RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED STRESS AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG ADOLECENTS DURING COVID-19

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an appreciable impact on public mental health. As a result, continual monitoring of the population's mental health, particularly during a pandemic, is critical. The COVID-19 pandemic is causing an increase in perceived stress and a decline in social adjustment among teenagers, with more than a third of them reporting mental health issues. The main objectives of the present study is to find out the level of perceived stress, level of social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19 and to find out the relation between perceived stress and social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19.

Normative survey method was used for the present study. The Perceived Stress Scale (Sheldon Cohen in 1983) and the Social Adjustment Scale (Darsana and Dr. S Bindhu in 2014) were utilised in this study, which was done among 100 teenagers using a Google form after receiving written consent from the students. A structured online questionnaire was constructed using Google Form, and the link was spread via email and social media. Statistical approaches were used to analyse all of the data. The proportion and frequency of the results are reported. Results are reported in frequency and percentage. According to the findings of this study, the majority of teenagers have an average level of felt stress, a majority of adolescents have an average level of social adjustment, and a majority of adolescents have an average level of perceived stress. Despite the fact that the correlation coefficient is positive, the link between the variables is insignificant and not significant.

Perceived stress and social adjustment were shown to be present among teenagers in this study. Students did not visit schools during the COVID-19 period, and the whole teaching process was conducted online. Adolescents were experiencing perceived stress and social changes even at home. To reduce teenage morbidity, early evaluation and intervention should be prioritised.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 epidemic has raised attention to the mental health of those who have been impacted. It is well recognised that epidemics amplify or generate additional stresses, such as dread and worry for oneself or loved ones, restrictions on physical movement and social activities due to quarantine, and abrupt and extreme lifestyle changes. Students and teens, in particular, have had to persist under extreme pressure while managing formative traits. Because adolescence is a difficult time owing to physical, psychological, and sexual changes, as well as the occurrence of mental illnesses such as perceived stress, sadness, and anxiety, social adjustment issues are a cause for worry. Although the results of the research thus far point to an increase in mental health difficulties among teenagers, the contributing variables may not be applicable to populations in other countries. As has been stated several times in recent history, there is a pressing need to assess the effects of the current pandemic on the mental health and well-being of adolescents, which was the focus of the current study, which examined perceived stress and social adjustment among adolescents during COVID - 19.

Perceived stress refers to an individual's sentiments or thoughts about how much stress they are under at any particular time or over a specific length of time. Feelings about the unpredictability and uncontrollability of one's life, how often one needs to deal with bothersome inconveniences, how much change is occurring in one's life, and confidence in one's ability to cope with issues or challenges are all factors that contribute to perceived stress. Psychological stress is also linked to a significant rise in mortality in the general population, which cannot be explained entirely by uncommon causes of death like suicide. The link between psychological stress and unhealthy lifestyles might explain some of the higher mortality owing to common causes in those with psychological stress. A psychological process, social adjustment might be characterised. It entails adjusting to new norms and ideals. Technically, social adjustment refers to doing the best one can to get along with other members of society. The term "social adjustment" refers to an individual's response to the demands and pressures of the social environment. The harmonious interaction between the individual and the environment is known as adjustment. "Adjustment would result in an individual's harmonious connection with his environment, allowing him to live a pleasant existence free of strain, stress, conflict, and dissatisfaction" (Rao, 1990).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is entitled as *"The Relationship between Perceived Stress and Social Adjustment among Adolescents during Covid-19"*

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the level of perceived stress among adolescents during COVID -19
2. To find out the level of social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19
3. To find out the relation between perceived stress and social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There will have the higher level of perceived stress among adolescents during COVID - 19
2. There will have the higher level of social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19
3. There will be significant relationship between perceived stress and social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

Research design is the blue print of the procedure that the researcher follows for the collection and analysis of data. It answers the what, where, when and how of the research study. It is an outline of the research objectives and sample selection. The present study is an attempt to find out the relationship between perceived stress and social adjustment among adolescents during covid-19, thus following a correlational research design. The investigator adopted the Normative Survey Method for collecting relevant data for the present study.

Variables of the Study:

Variables are the contributions or characteristics that the experimenter manipulates controls or observes (Best & Khan, 2005). In the present study, the investigator aimed to find out the relationship between the selected variables Perceived stress and Social Adjustment.

Sample of the Study:

In research terms a sample is a group of people, objects or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. In our study required, the sample is representative of the population, so as to ensure that we can generalize the findings from the research sample to the population as a whole. Purposive sampling technique was used in the present study.

Tools Used:

Tools of the research are the instruments that are used for the collection of data and the selection of suitable instruments is very important in research study. The use of particular tools depends upon the type of the problem and each research tool is appropriate in a given situation to accomplish a particular purpose (Best, 2003).

