



## Stress among the Higher Secondary School Students – A Mixed Methodological Approach

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### Abstract

*The twenty first century, which is held to be a world of competence, is also a world of stress. One finds stress all over the place, whether it is within the family, school or any other social, economic and cultural activity. Stress is a theme which is hard to avoid. The term is discussed not only in our dialogue but has developed into adequate of a community issues to draw extensive media interest. Stress is divergent as troubles, strains, anxiety and uncertainties. Everyone has had it or has it in one point in their secondary school life. The level of stress on students in the learning process is undeniable. This is because of all the human factors in the learning structure, the students engage the input situation and it is only from beginning to end them that the eventual progression. Stress is believed to be caused by various problems that exist such as problems in physical/mental, financial problems, family problems and problems in their surroundings. Now, teenagers have lots of strength, potentiality and challenges, because of the new technology. Secondary education is the crucial stage which prepares the students for the world of work or to higher education's the secondary education is period of stress. This study was designed as a concurrent embedded mixed methods study (Creswell, 2007) in order to examine the stress among the higher secondary school students. Although the both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time, the qualitative data is embedded into the quantitative data and so the priority of the mixed method study was given to the quantitative phase. The motivation for using mixed methods in this study is that utilizing qualitative research assisted in the interpretation of the quantitative findings. Study was conducted on 60 adolescents studying in Aided schools of Kerala. The explanatory case study was undertaken to incorporate the relationships (Sasa Baskarada 2013). The case studies revealed that students have sufficient stress .DAS Scale was used for data collection. The data was analyzed using percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-value. The results indicate that majority of (78.3%) respondents were in high level of stress.*

**Keywords:** Stress, Secondary Students and Human factors.

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### Introduction

Stress is viewed as a negative emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological process that occurs as a person tries to adjust to or deal with stressors (Bernstein, et al 2008). Stressors are defined as circumstances that disrupt, or threaten to disrupt, individuals' daily functioning and cause people to make adjustments (Auerbach & Grambling 1998). Auerbach and Grambling (1998) regard stress as an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that individuals experience in situations that they recognize as unsafe or threatening to their well-being. However, stress is perceived in different ways and may mean different thing to different individuals. It is perceived as events or situations that cause individuals to feel tension, pressure, or negative emotions including anxiety and anger. Moreover, other people define stress as the response to existing situations, which includes

physiological changes (increased heart rate, and muscle tension), emotional and behavioral changes (Bernstein, et al 2008). Stress is always regarded as a psychological process that involves an individual's personal interpretation and response to any threatening event (P.Suresh Prabu, 2015). In social environment two of its factors namely — home and school environment share an influential space in child's life and there exists a unique juxtaposition between the two. Home is a social unit that exerts the greatest influence on the development of an individual's behavior (Archana Nara, 2014, July).

### Sources of Stress

Bernstein et al. (2008) define the sources of stress as every circumstance or event that threatens to disrupt people's daily functioning and causes them to make adjustments. These sources of stress are called "Stressors". Stressors are demands made by the internal or external environment that upset balance, thus affecting physical and psychological well-being and requiring action to restore balance (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977). However, they differ from the degree of severity and duration of stress; what is stressful for an individual may

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not be a stressor for another. For example, missing some lectures may be stressful for the higher secondary students, but may not be stressful for another student depending on his or her matriculation of expectations. Taking his final exam or session in rush hour interchange is not equivalent to being attacked by an angry Lion, where high arousal could facilitate fighting or feeling. Shattering events, major life changes, and daily disturbances are regarded as major categories of stressors that create demands to which people must adjust. The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievement, is also a world of stress. One finds stress everywhere; whether it is within the family, school, organization or any other social or economic activity. Stress is physiological and psychological imbalance (Theory). It arises due to the demands on a person and that person's helplessness to meet up those demands. Academic Stress in the students can be very tough for the parents and the students themselves. Stress has been tightening its grip on the students, as they have to compete at every step of their academic career in this fast moving world. Adolescence has been described as a period of storm and stress (Hall, 1904) and as one of the most difficult periods in life due to abrupt changes.

