

Need Based Innovative Counseling Strategies to Cope With Stress in Adolescents***Bharathi Yelisetti****Post Graduate Teacher in Biology, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Nalgonda, Telangana
Kendriya Vidyalaya Sanghatan, under ministry of HRD, India***ABSTRACT**

The rapid changing scenario of technological development, modernization, media exposure, and lack of traditional family support system has created a gap for fulfilling the physical, psychosocial and emotional needs of the growing child, stressing the need for an alternative support system. The Counseling in schools is definitely the bridge that might fill this gap. Adolescence is a stressful and turbulent developmental period filled with major changes in physical maturity and sexuality, cognitive processes, emotional feelings, and relationships with others. Hence the study is aimed at assessing the prevalence of stress, and coping styles among urban and rural adolescents. Academic stress and coping styles in both genders of urban and rural adolescents were studied in the age range of 13-18 years. The menstrual stress and stress causing factors among the girls of urban and rural schools was also focused. The present study also provides a comprehensive overview of innovative counseling strategies adopted as per the need of an individual and the groups concerned. The result of present study reveals that in both environmental settings male reported little more stress than their female counterparts. However, to utilize coping strategies female adolescents were slightly better than male adolescents. Coping is also an important mediator of experience that shapes personality development and influences adaptability and resilience in difficult situation. The interventions revealed that adolescent developmental related stress factors have reduced considerably signifying the effect of need based counseling given. "Prevention is better than cure" regular group counseling creating awareness on general problems also minimized the stress in adolescents. It is also found that social support is one of the most important resources for coping with stress in adolescents hence it was tapped.

Key words— Adolescents; Stress; Coping; need based intervention; area under study.

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional rapid developmental period of psychosocial processes during which changes in emotions, personality, relationships with others, and social contexts take place. (McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson, & Hare, 2009) Adolescents usually go through a crisis, as they are in search of their identity and easily are influenced by the external /internal pressures.

Majority of adolescents undergo stress due to various factors like parents high expectations, financial issues, peer pressure, exam fear, sudden death in family, social acceptance, etc; Most of them are reluctant to share their problems with their parents which leads to depression and stress. Stress and depression are the serious problems which may be in the form of frustrations, withdrawals, worries, which commonly lasts for few days. Parents are generally unable to develop a friendly relationship with their children. It is the need of the hour to empower the adolescents to cope up with stress to make the relationship stronger.

Adolescence in girls is a turbulent period. The events like menarche, during puberty causes negative feelings of shame, anxiety, and a kind depression in adolescent girls. Menstruation is commonly considered as a taboo and is neglected both in the family and at school to be discussed about. As these factors result in confusion among adolescents in general and menstrual stress in adolescent girls in particular have been focused in the present study.

Every child is different hence they need child specific counseling strategies. The innovative counseling strategies were adopted in the present study. To create awareness about stressors and coping with them was taken up separately for urban and rural adolescents. The positive results were observed after counseling them by adopting child specific strategies. Both individual and group counseling strategies were adopted. There is a transformation to examine the impact of hormones on adolescent behavior to reciprocal relationship and interaction between biological and social environments (Graber et al., 1997).. Adolescents in the present day do not show any interest in traditional conversational methods of counseling strategies (Paisley & Young, 1998) therefore little different strategies were chosen.

The secondary and senior secondary school years are an intense period in the adolescence where they face the developmental issues like social, behavioral, emotional and physical. Academic stress plays a vital role in a student's life. The root cause for this stress is lack

of time management, last minute preparations, high expectations from the parents, teachers and also to some extent peer pressure.

The study was conducted on adolescent stressors in view of adopting suitable need based counseling strategies. As adolescence is a very critical period for the child in which they have to cope with their physical, emotional and psychosocial changes. They have to face a lot of stressful situations in school, with peer group, with family and in society which affect their lives considerably. These factors make the adolescents to fall down because of stress, anger and anxiety. The neglected field of creating awareness about menstruation in adolescent girls has been taken up to empower them to cope up with stress during that period. School counselors should take up this on top priority to empower the girls of both urban and rural areas.

