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## Stress and Time Management in Adolescent Students

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### **Abstract:**

*The present research was undertaken to study the academic stress experienced by adolescent students and their time-management skills in relation to their stress. The sample consisted of 100 adolescents (50 girls and 50 boys) within 16-18 years of age from senior secondary class II of science faculty aspiring to get admission in professional colleges (medical and engineering) randomly selected from various schools. Time-management scale and academic stress scale were used to measure time management skills and academic stress. 2x2 ANOVA was computed and the results supported the hypothesis indicating variations in stress in relation to time-management. Adolescents high on time-management were found to be low on academic stress and also significant gender-differences were found in the level of stress in relation to time-management.*

### **1. Introduction**

Adolescence is a very critical and crucial stage of development. It involves a period which extends over a significant period of person's life. Adolescence may be defined as the period within the life span when most of a person's biological, cognitive, psychological and social characteristics are changing from what is typically considered child like to what is considered adult like (Lerner and Spanier, 1980). It is described as upsetting, full of turmoil, intense, troubling or difficult. (Gormly and Brodzinsky, 1993) It is a time of powerful, unstable emotions passionate and political idealism. (Arnett, 2002). It provides an important life transition as young people move from the security of the simpler world of childhood to social, vocational and athletic functions of high school (Papalia and Olds, 2003). An adolescent tends to become vulnerable during periods of biological, social and psychological transitions. The transition from middle to high school represents for many students a stressful move as academic standards are more rigorous, atmosphere often more impersonal and demanding and at the same time there is tremendous parental and peer pressure to excel. Close emotional ties to parents are challenged as adolescents begin to exercise their independence and individuality. Parental expectations are largely incongruent with their children's ability which leads to academic stress. Adolescents are constantly under the stress of studies and examinations. Kouzma and Kennedy (2004) found that main sources of stress reported by high school students were related to school.

In the context of school, Academic stress means a pervasive sense of urgency to learn all those things which are prescribed by the school (Shah, 1988).

Academic stress is a mental stress with respect to some anticipated stress associated with academic failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure (Gupta & Khan, 1987).

The sources of academic stress include leaving home, commuting to school and for tuitions, getting good grades, finishing assignments in time at school and extra assignments and tests at coaching centres, meeting the expectations of parents, teachers and tutors, having less structure, less time in life to get everything done and organized with little guidance and also at the same time dealing with multiple priorities like socializing, handling personal problems etc. They often feel stress by being asked to do too much in too little a time. Academic stressors include the student's perception of the extensive knowledge base required and the perception of an inadequate time to develop it (Carveth, Gesse & Moss, 1966). Students report experiencing academic stress at predictable times each semester with the greatest sources of academic stress resulting from taking and studying for exams, grade competition and the large amount of content to master in a small amount of time. (Abouserie, 1994; Archer & Lammin, 1985; Britton & Tesser, 1991; Kohn & Frazer, 1986).

Stress exists when the demands on a person are perceived as taking or exceeding to person's adjustive capacity (Lazarus, 1966) Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) implicates that stress in a part of complex and dynamic system of transaction between the person and his environment and stress occurs when there is an imbalance between demands and resources. It emphasizes that stress is an individual perceptual phenomenon rooted in psychological process. The event or situation is not stressful in itself, it becomes a source of distress when a person appraises it as to be a threat for him and tends to exceed his capacity to deal with it. Therefore, the available resources would have a strong influence on the future appraisal of the event or situation as stressful. Thus, factor like time management would protect against stress by altering perceptions of stress.

In our achievement oriented, highly competitive society, students need to keep their pace with the fast moving world where harder tasks need to be accomplished in shorter time. With high amount of pressure mounting on adolescents due to their multiple roles, adolescents need to acquire time-management skills.

Time-management may be defined as the ability to prioritize, schedule and execute personal responsibilities. The concept of time-management is generally defined in terms of clusters of behavior that are deemed to facilitate productivity and alleviate stress. (Lay and Schouwenberg, 1993)

The Britton and Glynn (1989) model conceptualizes time-management practices as consisting of what could be considered inter-related macro, intermediate and micro-level components. At the macro-level are such, components as choosing a goal and sub goals and prioritizing the goals. The intermediate level entails generating tasks or subtasks from the goals and the prioritizing of the tasks, whereas the micro-level components consist of the scheduling and execution of individual tasks.

Macan's (1994) process model of time management emphasizes the importance of setting goals and priorities, the mechanisms of task execution (scheduling, making lists) and preference for organization. Both the models propose that time planning behaviours (i.e. setting goals, task prioritizing and scheduling), attitudes (i.e. preference for orderliness and organization) are cyclically related to each other.

