world at large should know the usual symptoms, causes of stress so that when someone is experiencing the stress, another could give a hand. Overeating, Insomnia and Depressions are the top-rated symptoms of stress. Youth should be highly educated about the Stress and right ways of coping up to stand stronger as a nation making our youngsters lead the Country and the World.

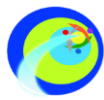
Keywords: depression, stress and suicides

Introduction

Stress is “any external event or any internal drive which threaten to upset the organism equilibrium is stress”. In the competitive age it is reported that young generation are found to be more in stress. The Society and Organizations should take quick steps to get the youngster to the normal from experiencing stress.

Literature Review

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress is a mental or physical phenomenon formed through one’s cognitive appraisal of the stimulation and is a result of one’s interaction with the environment. The existence of stress depends on the existence of the stressor. Stress can be caused by environmental factors, psychological factors, biological factors, and social factors. Academic stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003), poor relationships with other students or lecturers, family or problems at home. Institutional (university) level stressors are overcrowded lecture halls, (Ongori, 2007; Awino and Agolla, 2008), semester system, and inadequate resources to perform academic work. Researchers have long identified stress symptoms as lack of energy, taking over the counter



medication, high blood pressure, feeling depressed, increase in appetite, trouble concentrating, restlessness, tensions and anxiety among others.

An individual experiencing one of these factors is likely to be a victim of stress. Although this may also depend on how the individual appraises the situation, and how resilient is the person. While the negative effects of stress on an individual may vary considerably from one student based on their previous encounter with situations and the resilient of the individual student. In their findings (Jaramillo et al., 2005; Stevenson and Harper, 2006) point out that, the perception of the individual determines whether or not the stressor has a detrimental effect; that is whether it causes physical or psychological symptoms of stress in the individual. Another reason why little has been done on student's stress could be due to the fact that students' presence in the institution have no direct relationship to the quality of education they get. We argue that, unless the university puts appropriate measures that take care of well-being of the students, the student's health may compromise the quality of education they are supposed to get (Daniels & Harris, 2000). Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) and McCarty and Garland (2007) have carried out extensive research on stress and found out that, stress is associated with how an individual appraises situations and the coping strategies adopted.

Causes of stress among youngsters

Academics-. The fear of exams and workload create stress among students. The first cause of stress among university students is many assignments.

Finances – All young people feel stress about money! Most young people do not have jobs, or the jobs they have do not pay as much as they would like for them too.

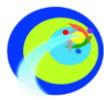
Relationships –. Everyone wants to have friends, whether they are close friends or just acquaintances. If a person finds that making friends is a bit harder than he/ she had expected, stress is present here.

Career- The high competition, an inconsiderate work colleague, a lack of job security, there are many causes of job stress. The students have a fear of not getting the job opportunity and competition in the market.

Time Management- Balancing academics, peer activities, and home life can be difficult. Toss in a part-time job and the challenge increases.

Research Questions

- What are the leading causes of stress?
- What are the symptoms of Stress among youth?
- What are the strategies used to cope up with stress?
- Does age and stress level are related?



- Does the income of the family and stress are related?
- Does working parents and stress are related?

Research Objectives

- to identify the leading cause of stress.
- to study the symptoms of stress among youth.
- to identify the strategies to cope up with stress by the youth.
- to identify whether there is a relationship between age and stress level.
- to identify whether there is a relationship between the income of the family.
- to identify whether there is a relationship between working parents and stress level

Methodology

It is quantitative research. Structured questionnaires were distributed to 300 youth where 225 responded. Structured questionnaires are distributed for the sample of 300, where 225 responded. T. Test and Avova were used to analyze the results. A questionnaire is designed with three sections. One section highlights the symptoms of stress, the second section highlights the stressor and the third section highlights the coping strategies used by the Youth. In order to achieve the objective, both primary and secondary sources of information are relied upon. The primary data was collected through structured questionnaires apart from discussions with students.

Hypotheses of the study

- H₁: There is a significant relationship between age and stress level.
H₂: There is a significant relationship between the income of the family and Stress level.
H₃: There is a significant relationship between the Working status of parents and Stress Level.

Results and Discussions

Table 1. Stress Symptoms

Stress Symptoms	%	Rank
Headaches	71.29	8
Tense muscles, sore neck and back	74.93	5
Fatigue	73.60	7
Anxiety, worry, phobias	67.20	10
Insomnia	79.82	2
Irritability	70.84	9
Bouts of anger	64.18	11
Boredom, Depression	78.22	3
Overeating	81.60	1



Constipation	75.38	4
Restlessness	73.69	6

Table 2. Kind of stress

Kind of Stress	Level of Stress	Rank
Academics	61.81	5
Financial or Economic Stress	72.55	3
Relationship Stress	74.74	1
Future / Career Growth Stress	68.39	4
Psychological Stress	73.40	2
Overall Stress	70.18	

Table 3. Action to cope with stress

Action to Cope with Stress	N	%	Rank
Watch movie with friends	150	66.67	4
Play Games	139	61.78	5
Talk with friend(s)	182	80.89	1
Talk to family member(s)	168	74.67	3
Go to picnic/excursions	75	33.33	10
Use the Internet (Social networking sites - Facebook, Google+ etc.) or other sites.	171	76.00	2
Listen Music	137	60.89	6
Do exercise / yoga	92	40.89	7
Read self-help books	77	34.22	9
Attend cultural programs	83	36.89	8

Analysis of age and stress

Table 4. Age

Age	N	Mean	SD	F	df	Results
Up to 20 years	56	3.57	0.66	0.518	3, 216	NS (p > 0.05)
21-22 years	88	3.47	0.58			
23-24 years	51	3.54	0.65			
Above 25 years	25	3.43	0.51			

Hypotheses are rejected and a non-significant relationship is found.

Analysis of family income and stress

Table 5. Income

Income	N	Mean	SD	F	df	Result
Rs. 10,0001 - Rs. 20,000	37	3.55	0.47	8.611	4, 177	*** (p < 0.001)
Rs. 20,0001 - Rs. 30,000	51	3.10	0.41			
Rs. 30,0001 - Rs. 40,000	39	3.41	0.47			
RS 40001-50000	26	3.82	1.00			
Above 50001	29	3.50	0.37			

A significant result has occurred between the different income group. There is an overall significant relationship exist between different income groups. Hypotheses are accepted.



Analysis of working status of parents and stress

Table 6. Working Status of parents

Working Status of Parents	N	Mean	SD	Z	Result
Mother - Father Both Working	32	3.85	0.67	3.557	*** (p < 0.001)
Single Parent is Working	193	3.45	0.57		

Hypotheses are accepted that there is a significant relationship between working status and stress

Conclusions and Recommendations

A high degree of stress is identified among youth in Sri Lanka. Symptoms and causes of stress should be clearly known by the society where this would protect the person going to the peak of stress. Right way of coping with the stress should be educated to the younger populations. In this research, it is clear that there is no significant relationship between age and stress. Every age category of people face stress somehow, and the way they handle and overcome is the key. There is significant relationship between income of the family and stress. Low income people face more stress than the high income earners. There is significant relationship between working status of parents and stress. When parents are working, their children's stress level is high due to lack of time they are with parents. Therefore, it is always suggested to have more communication and connection with the child if the parents work. Working parents should maintain a good friendship with their youth children. This study contributes to the literature by examining the overall stress among the youths in Sri Lankan cultural context, which was unnoticed in the literature.

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