

EFFECTIVENESS OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Noufal, T.P

Dr. Deepa R.P

M.Phil.Scholar, N.V.K.S.D. College of Education, Attoor.

Assistant Professor, N.V.K.S.D. College of Education, Attoor.

ABSTRACT

Stress is related to cognitive, physiological and behavioural responses of an individual during demanding contexts. The modern students experience more stress due to unhealthy competitions, faulty exam system, over loaded syllabus, peer jealousy and lack of recreational activities. This creates poor physical, mental and academic performance. Therefore, it is high time that we should learn how to manage stress effectively to improve mental and physical health. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy has been used to the treatment of stress, and other personality disorders. The study also investigates the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) on stress management of high school students of Kozhikode district. The design of the study is a pre-test, post test design control group. A stress scale validated by the investigators has been for collecting data. The collected data has been analyzed using t test. Results show that Cognitive Behavioural therapy has significant effects on stress management among high school students.

Key words: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, stress management, academic performance, high school students,

Introduction

Stress can be defined as cognitive, physiological and behavioural responses that occur in an individual during demanding situations. Stress makes individuals deprive of their abilities and put them in dangerous contexts mentally and physically. Hans Selye (1983) proposed that stressors will produce physical reactions symptoms such as loss of appetite, muscular weakness, and diseases. Acute and chronic stressors are linked with a downturn in the functioning of immune system and high blood pressure (Kiecolt Glaser, 2002). Stress is considered to be a key factor in mental health and high level stress is associated with depression and suicide attempts (Nolen Hoeksema, 2004).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) has its base on cognitive behaviourism and cognitive neuroscience. It is a behavioural therapy that incorporates cognitive concepts to control negative thoughts of an individual. It is also a structured form of psychotherapy that changes thinking of an individual and his reactions to the stressors of environment. According to the **Merriam-Webster dictionary**, it is "**Psychotherapy** that combines cognitive therapy with behaviour therapy by identifying faulty or maladaptive patterns of thinking, emotional response, or behaviour and substituting them with desirable patterns of thinking, **emotional response**, or behaviour." Aaron Beck was the psychologist who first conceptualized cognitive behavioural therapy as a "time-sensitive, structured, person-oriented psychotherapy directed towards solving current problems and teaching client skills to modify dysfunctional thinking and behaviour." National Health Service (NHS) of England reported that "CBT is based on the concept that our thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and actions are interconnected, and that negative thoughts and feelings lead to mental illness". CBT aims to deal with overwhelming problems in a more positive way by breaking them down into smaller parts. It also deals with current problems and provides practical ways to improve a healthy state of mind.

Need and Significance of the study

Stress is one of the greatest problems of the present digital era. Due to globalisation, people lead a mechanical way of life and struggle hard to raise their livelihood. Students of 21st century are the major victims of stress. Nowadays the unhealthy competitions in learning, faulty exam system, expensive schooling, over loaded syllabus, teacher centered methods of teaching, peer jealousy, less parental attention, high parental expectations, lack of acceptance and lack of recreational activities, put the children under pressure. These factors cause great stress in them. Stress combines with other physical and psychological factors affect the entire spectrum of physical illness from common cold to cancer (Lovallo, 2005; Suls & Wallston 2003). Stressful learning activities may lead the students to smoking, drug use, and sleeplessness, under eating, or overeating and other health threatening behaviours. Therefore stress management is a need of the hour. Today coping strategies of stress have attained greater significance in one's life especially for students. Stress coping strategies are the therapeutic measures which reduce and eliminate stress. Cognitive behaviour therapy points out our errors of thinking and emotional disturbance and helps to reprogram the thought patterns. It also incorporates mindfulness as a central objective of behaviour change. The interventions of CBT in would help students acknowledge three things: how their thought patterns influence their behaviour, how they can take control of these thought patterns and how they can apply interventions to impact their behaviour. Hence the investigators made an attempt to examine the effectiveness of CBT in managing stress among high school students.

Review of related literature

Pascoe, Michaela. C. (2017) conducted a Meta analysis and found out that various techniques of CBT such as yoga, asanas, mindfulness-based stress reduction therapies and stress related physiological measures were highly effective for the management of stress. Ruiz Santos (2017) reported that the cognitive-behavioural therapy for stress management would be an appropriate strategy for improving personality construct components. Hallajian, Mabdiye (2016) viewed that cognitive behaviour stress management training was effective on the satisfaction of adolescent school students. Khanekeshi, Ali (2014) found out that CBT interventions were the most significant interventions in decreasing academic stress. Bolmeijer, E. et al. (2010) viewed that mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) was highly effective on depression, anxiety and psychological distress across populations with different chronic somatic diseases. Worthless, I.M. et al. (2002) reported that cognitive therapy training was found to be an effective one for the treatment of stress disorders. Mills Harry, et al. viewed that cognitive techniques could be used to gain conscious control over children's mental stress-inducing processes.

