

Leisure and Stress Coping in Today's Situation

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Abstract – A stressful situation alert! as the pandemic has transpired and almost the whole human race is facing a lockdown condition. The people are stressed as the majority of us have elderly at home who are suffering from some kind of diseases which in turn is a bait for the COVID-19. People are away from their loved ones. World economy is deteriorating overall resulting in an extremely stressful situation.

Keywords – Stress, Coping up with stress, COVID-19, Leisure.

I. INTRODUCTION

For more than two decades researchers have been interested in finding how socially induced stress causes psychological distress or mental health problems. The toll that stress takes on the individuals can be minimized while making a substantial contribution to the overall quality of life. The feeling of satisfaction that comes from participation in leisure activities promotes a sense of general well-being which can be observed in higher self-confidence of the individual and a more positive attitude at both home and at work. The purpose of this paper is to show how leisure activities can be helpful while coping up with acute and chronic stressors at work, school, home, etc. and to identify and analyse how different aged groups might have different stressors and undertake different stress coping leisure activities in response to these stressors.

Stress can be of majorly 3 categories:

1. Positive stress
2. Tolerable stress
3. Toxic stress

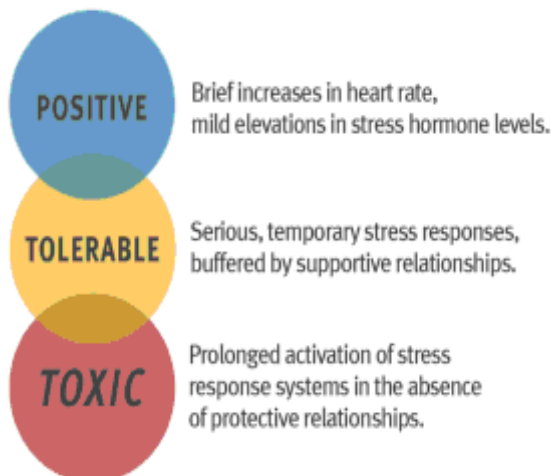


Fig .1. Categories of stress.

1. Stress levels and its fluctuation

The stress levels of an individual changes both physically and mentally as the levels of cortisol fluctuates and as depicted in the graphs below the stress builds up in a human mind and its consider a healthy amount of tension which in turn leads to the best performance and if still after accomplishing the best level the stress levels continue to grow then the performance deteriorates and eventually lead to a mental or a physical breakdown.

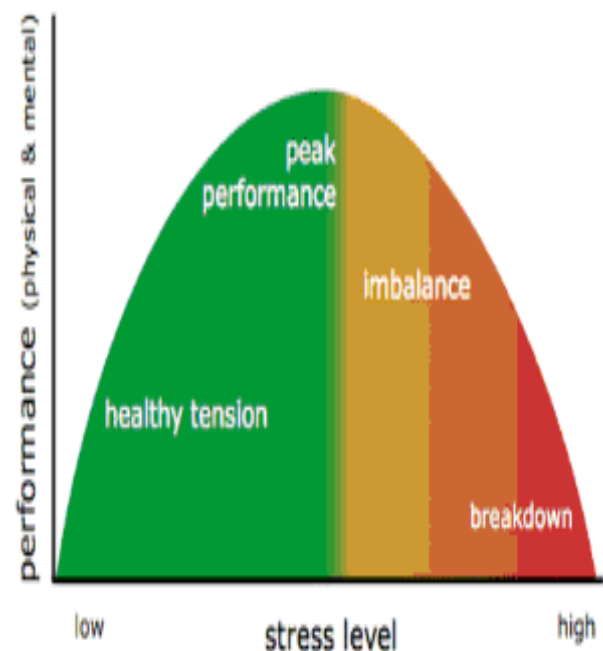


Fig .2. Graph depicting human performance with respect to the stress levels.

Now another factor in this case is the chronic stress hormone and the adrenal hormone output which is in accordance with three different hormones considerably:

- Cortisol
- Pregnenolone
- DHEA

Chronic Stress and Adrenal Hormone Output

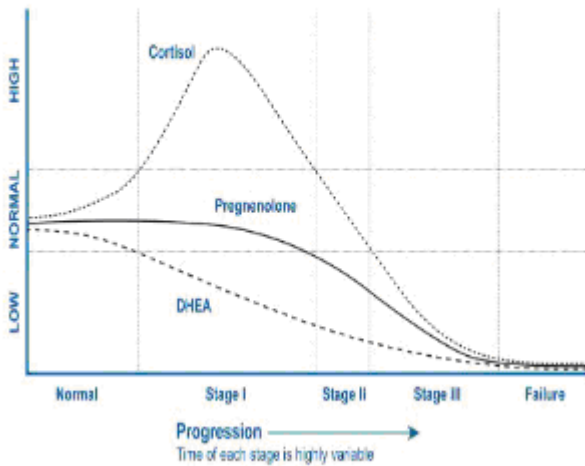


Fig .3. Graph depicting chronic stress and adrenal hormone output.

2. Leisure and Stress Coping

Coleman was the earliest leisure researcher to conceptualize the relationship between leisure and stress. He concluded that leisure-generated social support and “sense of freedom without external compulsion” (self-determination dispositions) would buffer the relationships between increased life stress and mental and physical health. Leisure generated social support refers to the ways in which connections with others in leisure settings may provide people with important emotional supports. Self-determination dispositions are the ways that leisure contributes to:

- generating people’s beliefs in their abilities to take action on issues that matter to them
- experiencing self-determination through leisure. The intrinsic motivation and perceived freedom may contribute to the development of stable beliefs in one’s ability to be self-determined which further would help people draw on their leisure effectively during periods of stress.

