Perceived stress and Self Esteem among school going adolescents : A Gender Perspective

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Background: Adolescence is a traditional period and it is the bridge between childhood and adulthood. It is the time of rapid development of growing to sexual maturity, discovering one's real self, defining personal value and finding one's vocational and social direction. Healthy self-esteem is the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life, stress and being worthy of happiness. Stress is the major source of many problems among adolescents and it may lead to low self-esteem. Many psychological problems such as depression and suicide occur as a result of low self-esteem and confidence. *Objectives:* To assess and compare gender differences among school going adolescents in terms of perceived stress and self-esteem. *Sample:* 200 school going adolescents (100 male respondents & 100 female respondents) have been included randomly in the study. *Design:* Data collected was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-20 version) *Tool:* Semi-Structured Socio Demographic datasheet was used to collect the relevant socio demographic information followed by Perceived Stress Scale and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. *Result:* Data Collected was analysed using statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-20 version) The study findings highlights significant gender differences among school going adolescents in terms of perceived stress and self- esteem. *Conclusion:* The findings of the study reported that female school going adolescents perceive more stress and less self-esteem as compared to their male counterparts

Keywords: Perceived Stress, Self-esteem, Adolescents and Gender Perspective

Introduction

Age of adolescence is age of identity formation where occupational, educational and personal contexts develop. Adolescence can be specifically turbulent as well as a dynamic period of one's life. Adolescent moral development has been conceptualized in three phases (i.e., pre-conventional morality, conventional morality, and post-conventional morality) by (Kohlberg, 1978). (Gilligan, 1993) advances the understanding by exploring observed gender differences in how boys and girls approach moral dilemmas, demonstrating that generally, boys seek direct resolution and girls will avoid conflict to maintain a relationship (Rew, 2005).

Usually men are considered to be the higher authority and most of the time they are being obeyed. Even when a child is born, gender is the first thing that is looked at. If it's a boy everyone is usually elated, but if it's a girl then a little disappointed. But in today's context a lot of Indians are opening up and trying to get rid of the evil gender differences.

Adolescence can be specifically turbulent as well as a dynamic period of one's growth and development. Healthy self-esteem is the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life, stress and being worthy of happiness. Stress is the major source of many problems among adolescents and it may lead to low self-esteem, poor way of coping and poor problem solving ability. Many psychological problems such as depression and suicide occur as a result of low self-esteem.

It is now quite widely accepted that adolescence is a time of involving multi-dimensional changes: biological, psychological (including cognitive) and social. Biologically, adolescents are experiencing pubertal changes, changes in brain structure and sexual interest, as a start. Psychologically, adolescents' cognitive capacities are maturing. And finally, adolescents are experiencing social changes through school and other transitions and roles they are assumed to play in family, community and school (National Research Council [NRC], 2002). These changes occur simultaneously and at different paces for each adolescent within each gender, with structural and environmental factors often impacting adolescents' development.

Wilburn and Smith (2005) found in his study found"Stress, Self Esteem and Suicidal Ideation in Late Adolescents". The Life Experience Survey, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire were used for the study. The results revealed that both stress and self-esteem were significantly related to suicidal ideation and low self esteem and stressful life events significantly predict suicidal ideation.

Objectives:

1. To assess and compare perceived stress and self- esteem among school going adolescents: a gender perspective.

2. To assess and compare perceived stress and self-esteem among school going adolescents in terms of perceived stress

3. To assess and compare the gender difference among school going adolescents in terms of self-esteem.

Method

Sample:

The sample comprised of 200 adolescents who met the inclusion

and exclusion criteria. Samples were further divided into 100 male adolescents and 100 female adolescents. The samples were selected using simple random sampling technique.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

Inclusion criteria for both groups

- Studying in 9th and 10th standard.

- The age range 12-19 years.

- Both male and female.

- Willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria for both groups

- Not staying with biological parents.

- Absence/death of mother or father or both.

- Death of first degree relative in last one year.

- Student who goes for work after school.

- History suggestive any significant life event.

- History suggestive of any psychiatric illness.

- History suggestive of any physical illness.

