

Stress Management among Indian Adolescents

Prof. Lalit Kumar

Dean & Head, Faculty of Education, Patna University, Patna

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is being considered as the most crucial phase of human life. It is being said as the stormy age of the development due to so many changes taking place among the adolescents. Due to immense physical strength, too fast changes taking place and transition from childhood to adulthood this span of human life face anxiety and stress. The stress management among adolescents is a vital challenge before the mankind, and as a country India faces more challenges due to its more youth population of this age group. WHO defines adolescence as the period between 10-19 years of age. It comprises 253 million persons in India, the largest demographic group of the country. One can think that if stressful Indian adolescents are not managed to their strength India cannot grow. The country needs to manage the stress of its adolescent population for development. Besides other measures to be taken by the individual, the parents and other social institutions, the educational institutions of the country also need to take certain measures like adopting sound and physical activities based curriculum, employing more group centered methods, arranging different types of activities-based programmes, increasing participations of the learners in decision making, employing yoga and meditation, arranging needed counselling sessions, etc.

Keywords: Adolescence, Mental Health, Stress Management, India, Population Dividend.

Received : 11/9/2025

Acceptance : 25/10/2025

Introduction:

Mental health is an important issue in children and adolescents. Due to many factors, they get their mental health affected. There are various correlates of mental health among children and adolescents such as physical health, genetics, emotional matters, trauma, sleep quality, quality of education, poverty, inequality, etc. In nutshell, the factors may be individual, environment related, and social issues based. Mental illness, anxiety, and depression are becoming common in youth due to changing socio-cultural environment. As children get older their source of anxiety and stress expand, and so stress is a bigger issue among adolescents. Mental health is an umbrella term, and stress is a part of it. Kishore, BWJ (2011) defines stress, "Stress is defined as the adverse relation of the people to excessive pressure of other types of demand placed on them." Stress is becoming a vital challenge among adolescents and for the national and social health of the country it needs to be managed properly. WHO (2025) is showing concern for adolescent population and forward needed measures for their stress management, "Adolescence is a crucial period for developing social and emotional habits important for mental well-being. These include adopting healthy sleep patterns; exercising regularly; developing coping,

problem-solving, and interpersonal skills; and learning to manage emotions. Protective and Supportive environments in the family, at school and in the wider community are important."

Personality characteristics like self and self-esteem influence mental health issues. It is also affected by empathy, emotional capacity, and genetic traits. Use of substances increase vulnerability to mental health. Family, community, and school environment influences mental health and stress. Discrimination based on caste, class, race gender, etc. influence stress and mental health. Socio-economic status, physical health, work-load, lifestyle, etc. affect mental health and cause stress. Social relationships are especially important for adolescents' mental health and stress management. This age group is characterized by rapid physical and psychological development. The age group faces multifaceted challenges like health, nutrition, education, safety, and stress and anxiety. India's focus, being the young nation, on this demography is crucial for national development. Their mental health and stress management is crucial. The country has no option except to deal with issue with due considerations.

Adolescent Indian Population and Stress:

Adolescence is being considered as one of the important spans of human life. It is a transition phase of human life where child starts to move towards adulthood. This period is psychologically specified from 12 to 19 years of age. World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as the period between 10-19 years of age. Statistical available data also manifests the range as 10-19 years of age. UNICEF (2025) asserts, "India has the largest adolescent population in the world, 253 million, and every fifth person is between 10 to 19 years. India stands to benefit socially, politically, and economically if this large number of adolescents are safe, healthy, educated and equipped with information and life skills to support the country's continued development. Both adolescent girls and boys lack access to information on issues affecting their lives and have limited spaces to develop competencies crucial for active participation." This lack of information gap among girls and boys adolescents must be addressed. Census in India also reveals the data from 10-19 years of age for adolescents. It is a time of human life where significant physical, psychological, and social changes take place. Sources claim that adolescent data is collected for the 10-19 years of age group because this is the internationally recognized period of transition from childhood to adulthood. WHO (2025) defines 'Adolescents' as individuals in the 10-19 years age group and 'Youth' as the 15-24-year age group. While 'Young people' cover the age range 10-24 years. There are about 360 million adolescents comprising about 20% of the population in the Countries of the South-East Asia Region (SEAR)."