The present study aimed to find out the relationship between perceived stress and social adjustment among adolescents during Covid-19. There are so many tools to assess both the variables, after doing a review of related literature the researcher had selected the latest and suitable tools for the selected sample. The tools selected were:

A. Perceived Stress Scale (Sheldon Cohen in 1983)

B. Social Adjustment Scale (Darsana.J and Dr. S Bindhu in 2014)

A. Perceived Stress Scale

Sheldon Cohen developed the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) in 1983, and it is a well-known self-report measure based on the psychological understanding of stress. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is the most extensively used psychological tool for assessing stress perception. It's a metric for how stressful certain situations in one's life are regarded. Items were chosen to reflect how unexpected, unmanageable, and overburdened respondents' lives are. A number of direct questions concerning current levels of experienced stress are also included on the scale. The PSS was created with at least a junior high school education in mind for use in community sampling.

The items are straightforward, and the response options are straightforward. Furthermore, the questions are of a broad character and hence lack substance that is particular to any demographic group. The PSS questions inquire about feelings and ideas from the previous month. Respondents are asked how often they feel a specific way in each situation. PSS scores are calculated by inverting replies to the four positively stated items (items 4, 5, 7,

and 8) and then totaling across all scale items (e.g., 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1 & 4 = 0). The PSS 10 item scale's questions 2, 4, 5, and 10 can be combined to create a short four-item scale.

Reliability of Perceived Stress Scale:

Researchers report relatively satisfactory reliability estimates for scores on the 14- and 10-item forms across a variety of conditions. For example, Roberti et al. (2006) found reliability estimates of.85 and.82 for scores on the felt helplessness and perceived self-efficacy measures in a 66-person university sample. Taylor (2015) found very comparable results in a sample of middle-aged people. However, the unduly strong need of equivalence for accurate reliability estimates is one of the shortcomings of many of the reliability estimates given in the existing literature. Each item on a scale must have about the same magnitude of connection with the unobserved trait (e.g., perceived self-efficacy) driving responses to the items, as well as constant reliability independent of the latent level driving responses to the items. As a result, it's unclear whether questions on the PSS give scores to respondents with high latent levels (e.g., perceived helplessness) with the same degree of dependability as respondents with low latent levels. Taylor (2015) makes an exception, using the graded response model to investigate the reliability levels of the two latent variables at different levels. Except for respondents with extremely low levels of perceived helplessness and extremely high levels of perceived self-efficacy, the perceived self-efficacy and perceived helplessness sub-scales tended to estimate scores reliably across levels of the latent variables, according to Taylor (2015). Finally, nothing is known regarding the dependability of 4-item form scores.

Validity of Perceived Stress Scale:

For the whole sample and the English and Spanish language preference groups individually, PSS-10 total and sub scale scores were significantly correlated with scores on measures of anxiety (GAD-7) and depression (PHQ-9) in the speculated directions, indicating convergent validity. PSS-10 total and Factor 1 ("Negative") scores were strongly and positively correlated with anxiety (rs =.64–.71) and depression (rs =.56–.64), whereas PSS-10 Factor 2 ("Positive") scores were weaker (small to moderate correlations) and negatively correlated with anxiety (rs =.25–.46) and depression (rs =.24–67.46). The Spanish language preference group reported lower associations between the "Positive" sub scale and anxiety (z

= 2.52, p =.01) and depression (z = 2.46, p =.01) than the English language preference group (Baik et.al., 2019).

Scoring of Perceived Stress Scale:

First, reverse the scores for questions 4, 5, 7, and 8. On these 4 questions, change the scores like this: 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, 4 = 0. Individual scores on the PSS can range from 0 to 40 with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress.

- Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.
- Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.
- Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high perceived stress.

B. Social Adjustment Scale

The Social Adjustment Scale developed by Darsana and Dr. S Bindhu in 2014, is to measure the social adjustment status of adolescents. For developing this tool the investigator had to understand the construct namely social adjustment in detail and had to accomplish of the various stages or steps that are to be followed in test development.

Validity of the Social Adjustment Scale:

The scale is found to have both face validity and content validity. The term face validity means that a test looks valid particularly to those who were in the field. The face validity of the present scale was determined by submitting it to a panel of experts. By verifying the content of the test using authentic literature the content validity of the test was also established. It was also made sure with the help of the expert in the field.

Reliability of the Social Adjustment Scale:

The scale's reliability was determined using the odd-even approach. Researchers preferred the odd-even technique, therefore the odd even items were evaluated independently, and the two sets of scores were then related using the Spearman Brown formula. D2/N(N2-1)] is the Spearman Brown formula for determining the reliability of the co-efficient of half test. □1-[6 The reliability co-efficient of the half test (r) was determined to be 0.85, and the formula for obtaining the reliability co-efficient of the whole test was R= 2r/(1+r), where R is the whole test reliability and r is the half test reliability. The whole test's reliability was judged to be 0.84. This demonstrated that the scale was quite reliable.