Materials and Methods:

a) Survey on stressors and coping styles of adolescents

The study of stressors in adolescents was done gender wise and area wise by administering the simple self made questionnaires and direct interactions with them. The permission from the principals of the schools concerned was taken to collect the data and counseling the children. The adolescents were briefed about the problems they face and also the questionnaire and how to answer them. The students who were willing to participate only were taken for the study purpose. Based on the answers of the questionnaires and verbal communications the data was prepared and percentages were calculated and presented in the form of tables and figures for viewing at a glance

Gender wise adolescent stressors and coping styles were studied by taking random sample of 120 boys in the age group of 13-15yrs and 80 boys in the age group of 16-18yrs in urban and rural areas respectively. Similarly, 120 girls in the 13-15 yrs and 80 in the age group of 16-18 yrs of urban and rural respectively.

b) Prevalence of menstrual stress among urban and rural adolescent girls

A study was carried out by administering the questionnaires about the common stressors and coping styles during menstrual period among the adolescent girls of different age groups in urban and rural areas. The importance of socialization in the emergence of menstrual distress and negative menstrual attitudes was discussed

c) Innovative counseling strategies adopted

After the thorough study of stressors and coping styles of adolescents the innovative counseling interventions were chosen as per the need of individual and group concerned. For individual counseling, personal talk and storytelling, small motivational and inspirational video clippings were adopted. The stress balls were also used to release the stress of the individuals. The students, who were with an art background, were asked to express themselves through drawings. The students were made to feel comfortable by telling self stories and narrating about our own personal experiences. The parents and the students were also discussed with the problem of the adolescent concerned. The telephonic conversations were also adopted in case of parent's absence. And adolescents who were at a distance were cyber counseled in urban areas. In some cases the siblings of the adolescent were discussed with regard to their behavior at home. A personal visit was paid to the house of the adolescent who had family conflicts. Whatsapp counseling has also been adopted, which was found to be very resilient by the student. Video gaming was also used to improve concentration levels and focusing skills.

As per the stressors like lack of time management, examination stress and media influence, group counseling strategies were adopted by using animations, inspirational video clippings, motivational stories to develop self-confidence. Smart time schedules and hand outs of tips to get rid of exam fear were administered as counseling interventions. In certain cases, video games; a powerful prop was also used to counsel specially secondary to understand students. The reading interventions provided both information and insight for the reader that can enhance or stimulate the therapeutic conversations. (Hynes-Berry, 1986) and develop awareness on how others have coped with similar issues, and consider possibilities for problems. This reading intervention was used for rural adolescents and found positive results.

In the present study, the portrait of Subhas Chandra Bose, VB Sardar Patel was chosen to empower the students with courage and improve their self-confidence. To inculcate the values of peace and withstand violence, portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and his visual clippings, his voice recordings were used as effective strategies that made them to cope with stressors like bullying and violence. For relaxation techniques, yoga videos of certain saints were used as counseling strategies.

Results and Discussions

The data collected in the form of questionnaires and personal discussions have been presented in the form of tables and figures

1. Prevalence of General stress in Rural and Urban adolescents.

Table 1 - Prevalence of stressors in Urban and Rural adolescents

Urban - Stressors	Rural - Stressors
Bullying	Lack of understanding
Peer Pressure	Lack of awareness
Arguments with parents	Rejections
Career goal settings	Unavailability of resources
Economic status of family	Medium of instruction
Expectations from parents	Confusions
Family conflicts	Inadequate facilities
Opposite sex pressure	Family prohibitions
Drug Abuse	Unconducive Environment
Conflicts with teachers	Lack of media exposure

Table 2 – Prevalence of Coping styles in Urban and Rural adolescents

Urban	Rural
Going to movies	Spend time with siblings
Browsing internet	Seeking diversions
Friends	Talking to grandparents
Sports	Seeking spiritual support
Yoga	Outdoor games
Exercise	Book Reading
Avoiding problems	Developing social support
Chatting with friends	Friends
Video gaming	Meditation
Book Reading	Spending time with family