Psychologically adolescence period is broadly categorized in three stages of development as Early Adolescence, Middle Adolescence, and Late Adolescence. Early adolescence is a phase of contradiction. In this phase the child is not mature, but he/she is not child as well. They demand more freedom, but parents do not provide desired freedom. Drastic physical changes occur during the phase, and these changes also becomes a source of irritation. If someone is not optimally grown, he/ she develops a sense of inferiority. There is a sense of fear and insecurity due to these occurring changes among many of them. In fact, during the phase there is a lot of confusion, hesitation, and a search of the real identity. Physically, during the phase, adolescents look like adult, but mentally they are as child. Parents also

behave in the similar fashion. At times they treat adolescents as child and another time as grown up. This causes identity crisis among adolescents. During middle adolescence they become comparatively independent, conscious to identity, and competitive in nature. Late adolescence is very near to adulthood. They attain greater emotional stability, more developed sense of humor, self-dependent in decision making, greater concerns for other, flexible in adjustment and compromises, self-reliant, and more concerned about future life.

Adolescence is a vital span of one's life where adolescents undergo changes in biological, psychological, cognitive, and social characteristics. This age presents a lot of challenges among adolescents of adjusting with self, peer, family, and society. Undergoing physical, chemical, and emotional changes also present many challenges before the teenager. Increased hormone levels, intensive changes in thought process, and changes in social life make the teenager anxious. What is more demanding is to manage many issues at a time, and it is never going to stop. All these make their life more challenging. This stormy age of human life, in one sense, is the period of conflict, stress and anxiety. This age also presents challenge in terms of stress management as well. Keeping in view the strength of the adolescents and its relationship with country's manpower their stress management is a national issue which influences the quality of human population on earth. Adolescent in India refers to a person under age group 10-19, and it constitutes India's largest demographic comprising 253 million persons. In 2011 census the adolescent population under the age group 10-19 year of age represented 20.9% of the total Indian population. It was nearly 243 million individuals with 52.7% males and 47.3% females.

Sign of Stress among Adolescents:

All sign and symptoms of stresses cannot be identified, but following are some symptoms that act as indicator for the adolescence stress:

- (1) Irritability and Anger: Stress produces irritation and anger among adolescents. As and when they get difficulty and do not find solution during the stress they become irritate and angry. Frequent irritation and anger among adolescents indicate that they are stressful.
- (2) Changes in Behaviour: Undue changes among the behaviour of the adolescents are the indicator of

their stressful condition.

- (3) **Sleeping Problem:** During stress adolescents find their sleep disturbed. They sleep less, and during sleep awake two frequently.
- (4) **Negligence Towards Responsibilities:** Stressful condition or status find adolescents ignoring their responsibilities.
- (5) **Change in Eating Pattern:** Change in the usual pattern of eating is the indicator of adolescent's stressful status. During stress they start to eat too less or too much.
- (6) **Falling Sick too Often:** Stress makes the adolescents sick too frequently. During stressful condition they become ill too frequently.

All sign and symptom of stress among adolescents cannot be mentioned, but it has been identified by scholars and agencies and organizations. Chauhan, S.S. (1998) has pointed out certain indicators of emotional disturbances of adolescents as, "Excessive nail biting, thumb sucking, biting the lips, scratching the lips, scratching the nose, pulling or twisting the hair, scratching the head, picking the face, touching the face with the hand, leaning the face on the hands and rocking legs etc. Use of other mechanisms as aggression, inattention, shyness, withdrawal and hyperactivity, also indicate emotional disturbance." American Psychological Association (APA), WHO, UNICEF, and other similar organizations have also identified certain sign and symptoms of stress and adolescents behave in the manner defined by them in most of the cases. APA (2024) recognizes the sign of stress as Irritability and Anger, Changes in Behaviour, Trouble Sleeping, Neglecting Responsibilities, Eating Changes, and Getting Sick More often.

Stress Management among Adolescents:

We discussed in detail that rapid physical changes; and many intellectual, emotional, and social development causes stress in the comparatively young and immature mind of adolescents. Medical science suggests that if stressful status of adolescents is not taken care of promptly, it may be lethal to the individual, and the society. Mentioning the nature and concerns towards adolescent IGNOU (2018) rightly claims, "Adolescence is a period that is full of challenges. This is a time when a teenager undergoes a lot of changes, physically, chemically, and emotionally. The adolescent's life changes dramatically wherein he or she starts having increased hormone levels, the thought

process changes, and the social life. The teenager has to deal with all these changes at the same time, and this can be extremely challenging." Stress harms the individual and in long run the society, nation, and mankind at large. Stressful adolescents harm himself or herself and simultaneously damage society in many ways- crime, violence, etc. Damodaran, DK and Varghese, PK (2015) convey, "Chronic stress in childhood and adolescence can lead to lasting changes in the structure and function of the brain because it occurs during sensitive periods of brain growth and development." Stress up to a level, is common feature among adolescents. If their stressful status not managed or allowed to persist to continue for long the surrounding suffers. It is not difficult to manage stress among adolescents. Following are certain measures to be considered for better stress management among adolescence, keeping in view immense physical strength and panic emotional turmoil of adolescents:

- a. Learning and Maintaining Healthy Lifestyle and Good Habits.
- b. Practicing Mindfulness and Relaxation.
- c. Preparing and Maintaining Time Management and Organization.
- d. Adopting Needed Emotional and Social Strategies.
- e. Cultivating Positive Outlook.
- f. Seeking Social Support.
- g. Practicing Coping Skills.

Healthy lifestyle includes regular exercise; healthy diet; prioritization of sleep; and avoidance of unhealthy substances like caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, etc. Good habit is to maintain healthy life- style regularly without fail. Doing everything as per schedule- eating, sleeping, physical labour, etc. is needed. Practicing Mindfulness and Relaxation is about rest to the body, mind, and spirit scientifically. Deep breathing, meditation, muscle relaxation, mind calmness, etc. are needed for relaxation. Journaling of feeling also reduce stress. Organization and Management of Time is always fruitful. It is productive and counterproductive. Emotional and Social Strategies have their bearing on human personality and its development. Handling the stressful situations demand social and emotional strategies to deal with interpersonal and intra-personal human relations which is crucial for peace and harmony individually and socially both. Connect with others, seek support,

manage time for fun, etc. are the important components of relaxation and mindfulness. Positive outlook towards life and work has its bearing on stress and its management. It is about challenging negative thoughts, poeticizing gratitude, and focus on competence attainment. Seeking social support indicates towards friendship, relation with peer, and showing concern and obligation towards the societal norm and social contribution in his/her development. Practicing Coping Skills is to break down tasks to smaller parts, take breaks, develop hobbies, and manage positive thoughts towards work and life. Activities like listening to music, writing, drawing, playing, talking with family members and friends, spending time with pet, etc. reduce stress. If struggle with stress persists even after these measures one may approach for professional help. Physical activities among adolescents are the most important aspects to be considered for their proper development due to channelization of the immense physical strength they are having. This is for their every type of development, and stress management is also not exception of it. NEP (2020) also support this view like other psychological institutions, "Sports-integration is another cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes physical activities including indigenous sports, in pedagogical practices to help in developing skills such as collaboration, self-initiative, self-direction, self-discipline, teamwork, responsibility, citizenship, etc. Sports integrated learning will be undertaken in classroom transactions to help students adopt fitness as a lifelong attitude and to achieve the related life skills along with the levels of fitness as envisaged in the Fit India Movement." Fit India Movement as a concept has its bearing on stress management of adolescents of India. This movement has its physical, emotional, social, and national dimension which our adolescents need and demand to grow and develop properly.

The ABC Model for Stress Management and Adolescents:

The ABC model for stress management is rooted in Albert Ellis's Work. It is also linked with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). ABC model refers to a framework for understanding and managing stress. In the model A stands for Activating Event which is about the situation or events that causes Stress. B stands for Beliefs which is about thoughts and interpretation of the event by the person. Only event which is crucial is individual's internal dialogue, which

may be rational or irrational. C Stands for consequences which is the result of the beliefs in terms of emotional and behavioural outcomes. Negative and irrational beliefs produce unhealthy consequences and stress. The model suggests that by analyzing these components named ABC the negative beliefs can be encountered to cultivate positive and more realistic beliefs. In fact, by identifying stressful activating events, managing negative beliefs, and calculating the resulting consequences, the individual can learn to handle maladaptive thought pattern to reduce stress in more flexible and rational manner.

In the application of ABC model of stress management firstly the individual must identify the situation or event that triggers stress. After this identification he/she needs to analyze belief system against the event or situation. In the analysis he/she must be positive, realistic, and flexible. In the next step he/she needs to understand consequences produced by beliefs. Based upon the insight won he/she needs to change and challenge irrational beliefs. Rational belief adoption provides more positive emotional and behavioural outcomes and subsequently stress of the individual reduces. By the application of this model one can learn to manage stressful situations more effectively and can adopt more positive and rational way of event or situation interpretation. Adolescents can properly and purposefully adopt this ABC Model for their Stress Management. They must be handled properly during this crucial age of human life either by him-self / her-self or by others. NCF (2005) by showing concerns considering Adolescence as a critical period of self-identity development suggests, "Responsible handling of issues like independence, intimacy, and peer group dependence are concerns that need to be recognized, and appropriate support be given to cope with them."

