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Effect of Stress Management Programme on Mental Health of Learned Helpless Adolescents

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Abstract:

The present experimental investigation, which is pre test - post test control group design, was conducted to assess the effectiveness of stress management programme on mental health of adolescents who exhibit the problem of learned helplessness in the subject of mathematics. A sample of 200 learned helpless adolescents in mathematics were selected by the investigator, out of which 100 were assigned to control group and 100 to experimental group. After conducting a pre test of mental health on both the groups, investigator had given a four-month stress management programme based on three techniques i.e. changing thoughts, changing behaviour and learning to relax for 30 min per day to the experimental group, which was then post tested on the scale of mental health. The results of the study revealed that stress management programme was an effective intervention strategy to improve the mental health of learned helpless adolescents. Based on the finding, some implications were made.

Keywords: *Stress management programme, mental health, learned helplessness and adolescents.*

1. Introduction

Stress is the unavoidable phase of an adolescent's life. Since adolescence is the stage when an individual undergoes many changes, whether those be physical, emotional or psychological; these changes cause fluctuating moods, increased frustration and irritability among adolescents which ultimately deteriorate adolescent's academic achievement. Demand to succeed academically put unavoidable pressure on all the adolescents, but especially on those who shows learned helpless behaviour pattern. The learned helpless behaviour pattern was generally found in those adolescents who because of their continuous exposure to failure, show withdrawal, lack of persistence and unwillingness to do a task. This withdrawal or unwillingness negatively reinforces the adolescent that they cannot avoid their failure even by putting extra efforts.

Learned helplessness creates three basic deficits in the adolescents which are cognitive, emotional and motivational (Ekechukwu and Isiguzo, 2015). These deficit can decline adolescents desire to learn. The motivational deficit stops the adolescent to learn by aborting his initiation of responses, while the emotional deficit leads him to depression and lowered hisself esteem. Depressed adolescents may have problem behaviour that they express through anger, aggression, running away, stealing, truancy and other rebellious acts (Ekechukwu and Isiguzo, 2015). This feeling of low self esteem, anxiety, anger, aggression and inferiority can negatively affects an adolescent's mental health. Mentally unhealthy adolescents show the sign of frustration, school phobia, truancy, delinquency and stress. One of the effective ways to reduce the level of stress among adolescents is stress management programme.

1.1. Stress Management Programme

Stress management programme is an intervention strategy which involves a set of techniques and programs intended to help people deal more effectively with stress in their lives by analyzing the specific stressors and taking positive actions to minimize their effects. In fact, the purpose of any effective stress management programme is, i) to find out the optimal level of stress and ii) to reduce physical arousal levels of stress.

Ellis (1999) Stress management refers to the effort to control and reduce the tension that occurs with a situation that is considered difficult or unmanageable.

Pesic (2007) define stress management as our conscious knowledge of things that effect stress and the methods to divert stress harmlessly out of our body system. It is also a set of techniques that professionals do to help us in coping with various kinds of stress.

1.2. Mental Health

Mental health is soul from which the finest flowers grow. It includes a sound, efficient mind and controlled emotions (Kaur and Arora, 2014). Mental health which is an important aspect of an individual's life helps to maintain physical health and social effectiveness by understanding his own potentialities, abilities and interest.

Hales and Hales (1995) define mental health as the capacity to think rationally and logically, and to cope with the transitions, stresses, traumas, and losses that occur in all lives, in ways that allow emotional stability and growth.

United States Department of Health and Human Services (1999) defined mental health as successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to change and to cope with adversity.

2. Review of Related Literature

Sharifi and Kaveh (2013) in their study investigated the effect of coping strategies on the mental health of male adolescents of 13-17 years old, living in boarding houses. Investigators expressed their opinion that teaching various coping strategies as self controlling, time management, how to express feeling etc were effective on enhancing students mental health and reducing their depression and anxiety.

Huli (2014) in his study concluded that the main causes of stress among adolescents are peer pressure, family disturbances, academic incompetence, drug abuse. And it has been observed that to get instant gratification from this stress, adolescent seek the help of media and gadgets. These gadgets, instead of providing gratification, led them to lot of stress in them and their relationships with family and peers.

Nazemi et al. (2015) conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of stress management training on mental health of adolescents in the high school adolescents and found that stress management skills which includes knowledge about stress and methods to reduce stress i.e. coping strategies and physical activities are effective in reducing physical symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction and depression and gaining mental health of adolescents.