Statement of the problem

Most of the high school students show poor academic performance due to stressful events at the school. Since they spend more time in the school, the teachers need to implement suitable strategies to them to manage their stress. Research studies have showed that cognitive behaviour therapy would reduce stress. The present study made an attempt to study how far cognitive behaviour therapy is effective in reducing stress? Hence the present study is entitled as ***Effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy on Stress management among high school students.***

Objectives of the study

1. To construct structured transcripts and worksheets on Cognitive behavioural therapy.
2. To construct and validate Stress scale.
3. To test the effectiveness of Cognitive behavioural therapy in reducing stress on high school students.
4. To study if there is any significant differences between the pretest mean scores of high school students in the experimental group and the control group with regard to stress.
5. To study if there is any significant differences between the posttest mean scores of high school students in the experimental group and the control group with regard to stress.

Hypotheses of the study

1. Cognitive behavioural therapy is highly effective for reducing stress of high school students
2. There will be significant differences between the pretest mean scores of high school students in the experimental group and the control group with regard to stress.
3. There will be significant differences between the posttest mean scores of high school students in the experimental group and the control group with regard to stress.

Method adopted

In this study the investigators have adopted experimental method. Experimental design adopted for the present study was pre-test post test non-equivalent control group design.

Sample for the study

The sample consisted of class IX students from VMHMHSS, Anayamkundu in Kozhikode district. Sample size was 60. Sample was divided into two groups namely the experimental group with 30 students and the control the group with 30 students.

Tools used

1. Structured worksheets on Cognitive behavioural therapy.
2. Stress scale

Stress scale constructed and validated by the investigator consisted of 20 items with three alternatives namely most of the time, sometime and not at all. The tool possessed adequate content and face validity, and the reliability was established using split half method. It was found to be 0.67.

Statistical techniques used

The following statistical techniques were used for the analysis and interpretation of the data.

1. t test for independent large sample.
2. Paired t test

Procedure adopted for the study

- 1) The investigator selected two intact groups from the select school.
- 2) Randomly assigned one as the experimental group and other as the control group.
- 3) Established rapport and administered pretest
- 4) Experiment group was given CBT intervention
- 5) Control group was given stress management strategies through visual presentation
- 6) Administered posttest
- 7) Data analysis the and interpretation

Analysis and major findings

Null Hypothesis

There exists no significant difference between the pre test mean scores of high school students in the experimental and the control groups in relation to stress.

Table1 Summary of Mean, SD and t values pre test scores of high students in relation to stress

Group	Mean	SD	N	Mean Difference	t	p	Remarks
Experimental	43.85	5.88	30	0.16	0.14	0.81	NS
Control	43.69	5.47	30				

NS-Not Significant

From the above table it is evident that the t value is 0.14, $p > 0.01$ and therefore it is not significant at any level. Also it is clear that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of high school students of experimental and control group in relation to stress. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. That is, before the treatment the students of the two groups had more or less same level of stress.

Null Hypothesis

There exists no significant difference between the post test mean scores of high school students in the experimental and the control groups in relation to stress.

Table2

Summary of Mean, SD and t values of post test scores of high students in relation to stress

Group	Mean	SD	N	Mean Difference	t	p	Remarks
Experimental	16.03	2.80	30	3.53	4.24	0.000	0.01
Control	12.50	1.82	30				

From the above table it is evident that the t value is 4.24, $p < 0.01$ and therefore it is significant at 0.01 level. Also it is clear that there is significant difference in the mean scores of high school students of the experimental and the control group in relation to stress. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. That is after the cognitive behavioural therapy, the students of experimental group have reduced their level of stress than the students of control group. Hence cognitive behavioural therapy is found to be an effective one for reducing stress.

Null Hypothesis

There exists no significant difference between the pre test and the post test mean scores of high school students in the experimental group in relation to stress

Table3

Summary of mean, SD, & Paired t values of pre test and post test scores of students in the experimental group.

	Mean	SD	N	Mean Difference	Paired t	Sig.	Remarks
Pre	43.85	5.88	30	27.82	20.46	0.000	0.01
Post	16.03	2.80					

From the above table it is clear that t value is 20.46, $p < 0.01$. Therefore it is significant at 0.01 level. The findings also show that the post test mean scores on stress are lesser than the pre test means scores. It indicates that the pre test and the post test scores of students in the experimental group on stress differ significantly after using cognitive behaviour therapy. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. So it can be concluded that the cognitive behaviour therapy is significantly an effective one in reducing stress among students.

Educational implications

The findings of the study indicated that cognitive behaviour therapy is an effective one for reducing stress of high school students. Therefore, the following implications are made based the study.

1. Awareness on importance of cognitive behavioural therapy in the reduction of stress among students could be given to school teachers through seminars and conferences.
2. Teachers could be given hands on experience on cognitive behavioural therapy for reducing stress among their students.
3. School authorities and policy makers and the governments may take initiatives to implement CBT techniques as part of school counseling programme
4. Well trained CBT therapists could be appointed in every school on part time or full time basis

Conclusion

Cognitive behaviour therapy was found to be an effective therapy for stress management. Cognitive behaviour therapy helps to control our thinking. Parents and teachers could get training in this therapy so that they can help their children for stress management.

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