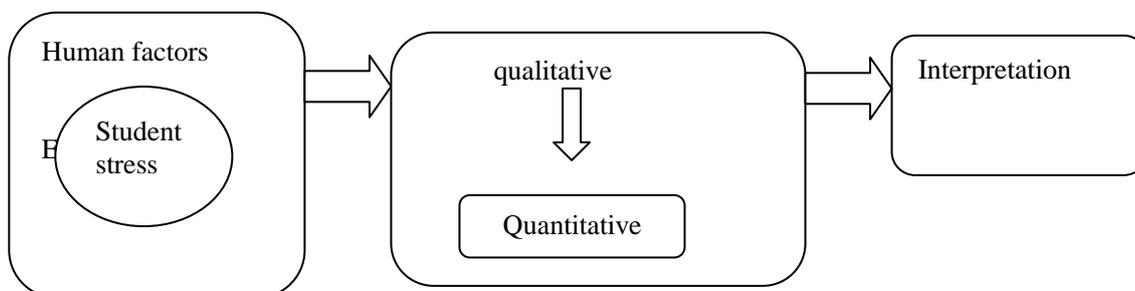
### Review of Literature

(Schafer, 1996 and Suresh Prabhu, 2015)

Observed that the most irritating daily hassles were usually school-related stressors such as constant pressure

of studying, too little time, writing term papers, taking tests, future plans and boring instructor. Youth today are living in an increasingly anxiety ridden atmosphere (Nalini, 1997). A human being whether a child, adult, male, female, employed or unemployed each one is facing stress in his/her own way. It is the human environment to face the challenges bravely or to get away from it. All this varies from person to person. Any challenge that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual becomes stress. Rapid global change is altering the experience of adolescents, presenting new opportunities and challenges to young people's health and well-being. Adolescents' experiences around the world may differ depending upon their gender, family, schools and peers. (Brown & Larson, 2002, Larson & Wilson, 2004). This study shows that, the sample consisted of 200 Government Senior Secondary School students selected randomly from Ludhiana District of Punjab, India. The sample was equally categorized between Boys- Girls and Rural- Urban students. The results revealed that there exists no significant relationship between Stress Management and Socio-Economic Status of Government Senior Secondary School Students. It means that Socio-Economic Status does not affect the Stress Management of Government Senior Secondary School students, (Naresh Kumar & Gurdeep Kaur, 2013 January).

### Student Stress Mixed Methodological Embedded Design Model



### Aim

The study was conducted with an aim to identify the stress among the higher secondary school students and to examine the reasons behind the students having stress in their life.

### Objectives

1. To identify causative factors of student stress.
2. To use case study as a tool to understand the reasons behind students having stress.

### Universe and Sampling

The Present study was conducted in one of the higher secondary school of Ernakulum district. Researcher adopted two phase random sampling method. Sixty students are taken for the study through lottery

method.

### Research Design

This study was designed as a concurrent embedded mixed methods study (Scholz & Tietje, 2002; Yin 2003; Creswell et al, 2007 & 2008) in order to examine the stress among the higher secondary school students. Researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data either sequentially or concurrently with one form of data playing a supporting role. The concurrent (as one-phase embedded designs) or sequential (two phase embedded designs) and the quantitative and qualitative data are used to answer different research questions within the study, (Creswell, 2007). The both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time or simultaneously, the

qualitative data is embedded into the quantitative data and so the priority of the mixed method study was given to the quantitative phase. The motivation for using mixed methods in this study is that utilizing qualitative research assisted in the interpretation of the quantitative findings (Lieberman, 2005 ; Creswell, Shope, Plano, Clark, & Green, 2006; Robert and Timothy, 2011 ;Anne Kanga, Lucy N. Njeru, Esther Wachera & Jedidah Rutere , 2015). An embedded case study methodology provides a means of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods into a single phase.

#### Tools of Data Collection

A standardized scaled developed by DASS

(1995) was used to measure the stress among the higher secondary students. This is based on 0-3 point scale of 4 items. The reliability value for the DASS scale is Alpha 0.93 (0.86). These results show that the DASS is a valid and reliable instrument.

In embedded case study, qualitative data about the individual is collected through in-depth interviews from the individual or detailed document reviews. Case Studies using structured open ended questions were used to understand and highlight the reasons for the stress among students. Interview Schedule was the method adopted to understand the reasons for their stress.