Design:

Tools :

Socio Demographic Data Sheet: Self designed semi-structured socio demographic data sheet was used for collecting the necessary information regarding age, sex, education, domicile, ethnicity, religion, type of family of students.

Perceived Stress Scale – 10 item version (Cohen and Williamson, 1988):PSS-4 is an economical and simple psychological instrument that measures the degree to which situations in one's life over the past month are appraised as stressful. The questions are of a general nature and items are designed to detect how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives, e.g. "How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?" and, "How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?". Students responded on a five-point scale (0="never", 1="almost never", 2="sometimes", 3="fairly often", 4="very often"). Items were recorded so that higher scores indicated more perceived stress. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.74 (Germany), 0.75 (Poland), 0.67 (Bulgaria), 0.50 (UK) and 0.54 (Slovakia). The PSS score was obtained by summing up answers to individual questions.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965): Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was developed by Rosenberg

(1965) for measuring global self-esteem levels of adolescents. RSES is a Gutman-type scale with four response options ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4), and consists of 10 items, 5 positively scored and 5 negatively scored. RSES includes such statements as the following: "I do not have much to be proud of", "I am proud of myself", and "I take a positive attitude toward myself". Reverse items are 3, 5, 8, 9, 10. The possible total score obtained from the scale ranges between 0-40. The higher score indicates the higher self-esteem.

Procedure:

The Perceived Stress Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was administered to the 9th and 10th students of St. Joseph's Boys High School and Anita Girls High School, Kanke, Ranchi, the aims and objective of the research was explained to selected sample and consent for participating in the study was also sought. The sample was made clear that, the collected data will be used only for research purpose and their identity will not be disclosed in any manner.

Results

Table:1 Description of age and family size of male and female school going adolescents

Variables	Male N 100 Mean± SD	Female N 100 Mean± SD	Total N 200 Mean± SD
Age	14.66 ±1.13	14.27 ±0.78	14.46 ± 0.99
Family Size	7.01 ±3.48	7.32 ±3.13	7.16 ± 3.30

The mean age of the male respondent was 14.66 but the mean age of female respondents was 14.27 and in total the mean age of all respondents was 14.46. A result shows that in family size of male respondents, female respondents and total study respondents an average of 7 persons resides in family.

Table:2 Comparison of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of male and female school going adolescents

Variables	Level	Male (N= 100)	Female (N=100)	x^2	df	P
Family Type	Nuclear	50 (50.0%)	39 (39.0%)	2.450	1	.118
	Joint	50 (50.0%)	61 (61.0%)			
Domicile	Rural	74 (74.0%)	72(72.0%)	.101	1	.750
	Urban	26 (26.0%)	28 (28.0%)			
Ethnicity	Tribal	32(32.0%)	44(44.0%)	3.056	1	.080
	Non- Tribal	68(68.0%)	56(56.0%)			
Religion	Hindu	31(31.0%)	28(28.0%)	6.032	3	.110
	Muslim	26(26.0%)	21(21.0%)			
	Christian	23(23.0%)	16(16.0%)			
	Others	20(20.0%)	35(35.0%)			

Table 2 shows descriptive information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents which were divided into two groups as male school going adolescent and female school going adolescent group. The result shows that majority of (50%) respondents in male group belongs to nuclear and joint family type but in female group majority of (61%) respondents belongs to joint family type and rest (39%) belongs to nuclear family type. Study finding shows that majority of male (74%) and female (72%) respondents belong to rural background and rest (26%) male respondents and (28%) female respondents belongs to urban background. Present study finding reveals that most of (68%) male respondents belongs to non-tribal ethnicity and (32%) belongs to tribal ethnicity but in female respondents majority of (56%) hails from non- tribal ethnicity and rest (44%) belongs to tribal ethnicity. Table shows that in male respondents majority of (31%) belongs to Hindu religion, (26%) belongs to Muslim religion, (23%) belongs to Christian religion and (20%) belongs to other religion, but on the other hand in female study respondents most (35%) respondents belongs to others religion, (28%) respondents belongs to Hindu religion, (21%) respondents belongs to Muslim religion and (16%) respondents belongs to Christian religion. Result shows no statistically significant difference was found between both the study groups.