The above mentioned stressors were observed in the urban and rural adolescents respectively by the data collected in the form of questionnaires and discussions. Significant variation is observed between urban and rural adolescents. Employed parents and nuclear families cause those stressors in

Table 3 - Prevalence of stress age wise in Boys and Girls of urban and rural Areas

	Boys						Girls					
	13-15 yrs			16-18 yrs			13-15 yrs			16-18 yrs		
	Total	Stress	% age									
Urban	120	80	66.6	80	65	81.2	120	70	58.3	80	60	75
Rural	120	70	58.3	80	60	75	120	60	50	80	55	68.7

Urban adolescents and conservative mindset and environment cause different stressors among rural adolescents. Variations in coping styles have also been observed in Urban and Rural areas.

The table -3 depicts that 80 adolescent boys of 13-15 yrs age group were stressed out of 120 and 65 out of 80 adolescent boys of age group of 16-18 years were stressed up in urban areas. Similarly, the same number of boys under the same age group in rural areas was studied. 70 out of 120, in the age group of 13-15 yrs, 60 out of 80 in the age group of 16-18 yrs were stressed with different factors as shown above. In both the cases, the stressors and coping styles were observed. When we compare the percentage of stress prevalence, in rural boys it was slightly less than urban boys. The variation in stress levels is basically due to media exposure, availability of electronic gadgets, family backgrounds, and different types of peer groups, economic status, and environmental set up

Similarly, the levels of stress in different age groups of girls was also studied and depicted in Table - 3. In 13-15 yrs age groups, 70 out of 120 girls and in the age 16-18 yrs, 60 out of 80 girls were stressed in urban areas. Whereas in rural, 60 out of 120 were stressed and under 13-15 yrs age group and 55 out of 80 under 16-18 yrs age group were stressed. The stress levels observed in rural girls was comparatively found less than the girls of urban areas. The reason analyzed and found was that the techno based exposure and peer pressure was

less in rural areas. The family support and social support were available at high levels to girls in rural areas when compared to urban adolescents. However the stress levels were different from individual to individual

The stress levels were found higher in the 16-18 yrs age group when compared to 13-15 yrs age group in both boys and girls. Career development, family conflicts, time constraint, competitive world and higher academic stress are the factors which cause more stress in late adolescents.

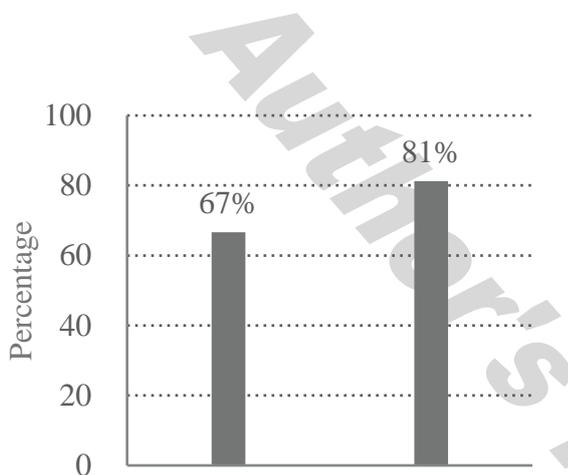
The findings indicated that male reported more stress than females in both settings (rural-urban) This result was similar with the result of [Vijayalakshmi and Lavanya \(2006\)](#), [Kumar and Jejurkar \(2005\)](#), [Carlson and Grant \(2008\)](#), [Pастey and Aminbhavi \(2006\)](#) which indicated that boys tend to have significantly higher stress. The results were also found similar to the studies of [Samata Srivastava¹](#), [Dr. J. P. Singh²](#), [Dr. Om Prakash Srivastava¹](#) Other findings of the present investigation, explore that urban adolescents reported more stress than their counterparts' rural adolescents. The results were similar to the results of [Vijayalakshmi and Lavanya \(2006\)](#) which revealed that urban students experienced more stress as compared to rural students, but contrary to the results of [Elgar et al. \(2003\)](#).

