

Interactional Effect of Adjustment and Stress on College Students

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Abstract:

Stress is found in all aspects of life. Most of the social, physiological and emotional problems are related to unrelieved stress. Today students are more stressed than earlier generation. They experience high stress due to academic commitment, financial pressure and lack of time management skill. The present study focused on stress and adjustment and their interaction effect among college students. A total of 180 first year students from national college sirsa completed measures of Adjustment Inventory by H.S. Asthana (1968) and Stress scale by Puri, Kaur & Mehta, (2011). Results shows that Male students and female students, both show significant effect of different levels of stress and adjustment. Findings further gave a clear picture of positive and negative effect of stress and adjustment of college students.

Key Words:- Adjustment, Stress

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Introduction:

The transition from high school to tertiary institution of learning is a major life change for many youth. Attending tertiary institution of learning offers students with learning experiences and opportunities for psychosocial development (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007; Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000). However, entering the institution of higher learning may be a source of strain and an acute stressor (Friedlander et al., 2007). At the colleges and universities, academic demands increase and new social relations are established. However, students are often not sure of their abilities to cope with these demands (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). Adjustment is a continual process by which a person varies his/her behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship between himself/herself and his/her environment. It implies changes in our thinking and way of life to the demands of the situation. Based on the above definitions, adjustment

could be seen as a condition or state in which one feels that one's needs have been (or will be) fulfilled and one's behaviors conforms to the needs of a given environment.

Stress is found in all aspects of life. Most of the social, physiological and emotional problems are related to unrelieved stress. Today students are more stressed than earlier generation. They experience high stress due to academic commitment, financial pressure and lack of time management skill. The college students especially fresher's are a group particularly prone to stress (D' Zurilla, Sheedy, 1991) due to the transitional nature of college life (Towbes & Cohen, 1996). They feel stress resulting from interaction between stressor and the individual's perception and reaction to those stressors (Romano, 1992).the dynamic relationship between the person and environment in stress perception and reaction is especially to investigate the nature of these stressors for college students and which stressors are most prevalent in college students

lives. It is unclear whether most stressors result from interpersonal or academic issues.

Adjustment:

Adjustment is a persistent feature of human personality. The biological concept of adaptation has been borrowed and changed somewhat by the psychologist and renamed it as adjustment. It emphasizes the individual's struggle to get along or survive in his/her social and physical environment. There are many influencing factors for the adjustment of college students eg. Environmental factors, social pressure, role change, parental expectations and college system. Effective adjustment includes the adequateness in home, health, emotional, social and educational area.

Adjustment is a process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. Adjustment is a harmonious relationship with the environment involving the ability to satisfy most of one's needs and most of the demands, both physical and social that are put upon one (Anonymous, 1968). Adjustment is a state in which the needs of the individual on the one hand and the claims of the environment on the other are fully satisfied (Anonymous, 1972).

College students might have some adjustment problems as:-

1. They are far away from their family and their network of support.
2. They are inexperienced in making new acquaintances.
3. They have limited funds.
4. They may be unaware that they are exhibiting a spoiled or "high and mighty" attitude that inhibits the healthy development of new friendship.
5. They found independence but at the same time learning the cost of it.
6. They are discovering that college is not just an academic experience, but also a social adventure.

7. They are beginning to learn what really counts in all kinds of interpersonal relationships and the concept of "win some and lose some".

Adjustment and Stress:

Stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response. But too much stress can cause a lot of discomfort and can get in the way of being able to focus and achieve. As a college student all have a lot of demands on them, which it can be difficult to balance. Stress is caused by an existing stress-causing factor or "stressor." All are aware of fearfulness of examinations and especially about practical examination in a medical college. Whether it is a test or an annual promotion examination, it does cause to lose some sleep which leads to anxiety. Reem Rachel A. (2009) confirmed the general impression that there is a considerable amount of stress among medical students. Perceived stress was significantly higher among female students.

Physiological studies have shown that stress can affect the vital parameters. These changes include increase in pulse rate and blood pressure. The present study was aimed to assess the stress and its effect on vital parameters during academic examination in final year medical students.

For many young adults, college is the best time of life. These critical years of adjustment can also be undermined by depression, anxiety, substance abuse and eating disorders. Researchers are finding that many mental illnesses are traced to trauma, whose damage surfaces in times of stress and change, such as the college years. The statistics listed below are evidence that stress in ourselves or in someone about whom we care – should be taken and treated seriously.

A stressful situation has been considered little to do with our emotional responses. In fact it is our appraisal of the

situation. Along with this appraisal it is also important how we interpret our own body's responses that create our anxiety. In other words it is our thought process about a particular situation which is critical factor in evaluating whether we feel stressed or not.

