

Coping Strategies for Adolescents Dealing with Academic Stress

Evangelin Sally Jeyasingh^{1*}

¹Lecturer, College of Nursing, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS), Prince Mutib Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz Rd, Ar Rimayah, Riyadh 14611, Saudi Arabia

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*Corresponding author: Evangelin Sally Jeyasingh

Lecturer, College of Nursing, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS), Prince Mutib Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz Rd, Ar Rimayah, Riyadh 14611, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Everyone is stressed to some extent. The way you respond to stress, on the other hand, has a significant impact on your overall well-being. Stress is defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain. Stress is your body's reaction to anything that requires your attention or action. Students are exposed to a wide range of potentially stressful situations in their daily academic lives, which can have a negative impact on both their academic achievement and their health. Among the factors that may be weakened by academic stress are self-efficacy expectations, which are regarded as one of the most important determinants of student engagement, persistence, and academic success. Sometimes the best way to deal with stress is to change your situation. Other times, changing your response to a situation is the best strategy. Short-term and long-term stress are both possible. Both can cause a variety of symptoms, but chronic stress can take a serious toll on the body and have long-term health consequences. As a result, they must be educated on healthy coping strategies. Counselling sessions and other student support systems must be better organized to address issues such as career guidance, healthy coping behaviors, time management, and improving self-esteem among those affected. It is also important to pay attention to making the study environment in the classroom less stressful and free of excessive academic load (Joseph, 2021). This would accomplish the aim of reducing academic stress, improving academic performance, and minimizing anxiety. This review article aims to discuss the causes and coping strategies for adolescents dealing with academic stress.

Keywords: Coping strategies, academic stress, adolescents.

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INTRODUCTION

Stress has become an unavoidable part of everyday life; anything that poses a challenge or a threat to our well-being is considered stressful. The world we live in is becoming more competitive, with everyone striving for greater success in their lives (Reddy K.J., 2018).

Academic stress is defined as a student feeling more pressure on his mind as a result of his inability to meet academic performance demands. Most parents and teachers have higher expectations of their children, but this expectation increases pressure on students, making them feel more stressed. These stresses disrupt a student's daily activities and increase the likelihood of stress, anxiety, and depression-related disorders (Topor DR, 2010).

Students must deal with a variety of academic demands and expectations, such as school exams,

answering questions in class, and demonstrating progress in school subjects. What the teacher desires is to teach, compete with other classmates, friends, and peer groups, and meet academic expectations set by teachers and parents. Demand can sometimes outstrip students' ability to deal with stress effectively.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15–19-year-olds worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (2019). Depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability in adolescents, with estimates ranging from 10–20 percent suffering from mental health issues. Self-harm was estimated to have killed 62 000 adolescents in 2016. Nearly 90% of the world's adolescents live in low- or middle-income countries, but more than 90% of adolescent suicides occur in those countries. Adolescent mental health conditions account for 16% of the global burden of disease and injury in people aged 10–19 years. Half of all mental health problems begin before

the age of 14, but the majority of cases go unnoticed and untreated (WHO, 2019).

According to articles published by the American Psychological Association (2017), 30% of the students were looking for a psychiatric counseling center appointment from 2009 to 2015. 61% of them suffer from anxiety. 41% depression, family problems by 31%, and 28% academic performance and 27% by problems with relationships (Winerman, 2017).

Stress should not automatically be considered, a scourge of the modern times. A certain amount of short-term stress (acute stress) can be considered a useful component or tool.

However, when stress becomes constant, and a person cannot go back to homeostasis— then the external factors are considered a negative and ineffective; If the stressor remains constant (chronic stressors) – the body will attempt to re-adjust and cope with the stress i.e. maintain the ‘fight’/adaptive response. However, if the stress remains and goes beyond the body’s ability to cope indefinitely, the body’s resources will gradually diminish. ‘Exhaustion’ where the body’s resources have been depleted with trying to cope with the stress.

The body is unable to maintain normal function, which in the short term may mean the reappearance of the initial autonomic nervous system symptoms – such as sweating, breathlessness, rapid heartbeat etc. and in the long-term exhausting and possible impairment to the immune system and reducing the capacity of the glands, especially the adrenal glands.

The physical response to stress is more energy is used and so stored up glucose in the liver is used (sugar levels increase) and so with more glucose, more oxygen is also needed and so resulting in the breath being faster. Blood pressure also goes up and the heart rate increases and increase in sweating. Also, stiffness of muscles, pupil dilates, senses go into a higher awareness. These reactions all occur to help cope with the situation. If the body cannot re-establish balance and go back to normal (homeostasis) after the stress. Then this is when stress is considered harmful and could result in illness – psychosomatic disorders- high blood pressure, ulcers, IBS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, and aids. Also, as psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, mental disease, nerves diseases (Pise, 2021).

Academic pressure is more prevalent in both developing and developed countries. During their studies, most students experience stress related to their examinations, tests, academic performance, and assignments. These stresses have a positive effect on their performance most of the time, but they can also have a negative impact on their health, leading to

mental and psychological problems such as anxiety, phobias, and depression.

