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Stress and Adjustment: A Causal Study

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Abstract – Various researches conducted on children and adolescents have focused on the relationship between life events and range of dependent measure assumed to index problems of psychological adjustment in some way. All these research effort provide a reasonable support for the link between stress and adjustment indices. However, it is pertinent to point out that the stress and adjustment relationship is a reciprocal one in nature i.e., the amount of stress individuals experience may also be partly due to their prior functioning (Billings and Moos, 1982). The sample consisted of 240 male students age between 12 to 15, who were willing to participate in the study. Life Events Scale for Indian Chidren (LESIC), Adjustment Inventory, PGI Well- Being Scale ware use for this research data. It can be seen from the results that the number of stressful events (SLE) are highly correlated with weighted stress score(SS) (correlations ranging from .95 to .98). It can be a point of further research that the stress adjustment relationship is cyclical in nature and the influence of adjustment on stress is more than influence of stress on adjustment or voice versa.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is currently viewed as a period of transitions and challenges encountered through a series of passage from immaturity in to maturity of the developing adolescent. These change and transition are frequent in the lives of children and can lead to adverse impact on their mental health. Interest in challengers or stressors, and how they elated to psychological health and adjustment has been evidence (Fabricatore et al., 2000: Kivimaki et al., 2002).

Various analyses of stress and adjustment have appeared over the past many years. Theorists (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984: Pearline & Schooler, 1978) have converged around transactional view of stress. Central to this perspective has been the thesis that stress arise from an individual's appraisal that situational demands are threatening or overly challenging. Such appraisals demands are threatening or overly challenging. Such appraisals are thought in short team, to engender discomforting emotional are thought in short term, to engender discomforting emotional states(e.g. anxiety, frustration or anger) and adverse behavior (e.g withdrawal or aggression) . Unabated, this complex system of appraisals, emotions of maladjustment and debilitation, commonly associated with frustration, trauma or emotional and physical deletion.

The stresses they undergo and the adjustments made are different than those of adults. Goodyer(1988) describes the stressors of adolescents under three categories i.e. peer relation, cognitive development and behavioural response to stress. Children show effective responses such as sadness, misery and anger, or behavioural responses such as disruptiveness or school refusal in response to stress and are becoming more vulnerable (Broota & Misra, 1997; Malhotra et al., 1991; Tandon, 1994).

Various researches conducted on children and adolescents have focused on the relationship between life events and range of dependent measure assumed to index problems of psychological adjustment in some way. Life changes (usually negative events) have been found to correlate with range of adjustment indices, including lower levels of satisfaction, lowered levels of academic performance, conflict with parents, fighting, delinquency, drug use and overall maladjustment(Cuneo & Schiaffino, 2002; Ge et al., 2001, Malhotra et al., 1992; Srivastsva, 1999)It has been that negative life experiences may either accentuate pre-existing psychological characteristic, be the adaptive or maladaptive or alter them. Attar et al. (1994) found that presence of one type of stressor alone was not sufficient to lead to significant maladjustment; exposure to a combination of stressors was necessary for children to develop serious emotional and behavioural problems.

All these research effort provide a reasonable support for the link between stress and adjustment indices. However, it is pertinent to point out that the stress and adjustment relationship is a reciprocal one in nature i.e., the amount of stress individuals experience may also be partly due to their prior functioning (Billings and Moos, 1982). Children and adolescent who display adjustment problems

experience more stressful life events. That is, lower levels of functioning may elicit stressors such as lower grades and problems with peers and parents. Conversely, people who are in good health may develop healthy life styles and be able to effectively manage their lives so as to prevent stress (Antonovsky, 1979).

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of 240 male students who were willing to participate in the study. Thus incidental sampling was used in the study. The design of the study demanded the subjects to be tested twice with a time gap of one year. In the first phase, subjects with age range of 12-14 years were taken with a mean age and standard deviation of 12.78 and .69 respectively. In second phase the age of the same subjects ranged from 13-15 years with a mean age and standard devastation of 13.78 and .69 respectively.

Tests

1. Life Events Scale for Indian Chidren (LESIC)
2. Adjustment Inventory
3. PGI Well- Being Scale

Procedure

The Life Events Scale for Indian Children was given to the parents to be filled in. The Adjustment Inventory and PGI Well- Being Scale were filled by the students. According to the demands of the study, data was collected twice on the same subjects after a gap of one year. Collected data was scored and put to analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Perusal of Table I show that in males, adjustment (lack) is positively relates to stress i.e SS, SLE (correlations ranging from.22 to .24) in Time period 1 which means that poorly adjusted males experience more stress and undergo more of undesirable life events or vice versa. Similar findings have been reported earlier by Greenberg et al., (1983). Furthermore, well- being of male is significantly and negatively related to adjustment (r=.32). Thus, it is apparent that males experiencing negative life events and who are maladjusted are even poorer on psychological well-being. Prior research by Flett et al., (2002) also yielded similar results.

The change in the relationship pattern between stress and adjustment for males in the second phase is interesting to note. There are no significant correlation for the male sample. Probably , These event which had been significant and seen to be insignificant to the adolescents after a years time. Another reason could even be that at the later stage, they do not want to report experiencing of stresses as it would undermine their status of masculinity. Earlier findings also reported moderate correlations between stressful life events and adjustment(Jemerin & Boyce, 1990)

It can be seen from the results that the number of stressful events (SLE) are highly correlated with weighted stress score(SS) (correlations ranging from .95 to .98). In earlier studies, Thoits (1983) and Vinokur & Selzer (1975) found that unit score (SLE) and weighted score (SS) intercorrelated greater than .90.

Table II & III shows the simultaneous and autocorrelation of stress and adjustment indices i. e., those between (stress) and adjustment in Time Period 1 ranged from -.11 to .24 and those between stress and adjustment in Time Period 2 ranged from .05to .07. The autocorrelations i.e between stress at Time Period 1 and Time Period 2 were .89 and .91 whereas between adjustment at Time Period 1 and Time Period 2 were .19 and .31.

CONCLUSION

It can be a point of further research that the stress adjustment relationship is cyclical in nature and the influence of adjustment on stress is more than influence of stress on adjustment or voice versa. It may be possible that if different time lags had been used the results could have been relatively in a clearer direction.

Table I. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Between Stress And Adjustment Indices For MAles in Time period 1 & Time Period 2.

S.No	Variable	Time Period 2			
	E	SLE	SS	Adj	PGI
1	SLE	-	95*	06	-06
2	SS	98**	-	07	-06
5	Adj	22**	24**	-	-08
6	PGI	-11	-12	-32**	-

Significant at .05 level, significant at .01 level.

Decimals omitted

Table II. Simultaneous Correlations of Well-Being and Adjustment with stress Indices In Time Period1 And Period2.

Time Period-1	
Adj1 with SS1	.24**
Adj1 with SLE1	.22*
PGI1 with SS1	-.12
PGI1 with SLE1	-.11

Time Period-2	
Adj2 with SS2	.07
Adj2 with SLE2	0.6
PGI2 with SS2	0.6
PGI2 with SLE2	0.5

Significant at .05 level, Significant at .01 level

Table-III: Auto Correlations Of Well-Being & Adjustment In Time Period 1 And Time Period 2.

SS1 with SS2	.91**
SLE1 with SLE2	.89*
Adj1 with Adj2	.19*
PGI1 with PGI2	.31*

Significant at .05 level, Significant at .01 level.

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