Present study focused on stress and adjustment and their interaction effect among college students. A lot of studies examined various stressors common for all students and stressor which are specific, lack of time, availability of resource, finance, unclear expectations and assignments' how to study for tests are common stressors. Students who are studying abroad have to face more common stressor like language problems, home sickness, adjustment stress, loneliness and lack of social support due to racial discriminations.

Male and female students might have different perspectives of adjustment and related stress. In some of the studies female students were found to be having higher stress levels than the male students and having poorer adaptation (Bang, Muruiki, & Hodges, 2008; Virta et al., 2004). However, in other studies it was found that gender has no effect in adjustment (Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, & Pisecco, 2001; Sumer, Poyrazli, Grahame, 2008).

Objective of the study :

- To study various levels of adjustment and stress in college students.
- To examine the relation of adjustment and stress among college students (male and female).

Hypotheses:

- There is no significant difference between different levels of stress in college students.
- There is no significant difference between different levels of adjustment in college students.
- There is no significant effect of adjustment on stress among college students.

Procedure

Prior to the administration of the scale and inventory the investigators contacted the concerned Principal of the college and explain them briefly about the purpose of the study. The scale was administered to the adolescents' student individually. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceive. After distribution of the scales to the respondent, they were convinced about the confidentiality of their responses.

Methodology:

Sample:

The sample consisted of 180 students (90 boys and 90 girls) were randomly selected from college of Distt. Sirsa. These students were studying at graduation level in B.A. 1st the Govt. College Sirsa. The age range was 17 to 20 years.

Tools:

Adjustment Inventory by H.S. Asthana (1968).

The inventory compiles 42 items which measures adjustment of the students. The inventory is self administering and it has no fix time limit. The reliability coefficient is .80.

Stress scale by Puri, Kaur & Mehta, (2011):-

This scale is useful to assess the stress level of the students of secondary/senior secondary, college and university level. It was developed on the basis of data of 500 college students. It contains 34 items. The students have to respond how often they have gone through the situations under question and indicate it on a 4-point scale (very often, often, sometimes and never). Though there is no time limit but usually the subjects complete it within 15-20 minutes. For each item scores are awarded according to scoring pattern: Very Often (4), Often (3), Sometimes (2) and Never (1).

Results & Discussion:

Table 1 presents the mean and SD of both male and female. A perusal of the table shows that the mean of male and female on stress are 71.12 & 83.23, respectively. The SD are 13.18 & 12.92 for male and female respectively. It shows that females have more stress than male. On adjustment, the Mean and SD of male are 154.28, 20.24 where as it is 157.21, 23.07 for female students. It shows somewhat better adjustment by females in comparison to male.

Table No. 1 : Mean & SD

Gender	N	Stress		Adjustment	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Male	90	71.12	13.18	154.28	20.24
Female	90	83.23	12.92	157.21	23.07
Total	180	77.42	14.47	155.75	21.68

Table No. 2 : Frequencies of the college students in different levels of stress

Level/Gender	F	1	2	3	4	5	N
Males	fo	9	23	35	20	3	90
	fe	5.5	13.5	31	30	10	90
Female	fo	2	4	27	40	17	90
	fe	5.5	13.5	31	30	5	90
N	Total	11	27	62	60	20	fo=180,fe=180

F—frequencies, fo--- observed frequencies, fe--- expected frequencies, Stress Levels—1 – Low stress, 2—Below average stress, 3--- Average stress, 4--- Above average stress, 5—High stress

Table No. 3 : Chi Square Values of college students at five (5) levels of stress

Level/Gender	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Male	2.22	6.68	.13	3.33	4.9	17.26
Df	1	1	1	1	1	4
Level of significance	-	.01	-	---	.05	.01-
Female	2.22	6..68	.52	3.30	4.9	17.62
Df	1	1	1	1	1	4
Level of significance		.01	-	---	.05	01.
Total N	4.44	13.36	0.65	6.63	9.8	34.88
Df	1	1	1	1	1	4
	.05	.01		.01	.01	.01

df--- degree of freedom
 Stress Levels—1 – Low stress, 2—Below average stress, 3--- Average stress, 4--- Above average stress, 5—High stress
 .05-----level of significance ,.01-----level of significance

Table no. 2 shows the number of students in five levels of stress. They are 11,27,62,60 and 20 in the following levels of stress---- (1) low stress, (2) below average stress (3) average stress (4) average stress and (5) high stress. This table further shows that majority of students falls into third level (62) and fourth level (60) of the stress. Levels first and fifth show very less number of students. This finding is supported by the various studies that 10% to 13% college students perceived very high stress as in our findings 11% (20/180) students fall into the high level of stress .

Table no.3 shows chi square values at five levels of stress. Chi square values of total students are 34.88 which is significant at .01 level reflects that there is really a significant difference between different levels of stress among college students. This table further shows that every level of stress,except level no.3,(average stress) is reflecting significant effect because third level presents normal situations and stress generated in such a situation can be managed easily and this finding is supported by study by D'Zunlla & Sheedy (1991), who suggested that all students in college experiences stress varying from low stress to high stress due to ability to cope with it effectively/ in effectively.

