



A study of stress among students- A survey

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Abstract

Herein, a survey was conducted to study the causes of stress like curriculum, assessment, personal factors, economic conditions *etc.* among teenage students. A questionnaire survey method was used to collect the data. Total 100 questionnaires were distributed among science students and 80 valid responses were obtained. Research findings suggested that 31% science students have chosen their subject stream just because their parents, relatives, and friends has suggested. 11% students were forced to take science stream against their willingness. 35% students wanted to change their stream during early stages of 11th standard. Four major and highlighted causes of stress among students were competition, no free time, academic stress and pressure from family to get good grades. Finally, remedial measures were suggested for the students which can help them to fight against stress and to concentrate on their studies.

Keywords: Stress; Teenage; Students; Survey; Remedies

1. Introduction

Stress is a state of physiological or psychological imbalance. Whenever we find that our body is not able to do what our mind wants then arise a feeling of stress. Stress is the negative state of mind. It may be physical or mental. Stress is an integral part of everyone's life. Stress has nothing to do with age, income, and gender. If a person is rich and wealthy even then he or she may be stressed. Male as well as female both may be under stress. Only the type of stress will be different. The biggest issue is the stress among teenagers because most of the time teenagers do not share it with anyone and it leads to drastic situations and results. Stress can be a good motivator if handled carefully. But it can destroy one's life if neither properly managed nor discussed with anyone else. Some of the major causes of stress among the teenagers include;

Competition: Competition is so high that teens are under extreme pressure for getting a top position either to get a scholarship to meet higher educational expenses or to get a seat in desired discipline and reputed educational institutions.

Social stress and relationship: Students have to face social stress as well. When they enter college life, a totally new, fully open and exposed environment is experienced by them which is quite different from a secured and safe environment of the school.

Examination or evaluation system- The evaluation system in our country has many loopholes. Evaluation of answer sheets is subjective. Besides all, the students are evaluated on the basis of scheduled three hours performance for their full academic session.

Academic stress: It is one of the major causes of stress among teenage students. Coursework can be very demanding. Overcrowded classrooms, semester system, non-satisfactory academic results, preparation for tests and lack of interest in a particular subject may be some types of academic stresses which are faced by students.

Divorcing Parents – In past, this problem was not so common but nowadays, divorced or separated parents might be a very common cause of stress among teens. Issues like the divorce of parent or step-parents may be upsetting for teens leading to depression.

Heredity Problem- Heredity problem of stress and depression may be genetic in some people. A person is more susceptible to this problem if his or her parents or relatives in blood relation are suffering from stress and depression.

Feeling of Helplessness – Teens are commonly depressed by the things on which they have no control at all. They feel helpless and powerless in such type of situation which throws them into a spiral of depression.

Lack of emotional bonding: Teens may be getting every type of facility at their home, they may have full financial support from their parents but they need emotional support at every level of their life. Sometimes in the absence of such type of bonding students may get depressed.

Today is the world of competition. Everybody is competing to prove oneself best and so is the situation of students. Student life is full of stress and worries because every student wants to be a topper. But those who do not succeed may feel depressed. If situation pertains to a longer time, the thought of ending the life and committing the suicide may infect the thinking of the student. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among students between the ages of 10 to 14 years. In every 90 minutes, a teenager tries to commit suicide in India (Singh, 2012). Suicides committed by students at Kota represent the seriousness of the issue. 57 students committed suicide in the Kota in last five years (Poonam, 2016). 30 students committed suicide in the Kota during 2015 only (Khan, 2015). This number is so big that it can be considered as an alarming situation. Main reason for these suicides is considered to be the pressure built on the students from the side of their parents as well as teachers to get good marks in the national board examinations, especially in 12th standard as these grades help the students to get

admission in institutions of high reputes. Even employment opportunities are also affected by the scores of a candidate. Students are under undue pressure at home and sometimes being unable to control the stress. Suicide becomes the only way out for them. According to a report, the reason for 2,471 suicides was "failure in the examination" (Mukunth, 2014).

