

# Association between emotional maturity and perceived stress among adolescents

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■ **ABSTRACT :** The present study was an attempt to find association between emotional maturity and perceived stress among 17 to 19 years old adolescents. The total sample for the present study consisted of 100 adolescents from different colleges of Ludhiana city. Emotional Maturity Scale developed by Singh and Bhargava (2012) was used to assess levels of emotional maturity of the adolescents. Perceived Stress Scale developed by Cohen *et al.* (1993) was used to assess stressful feelings and thoughts of the respondents. Findings revealed that 82 per cent of the adolescents had high emotional maturity whereas, level of perceived stress was found to be low among 60 per cent of adolescents. The association between emotional maturity and perceived stress was found to be significant but negatively associated therefore, adolescents with higher emotional maturity were found to be low in stress. The results emphasized the role of emotional maturity in reducing stress among adolescents.

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According to Hall (1904) adolescence is the period of stress and storm charged with conflict and mood swings. Conflicts are due to adult expectations and perceptions who measure their current perception by memories of their own adolescence period. Adults may portray today's adolescents as more troubled, less respectful, more self centered, assertive and adventurous than they themselves were. Today's adolescents are presented with a less stable environment due to high divorce rates, family conflicts, high adolescent pregnancy rates and increased geographic mobility of families (Santrock, 2007). Media is playing a pivotal role to provide complex menu of life options to adolescents

that has become chaotic and dangerous. The increased rate of drug abuse (Harwood *et al.*, 1998), suicide, increased sexual activity at very young age leading to AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases are at its alarming stage (USDHHS, 2000). Due to change in life style, *i.e.* food habits, health facilities etc. the adolescence period is striking very early leading to early onset of menarche due to which early developers though enjoy their popularity among peer but at the same time passing through a lot of stress as they are not mentally developed to manage all these issues (Santrock, 2007).

According to Patel (2002), late adolescents have feeling of insecurity, uncertainty, intense emotionality due

to unfavorable family relationships, feeling of inadequacy and social expectation of more mature behaviour. Therefore it can be inferred that this period is full of turmoil and stress for adolescents. Stress is defined as the state of psychological upset or disequilibrium in the human beings caused by frustration, conflicts and other internal as well as external strains and pressures (Mangal, 1984). Stress is a part and parcel of human lifestyle. It can serve as a driving force in terms of obtaining results, but on the other hand, non-stop stress can act as a killer in terms of performance (Dhar and Nandan, 2012). It is a known fact that adolescents are subjected to different kinds of stressors, such as the pressure of academics with an obligation to succeed, an uncertain future and difficulties of integrating into the system (Kumar *et al.*, 2009). The literature has given evidence that with increase in age, challenges and adjustment difficulties increase in life of adolescents hence, there is more need for emotional competence (Tinto, 1996 and Noor, 2005).

Emotions are great motivating forces throughout the span of human life as they influence several aspects of one's behaviour. Emotional maturity is not inborn character. It is developed and shaped by our day to day experiences with people and environment. Emotional maturity can be understood in terms of ability of self control *i.e.* taking responsibility for one's own feelings and dealing with all ups and downs with maturity (Pастey and Aminbhavi, 2006). Arya (1984) found that boys and girls of superior intelligence had better emotional maturity. Boys of superior intelligence did better on the emotional maturity scores than girls. Azam and Nadeem (2013) explored the emotional problems of both male and female students studying in co-education setup. Results of the study revealed that majority of student felt that co-education set up was helpful in developing students' self confidence and such students were emotionally mature. Sharma (2012) compared college adjustment processes and emotional maturity between first and final year female students enrolled in different undergraduate courses. Research findings indicated that the first year undergraduate students were less emotionally mature, and had difficulty in adjusting emotionally and socially to the changing demands of the environment and faced more academic difficulty as compared to final year students. It was found that lack of emotional intelligence was linked to problem behaviour in adolescents (Erasmus, 2007). Thi and Kirby (2002) in their study of 304 under

graduate students in age range of 17-20 years found that higher emotional intelligence was associated with better scores on measures of cognitive performance.

Pастey and Aminbhavi (2006) conducted a study to reveal impact of emotional maturity on stress and self-confidence of adolescents. They reported in their study that adolescents with high emotional maturity showed significantly high level of stress and self-confidence. Rosa and Preethi (2012) conducted a study on the academic stress and emotional maturity among higher secondary school students of working and non-working mothers. They conducted the study on a sample of 240 higher secondary students from Palakkad and Thrissur districts. Children of working mothers possessed high Emotional maturity and at the same time, they were more indisposed to stress and strain. Ansari (2015) made an attempt to study the impact of emotional maturity on stress level of college students. The sample size of the study was 150 and the respondents were from age group of 18 to 20 years. It was found from the study that emotional maturity of college students affects their stress level. A significant negative correlation between emotional maturity and stress level of college students was reported.

Environmental factors may be positive or negative which may form high or low emotional maturity, respectively. Positive environmental factors forms high emotional maturity leading to high self confidence, high intelligence, healthy mind and easy adjustments, low stress and high performance. In turn, it helps in excellent performance, organization success and satisfaction. Reverse is also true. Negative environmental factors forms low emotional maturity in turn low self confidence, low intelligence, difficulty in adjustments, high stress and low performance. This results in dissatisfaction, organizational un-success (Rajeshwari and Raj, 2015). Emotional maturity is an effective determinant of shaping the personality, attitudes and behaviour of the adolescents into accepting responsibility, making decision, teaming with groups, developing healthy relationship and enhancing self worth. It is generally quoted that emotionally mature person can deal with the stress smartly.