The differences in coping with stress were observed. Older adolescents tend to use a greater array of coping strategies, especially cognitive-oriented strategies, to reduce the impact of the stressor compared to younger adolescents ([Williams & McGillicuddy-De, 1999](#)). However, even early adolescence period, people use a variety of coping strategies, such as seeking support and using social relationships, ventilating, distracting, , as well as using humor ([Broderick & Korteland,2002](#)).

There was a significant positive association found between stress due to puberty events among adolescent girls and availability of counselor in school. Availability of counselor lowers the stress related to puberty. In a study done by [Laura Hensley and Choate , 2010](#) it was explained that specific prevention and counseling strategies that school counselors can use to promote positive image in adolescent girls.

To calm down the adolescents games is best proven counseling strategy which teaches them to learn socializing skills and improve concentration and develops self confidence

about each other (Newsome & Gladding, 2003). This intervention was found very effective in both rural and urban areas.



Prevalence of stress among urban boys and girls

Figure-1

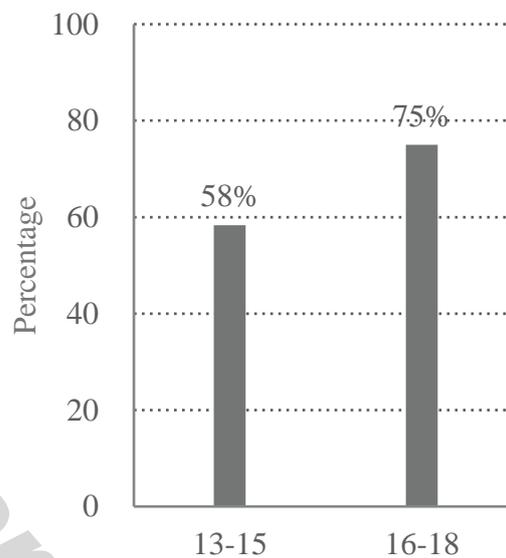
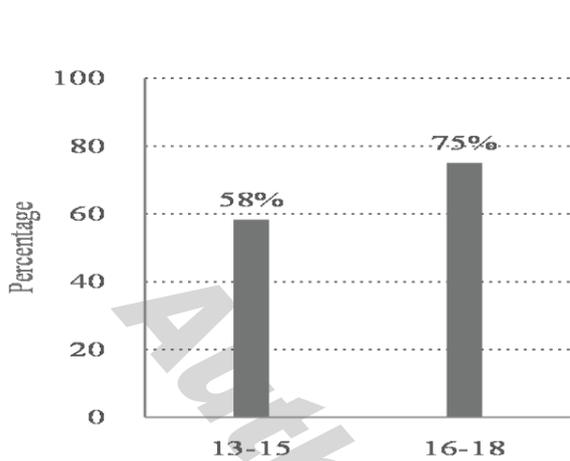