2. Objectives

The objectives of the present research are:

- To investigate the major causes of stress among science students of senior secondary level
- To investigate the various effects of stress on the students and
- To evaluate the need of extra coaching for students

3. Research methodology

A questionnaire was framed comprising 27 simple and general questions. Questionnaires were personally distributed among 100 students of science stream belonging to different public schools in Jalandhar district of Punjab. Only 80 questionnaires were received back.

4. General information of the students

50% of the students were male and 50% were female. All the students were between the ages of 16 to 18 years. 44% students were from the medical stream, 55% non-medical stream and 1% from the super-medical stream.

5. Analysis and Results

After matriculation, the most crucial and decisive stage of building a career begins. Selection of right subject stream opens the doors to bright long-term career perspective and has long lasting futuristic effects. In contrast, a wrong selection of subject in 11th standard due to lack of knowledge may result in some worst consequences. At this stage of life parents, relatives, friends, and other near ones generally suggest the students for opting the subject streams. Their suggestions are generally based on the grades which the students earn in the 10th standard. Medical, non-medical, commerce and humanity streams are suggested for very good, good, average and below average grades, respectively. In some of the instances, students are generally not consulted for what they want to be in life. Hence, it becomes very important for the students to choose the stream carefully for better career prospects in future (Mausumi, 2015).

Figure I shows that 69% students have taken their subject stream by their own choice while 23% students choose science stream on an advice of their parents. Only 3.8% students were influenced by their friends and relatives each.

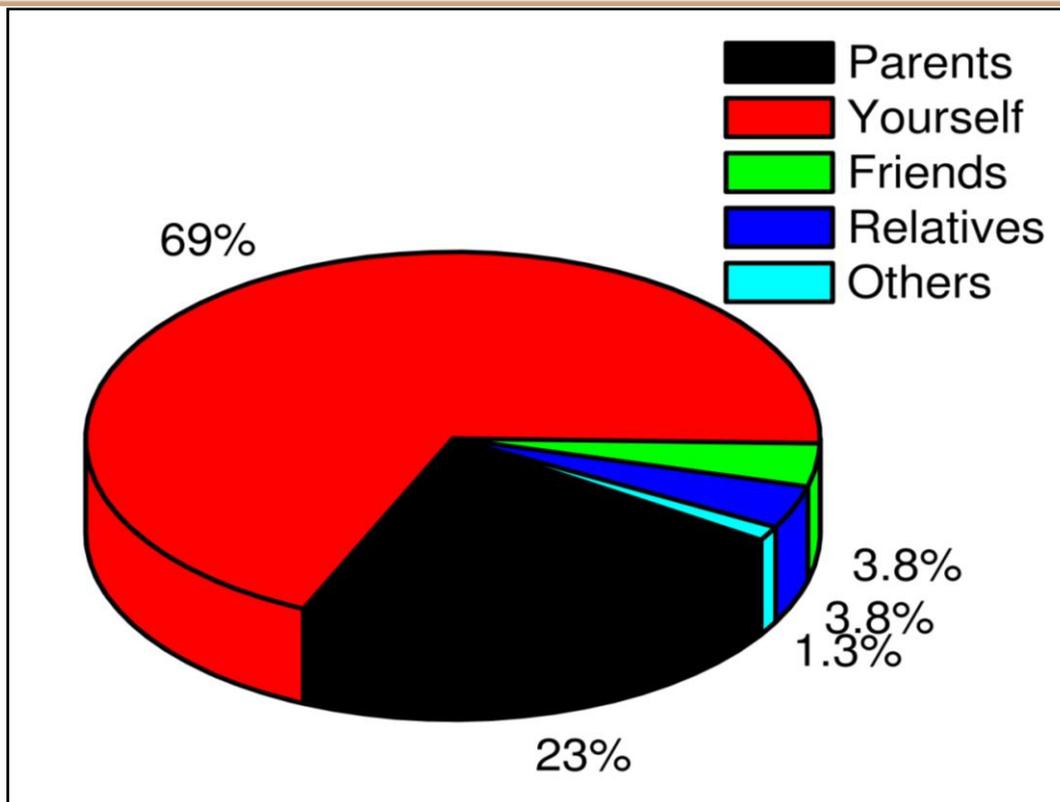


Figure I. Pie chart representing the role of different influencing factors in choosing subject streams.