2.1. Emergence of the Problem

Since, mathematics is a subject where maximum number of learned helpless students could be found, due to negative reinforcement students received from their parents, teachers and peers about their failure. This negative reinforcement causes severe form of anxiety, depression and frustration, which deteriorate adolescents' mental health poorly. As today's adolescents are tomorrows adults and if these young people remains untreated this stress will be transferred to their adult form and affect their physical and social adjustment to the life. So, investigators felt a great need to treat the stress among adolescents by using various intervention techniques in the form of stress management programme.

2.2. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the mental health of learned helpless adolescents.
2. To study the effectiveness of technique of changing thoughts on mental health of learned helpless adolescents.
3. To study the effectiveness of technique of changing behaviour on mental health of learned helpless adolescents.
4. To study the effectiveness of technique of learning to relax on mental health of learned helpless adolescents.
5. To study the effectiveness of overall stress management programme on learned helplessness of adolescents in mathematics.

2.3. Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant effect of technique of changing thoughts on mental health of learned helpless adolescents.
2. There will be no significant effect of technique of changing behaviour on mental health of learned helpless adolescents.
3. There will be no significant effect of technique of learning to relax on mental health of learned helpless adolescents.
4. There will be no significant effect of overall stress management programme on mental health of learned helpless adolescents.

2.4. Sample

A sample of 200 students of class VIII and IX having learned helplessness in mathematics was selected for the present study. To select the sample of 200 students, a scale of learned helplessness in mathematics was administered on 447 students of class VIII and IX of randomly selected Government Schools of Punjab, District Mohali as required to get the desired sample.

2.5. Design of the Study

The present study was experimental in nature. A pre test - post test control group design was used in this study. The effect of three techniques of stress management programme on mental health of adolescents was studied. These techniques were changing thoughts, changing behaviour and learning to relax.

The dependent variable in this study was mental health and independent variable was stress management programme. A pre test of learned helplessness in mathematics was administered on adolescents to select learned helpless adolescents for the study before allocating them to experimental group and control group. Then again a pre test of mental health was administered on the two groups before the onset of treatment. After the end of the treatment, post test of mental health was administered on both the groups. The difference between the means of pre test and post test was found out for each group and these mean difference scores were compared with the help of t- test in order to ascertain whether the experimental treatment produced a significant effect than the controlled condition.

2.6. Method and Procedure

Investigator had first administered the scale of learned helplessness in mathematics on adolescents studying in class VIII and IX to draw out 200 learned helpless adolescents in mathematics and then randomly assigned 100 adolescents to experimental and 100 to control group. The investigator had then administered mental health scale to found out their level of mental health. After that a four months stress management programme (one month for technique of changing thoughts, one month for technique of changing behaviour, one month for technique of learning to relax and one month for all the three techniques) was conducted on 100 adolescents of experimental group for 30 minutes per day.

Thereafter investigator again administered the scale of mental health on both 100 adolescents of experimental group and 100 adolescents of control group. The scores so obtained from both groups were compared to find out the effect of stress management programme on mental health of learned helpless adolescents.

2.7. Delimitation of the Study

1. For the present study, sample was confined to the Government Schools of Punjab, District- Mohali only.
2. Adolescents studying in the class VIII and IX were only considered for the study.
3. Effect of stress management programme on the mental health of adolescents which shows learned helplessness in only mathematics were studied.

2.8. Tools Used

Following research tools were used in the present study:

1. Stress Management Programme (developed by the investigator herself).
2. Learned Helplessness Scale (developed by the investigator herself).
3. Mental Health scale (developed by the investigator herself)

2.9. Statistical Techniques to Be Used

Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis was used to ascertain the nature of distribution of scores. ANOVA and t- test was used to found out interaction among the variables and significance of difference between the means respectively.

3. Results and Discussion

The following table shows the mean of both experimental and control group's pre test score in mental health.

Groups	Number	Mean	SD
Control	100	34.66	5.66
Experimental	100	32.38	2.92

Table 1: The Descriptive Indexes of Experimental and Control Group's Pre Test Scores in Mental Health

The above table shows that the mean score of both control and experimental groups does not vary much, means the two group chosen are similar to each other on the basis of their mental health.