Causes of Academic Stress among Adolescents (learning, 2018)

1. Upcoming tests/exams

When there is more than one upcoming test, many students are concerned about getting a good grade or simply finding time to study. Test anxiety isn't limited to struggling students; high achievers often worry about performing well on exams.

2. Too much homework

When the student is overwhelmed or frustrated by homework, it makes it harder for him or her to complete assignments. This can cause a stressful cycle where homework piles up and the student doesn't have the time or energy to complete it all—leading to even more stress.

3. Lack of organization

Students with poor organizational skills tend to experience more stress in school. This is usually because they aren't properly prepared with the tools, or the understanding needed to learn. If those organization skills don't improve they may continue to fall behind, leading to more stress and frustration about school.

4. Poor time management

Students with busy schedules can quickly become overwhelmed because they are left with no free time to relax. As the student progresses from elementary school to high school, the amount and difficulty level of schoolwork increases—and students without good time management skills can experience even more stress.

5. Poor sleep schedule

Not getting enough sleep makes it difficult for students to concentrate and learn effectively. This can lead to feelings of stress for the student when he or she isn't able to perform well in class or on assignments. In fact, studies have shown that students who don't get the required 8-10 hours of sleep each night are more likely to feel stressed than students who do.

6. Participating in class

For many students, the thought of getting called on in class and speaking in front of their classmates can be terrifying. This can be particularly true if the student struggles to keep up in a subject or area (common examples are math and reading).

7. Lack of support

A lack of support from parents or teachers, even if it's only perceived, can add a lot of stress to students. They may feel that a lot is expected of them, but that they don't have a strong enough support system (whether emotional or practical) to achieve their goals.

This is another cause of stress can affect high-achieving students in particular.

8. Transitioning to a new environment

Making a major move can be a stressful time for many students, whether it's starting at a new school or making the transition from elementary school to high school. New classes, new teachers, and new routines can all be stressful for students, and take time to adjust to.

9. Changes to routine

A routine including dedicated homework time and a consistent sleep schedule helps guide students through their day. When changes to the usual routine start to happen, the student may find it more difficult to manage his or her time, leading to more stress.

Stress Management



Parents can help their teen in following ways: (Stress Management and Teens, 2019)

- Monitor if stress is affecting their teen's health, behavior, thoughts, or feelings
- Listen carefully to teens and watch for overloading
- Learn and model stress management skills
- Support involvement in sports and other pro-social activities

Adolescents can decrease stress with the following behaviors and techniques: (Stress Management and Teens, 2019)

- Exercise and eat regularly.
- Get enough sleep and have a good sleep routine.
- Avoid excess caffeine which can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation.
- Avoid illegal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Learn relaxation exercises (abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques).

- Develop assertiveness training skills. For example, state feelings in polite, firm, and not overly aggressive or passive ways: ("I feel angry when you yell at me." "Please stop yelling.")
- Rehearse and practice situations which cause stress. One example is taking a speech class if talking in front of a class makes you anxious.
- Learn practical coping skills. For example, break a large task into smaller, more attainable tasks.
- Decrease negative self-talk: challenge negative thoughts - with alternative, neutral, or positive thoughts. "My life will never get better" can be transformed into "I may feel hopeless now, but my life will probably get better if I work at it and get some help."
- Learn to feel good about doing a competent or "good enough" job rather than demanding perfection from yourself and others.
- Take a break from stressful situations. Activities like listening to music, talking to a friend, drawing, writing, or spending time with a pet can reduce stress.
- Build a network of friends who help you cope in a positive way.

Yoga and Stress

Yoga science is a powerful stream of knowledge that enables practitioners to achieve radiant physical health, a calm mind, ongoing spiritual uplift, and the ability to live in harmony with others (Yogacharya., 2005).

Hatha yoga practices, like asanas (i.e., postures), pranayama (i.e., breathing practice intended to influence vital forces), kriyas (cleaning processes), mudras (i.e., certain interval attitudes), and bandhans (i.e., neuromuscular locks) are mostly taught as physical practices.

Yoga through its techniques of meditation, asanas, and pranayama yields a positive effect in the management of stress in adolescents (Milada., 1994). The processing of sensory information at the thalamic level is facilitated during the practice of pranayama and meditation. This improvement was believed to be due to improved eye-hand coordination, attention, concentration, and relaxation. Yoga appears to blunt the harmful effects of heightened stress by influencing the body's response to stress. There is also evidence that yoga helps increase heart rate variability, an indicator of the body's flexibility in responding to stress. Yoga helps to relax and decreases anxiety and stress.

Pranayama is the practice of breath regulation. It's a main component of yoga, an exercise for physical and mental wellness. In Sanskrit, "prana" means life energy and "yama" means control. In yoga, pranayama is used with other practices like physical postures (asanas) and meditation (dhyana). In a study, pranayama reduced perceived stress levels in healthy

young adults. The researchers speculated that pranayama calms the nervous system, which improves your stress response (Sharma, 2013).