Figure II shows that 78% students have chosen their subjects independently without any external force while 11% students were forced to take their subjects against their willingness. Remaining 11% were not sure regarding whether they were forced or not. This percentage of students forced to opt their subject stream is alarming one. Parents and relatives should be cautioned against imposing their own views and goals on their wards. Excessive parental control may result in some drastic negative outcomes. The role of a parent must be simply a facilitator rather than a dictator in their child's career journey. Wards should be allowed to think independently and should also have freedom for selecting an appropriate career for themselves (Mudassar, 2012).

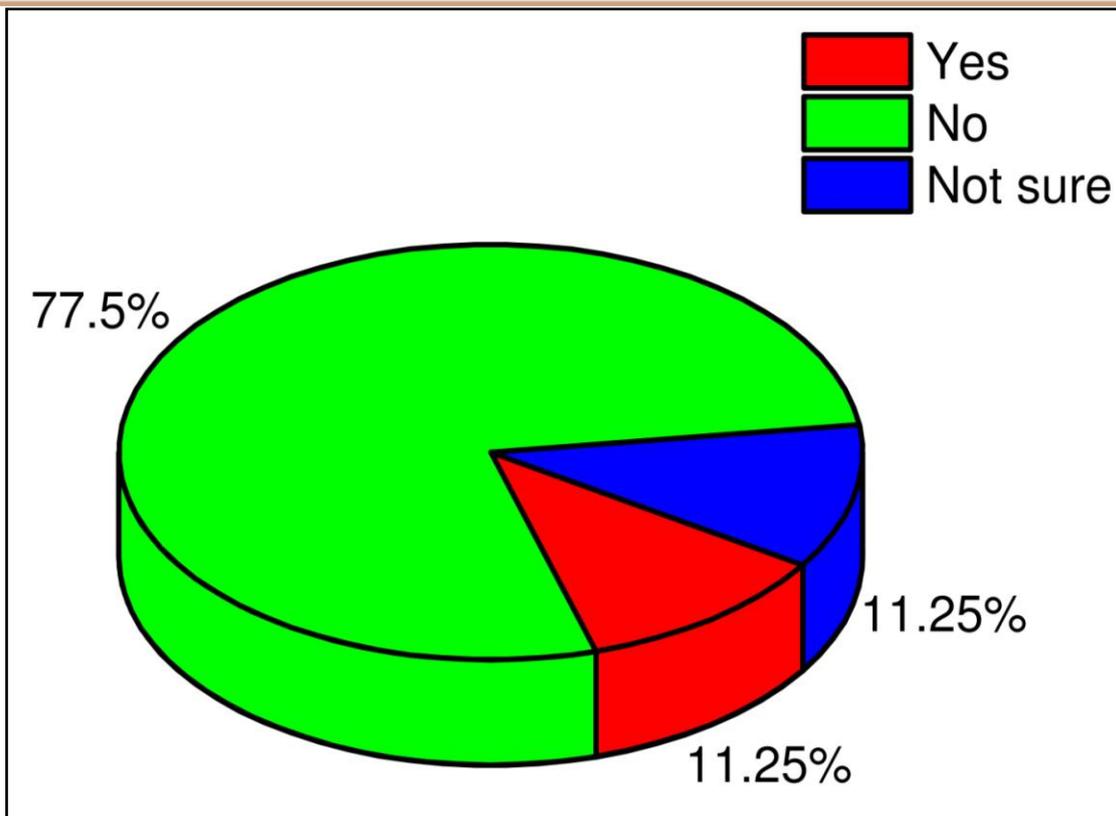


Figure II. Pie chart representing the percentage of different categories of students depending upon their subject selection criteria.

It was further found that 65% students wanted to continue with their present stream while 35% students wanted to change their stream during early stages of 11th standard. However, they retained the same stream after proper guidance from their parents and teachers.