#### **Need of the study :**

Adolescents are facing many personal, societal and environmental pressures resulting in stress and depression. Emotional maturity is a natural and inevitable

essential outcome of growth and development. The emotional maturity becomes important in the behaviour of individual. As the adolescents are the pillars of the future generations their value pattern of emotional maturity are vital. Emotionally mature individual can handle stress well. So the study aims to assess the level of perceived stress (*i.e.* how much a person is stressed, at a given point of time or over given time period), emotional maturity and association between emotional maturity and perceived stress among adolescents.

### Objectives of the study :

- To study the level of emotional maturity among 17 to 19 years old adolescents.
- To study the level of perceived stress among 17 to 19 years old adolescents.
- To find the association between emotional maturity and perceived stress of selected adolescents.

### ■ RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted in Ludhiana city. The sample of the present study comprised of 100 adolescents in the age range of 17 to 19 yrs who were randomly selected from different colleges of Ludhiana city.

### Tools :

#### *Emotional maturity scale:*

For measuring emotional maturity of adolescents, a scale developed by Singh and Bhargav (1984) was used. The scale has five components *viz.*, instability, emotional regression, social maladjustment, personality disintegration and lack independence. The scale consists of 10 items in each component except for the component of lack of independence which has 8 items. The responses were scored according to scores described in the manual. The statements were evaluated on five point rating scale, ranging from very much (5) Much (4) Undecided (3) Probably (2) to never (1). Higher the scores on the scale, lesser is the degree of emotional maturity and *vice versa*. The scores were categorized as follows:

Score	Interpretation
48-112	High emotional maturity
113-176	Medium emotional maturity
177-240	Low emotional maturity

#### *Perceived stress scale :*

The perceived stress scale is a classic stress assessment instrument development by Cohen *et al.* (1983). It was used to assess stressful feelings and thoughts of the respondents. The scale consists of 10 items, out of which 4 are positively stated while others are negatively stated. The scale is five point rating scale ranging from 0 to 4 *i.e.* 0 for 'Never', 1 for 'Almost Never', 2 for 'Sometimes', 3 for 'Fairly Often' and 4 for 'Very Often'. For positive statements it was just reverse. Total score ranged from 0-40. Low score means low level of stress and high score means high level of stress. The total scores obtained were divided into following categories:

Score	Interpretation
0-13	Low stress
14-26	Moderate stress
27-40	High stress

### Procedure of data collection :

Students from different colleges were selected randomly and were given questionnaire in classes. Respondents were asked to respond to the questions without consulting each other. The questionnaire had possible answers to a situation and the subject were required to tick whatever alternate they felt was most applicable in their case.

### Analysis of data :

Collected data was expressed in frequency and percentage and data was statistically analysed by using chi-square.

### ■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 1, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents (82%) had high emotional maturity whereas only 18 per cent of the respondents showed medium level of maturity. No respondent was found to have low level of emotional maturity. High emotional maturity of adolescents can be attributed to effect of household income, socio-economic status and parent- child

**Table 1 : Frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents across three levels of emotional maturity**

Category	High	Medium	Low
Frequency (f)	82	18	-
Percentage (%)	82	18	-

**Table 2 : Frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents across three levels of perceived stress**

Category	Low	Moderate	High
Frequency (f)	60	34	6
Percentage (%)	60	34	6

**Table 3: Association of emotional maturity and perceived stress among adolescents**

Emotional maturity	Stress			Total	p – value*
	Low (%)	Moderate(%)	High(%)		
High	58 (70.73)	24(29.26)	0	82 (100)	0.00001
Medium	2(11.11)	10(55.55)	6(33.33)	18 ( 100)	

\*p value at 0.05 level of significance found to be significant

relationship. Linda (2009) reported similar results and emphasized that these factors attribute to maturation of emotional self of young adults. Similarly, Gholampour *et al.* (2013) studied the different dimensions of emotional maturity in high school 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in *Saree*. Findings suggested that emotional maturity was in higher level than the mean, and comparing the emotional maturity in 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students, in terms of the fields of study, indicated meaningful differences.

Data presented in Table 2 reflects that more than half of adolescents (60%) had low level of stress, 34 per cent had medium level of stress and 6 per cent of adolescents were found to have high level of stress. As reported by Huli (2014) two common trends among adolescents for stress are academic stress and emotional turmoil. The low level of stress of adolescents may be because of better parent- child relationship as Montemyor (1986) reported that parents and adolescents who have good communication between them and when parenting style is helping the adolescents to communicate their stress then parents facilitate the adolescents to combat stress.

From Table 3, it can be inferred that adolescents with high emotional maturity had low level of perceived stress *i.e.* 70.73 per cent. Adolescent with medium emotional maturity were found to have moderate level of stress. The association between emotional maturity and perceived stress was found to be significant ( $p$ -value<0.05), but negatively associated therefore, adolescents with higher emotional maturity were found to be low in stress. Emotional maturity is the ability to bear tension and it is the ability to develop high tolerance for disagree circumstance (Brown, 1999). Emotionally mature individual has better self-concept and self- esteem as reported by Roja *et al.* (2013) hence, can very well deal with stress. Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) reported

similar results.

### Conclusion :

The results emphasized the role and significance of emotional maturity in reducing stress among adolescents. It provided baseline information for enhancing the emotional maturity among adolescents for psychological well-being.

### Recommendations :

- Research on large sample of similar age group can be conducted to increase the generalization of the results.
- Emotional maturity skill enhancement programme can be initiated in schools.
- Sensitization programmes for parents as well as for adolescents should be planned and implemented. So that adolescents understand about what kind of crises they are facing and how they can handle it with maturity. Parents need to understand their adolescent psychosocial need to provide support and enhance emotional maturity that can help adolescent in handling various stressful events in future.

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