

A Study of Stress Level among Adolescents in Government and Public Schools of Delhi

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Abstract

Stress has been observed as the major cause of problem for all of us. This problem has also been observed in adolescents as a result of which, behavioural problems have been on an increase amongst them. The stress also affects adolescents in terms of their academic performance as it is a major cause of anxiety within this age group. The cause of stress can be attributed to the type of school, conditions at home, peer pressure and the mental state. In the following study it has been found that the major reasons for increase in stress level and subsequent increase in anxiety are examinations, leisure time activities, home environment vis-à-vis school environment, sleep pattern and even consumption of junk food. Gender also plays a significant role in the increased/decreased level of anxiety. A significant role can be played by the teachers to reduce the stress level in adolescents. Compassion, understanding, love, care and a strong bond between the teacher and the taught can play an important role in reducing the stress level among the adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is one of the most important aspects of an individual's personality on which one's productivity depends. An unhealthy, poorly balanced mind will not lead to achievement, happiness or efficiency. It

is generally agreed that it is the person with a healthy mind who is most productive. True happiness comes from within from our own mental attitude rather than from external conditions.

Mental health can be a cause of concern for all age groups, special

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focus is being laid on the mental health of the adolescents, as the adolescents or the youth as we may call them, form nearly one fifth of the world's population (as per the report card prepared by UNICEF on Adolescents in 2012). The UNICEF in its work on adolescents or youth has categorically called this age as the age of opportunity. According to them, young people are resourceful and courageous. As adolescents flourish, so do their communities. All of us have a collective responsibility in ensuring that adolescence does in fact become an age of opportunity. (Adolescence and Youth, UNICEF).

The United Nations define adolescents as individuals between 10–19 years of age.

According to an online study on the Adolescent's mental health: An urgent challenge for investigation and investment – UNICEF, 2011, it is estimated that around 20 per cent of the world's adolescents have a mental health or behavioural problem.

Among the leading causes of mental health problems in adolescents, depression and suicide are the two most commonly found problems. Nearly 70,000 adolescents commit suicide every year around the globe. This figure of 70,000 takes an alarming proportion as almost 40 times more of this stated figure of adolescents makes an attempt to commit suicide. Most of the mental health problems have been reported between the age group of 14–24 years. There has been a disturbing

trend of an increase in the mental health problems of the adolescents due to various causes which include problems related to the sudden spurt in growth, lack of emotional support, guidance and peer influence etc.

There is a serious concern about the mental health of adolescents in our country as well. Adolescents, the future of our nation form around 30% of our total population. Serious behavioural or mental health difficulties have been found in a survey conducted by National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) 2004. They have observed that on an average 1 in 10 adolescents falling in the age group of 12-17 years have serious problems related to behaviour and mental health. They have further observed that this trend of the mental health difficulties has been more in male adolescents as compared to the female adolescents.

The state having made a note of this problem launched an exclusive programme for adolescents titled 'YUVA' to look into the reasons/causes for various mental health problems and ways to overcome them by providing support and guidelines to the youth of the nation. The Department of Education and State Council of Education and Training, Govt. of NCT of Delhi has launched this programme YUVA.

Showing concern about the adolescents and their problems, Ms Rina Ray, I.A.S. Secretary, Department of Education, has aptly quoted the feelings of adolescents as:

Is Anyone Listening? Does Anyone Care?

Adolescence is being regarded as the period of stress and strain, storm and strike. This is the time when an individual undergoes tremendous changes both physically, emotionally and psychologically. A profound and abrupt change is clearly perceptible into the development of the child who is neither too young nor too old. This sudden growth and development in the child is the unique characteristic of adolescence, an age which requires lots of care, affection, guidance, proper monitoring and motivation. It is because of these changes that the child undergoes stress and strain.

A high priority has recently been placed on addressing the mental health needs of adolescents because of

- Difficulties causing distress and affecting adolescents' emotional development.
- Disruptive behaviour leading to exclusion from schools.
- Violence in schools and juvenile crime.
- Suicides and incidents of self-harm.
- Depression due to examination stress.
- Increase in the number of substance abuse cases.
- Adolescents subjected to abuse or neglect.

In the last few years there have been a number of teenage suicides where examination pressure has played a

part. Fear of failure and pressure to succeed is immense as adolescents don't want to let their parents, teachers and themselves down. They are pressurized from teachers who are themselves under lot of pressure to achieve impressive results. Increasing competition among peers forces these adolescents to strive for higher grades to enter various university courses. This mental stress among adolescents due to examination calls for immediate attention, preventive and remedial measures from the teachers, parents and the society as a whole.

NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CONTEXT

Stress is a complex phenomenon. It is a very subjective experience. A challenge for one might give stress to another. It depends largely on the background experiences, temperament and environmental conditions. Stress is a part of life and is generated by constantly changing situations that a person must face. The term 'stress' refers to an internal state, which results from frustrating or unsatisfying conditions. A certain level of stress is unavoidable. Because of its complex nature, stress has been studied for many years by researchers in psychology, sociology and medicine. It is important because we want to understand how it affects the body, yet each person reacts and handles stresses differently. The

worse we handle stress, the more it affects the body.