Figure III shows that there are four major causes of stress among students which include competition, no free time, academic stress and pressure from family to get good grades while extra coaching, teachers, health and social pressure are the moderate causes. Other causes with a nominal percentage but the still important source of stress are financial position of the family, friends, and conflicts with other students *etc.*

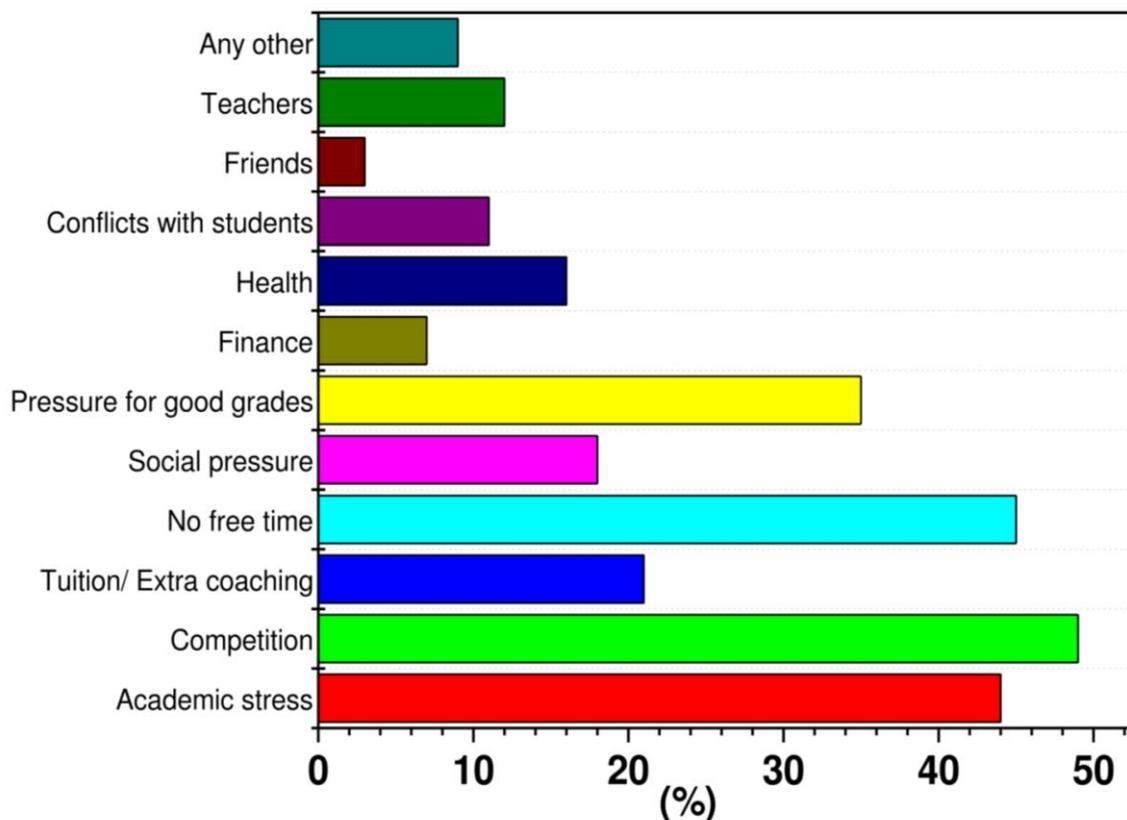


Figure III. Bar diagram representing various factors causing the stress among students.

The intensity of stress does not remain same throughout. As shown in figure IV, 48% students feel stress during exam days while 33% feel stress only once a week. 20% students were those who feel stressed themselves every day. Examination system in our country should be such that the performance of students is evaluated throughout the year on the basis of their regular tests *etc.* instead of annual exams taken by schools. All the students may not be able to express their full knowledge in their answer sheet in a limited time period of 3 hours.