Male and female students, both show significant effect at different levels of stress. The report of APA-2011 shows that females being relationship oriented report a great deal of stress (8,9and 10on a 10 point scale) and this is proved in our finding as 40 and 17 females are found in 4th and 5th levels of stress in comparison to males whose numbers are 20 and 03. Ross; Neibling, and Heckert, M. (1999) determined the major sources of stress among college students --- interpersonal, intrapersonal, academic and environment and they proposed stress management programs in colleges.

Table no. 4

Frequencies of college students in different levels of Adjustment

Gender levels	Frequencies	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Male	fo	1	11	37	23	18	90
	fe	1	13	33	22	21	90
Female	fo	1	15	29	22	24	90
	fe	1	13	33	21	21	90
Total	fo	2	26	66	44	42	180
	fe	2	26	66	44	42	180

Levels of adjustment--- 1- in effective adjustment, 2—less effective adjustment, 3—effective adjustment , 4—more effective adjustment, 5--- most effective adjustment

Table no. 5 : Chi- Square value of level of Adjustment

Gender levels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Male	0	1.23	.48	.04	.43	2.18
Df	1	1	1	1	1	4
Female	0	.31	1.03	.04	.43	1.81
Df	1	1	1	1	1	4
Total	0	1.54	1.51	.08	.86	3.99*

Note: *--- indicate value is significant at .05 levels

Another independent variable is adjustment. Abrahao Andre de Aryo (corresponding Author, 2011) presented an article on adjustment issues of international students indicated that language problems, lack of social support, home sickness, perceived discrimination etc. were most significant factors related to problems of adjustment. Table no. 4 and 5 show significant results related to adjustment among college students as Chi-square value (3.99) is significant at .05 level.. There is almost no gender difference regarding number of students at various adjustment levels. Majority of students (males and females) fall in level no. 3, 4 & 5 (effective, more effective and most effective) in comparison to less -effective and ineffective levels. This finding is supported by the study done by Fu- An Tason, Chaw Shun Cheng (2009) that adjustment level of college students was found to be moderate to high. Both males and females students show same trends of adjustment as they both experience almost same types of transitional factors related with college life. They both have no option except adjust and maintain a desired level of academic achievement to a new social environment eventually.

Table no. 6 : Chi- square values on adjustment and stress Adjustment

Levels of stress –	levels of adjustment		Ineffective adjustment	Less effective Adjustment	Effective Adjustment	More effective Adjustment	Most effective Adjustment
			1	2	3	4	5
Low stress	1	fo	2	4	6	00	00
		fe	.04	3	4.2	2.5	1.87
Below average stress	2	Chi-square	6.4*	.33	.77	2.5	1.87
		fo	2	9	8	5	5
		fe	.97	7.25	10.15	6.12	4.51
Average stress	3	Chi-square	1.09	.42	.45	.20	.05
		fo	1	8	34	13	4
		fe	2	15	21	12.67	9.33
Above average stress	4	Chi-square	.5	3.27	8.05*	.01	3.04
		fo	1	6	14	20	19
		fe	2	15	21	12.67	9.33
High stress	5	Chi-square	.05	5.4*	2.33	4.24*	10.02*
		fo	0	18	1	0	0
		fe	.63	4.75	6.65	4.1	2.96
		Chi-square	.63	46.38*	4.80*	4.01*	2.96

*----indicates significant values either at .05 or .01 level of significance.

Adjustment and stress have interactive effect too. Obtained results are tabulated in Table no. 6.

The researchers found both, positive and negative effects of stress on adjustment as listed follows:

1. Low stress found to be have significantly –ive effect on adjustment by making it ineffective.
2. Average stress (required effective level of stress) found significant to increase the effectivity of adjustment.
3. Stress above average(4 &5 levels) found significant to have +ive as well –ive effectives on adjustment. It has –ive effect when adjustment already has low levels (ineffective&less effective) where as +ive effect when adjustment already has effective levels (effective, more effective &most effective levels). Results are clear and supportive with earlier findings as Friedlander et al (2007) found that stress, social support and self esteem has positive effect on the adjustment & Crockett et al, (2005) in bivariate analysis found negative correlation between stress and adjustment indicating that stress inferences with adequate adjustment. Similarly Fu- An Tason, Chaw Shun Cheng (2009) found a negative correlation between life stress and adjustment among college students. A data base article by EI- Ghoroury, Nabil Hassan et al (2012) reported that high percentage of psychology graduates experienced disruptive levels of stress during their graduate programmes and they were educated by the faculty how to cope their stress effectively. Individual differences have some latent effects on interactional effects of stress

and adjustment which are needed for further future research.

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