In order to find out the stress level among students of govt. and public schools of Delhi, a study was conducted. The main aim of the study was to assist the adolescents of the subjective group to increase their awareness about the importance of mental health and hygiene with emphasis on ways of managing the stress.

The study is intended to provide a broad understanding of the mental hygiene and stress response. The focus is to implicate the importance and to maintain the balance of one's mental health and on providing a practical application of relaxation techniques. Perhaps the demands of their environments make them more resilient to the effects of stress. The findings of this study are unique and show that stress reaction is quite different in adolescents.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Measure and compare the mental health of adolescents of government and public schools.
2. Determine the stress levels amongst the adolescent students.
3. Measure the examination stress among adolescent students.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There will be no significant difference between the mental health of government and public school students.
2. There will be no significant

difference in the stress levels among adolescent girls and boys.

3. There will be no significant difference in the stress levels of adolescents before and during examination.

SAMPLE

For the present study, the sample was drawn from government and public secondary schools of Delhi. A sample of 400 students between the age group of 11 to 16 years was drawn from government and public schools on the basis of gender.

PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION

A total of eight schools (four each from government and public schools) were chosen to administer the standardised tools. From these identified schools, a total of 400 students were selected based on random stratified sampling on the basis of gender. After the selection of the sample, the tools were administered. The data collected was analysed to derive the outcomes.

TOOLS

1. Manual for Mental Health Battery by Prof. Arun Kumar Singh and Dr. Alpana Sen Gupta, 2010

This scale consists of six parts containing one hundred and thirty items, covering areas as follows—emotional stability, overall adjustment, autonomy, security-insecurity, self concept and intelligence.

2. Manual for Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) of age 13 to 16 years by Dr. A.K. Singh and Dr. A. Sen Gupta, Department of Psychology, Patna University, 1984.

This test has been developed for the use of school students of class VIII, IX and X between the age group 13 to 16 years. This test consists of 20 items.

3. Indian Adaptation of Saran son's General Anxiety Scale for School-Going Children (GASC) by Dr. A. Kumar.

This anxiety scale consists of 45 items, related to varied life situations. These items contain an element of anticipation of dangerous and painful consequences.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

The following statistical techniques

were used to analyse the data obtained:

1. Central Tendency and Dispersion Measures like Mean and Standard Deviation
2. T-Test

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant difference between the mental health of government and public school students.

The data was collected from eight schools (four each from government and public schools) and a test was administered on the sample. The test adopted to administer the mental health of the students was –

Manual for Mental Health Battery by Prof. Arun Kumar Singh and Dr. Alpana Sen Gupta, 2010

Table 1 shows the interpretation of the data collected from the schools:

Table 1

Dimensions	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	6.11	11.19
Variance	3.94	30.20
Observations	398	400
Pooled Variance	17.10	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	796	
t Stat	-17.35	
P(T<=t) one-tail	9.78E-58	
t Critical one-tail	1.65	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.96E-57	
t Critical two-tail	1.962949*	

* Significant at the 0.5 level

It can be interpreted from the above table that the t-value is significant at the 0.5 level of significance and thus, it can be analyzed that there is significant difference between the mental health of the students studying in the government school and the students studying in the private schools. The mental health of the students studying in government school is more affected or is poorer as compared to the students studying in the private schools.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in the stress levels among adolescent girls and boys.

The data was collected from eight schools (four each from government and public schools) and a test was administered on the sample. The tests adopted to administer the stress level among adolescent girls and boys were –

1. Manual for Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) of age 13 to 16 years by Dr. A.K.

Singh and Dr. A. Sen Gupta, Department of Psychology, Patna University, 1984

2. Indian Adaptation of Sarason's General Anxiety Scale for School Going Children (GASC) by Dr. A. Kumar.

The following Table 2 shows the interpretation of the data collected from the schools:

It can be interpreted from the table 2 that the t-value is significant at the 0.5 level of significance and thus, it can be analysed that there is significant difference between the stress levels among adolescent girls and boys. The stress level of boys is higher than the stress levels of the girls, irrespective of the schools they are studying in.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant difference in the stress levels of adolescents before and during examination.

An informal interview of the students was taken to collect more

Table 2

Dimensions	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	15.09	17.56
Variance	83.47	87.72
Observations	400	400
Pooled Variance	85.59	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	798	
t Stat	-3.77	
P(T<=t) one-tail	8.57511E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1.64	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00017	
t Critical two-tail	1.96*	

*Significant at the 0.5 level

information regarding their feelings, anxiety and stress levels before and during examinations. The questions asked in the interview are as follows:

Questions for the Informal Interview Before The Examination

1	What is your name?
2	How old are you?
3	What is your stream of study?
4	Do you enjoy being at school?
5	Do you allocate time for leisure activities?
6	What do your parents want you to become?
7	Do you feel stressed during your exams?
8	You suffer from stress at home or at school?
9	How often do you have peaceful sleep?
10	What do you think is more stressful—preparation for exams, writing exams or waiting for results?
11	Are your friends supportive and helpful during stressful times?
12	Are you getting into substances like alcohol, drugs or smoking for mitigating stress?
13	How often do you eat junk food?
14	Do you think the amount of syllabus to be studied for exams is appropriate?
15	Which of the following techniques do you follow to overcome stress—listening to songs, going out with friends, spending time with family and eating your favourite cuisine?
16	Are you confident of coming out of stressful situations during exams?
17	Do you share your problems with your parents?