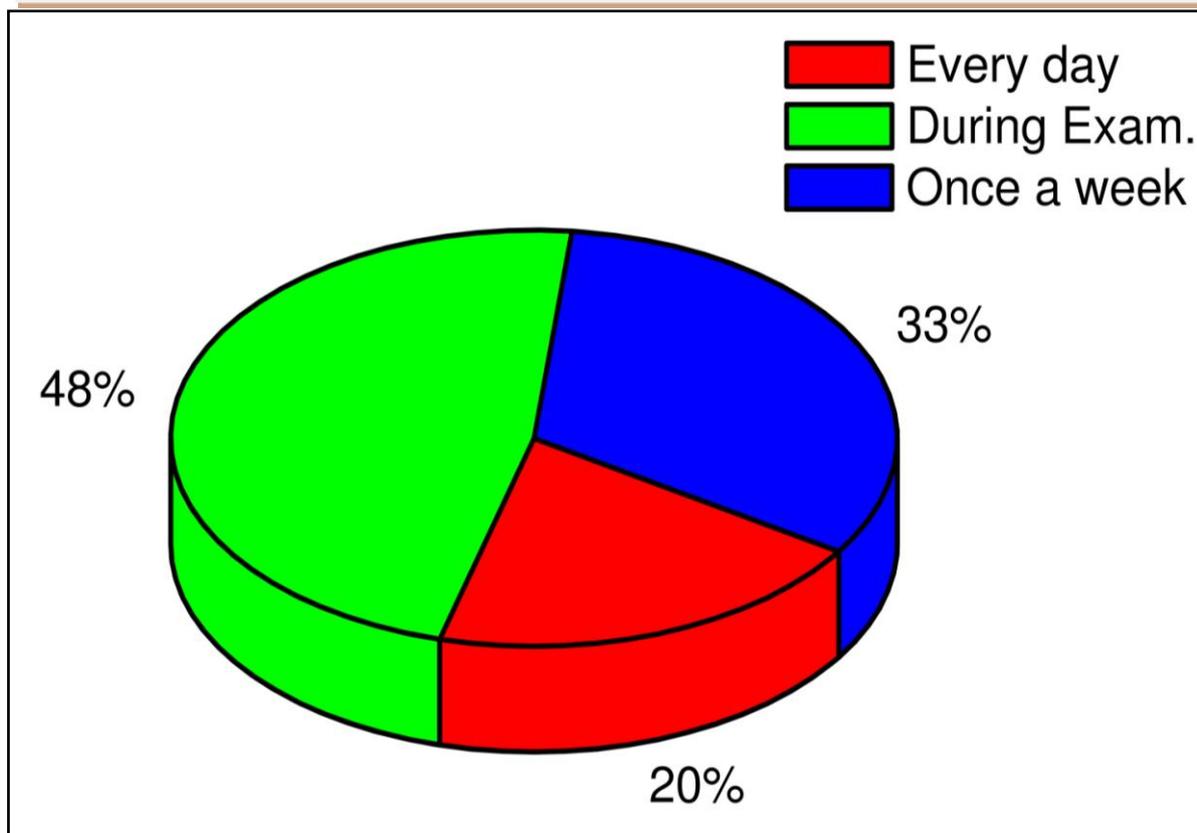


Figure IV. Pie chart representing the stress magnitude under different conditions.

While comparing all the days of the week individually, it was found that Monday was the most stressful day of the week for 44% students as expected whereas the magnitude of the stress during other days of the week was not of much significance.

Stress has multiple effects on life like physical, mental, emotional, behavioural and others. Two questions were asked regarding the physical and emotional effects of stress on students. As far as physical effects were concerned, 36% students feel tired during stress, 33% students cannot sleep well at night while 31% do not feel well. Stress also has a significant effect on emotional feelings of the students. Because of stress 23% students feel nervous, 29% feel worried, 17% feel sad and 31% feel angry.

The effect of stress can be reduced by sharing it with near and dear ones. Regarding this, a question was asked from the students. It was found that 35% students share their stress with their parents, 36% with their friends and only 2% students share their stress with their teachers, whereas 27% students do not discuss their stress with anybody. This percentage is very drastic and needs special attention and psychological treatment. The students falling in this category are more susceptible to commit suicide.

In addition to personal and social life, stress also drastically affects the study of the students. 82% students think that stress affect their studies, whereas 18% students feel that stress does not affect their studies.