#### Findings: Quantitative Analysis

**Table I.** Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents

S.no	variables	No. Respondents 60	Percentage (%)
1	Age 16 ,17	30 + 30	100
2	Sex a)male b) female	a)28 32 b)32 28	53.3 46.7
3	Standard of education-11 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup>	30 +30	100
4	Type of family a)joint b) nuclear	a)22 b)38	36.7 63.3
5	Birth order a)1 <sup>st</sup> b)2 <sup>nd</sup> c)3 <sup>rd</sup> d)4 <sup>th</sup>	a)37 b)15 c)4 d)4	61.7 25 6.7 6.7
6	Extracurricular activity a)NSS b) guide c) scout d) club	a)8 b)2 c)1 d)49	13.3 3.3 1.7 81.7
7	Monthly Income a)Rs.5000 to 15000 b)Rs.16000 to 25000 c) Rs.26000 to 35000 d)Rs.36000 & above	a)25 b)26 c)7 d)2	41.7 43.3 11.7 3.3

Respondents were at the age of 16. More than half (53.3%) of the respondents were females and another less than half (46.7%) were males. Majority (63.3%) of the respondents were from nuclear family and more than one third (36.7%) from joint family. Majority of the respondents were (61.7%) in first birth order

remaining (25%, 6.7 %,.) were second, third and fourth in birth order. Vast Majority (81.7%) of the respondents have membership in nature club remaining in NSS, Guide & Scout. Less than half (43.3%) of the respondent's parent having Rs.16000 to 25000 per month.

**Table II.** Level of stress of the respondents

S.No	Level of Stress	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Low	1	1.7
2	Medium	12	20
3	High	47	78.3
----	Total	60	100

Majority (78.3) of the respondents are having high level of stress. One fifth (20%) of the respondents

facing medium level of stress. And the remaining (1.7%) of the respondents facing low level of stress.

**Table III.** Difference between gender and stress of the respondents

S.No	Level of stress	Mean	S.D	Statistical inference
1	Male (n=28)	33.38	7.183	t=2.256 Df=58 .028<0.05 Significant
2	Female (n=32)	37.82	8.083	

The table depicts that there is a significant difference between gender and the level of stress among the respondents. The measure reveals that the level of stress is higher (mean value is 33.38) among the male and the level of stress is higher (mean value is 37.82) among the females. The calculated value (2.256) is greater than the table value at 0.05 % significant level. Since the calculated value is greater than the table value it is inferred that there is a significant difference between gender and level of stress of the respondents. Hence the research hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected.

#### Findings: Qualitative Analysis

Though family members may contribute towards the betterment of their children, the achievement of these activities are in the hands of the children/students. If the students have high level of stress. Which factors led to the stress? The reasons for such cannot be answered using quantitative analysis, thus two case studies were undertaken by researcher to look into the event of these phenomena's.

#### Case Study Design

The 'Explanatory Case Study Method' was adopted. It is a method can be used to investigate certain phenomena in very complex and multivariate cases (Yin, 1984.; Zaidah Zainal, 2007). In this case, what made the students have a high level of stress due to their human factors.

#### Case Study Methodology

To present the case studies a format described by B Budgell (2008) was used, which classified the scheme for the case study presentation into four:-

- Introduction - Describes the context of the case.
- Case Presentation - Why the case study was undertaken and what were the research questions?
- Outcome - The reasons behind the occurrences of the phenomenon that was to be studied.

d) Discussion - Summarization of the presented case study.

#### Case Study 1

##### Introduction

The present study revealed that, Mr.D is a 17 year old male student living with his parents and one sibling. He is studying 12<sup>th</sup> standard Aided higher secondary school. His subject is commerce. He had 89% in 10<sup>th</sup> standard. His parents were working in public sector. They are in financially and socially quite well. Younger sister is 12 years old. Every day he used to wake up at 6.00 am for going for tuition. He was very interested to go for play even during the exam. He was telling; my grandmother took care of me till I was in 10<sup>th</sup> standard. She given to him lot of freedom or he himself was granted freedom.

##### Case presentation

There were many questions to be answered as to why Mr. D had showing careless and stressful behaviors in the class room and home, because the findings appeared differing as he appeared to be very careful and received a good percentage in tenth standard. He was telling; my grandmother took care of me till I was in 10<sup>th</sup> standard. She given to him lot of freedom or he himself was granted freedom. Father is a drunkard and always quarrelling with mom and outside people too. During his childhood, he had received many things from parents. But now they are denying many things due to his character. Last two years he was hearing from parents cursing words towards him. Then questions moved on the track of academic performance and its association with home environment. His friends are mostly from outside the school campus, than elder him. He was not interest to tell about his parents. They were denied to me all the care and love from as a parental role. In school, he was a repeated fighting with other students and stolen money from others.