Statistical Techniques Employed:

The procedure of completing numerous statistical procedures is known as statistical data analysis. It's a type of quantitative study in which the goal is to quantify the data using some sort of statistical analysis. Descriptive data, such as survey data and observational data, are examples of quantitative data.

In the present study, Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The following were employed for analysing the collected data.

- Mean
- Median
- Mode
- Standard Deviation
- t score
- Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Stress and Social Adjustment among Adolescents during Covid-19

Items	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Perceived stress	100	19.38	20	20	7.69
Social Adjustment	100	150.36	155	157	22.87

As per descriptive statistics Perceived Stress has a Mean of 19.38, Median 20, Mode 20 and Standard Deviation 7.69; and that of Social Adjustment has 150.36, 155, 157 and 22.87 respectively.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Perceived Stress among Adolescents during Covid -19 into Low, Average, and High Categories

Perceived stress	Number	Percentage
Low	9	9 %
Average	81	81%
High	10	10%

The results on the above table reveals that in the total sample 9% of adolescents have a low level of Perceived stress and 10% have a high level of Perceived stress. It also reveals that the majority of the adolescents 81% show an average level of Perceived stress.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Social Adjustment among Adolescents during Covid-19 into Low, Average, and High Categories

Social Adjustment	Number	Percentage
Low	22	22
Average	63	63
High	15	15

The results on the above table reveals that in the total sample 22% of adolescents have a low level of Social adjustment and 15% have a high level of Social adjustment. It also reveals that the majority of the adolescents 63% show an average level of Social adjustments.

Table 4. Results of Correlation between Perceived Stress and Social Adjustment among Adolescents during Covid 19

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	Statistical inference
Perceived Stress		19.38	7.69		
	100			98	Calculated value of correlation= 0.1176 P < 0.05, 0.01 not significant
Social Adjustment		150.36	22.87		

Above Table shows the relationship of Perceived stress and Social adjustment among adolescents during Covid 19. The mean values of Perceived stress and Social adjustment were found to be 19.38 and 150.36 and S.D were 7.69 and 22.87 respectively. The coefficient correlation Perceived stress and Social adjustment among adolescents during Covid 19 for the total sample is 0.1176. The p- value is 0.243912. Hence, the correlation coefficient obtained is although a positive one, the relationship between the variables is negligible and it is not significant at 0.05 levels.

DISCUSSION OF THE HYPOTHESES

As per the findings of the study and on the basis of a discussion of these findings, the hypotheses set earlier to be tested are discussed below:

Hypothesis 1: There will have the higher level of perceived stress among adolescents during COVID -19

As the results of the current study shows that the majority (81%) of the adolescents have an average the level of perceived stress, 9% low perceived stress and very few (10%) of them have high perceived stress, it can be said that adolescents possess a minimum level of perceived stress. Thus, the hypothesis, There will have the higher level of perceived stress among adolescents during COVID -19, is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There will have the higher level of social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19

As the results of the current study shows that the majority (63%) of the adolescents have an average level of social adjustment, 22% of them have low social adjustment and very few (15%) of them have high social adjustment; it can be said that adolescents possess a minimum level of social adjustment. Thus, the hypothesis- There will have the higher level of social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19, is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There will be significant relationship between perceived stress and social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19

The results of the study shows that the mean values of Perceived stress and social adjustment were found to be 19.38 and 150.36 and S.D were 7.69 and 22.87 respectively. The coefficient correlation between Perceived stress and Social adjustment for the total sample is 0.1175. The p- value is 0.243912. Hence, the correlation coefficient obtained is although a positive one, the relationship between the variables is negligible and it is not significant. Thus, the hypothesis- There will be a significant relationship between perceived stress and social adjustment among adolescents during COVID -19 is rejected.

CONCLUSION

During Covid-19, there was a considerable positive correlation between perceived stress and social adjustment among teenagers, according to the findings of this study. The goal of this study was to better understand the relationship between perceived stress and social adjustment, as well as to see if social support may act as a moderator in this relationship. The researchers used a survey approach to obtain data on the students' perceptions of stress and social adaptations. When this data was analysed, it was shown that the sample's perceived stress and social adjustment were both within the normal and average ranges. According to the findings, 81% of the participants have perceived stress, 9% have low perceived stress, and 10% have a high level of perceived stress. In addition, 63 percent of the adolescents have an average social adjustment, 22% have a low level of social adjustment, and 15% have a high level of social adjustment in the present study.

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