Time management programs emphasize starting larger tasks well before due dates, breaking down large tasks into small ones and doing small tasks on a regular schedule. There are individual differences in how individuals manage their time. (Macan, Shahani, Dipboye and Philips, 1990). Some people plan their time carefully and use various time management techniques whereas others do not. Students who ignore these techniques find themselves in great distress before exams (Brown, 1991). The present study attempts to investigate the relationship between time-management and academic stress faced by adolescents of higher secondary level.

### 1.1. Objectives

The objectives were to investigate the difference between:

- Two levels of time-management i.e. high and low.
- Gender i.e. males and females in relation to academic stress.

### 1.2. Hypotheses

- Adolescents high on time management would score low on academic stress.
- Adolescent girls would be high on academic stress as compared to adolescent boys.

### 1.3. Method

Design was 2x2 factorial with two levels of time-management (high/low) and gender.

### 1.4. Sample

The present investigation comprised of 100 adolescents (50 males and 50 females) with their average age being 16-18 years, randomly selected from senior secondary class II of science faculty preparing for entrance exams to get admission in professional colleges (medical and engineering).

### 1.5. Procedure

The present study was designed to investigate time-management i.e. high and low in relation to academic stress in adolescents. The following tools were used:

1. Time management competency scale consists of 36 items to be rated on a five point Likert scale-Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Rare, Never for measuring time-management in students.
2. Academic stress scale consists of 80 items to be rated on a five-point Likert type scale-Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely and Never for measuring frequency of stress in students and simultaneously on a five point likert type scale-Too much, Much, Average, Less, Not at all for measuring the level of stress.

## 2. Results and Discussion

The results of the present study are shown in the following tables:

	<b>HTM</b>	<b>LTM</b>	
<b>Girls</b>	177.2	220.92	398.12
<b>Boys</b>	116.76	202.04	318.8
	293.96	422.96	716.92

Table 1: Showing Mean Scores

	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>
Time Management (A)	104006.25	1	104006.25	11.8
Gender B	39322.89	1	39322.89	4.4
AxB	10795.21	1	10795.21	1.2
Within Treatment	841959.36	96	8770.41	

Table 2: Showing summary of Analysis of Variance

The present research hypothesized that adolescents high on time-management would be low on academic stress. 2x2 factorial design was applied to study the difference in the level of stress in relation to time-management. Results of variance [ $F(1,96)=11.8, P<0.1$ ] shows that variation in stress were found to be highly significant in relation to time-management indicating that students high on time management were low on academic stress.

Academic pressure is a significant source of stress for many students (Hashim (2003); Olpen (1997); Tyrrell (1992)). Identified sources of academic related to stress have included fear of falling behind course work, finding the motivation to study, time pressures, financial worries and concern about academic ability (Tyrrell 1992). Additionally, students report stress over struggling to meet academic standards, time-management worries and concern over grades. However, individuals evaluate or appraise the stressors with which they are faced. Appraisal is an individual's evaluation of what is at stake and what coping options may be available (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Therefore, the available resources would have a strong influence on the future appraisal of the event or situation as stressful as stress is an individual perceptual phenomenon (Transactional Model of Stress, Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). So, students who were resourceful on time management were able to prioritize, schedule and execute their activities and responsibilities and thus experienced lesser academic stress. Such adolescents despite of the continuous pressure of challenging classes, difficult tasks, long hard study hours, school and tuition workload and above all with less hand holding from parents and teachers were able to withstand stress as they were able to manage their time well. Such students planned their time carefully using various time-management techniques like breaking down large tasks into small ones, starting large tasks well before due dates, dividing hours of study for finishing assignments and preparing for tests etc. Time-management altered their perceptions of stress, proving the hypothesis that adolescents high on time management would be low on academic stress. Students who perceived themselves in control of their time, reported greater work and life satisfaction and fewer somatic tensions and stress (Macan, 1990). And student's academic stress is reduced and controlled through effective time-management. (Brown 1991).

The study posed another important factor i.e. gender, the results [ $F(1,96)=4.4, p<0.5$ ] show significant variations in stress in relation to gender indicating that males and females differ in their experiencing of stress. Majority of the adolescent's experience stress because of the miscellaneous and rapid changes taking place physically, psychologically, socially and even economically for some. The high expectation of parents and teachers to achieve targets and get admission in good professional colleges adds up to the already existing stress. Along with these stressors, adolescent girls have added responsibilities in household chores of cooking and cleaning which consumes a lot of their time. Moreover, during times of emergency, family disputes or illness in the family, girls are expected to render help in nursing the sick which increases their stress. Therefore, girls due to their stereotypical, multiple roles experience more stress, thus proving the hypothesis that adolescent girls would be high on academic stress as compared to boys. The results of the study were also supported by research findings by Misra and McKean (2000) that significant gender differences exist among adolescent boys and girls in experiencing academic stress and girls experienced greater academic stress than boys. However, the interaction effect was non-significant.

To conclude it can be said that the study has practical as well as social implications and adolescents should be encouraged to develop time-management skills and especially girls should be motivated and enhanced in order to control stress.

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