During the Examination

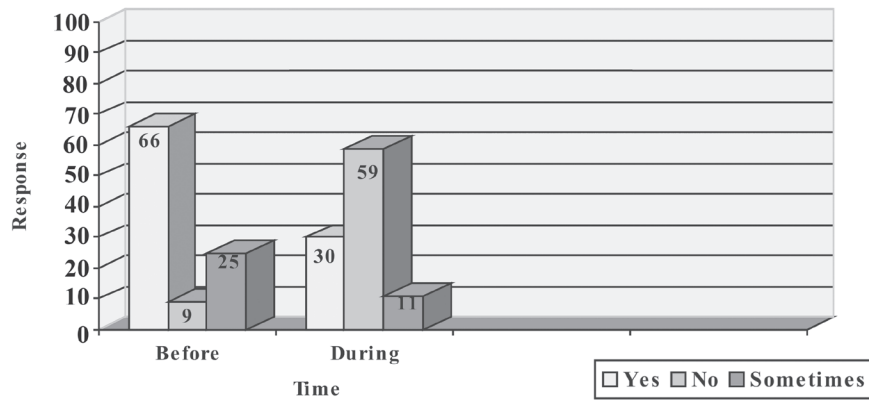
1	Do you enjoy being at school?
2	Do you allocate time for leisure activities?
3	What do your parents want you to become?
4	Do you feel stressed during your exams?
5	You suffer from stress at home or at school?
6	How often do you have peaceful sleep?
7	What do you think is more stressful – preparation of exams, writing exams or waiting for results?
8	Are your friends supportive and helpful during stressful times?
9	Are you getting into substances like alcohol, drugs or smoking for mitigating stress?
10	How often do you eat junk food?

11	Do you think the amount of syllabus to be studied for exams is appropriate?
12	Which of the following techniques do you follow to overcome stress—listening to songs, going out with friends, spending time with family and eating your favourite cuisine?
13	Are you confident of coming out of stressful situations during exams?
14	Do you share your problems with your parents?

The questions were further interpreted and analysed and the interpretation is as follows:

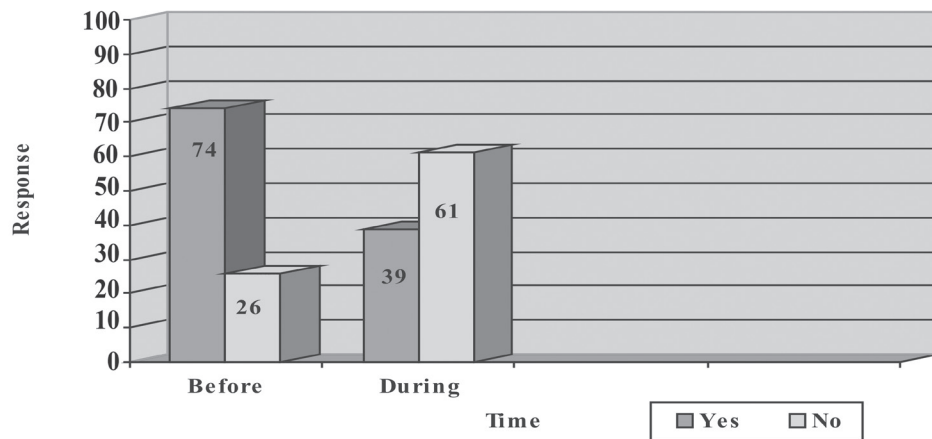
Before and During the Examinations

Q1. Do you enjoy being at school?



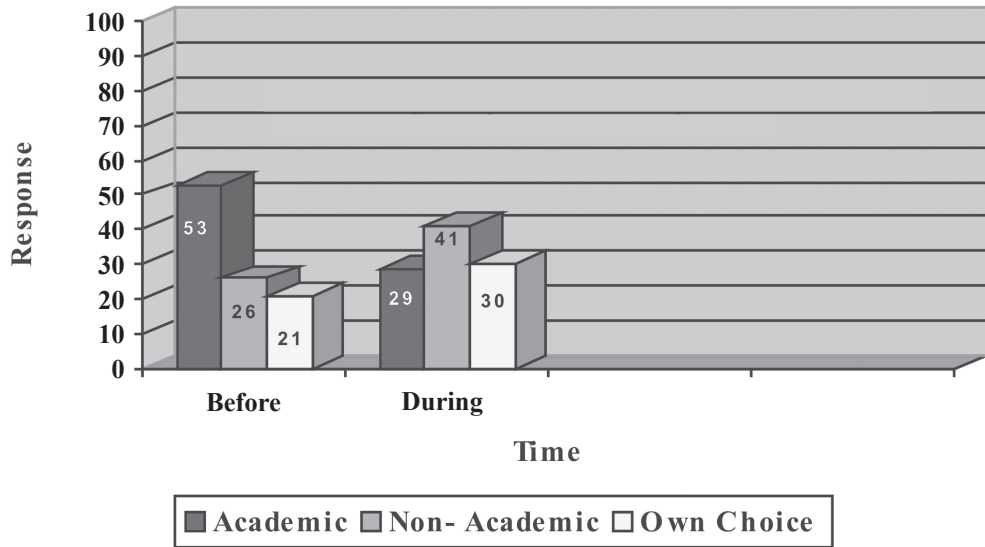
Graph 1: Graphical Representations of the Data

Q2. Do you allocate time for leisure activities?