Figure- 2

Table 4 - Awareness of the menstrual cycle before attaining menarche

	Total	Aware	Percent
Urban	200	162	81%
Rural	200	125	62.5%



Prevalence of stress among rural boys and girls

Figure-3

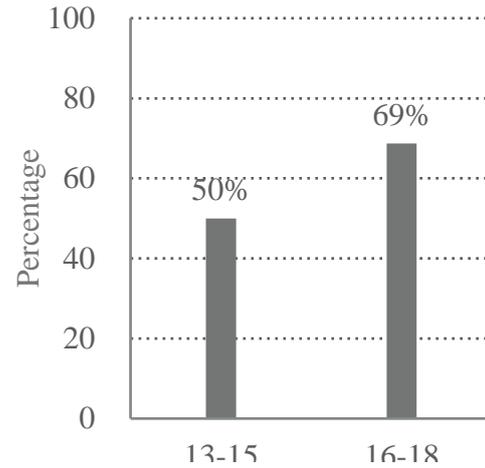


Figure-4

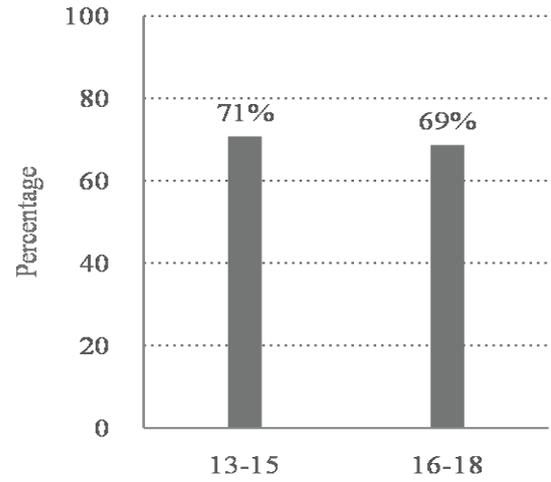
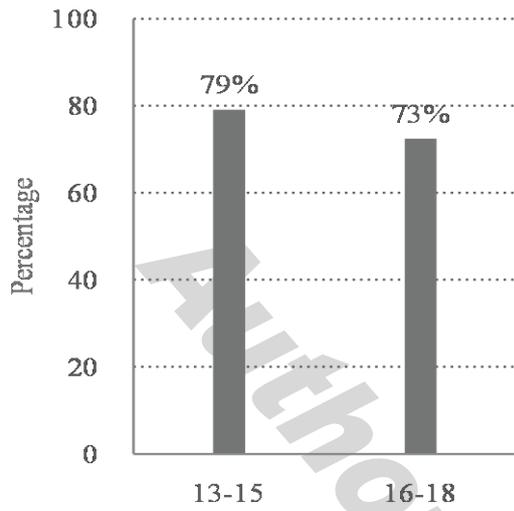
The study of awareness of menstrual cycle was conducted among adolescent girls of both urban and rural areas separately. It was understood that the knowledge of menstrual cycle awareness was more in urban adolescents than in their counter parts of rural which is depicted in the above table -4 ..The awareness in urban areas is more because of peer group, media exposure and educated parents.

Table 5 - Prevalence of menstrual stress among urban and rural adolescents

	13-15 yrs			16-18 yrs		
	Total	Stressed	%	Total	Stressed	%
Urban	120	85	70.8	80	55	68.7
Rural	120	95	79.1	80	58	72.5

The prevalence of menstrual stress studied among urban and rural adolescents with reference to the different age groups by administering questionnaires (vetted by experts) and personal interactions with girls.

It is found that the prevalence of menstrual stress is more in rural girls than in urban due to shyness, isolation, certain prohibitions in the family, less media exposure, no internet access, improper hygiene, etc; The stressors for menstrual cycle were collected and are presented in the following table.