How to do pranayama?

- Warmups - 5 mts
- Bastrika - 5 mts
- Nadisuddhi - 5 mts
- Cooling pranayama - 5 mts
- Bhramari pranayama - 5 mts
- Relaxation - 5 mts

Warm-Ups

- Stand at ease, keep distance between feet, hands joined at back.
- While inhaling move head towards right up to shoulder lines (line of the eyesight too), come to center while exhaling and move the head towards left shoulder. Repeat 5 times in each direction. Pause and relax.
- Lean down head and rotate in a circle (try to touch ears to shoulders) with eyes open. Perform one round each of 5 circles in both the directions.
- Also move head, down and up 3 to 5 times. It removes giddiness caused by circular movement of head.

NADI SUDDHI

a) Starting Position:

- Sit in any meditative posture.

b) Practice:

- Close the right nostril with the right thumb and exhale completely through the left nostril, then inhale deeply through the same left nostril.
- Close the left nostril with your ring & small fingers of the right hand, then open the right nostril and exhale through the right nostril, again inhale through the same right nostril. Then close the right nostril and exhale through the left nostril.
- Repeat nine rounds.

Bhastrika

- Be seated in cross leg position. Place your hands on your knees. Feel relaxed.
- Breathe in by inhaling forcefully through both nostrils. Make sure that your lungs are fully, exhale with great force making hissing sound.
- Repeat the procedure for 5-10 times.

COOLING PRANAYAMA

SITALI

a) Starting Position:

- Sit in any meditative posture.

b) Practice:

- Stretch the tongue forward out of the mouth and fold it so as to resemble the back of a crow.

- Slowly suck the air through the beak and feel the jet of cool air passing down the trachea into the lungs.
- Slowly exhale through the nostrils, carefully feeling the movement of warm air all the way up from the lungs through the trachea and the nasal passage.
- Repeat 9 rounds.

SITKARI

a) Starting position:

- Sit in any meditative posture.

b) Practice

- Fold the tip of the tongue inwards and press the root of the upper palate with the tip of the tongue. The folded tongue slightly comes out between the two rows of teeth and provides a narrow opening on both the sides. Slowly suck the air, which enters in through the two sides of the tongue, diffuse throughout the mouth and move down the trachea into the lungs.
- The warm air is exhaled out slowly through the trachea, and the nostrils and the breath stops automatically.
- Repeat 9 rounds.

SADANTA

a) Starting Position

- Sit in any comfortable posture.

b) Practice

- Let the upper teeth touch the lower teeth.
- The tip of the tongue kept behind the teeth and air is sucked in.
- Inhale through the crevices of the teeth and the air moves over the gums slowly and continuously into the mouth and passes down the trachea into the lungs.
- The warm air is exhaled out slowly through the trachea, and the nostrils and the breath stops automatically.
- The deep relaxation obtained due to cooling.
- Repeat 9 rounds.

BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA

- Be seated in cross legged position.
- Close the eyes with both hands by four finger and thumb on the ear.
- Now inhale and exhale forcibly with a buzzing sound.
- Inhalation and exhalation should be from both nostrils and mouth should be closed.
- Repeat it 10-12 times.

RELAXATION

Shavasana

- The patient lies in the supine position, lower limbs 30 degrees apart and the upper limbs making an

angle of 15 degrees with the trunk, with the forearms in the mid-prone position and fingers semi-flexed.

- The eyes are closed with eyelids drooping.
- The patient is taught slow, rhythmic diaphragmatic breathing with a short pause after each inspiration and a longer one at the end of each expiration.
- After establishing this rhythm, he is asked to attend to the sensation at the nostrils, the coolness of the inspired air and the warmth of the expired air
- The patient is asked to relax the muscles so that he is able to feel the heaviness of different parts of the body.

According to one study, a four-week yoga and meditation program reduces students' aggressive behavior. Another study found that meditation (a) reduced problems associated with maladaptive behaviors, (b) improved emotional and physical health and psychological well-being, (c) reduced the frequency of thought, (d) reduced substance abuse, and (e) improved overall quality of life. Transcendental meditation reduces stress and enhances academic performance (Pestonjee DM, 1998).

To alleviate academic stress, mindfulness meditation is a straightforward, safe, and easy-to-implement and adopt solution. With these forms of natural treatment techniques, clinical and community health nurses should be aware of the importance of academic stress and coping strategies (Kauts, 2009).

CONCLUSION

It is suggested that schools develop counseling centers and implement upgraded services such as social support groups for students by the counseling experts periodically. This will allow students to feel at ease and free to express their emotions. It is also vital to educate students on the negative consequences of stress. Teachers can also help students choose the best stress-reduction strategies by mentoring and guiding them. Interactive academic sessions on stress management can further encourage medical students to identify each and every problematic issue. This would achieve the goal of reducing academic stress, adopting healthy academic stress coping behaviors, improving academic performance, and minimizing anxiety among those considering future professional careers.

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