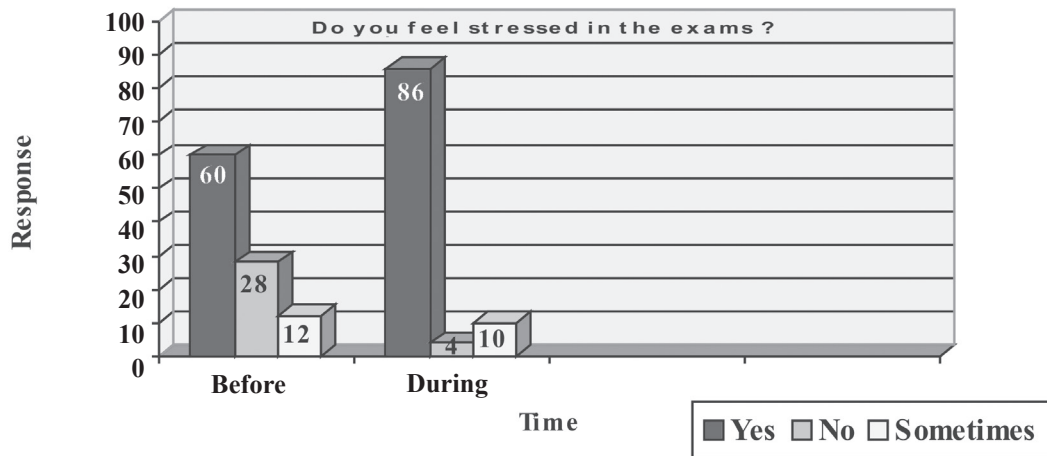
Graph 2: Graphical Representation of Data

Q.3 What do your parents want you to become?



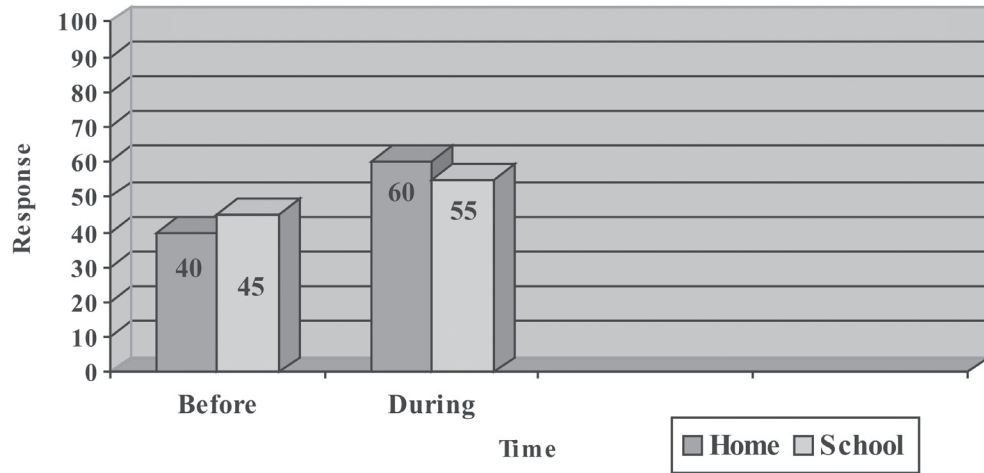
Graph 3: Graphical Representation of Data

Q4. Do you feel stressed before the exams?



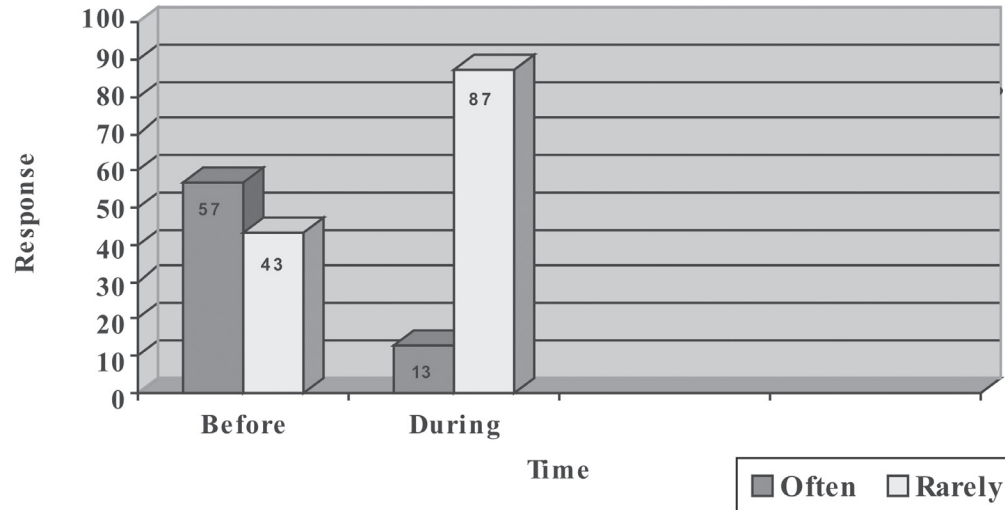
Graph 4: Graphical Representation of Data

Q5. At which place do you suffer more from stress—at home or at school?