Stress should be managed or controlled properly. Indulging themselves in extra co-curricular and hobby related activities; the students can reduce the magnitude of stress significantly. In the questionnaire, a question was asked about the behaviour of students during the stressed stage. The majority of students (70%) combat the effect of their stress by Indulging themselves hobby related activities. 18% students cry, 7% students chat with friends while remaining 5% didn't respond to the question.

If we consider the duration of stress for students then we found that 75% students feel stress for short time while 25% students feel the long-term effect of stress. These 25% students, when affected by stress, may not be able to do their homework and other activities of their life effectively and efficiently during this period.

Factors like the classroom environment, the efficiency of the teacher to complete the syllabi timely and efficiently, way of teaching, extra coaching etc. also contribute to the academic stress, which the students generally feel.

Five questions related to curriculum and extra coaching requirements of students were asked. A question regarding the role and interference of parents in the life of their wards was also asked in the questionnaire (Table-I). Majority *i.e.* 56.25% students were of the opinion that their syllabi are not covered efficiently in their schools due to which they have to opt for extra coaching. In favour of extra coaching, 53.75% students want it to be provided by their schools so that their precious and valuable time could be saved. This will further lower their dependency on expensive private tuition centres. Additionally, they will get ample of time to complete their homework and some other extra co-curricular activities. Counselling regarding career guidance should be provided at higher secondary level was the view of 53.75% students. As far as parents role is concerned, 43.75% (Strongly agree=21.25% and Agree=22.5%) students feel that their parents interfere in their personal life. This percentage is very high. Parents should play the role of a friend and guide in their ward's life instead of being a dictator. They should give some freedom to their wards to take their decisions so that their wards can become independent and feel some sense of responsibility.

Table-I Curriculum and extra coaching related requirements of students and role of parents in the personal life of students.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
You get sufficient time to complete your homework	2.5%	32.5%	42.5%	6.25%	16.25%
Your syllabi are efficiently covered in the school	3.75%	2.5%	13.75%	23.75%	56.25%
Concept of extra coaching is important in the present scenario	43.75%	38.75%	8.75%	5.0%	3.75%
For extra coaching schools should make sufficient arrangements	53.75%	13.75%	6.25%	11.25%	15.0%
Career guidance should be there at your higher secondary level	53.75%	27.5%	8.75%	8.75%	1.25%
Your parents interfere in your personal life	21.25%	22.5%	35%	13.75%	7.50%

6. Proposed remedial measures

1. Stress can be controlled by doing some physical activity like exercise, dancing, walking, cycling *etc.* These physical activities release chemical substances called endorphins that induce a positive feeling in the body.
2. Social interaction can also reduce the level of stress quickly. Interaction with parents and friends can divert the mind of students easily. There should be regular communication with near and dear ones so that students do not feel themselves isolated.
3. There should be proper counselling of the students before choosing their subject stream. The situation becomes more stressful for students when they have to choose the subjects without any interest but just because of undue pressure from parents or relatives.
4. To cope up with stress, time should be properly managed. Properly planned activities and time management help the students to remain calm and focused. Students should spend quality time on their study rather than having the books all the time in their hand without any purpose.
5. If a stressful situation becomes unavoidable, then students should try to use their innovative mind to alter the problems and then should try to solve it in some different way.

6. Fun and relaxation time in the life is also a great stress reliever. It will help the students to handle their life stressors more easily. Laughter is a good medicine which can cure many problems of life.
7. In addition to above, healthy lifestyle and a healthy diet can also help to fight with stress. As healthy mind lives in a healthy body so health should not be ignored at any cost. Fresh ingredients and lots of fruits should be a part of student's daily diet.
8. Meditation by sitting only for ten minutes alone can help to reduce the everyday stress.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the short survey conducted here shows that teenage students of senior secondary level from science stream have mental stress due to different reasons. It is very much important that schools, colleges or coaching centres should not only provide education to the students but they should also make them able to handle their academic stress. As we know that excess of everything is bad so is the case here. Stress is helpful but only to a certain extent. After a limit, it may prove to be harmful to health. Various remedial measures can be adopted to manage the stress like listening music, following a hobby, reading a book, chatting with friends *etc.* Teachers and parents should also play the role of facilitator rather than dictators.

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