Table:3 Comparison of male and female school going adolescents in terms of perceived stress

Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-Value
Perceived Stress	Male	100	17.97	4.28	198	3.03**
	Female	100	19.68	3.64		

* Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 revealed that in perceived stress the mean score of female respondents (19.68+3.64) was found higher than male respondents (17.97+4.28). The t value computed for this was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level. It indicates that significant differences exist among both respondents in terms of perceived stress. So the current study reveals that the female respondents found more stress in comparison to male respondents.

Table:4 Comparison of male and female school going adolescents in terms of self-esteem

Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-Value
Self Esteem	Male	100	23.59	2.64	198	3.46**
	Female	100	22.15	3.20		

** Significant at 0.01 level

Table 4 suggests that in self-esteem, the mean score of male respondents (23.59+2.64) was found higher than female respondents (22.15+3.20) which suggest that self-esteem was high among the male respondents in comparison to female respondents, the t value computed for this was found to be statistically significant 0.01 level. It indicates that there was significant differences exist among both the respondents in terms of self-esteem.

Discussion

Two hundred adolescents (100 male school going adolescents and 100 female school going adolescents) were focus of the present study and the aim was to assess and compare the gender difference among school going adolescent in terms of perceived stress and self-esteem. The samples were collected from class 9th and 10th students of St. Joseph's Boys High School and Anita Girls High School, Kanke, Ranchi. The tools administered were socio-demographic data sheet, perceived stress scale, Rosenberg self-esteem scale. The samples of both groups were matched with the variables like age, family size, family type, domicile, ethnicity, religion.

The analysis revealed that in perceived stress, female respondents had more stress in comparison to male respondents. Present study are in agreement with the study conducted by Gupta et al. (2011) on the gender difference on the measure of academic stress and on its four constituents, frustration, conflict, pressure and anxiety. Results suggests that female students are comparatively more predisposed for academic stress and its three constituents are namely, frustration, conflict and pressure than their male counterparts.

However, result suggests that in self-esteem, male respondents had high self-esteem than female respondents. Present study is in agreement with the study conducted by Iram and Junaid (2011) conducted a research to assess the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and self-esteem. The results showed that emotional intelligence and self-esteem were positively correlated and significant. Females were emotionally intelligent than males as p<0.05 and males showed high self-esteem than females.

Limitations

Being a time bound study only a small sample could be taken and hence the generalization of the result remains doubtful. If parents of the students would have also been included as respondents along with teacher, it would have been a more accurate study to identify behavioral problems in children. Students of class XIth and XIIth should have been included to obtain good and robust results.

Future Direction and Implications

Based on present study findings it is very clear that there are significant gender differences found among school going adolescents in terms of stress, self-esteem. With these findings it would be interesting to see the other contributing psycho-social factors such as parenting style, academic achievement, emotional intelligence, etc. and its impact on perceived stress, self-esteem. Based on the present study finding psycho-social intervention program can be developed to enhance the self-esteem and level of confidence of the school going adolescents and its efficacy and feasibility can be assessed. Based on the present study findings, intervention package can be developed for school going adolescents based on gender. Based on the present study more

schools and classes would be covered for future studies. Present study findings suggest that there is a need to impart life skill techniques to the school going adolescents soon after they enter high schools. These skills will help them to handle various life stressors and this will also facilitate them to perform well in their academics. Present study findings would help the school mental health program to tackle the problem related to stress and self-esteem among school going adolescents.

Conclusion

Present study was conducted to assess and compare the gender difference among school going adolescent in terms of perceived stress and self-esteem. The study findings highlight significant gender differences among school going adolescents in terms of perceived stress and self-esteem. With the help of present study findings, adolescents can recognize what is causing them stress and learn how to manage their stress in a healthy and productive manner. Students need to know about the positive ways to cope with the stressors in their lives, and being able to manage the stress increases self- esteem. It may not only benefit the students, but may also help to enhance their academic performance. Thus findings of the study will help adolescents how to respond to stress in an effective manner and increase self-esteem in their future life.

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