Feelings of self-determination, empowerment, and competence developed through leisure pursuits, help people feel more capable of managing perceived stress. There is also evidence that people generate leisure based coping beliefs about their abilities to be self-directed and autonomous in leisure. In turn these appraisals influence the various ways people might use their leisure to cope with stress. It is also believed that people’s belief about their leisure rather than what they “actually” do in their leisure, contributes more in buffering the effects of stress on psychological well-being. Iwasaki (2001, 2003), for example, found that both leisure coping beliefs and strategies made significant contributions to coping with daily hassles in the lives of university students and, in turn, enhanced students’ perceived coping efficacy, mental health and psychological well-being. The leisure’s contribution to the stress coping seems to operate beyond the

other general forms of stress coping like problem-focused coping which is aimed at resolving the stressful situation or event that is causing stress.

3. Stress coping and age

The way in which age influences stress and coping processes remains poorly understood by many. In general, the discussion is about how young and old differ in ways in which they experience and cope with stress. This could be due to different components of stress and coping processes.

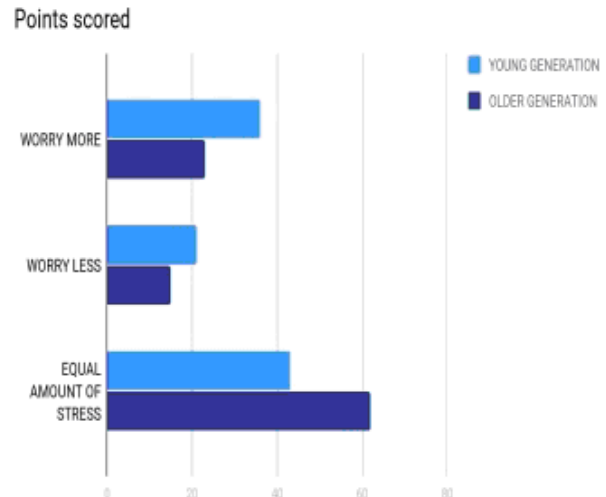


Fig .4. Graphical comparisons of stress levels between younger and older generations.

For example, old people might have different types of stressors than younger people. The amount of stress reported by them can vary as well. The old people are found to report less about the stressful situations or events. The question is whether they feel less stress about the ongoing life events, or they seem to have developed a good coping strategy over the course of life through experience. To understand this less talk about the word “Hassles” which are often a result of involvement in social roles. Thus, a decrease in the number of roles may result in fewer hassles in late life. For example, no active parenting or work roles may decrease the number of daily stressors one experiences. However, older people are often coping with chronic diseases, disability, the loss of friends and family members but Paykel (1983) found that that elderly still report fewer stressful life events than do the young. Some researchers have stated that the reason behind this could be development process i.e. older people through their wide range of experience, may have developed more coping resources and thus appraise problems as less stressful. In addition to this older people have experienced extremely stressful situations like death of loved ones over the course of life due to which everyday stressful events might appear to be pale in comparison. So, what about the way younger people deal with stress. Is it different from how older people cope with it? Hutchinson, Baldwin, and Oh (2006) determined that middle school aged adolescents used a wide variety of structured and unstructured leisure activities to manage perceived stressors in their lives. They recommended that more attention should be given to

building youth's social-emotional competence and skills that promote positive or adaptive coping and resilience which in turn helps to reduce psychological distress and increase optimism, social support and self-determination. Regardless of the nature of the stressor, Adults seem to like spending time with supportive others and in personally meaningful forms of leisure helps promote coping and resilience in the face of chronic stress. Apart from the positive emotions and thoughts generated from these experiences, leisure can contribute to ongoing coping efforts by providing people with something to look forward to and making them feel more capable of dealing with their stress. Most of the youth population like to get involved in weekly participation in pleasurable activities including leisure which is related to lower distress. Other techniques including yoga, meditation, tai chi, deep breathing exercises are also considered at large numbers by the population of these age groups. The knowledge and skills needed for participation in leisure activities are generally established in middle age and maintained into later life. Yet the changes associated with the aging process may cause leisure activity patterns to be modified. Research about participation patterns of older adults have consistently found a trend away from active pursuits to more sedentary ones. In the 1970's the first national study of older people's leisure participation patterns was conducted in the United States. The study conducted found that the most popular leisure activities among people 65 years and over were socializing with friends, gardening or raising plants, reading, watching television, sitting and thinking, caring for younger and older members of the family, participating in recreational hobbies, and going for walks. Various other studies of older adults in Houston reported similar findings which is, leisure activities which increased in participation or remained at the same level with increasing age, were ones that were usually engaged in, were less physically demanding, and in the company of family and friends. Atchley linked this trend away from active pursuits to more passive ones to the older person's inability to produce high rates of physical output, and the fact that recovery from exerting exercise takes longer.

II. CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be concluded that leisure self-determination and self-support contributes to acute stress reduction among older and younger residents. We saw that there are age-related changes in social roles and health status which affect the numbers and types of stressors experienced, which in turn influence the ways in which people may cope with stress. However, why the elderly report less stress in the face of increasing disabilities and loss of family and friends is not clear and may reflect developmental processes. Then we also concluded that the leisure activities undertaken by people of these two age groups are also different as older people tend to participate in less active recreational activities like talking, walking, and meeting friends and families whereas younger people are more likely to go for active pursuits. To summarize how stress and leisure are related to each other we can say that leisure definitely helps reduce stress even though the coping mechanisms or strategies are different for different age groups. Therefore, we can say that leisure's

contribution to stress coping seems to operate beyond the other general forms of stress coping.

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