Parental and Institutional Role in Adolescents Stress Management.

Adolescents are not adult. They are adult at times and seek help at times like a child. During stressful situation they need parental support and institutional training. Both parents and schools have direct role in the stress management of adolescents. Bhav, SY and Kavade, JS (2022) believe in the same manner, "Parents and teachers can play a great role by teaching children to become resilient. This will help them deal with all adversities in life as adolescents and young adult (AYA) and adulthood and promote

positive mental health." Parents can play their role by providing secure base, encouraging for proper and open communication, making the children problem solver, teaching the ward coping skills, managing for children social and physical activities, understanding and validating wards feeling, listening the children with patience, and playing the role of friend, philosopher, and guide. If parents believe in their adolescent ward and honour his/her saying stress of the ward will always to be minimal even if it increases, it will be managed due to openness of the parents with adolescents. IGNOU (2016) also supports the view, "Adolescents who have and can maintain an open, positive, honest, flexible and emotionally supportive relationship with their parents can withstand pressure from undesirable sources." The similar role teachers and schools can play for adolescent's stress management, but the institution has a bigger role in preparation to cope up with stress. The message given by NCFSE (2023) can be very specifically and suitably asserted for this type of situation, "Physical activity is integral to human life and, therefore integral to the school curriculum. For the individual student, sports and physical activities teach important motor skills, practices of physical fitness, socio-emotional awareness and regulation, associated cognitive abilities, as well as the values of hard work, teamwork, and a gracious acceptance of one's strengths and vulnerabilities." Institution can play very comprehensive role in adolescents' all-round development, mental health organization, and stress management by adopting certain measures as follows:

- Managing for sound curriculum with solid theoretical and practical base.
- Arrangement for activities-oriented programme, Regular practice of Yoga and Meditation.
- Application of Group Centered Methods of Teaching.
- Application of ABC Model of Stress Management with Institutional Support.
- Proper Implementation of School Health and Wellness Programme.

Conclusion:

Adolescents are the future of the nation and mankind. Their stress management is the strength development and capacity building of the nation. Considering the importance of educational aspect of adolescents for development NCFSE (2000)

suggests, "Curriculum designers could hardly afford to overlook the emotional dimensions of the child's life during the school period and the importance of emotional maturity in the life of a person. It is only gradually, through growth, that the child achieves emotional stability and emotional independence."

References:

1. American Psychological Association (2024). How to Help Children and Teens Manage their Stress, <https://www.apa.org/topics/children/stress>.
2. Bhawe, Swati Y and Kavade, JS (2022). Coping With Stress in Adolescents, Standard Treatment Guidelines, Indian Academy of Pediatrics, pp. 1-6.
3. Chauhan, S.S. (1998). Psychology of Adolescence, Advanced Educational Psychology, Vikas Publishing House PVT LTD, Delhi, pp. 94-114.
4. Damodaran, DK and Varghese, PK (2015). Stress Management among Adolescents, The International journal of Indian Psychology, 3(1), pp. 104-111.
5. IGNOU (2016). Adolescence Relation with Family, Relationship- Family and Peer Group, Unit-3, BPC-002, Block-3, pp. 33-40.
6. IGNOU (2018). Challenges of Adolescence, Challenges and Issues in Adolescent Development, Unit-4, MPC 002, Block-3, pp. 43-48.
7. Kishore, BWJ (2011). Stress Managements in Adolescents, Health and Population Perspectives and Issues, 34 (1), pp. 37-47.
8. NCF (2005). Development and Learning, Learning and Knowledge, NCERT, pp. 14-17.
9. NCFSE (2000). The Learners' Profile, Organization of Curriculum at Elementary and Secondary Stages, NCERT, pp. 41-45.
10. NCFSE (2023). Aims, Physical Education and Well-being, NCERT, pp. 419-420.
11. NEP (2020). Experiential Learning, School Education, Part-I, Government of India, pp. 12-13.
12. UNICEF (2025). Adolescent development and participation, <https://www.UNICEF.org/India/what-we-do/adolescent-development-participation>.
13. WHO (2025). Mental Health of Adolescents, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>.
14. WHO (2025). Adolescent Health in the South-East Asia Region, <https://www.who.int/India/health-topics/adolescent-health-and-development>.