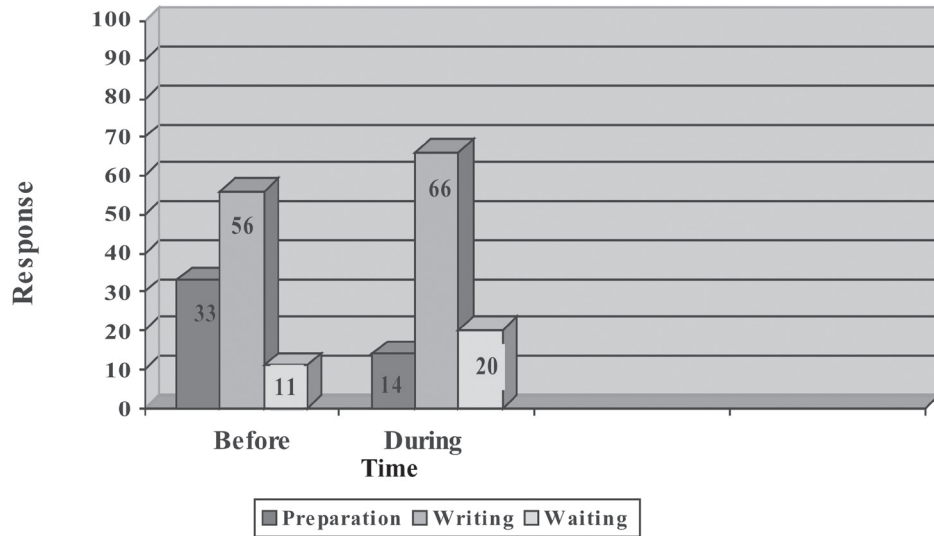
Graph 5: Graphical Representation of Data

Q6. How often do you get peaceful sleep?



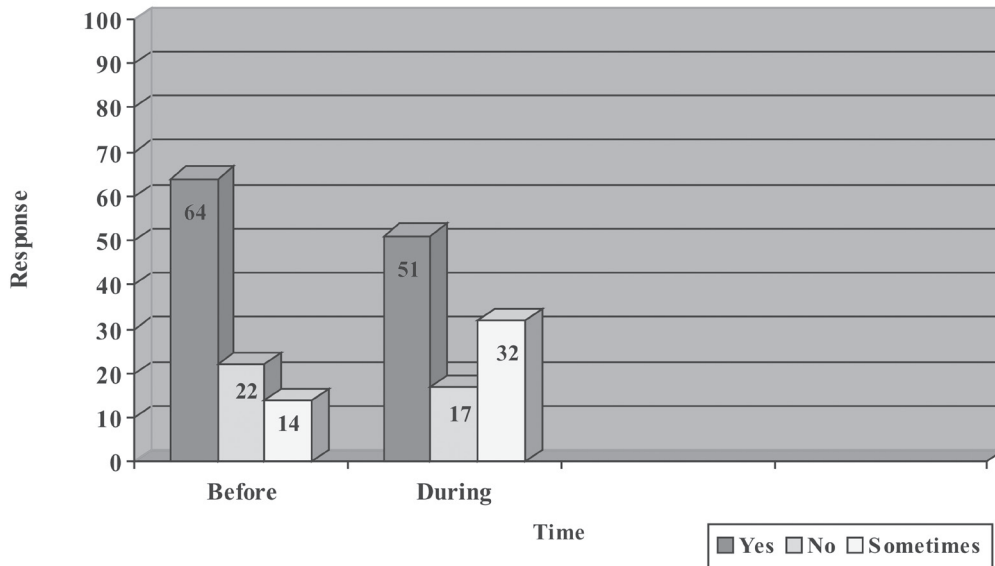
Graph 6: Graphical Representation of Data

Q7. What do you think is more stressful—preparation of exams, writing exams or waiting for results?



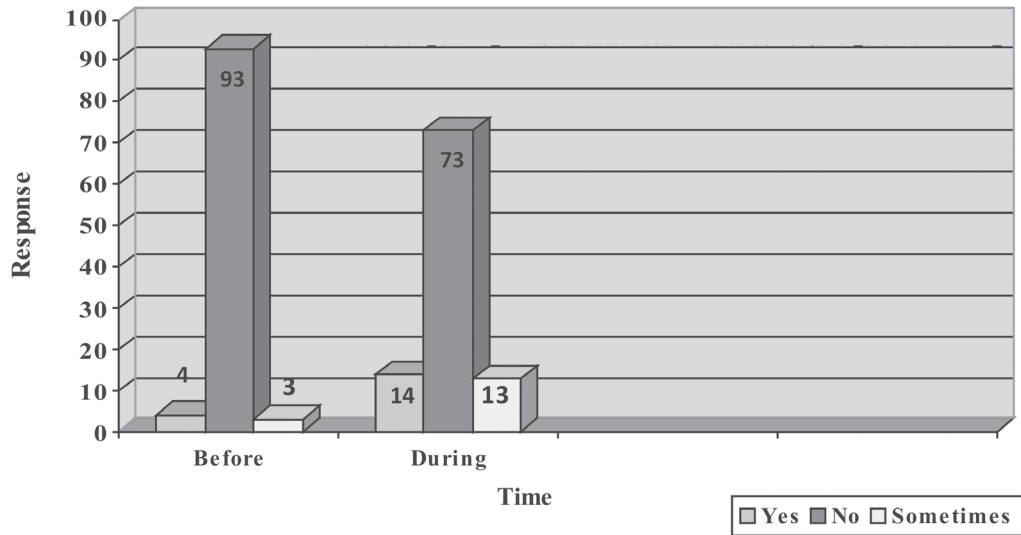
Graph 7: Graphical Representation of Data

Q8. Are your friends supportive and helpful during stressful times?