## Outcome

The case study revealed that Mr. D. felt that his home factors and the syllabuses were very congested. The respondent said “I used to go for tuition. Last year, my result was not bad, but now I am scaring about myself. This year very difficult because of two reasons, one my home factors and second one my peer group. Even though, he comes out his home going for tuition, not attending the classes regularly. Now he addicted to chain smoking. He can’t concentrate his studies.

## Discussions

The study clearly highlights that personal attributes such as home factors & peer groups were of a great extent influencing Mr. D's active involvement of studies. Though, Mr. Z did not care about identification he felt that the coming public exam, how he can write. The study also highlighted that about his environment, were not to an immense amount supportive.

## Case Study 2

### Introduction

The case study with Ms.E is a 17 year old female student living with her mother and grandparents. She is studying 12<sup>th</sup> standard Aided secondary school. Her subject is Bio-Mathematics. She had 94% in 10<sup>th</sup> standard. Mother is doing business.

### Case Presentation

The researcher finds that recognize the factors that led to the respondent academic performance associate with stress. Why did this take place and was there overload work on her, and to what level was there support with her home and school environment. She was telling about her parents. They were divorced, when she was two year old. Her parents had many problems among themselves. Her mother told to her no need to go past, if her mother is remembering, she became an anxious. Economically she is in good. So she won't ask anything to her mother. But her mother told to her, study well and gains good score. Till 10<sup>th</sup> standard she obeyed her mother. She wants to become an artist and without the permission of mother, she was drew pictures. But her mother doesn't like an artist. "She considers painting a waste of time. She wants me to study Physics, Chemistry, Maths, Biology, and become an engineer or a doctor. Ms.E was used to wake up at 5.30 am for study. She didn't have close friends till 10<sup>th</sup> standard. The last two years had many changes in her life. She falls in love. Family members were telling about her higher studies. Especially her mother was insisting in studies.

## Outcome

Ms. E felt that even if there were suitable situation for studies, she was not satisfied. She confirmed, “Her family members feel that she was waste her time”. She affirmed that she did not feel like getting involved with family because they would compel her because of her good talent over the subjects in which

they felt especially anxious. They frequently inspect her daily interactions too. She declared that she wanted to spend more time in serene environment. Her mother being a business woman had no time for the family. This was her humble request, “leave me alone sometimes”. Mother over controlled family and lover were factors that led to Ms. E, disinterested to studies. Ms. Y. did also mean that right appreciation should be given from home too.

## Discussions

As informed by the respondent, the foremost influencing factor was the mother's over and controlled involvement Ms.E's life. The thinking of her lover and his appreciation also influenced the respondent stress and academic performance. Ms. E, also confidently stated that there should be an appropriate environment in the home, I won't reach this situation.

## Social work development and Social work profession: Issues and Challenges

The applications of mixed-methods research are far ranging from our social work discipline. The social work subject is highly recommended all over the world. Auspiciously, over the years, community has understood that for a sustainable and democratic progress, everyone wishes access to mandatory recourses, skills and ideas to innovate generate and build up a healthier society. Every day news paper sees about the polluted generation. Like this issues and challenges seeing and reading every day.

## Conclusion

From the presented quantitative analysis, it was revealed that 78.3 percentages of the respondents had high level of stress. In an investigation to identify these reasons the researcher used qualitative techniques such as case studies to identify the factors affecting their daily activities. The case studies revealed that:-

- Personal features such as physical changes affecting the students' life.
- The home environment influencing the respondents' life.
- Increase in workload from the school and tuition centre also affected their life.
- There was vital role of peer groups influenced by the respondents.
- Appreciation was also not to a great extent.(eg : painting)
- There was an important role in extracurricular activity.

Though the family and school take great pay attention to the students, it is also important that they consider the above factors. Parents and teachers should consider these factors and suitable assignment of work should be given to students. It would help them for providing counseling to parents, teachers and students too. According to Dewey (1926) ‘Education is a continuous process of experiencing and of revising or non-revising experiences

It is the development of all those capacities in the individual, which enables him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities' (Y.K.Singh, 2007, p.22). The forces of environment begin to influence the growth and development of the individual right from the womb of the mother. Educational process of development occurs in physical, social, cultural and psychological environment, (A.S.Arul Lawrence & A.Vimala, 2012).

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