Prevalence of menstrual stress among urban and rural adolescent girls

Figure -5

Figure-6

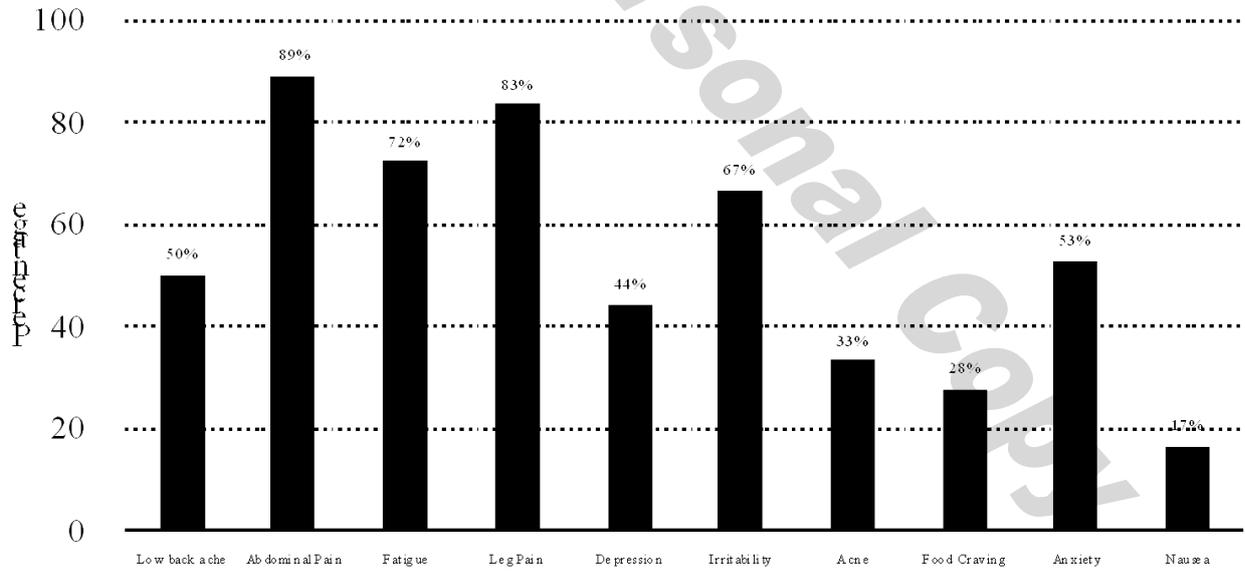


Figure -7. Prevalence of common menstrual symptoms

In present study, adolescent girls reported higher stress during puberty domain of body image and to some extent the stress was also reported on self-esteem domain. Especially in rural areas the girls reported that the menstruation is the source of shame, fear and stress, which

Table 6 - Common Menstrual Problems/Pre-menstrual Syndrome(PMS) - Rural/Urban

	Out of 180	Percentage (%)
Low back ache	90	50%
Abdominal pain	160	88.8%
Fatigue	130	72.2%
Leg pain	150	83.3%
Depression	80	44.4%
Irritability	120	66.6%
Acne	60	33.3%
Food Cravings	50	27.7%
Anxiety	95	52.7%
Nausea	30	16.6%

made difficult to concentrate in class and disrupted their learning. In addition to these factors other problems associated with menstruation at home or at school included fatigue with inability to complete their school works, they also reported that family isolation and irritability cause stress.

The common menstrual problems found by discussions and interacting with the girls were tabulated in Table no 6; the most prevalent factors found were abdominal pain, leg pains, irritability and fatigue. Due to the pre-menstrual syndrome they didn't feel like going to school, they mentioned that during their menstrual cycle the academic stress significantly increased. When they were asked about the coping styles, they expressed that seeking diversions, avoiding problems, developing self-reliance and seeking social support, ventilating feelings, playing games, media browsing, chatting with friends, reading books. And the least

coping style used found was seeking professional support for menstrual stress. There was a significant positive association found between stress due to puberty events among adolescent girls and availability of counselor in school. Availability of counselor lowers the stress related to puberty. This was found similar to the study done by [Laura Hensley and Choate 2010](#) which explained that specific prevention and counseling strategies that school counselors can use to promote positive image in adolescent girls. To calm down the adolescents games is proven counseling strategy which teaches them to learn socializing skills and improve concentration and develops self confidence and also enables to understand the counselor. ([Newsome & Gladding, 2003](#)).

The introduction of innovative counseling strategies to cope with stress in adolescents showed positive results in empowering them to face the problems boldly, accepting the situations as such with optimism, developing self-confidence, concentration power, reducing anxiety levels, improved focus, withstanding peer pressure, overcoming exam fear, coping up with menstrual stress. It is proved that activity based and visual strategies of counseling empowered the adolescents more than traditional conversational methods of counseling. Cyber counseling, interacting with parents, paying visits to the suffering adolescents were also a couple of innovative counseling strategies we came up with which worked out well.

Conclusion:

The present study has certain limitations as it included random sampling of urban and rural areas limited to Hyderabad and surrounding rural areas. It showed that more than 60% of the adolescents were stressed because of various stressors as mentioned which affect their academic performance. It is clearly evident that creating awareness about menstruation before and after attainment of their puberty in schools certainly results in better coping abilities in adolescent girls. This study reveals that the teachers and counselors have to change their mindset regarding these fragile topics and consider them as equal to their other subjects and discuss it in the school with a broader mindset. In future similar studies can be taken up in different geographic areas and adapting these innovative strategies to empower adolescents.

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