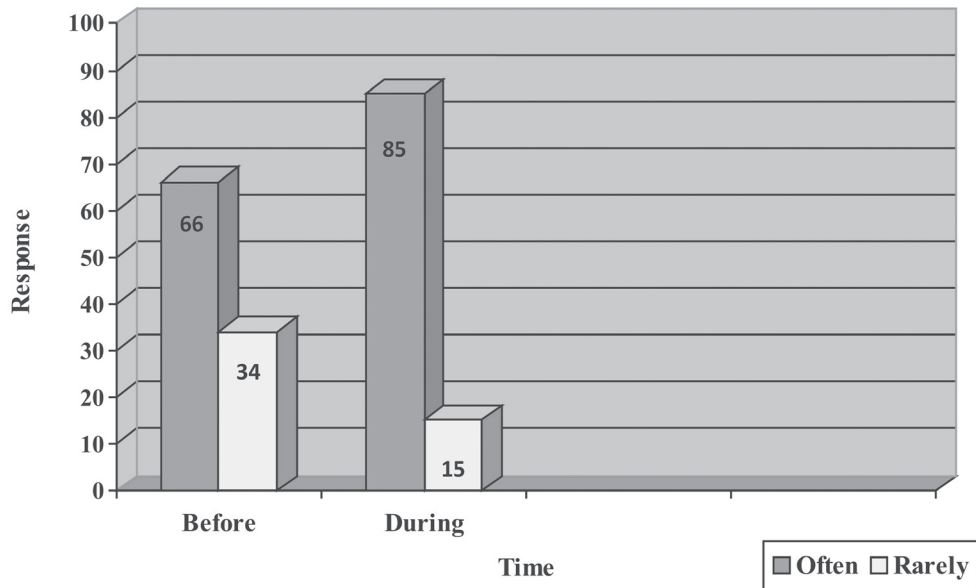
Graph 8: Graphical Representation of Data

Q9. Are you getting into substances like alcohol, drugs or smoking for mitigating stress?



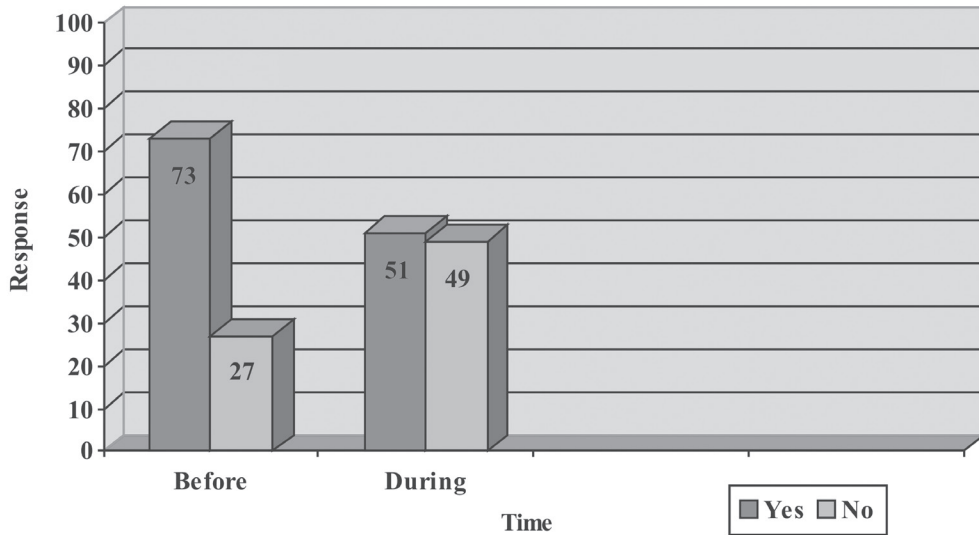
Graph 9: Graphical Representation of Data

Q10. How often do you eat junk food?