Groups	Number	Mean	SD	
Control	100	33.07	2.87	
Experimental	Changing Thoughts	100	48.77	2.32
	Changing Behaviour	100	44.14	2.73
	Learning to Relax	100	52.80	2.20
	All the Three Tech.	100	57.26	2.20

Table 2: The Descriptive Indexes of Experimental and Control Group's Post Test Scores in Mental Health

The above table shows that the mean score of experimental group increase after each treatment as compared to the control group; but mean score of experimental group after technique of changing behaviour decrease slightly as compared to the technique of changing thought.

Mental Health Scores after Techniques (I)	Mental Health Scores after Techniques (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	p-value
Pre Test	Changing Thoughts	-16.390*	.251	p<.01 (Significant)
	Changing Behaviour	-11.760*	.223	p<.01 (Significant)
	Learning to Relax	-20.420*	.289	p<.01 (Significant)
	All the Three Tech.	-24.880*	.307	p<.01 (Significant)
Changing Thoughts	Changing Behaviour	4.630*	.163	P<.01 (Significant)
	Learning to Relax	-4.030*	.112	p<.01 (Significant)
	All the Three Tech.	-8.490*	.160	p<.01 (Significant)
Changing Behaviour	Learning to Relax	-8.660*	.201	p<.01 (Significant)
	All the Three Tech.	-13.120*	.235	p<.01 (Significant)
Learning to Relax	All the Three Tech.	-4.460*	.110	p<.01 (Significant)

Table 3: Pair-wise comparison of mean scores of Mental Health after giving each Treatment.

The above table shows that the mean difference scores of mental health after each treatment as compared to the previous treatment (excluding technique of changing behaviour) shows a significant increase ($p<.01$), meaning thereby the techniques of changing thought, learning to relax and combination of all the three techniques are effective in increasing mental health of adolescents having learned helplessness in mathematics. These finding are consistent with the finding of other study conducted by George (2011) which stated that optimistic thinking style is somewhat protective against adolescent health risks; the clearest effects are seen against depressive symptoms, Telles (2010) who described that, that yoga practice improves these functions and also reduces physiological signs of mental stress (e.g., a reduced skin resistance value, reduced heart and breath rates with rhythmic breathing) in children. So, we reject the null hypothesis that there exist no significant effect of technique of changing thoughts, learning to relax and overall stress management programme on mental health of learned helpless adolescents and accept the alternate hypothesis that the techniques of changing thoughts, learning to relax and overall stress management are effective in improving mental health of learned helpless adolescents.

Also technique of changing behaviour is effective in increasing mental health of learned helpless adolescents as the values are significant at $p<.01$, but not as effective as technique of changing thoughts. The finding are consistent with the study conducted by Struthers, Perry and Menec (2000) who stated that problem focus coping is effective in reducing academic stress and improving course grades if given along with motivation. So, we reject the null hypothesis that there exists no significant effect of technique of changing behaviour on mental health of learned helpless adolescents and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is less significant effect of technique of changing behaviour on mental health of learned helpless adolescents as compared to the other techniques of stress management programme.

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects					
Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Techniques	36394.00	4	9098.500	3931.69	p<.01 (Significant)
Error	916.40	396	2.31		

Table 4: Repeated Measure ANOVA to test within subject effect of techniques of stress management programme on mental health

The above table shows that there is a significant difference ($F\text{-value}=3931.69$ significant at $p<.01$) in pre test post test scores of mental health after giving all the techniques of stress management.

3.1. Implications of the Study

The present study has useful implications in terms of feeling of frustration, anxiety, depression and other mental health disorders, generally found in adolescents. By providing appropriate stress management strategies to adolescents in the form of changing thoughts, i.e. enhancing positive thoughts and motivating by telling motivational short stories, changing behaviour from emotional focused to problem focused and learning to relax by progressive muscular relaxation and meditation etc. the deteriorated mental health of adolescents can be improved to the maximum level.

3.2. Conclusion

Adolescents are the pillars of any growing society, who due to the pressure exerted by parents, teachers, peers and other members of society are caught into the unavoidable stress. So, it is prime responsibility of schools and society that those strategies should be chosen and given to the adolescents which can enhance their physiological, emotional and psychological well being, so that they can be the productive member of the society by learning to have control over the stress which arises at every stage of one's life.

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