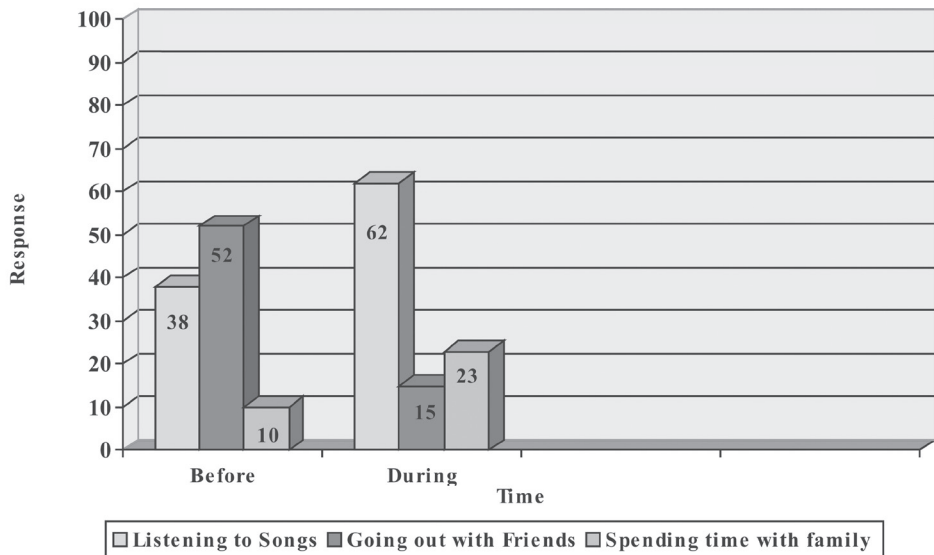
Graph 10: Graphical Representation of Data

Q11. Do you think the amount of syllabus to be studied for exams is appropriate?



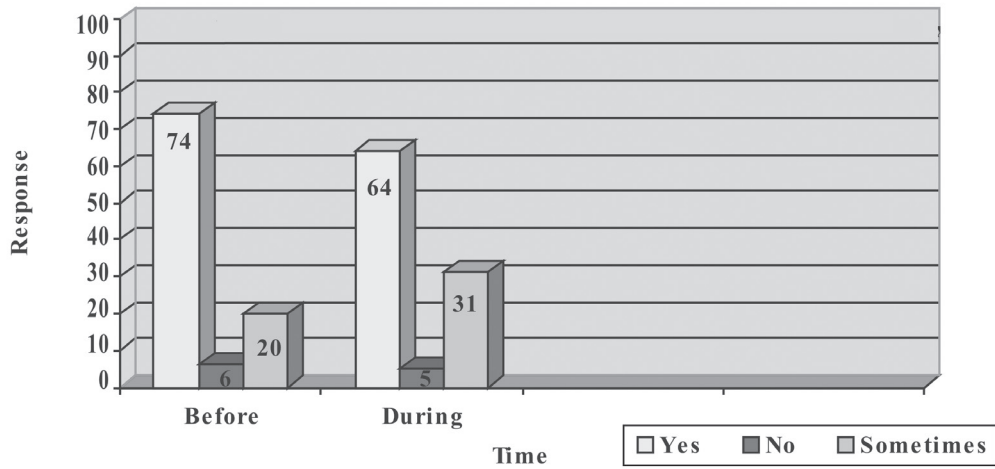
Graph 11: Graphical Representation of Data

Q12. Which of the following techniques do you follow to overcome stress—listening to songs, going out with friends, spending time with family and eating your favourite cuisine?



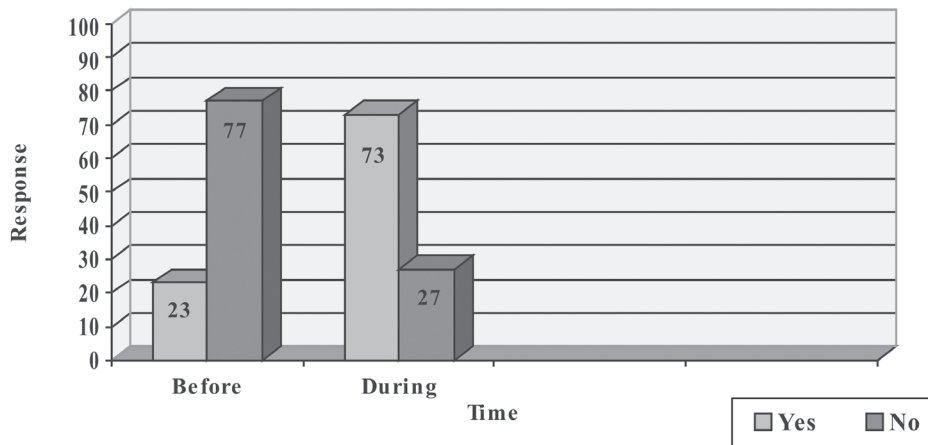
Graph 12: Graphical Representation of Data

Q13. Are you confident of coming out of stressful situations before exams?



Graph 13: Graphical Representation of Data

Q14. Do you share your problems with your parents?



Graph 14: Graphical Representation of Data

DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

On the basis of analysis of the above interview with the students of government and public schools, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the stress levels of the adolescents before and during the examinations. This was concluded from the following inferences:

- The percentage of the students that enjoyed being at school before the examination was 66% and during the examination, only 30% of the students enjoyed being at school because there was an increase in the stress level amongst the students.
- The percentage of the students that allocated time for leisure activities before the examination was 74% and during the examination, only 39% of the students allocated time for leisure activities because there was an increase in the stress level amongst the students.
- The percentage of the students that wanted to join an academic profession before the examination was 53% because of the pressure from their parents but during the examination, only 29% of the students were pressurized to join an academic profession, as the parents also understood the amount of stress the students took during the examination.
- There was an increase in the amount of stress taken by the students, before and during the examination. The percentage of the students that took stress before the examination was 60% and during the examination it was increased to 86%. Hence there was an increase by 26% in the number of students that took stress during the examination.
- The percentage of the students who feel stressed at home before the examination was 40% and during the examination, 60% of the students feel stressed at home because of the pressure from their parents. Similarly, students who feel stressed at school before the examination was 45% and during the examination, it was 55%.
- The percentage of the students who get peaceful sleep before the examination was 57% and during the examination only 13% of the students get peaceful sleep because there was an increase in the stress level and hence they could not get peaceful sleep.
- The percentage of the students who get stressed before writing the examination was 56% and during the examination, 66% of the students get stressed while writing their examination.
- The percentage of the students who get support from their friends before the examination was 64% and during the examination, 51% of the students get support from their friends.
- There was an increase in the number of students who

get involved in the intake of substances like alcohol, drugs and smoking before and after the examination. Before the examination it was 4% and during the examination it was 14%. This increase was due to the increase in the stress level amongst the students.

- There was an increase in the intake of junk food during the examination. The percentage of students who take junk food before the examination was 66% and during the examinations it was increased to 85%. This increase was due to an increase in the stress level. The students stated that whenever they get stressed during the exams, the food helps in relieving the stress.
- The students felt before the examination, the amount of that syllabus to be studied for exams is appropriate but there is a relative decrease in this point of view during the examination. The percentage of students decreases from 73% to 51%. The students feel stressed with the amount of syllabus that they have to cover for the examination.
- The students choose different techniques to overcome stress—before and during the examination. There is a difference in the percentage of their choice for the techniques employed to overcome stress, before and during the examination. Before the examination, 38% of the

students overcame stress by listening to songs but during the examination the percentage is increased to 62%. Similarly, before the examination, 52% of the students overcame stress by going out with friends but during the examination, this number is reduced to 15% due to lack of support from the friends. Lastly, 10% of students overcame stress before the examination by spending time with parents and during the examination, they depend upon the parents more for their support, so as to overcome stress.

- The percentage of the students who were confident to overcome stress before the examination was 74% but this percentage was decreased to 64% when the students had to try to overcome stress during the examination.
- Before the examination, only 23% of students shared the problems with their parents but during the examination, due to an increase in the stress level, this number got increased and 73% of the students shared their problems with the parents.

CONCLUSION

- (a) The mental health of the adolescents studying in private schools has been found to be significantly better than the adolescents studying in the government schools.
- (b) The score with respect to the

stress level in boys has been observed to be significantly higher than the stress level in the girls, irrespective of the schools they are studying in.

- (c) It was observed from the findings of the study that a larger number of adolescents enjoyed being at school before the examinations as compared to the time when the examinations are in progress.
- (d) The findings of the study indicate that adolescents devote more time for leisure activities before the examinations but the leisure activities take a back seat from their schedule during the examinations.
- (e) A significantly higher number of adolescents expressed a desire to join an academic profession before the examination. This number was comparatively less during the examination as indicated by the findings of the study.
- (f) It has been brought out by the findings of the study that the stress taken by the adolescents during the examination was found to be significantly higher as compared to the stress taken by adolescents before the examination.
- (g) An increase in the stress level of adolescents staying at home during the examination has been observed by the findings of the study. The stress level of the adolescents was however, found to be less at home before the examination.
- (h) The number of adolescents who get peaceful sleep before the examination was found to be significantly higher, vis-a-vis the number of adolescents who get peaceful sleep during the examination
 - (i) The findings of the study have indicated that the stress level of adolescents increases while writing the examination whereas before the examination it is significantly low.
 - (j) It has been brought out by the study that the adolescents when in stress, by and large, do get help from their friends before as well as during the examinations.
 - (k) The findings of the study revealed that the intake of substance abuse by the adolescents increases significantly during the examinations to overcome stress. Before the examination, the intake of substance abuse is comparatively less.
 - (l) It was observed through the findings of the study that the consumption of junk food is significantly higher in adolescents during the examinations as compared to other times, indicating the increase in stress level which they presumably combat by food that helps them to overcome the anxiety during the examinations.
 - (m) As far as the perception of adolescents with regard to the appropriate nature of the syllabus during the examination

is concerned, there was not much difference as observed by the findings. By and large, the adolescents under study found the syllabus appropriate before and during the examinations.

- (n) Out of the options given for relieving stress before and during the examinations, the study reveals that majority of the adolescents find listening to music as a great stress buster.
- (o) The number of adolescents who were confident to overcome stress before the examination was found to be significantly higher than the number of adolescents who were not confident to cope with stress during the examination.
- (p) The number of adolescents who shared their problems with their parents during the examination was found to be significantly

higher than the number of adolescents who shared their problems with the parents before the examination.

It is apparent from these findings that stress plays havoc on the body and mind of all individuals including adolescents. All efforts must be made by teachers, parents and schools to adopt measures to minimize stress level of adolescents. Encouraging them to speak, share their problems and conflicts will help in reducing their stress levels. Persuading them to channelise their energies in outdoor activities like sports and games can be great stress busters. Yoga has also been found to be a great stress reliever and a stress buster. It contributes effectively in calming the mind which in turn helps in reducing the stress and subsequently improving the learning capabilities.

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