



Assessment of Stress Awareness level among Professionals of district Rohtak, Haryana, India

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Abstract

Stress is so imbibed in us that it has become lifestyle itself. More successful we are, more stressed we are. Stress is of two types: eustress and distress. The present study was conducted to assess the level of stress awareness among professionals. The locale selected for the study was Rohtak city in Haryana, India. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select one hundred three subjects (aged 30-60 years) belonging to different professions i.e. doctor (n=22), nurse (n=15), banker (n=24) and professors (n=42). Data was collected by using questionnaire cum interview method. Stress awareness level was assessed through a self-designed questionnaire. Supplied questionnaire contained the list of questions pertaining to stress, its types, causes, symptoms and different coping techniques. Average stress awareness level of bankers (19.54 ± 3.20) was followed by nurses (18.93 ± 2.46), professors (18.36 ± 3.53) and doctors (17.64 ± 4.51). Analysis of variance further showed that there was no significant difference in the stress awareness level of different professionals i.e. professors, nurses, doctors and bankers, $F(3, 99) = 1.19, p = 0.32$. Stress awareness level of all professionals was more or less similar. Although majority of respondents were aware of stress management techniques, yet comparatively lesser fraction of professionals were adopting them to combat stress in their day-to-day work life due to lack of time. Stress management techniques used by respondents were light activities, brisk walk/ yoga/ meditation and eating stress busting food. Amongst all stress management techniques adopted, brisk walk/ yoga/ meditation was made use at maximum followed by light activities and eating stress busting food. However, about one fifth of professional had not adopted any stress management technique.

Keywords: Stress awareness, professionals, stress management.

Introduction

Stress is so imbibed in us that it has become lifestyle itself. More successful we are, more stressed we are. Stress can be classified under two categories: eustress and distress¹. Eustress motivates a person to be creative, solve problems, perform tasks well, and grow confidently. A person experiences eustress when his/her perceived ability to cope outweighs the perceived demands². The eustress brings a rise in the feeling of control and confidence, being able to handle tasks, challenges, demands and tackle situations effectively. A right amount of alertness is required to activate the stress response system of a person towards mental and physical performance so that one can be productive and creative. Distress situations deteriorate a person's performance, the adaptation and responses in body i.e. physiological, psychological or behavioural become disruptive. Therefore, eustress is regarded as positive stress and distress as negative stress. A fine line differentiates eustress and distress. When will eustress turn into distress, it depends on individual's perception towards a stressor (e.g. a negative threat versus a positive challenge). If two persons experience the same degree of stress or pressure, one may take it as positive or healthy types or the other may accept it as negative. Stressors can be psychological, physiological, biological or environmental. External causes of stress can be major life incidents, relationship

difficulties, being overloaded at work or home, children and family issues, job pressure, monetary problems etc. Internal causes of stress may include unrealistic expectations, pessimism, negative self-image, lack of assertiveness, inability to accept uncertainties of life, being perfectionist, etc³. Extreme efforts over the time results in to chronic stress can lead to either mental or physical exhaustion or other injury⁴. Chronic stress disrupts nearly each and every system of the body. Signs of being stressed are negative attitude, exaggeration in worrying, inability to relax, irritability, aggression, persistent unhappiness, feeling lonely or isolated, depressed, poor judgment. Physical signs of stress include dizziness, aches and pains in body, rapid heartbeat. As a result of this, changes in habits like eating in excess or less than needed, sleeping too much or not enough, procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities, smoking, consuming alcohol or drugs for relaxation, biting nails or pacing is being observed. However, stress and disease relation is expressed in two manners: from psychological to physiological problems and from the biological illnesses to mental disorder. Initially, it raises blood pressure, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contribute to infertility and pre-mature births, suppress immune system, speed up aging process. Chronic stress can result into infectious and immunological diseases, gastrointestinal, neurodegenerative, cancer. Stress-related

physical illnesses include migraines, hypertension, heart disease, muscle, back and joint pain, irritable bowel syndrome and duodenal ulcer⁵, whereas psychologists looking for psychological factors behind human ailments have focused primarily on coronary heart disease and cancer⁶. Mental stress may give birth to various physical diseases and if people are aware of stress and its coping techniques, stress specifically due to work can be managed and prevented at an early age. Stress management can be defined as recognizing causes of stress and managing those effects on a person in a more healthy way through strategic tools⁷. Compare to work done on assessment of occupational stress, there are relatively few published study on stress awareness in professionals. Considering the role of stress in human health and non-availability of literature regarding stress awareness, the present study was conducted to assess the level of stress awareness among professionals.

Methodology

Locale for the study: The locale for the study was Rohtak city in Haryana state.

Sample selection: Purposive random sampling technique was used to select sample. One hundred three subjects (aged 30-60 years) belonging to different professions i.e. doctor (n=22), nurse (n=15), banker (n=24) and professors (n=42) were selected.

Stress Awareness level Assessment: Data was collected by using questionnaire cum interview method. For adjudging the existing level of stress awareness, a self-designed questionnaire was supplied to each subject for filling. Supplied questionnaire contained the list of questions pertaining to stress, its types, causes, symptoms and different coping techniques. For evaluating the level of stress awareness, total twenty four questions were asked from respondents. One score was awarded towards correct answer and zero for incorrect answer. Depending upon the responses and scores, level of stress awareness was categorized as low, moderate and high for those obtained between 0-8, 9-16, 17-24 respectively.

Statistical analysis of data: Data was compiled, analyzed and presented in proportions and percentages. Statistical analysis of data was done through SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Sciences). The analysis of variance was used to analyze the stress awareness level of professionals.

Results and Discussion

Table-1 summarized the data regarding awareness towards stress among all the professionals in which very few doctors (9.09%) obtained the score less than eight falling under low stress awareness level category whereas none of the other professional belonged to this category. It was observed that doctors aged 30-40 years who were having lesser work experience fell in this category. Ensuing of data further revealed that nearly fourteen per cent doctors (13.63%), twenty two per cent nurses (21.42%), seventeen per cent bankers (16.66%) and more than twenty six per cent professors (26.19%) scored between 9 and 16. Among all the professionals, comparatively more professors were placed under this category of moderate stress awareness level followed by nurses, then bankers, in the last doctors. A major fraction of doctors (77.27%), nurses (78.57%), bankers (83.33%) and professors (73.80%) had high level of stress awareness and scored between 17 and 24. Amidst professionals, comparatively more bankers scored highest stress awareness level followed by nurses, doctors and professors.

Table-1
Distribution of respondents according to stress awareness level

Level of Stress Awareness	Doctors	Nurses	Bankers	Professors
*Low (1-8)	09.09%	-	-	-
*Moderate (9-16)	13.63%	21.42%	16.66%	26.19%
*High (17-24)	77.27%	78.57%	83.33%	73.80%

*Self-designed questionnaire

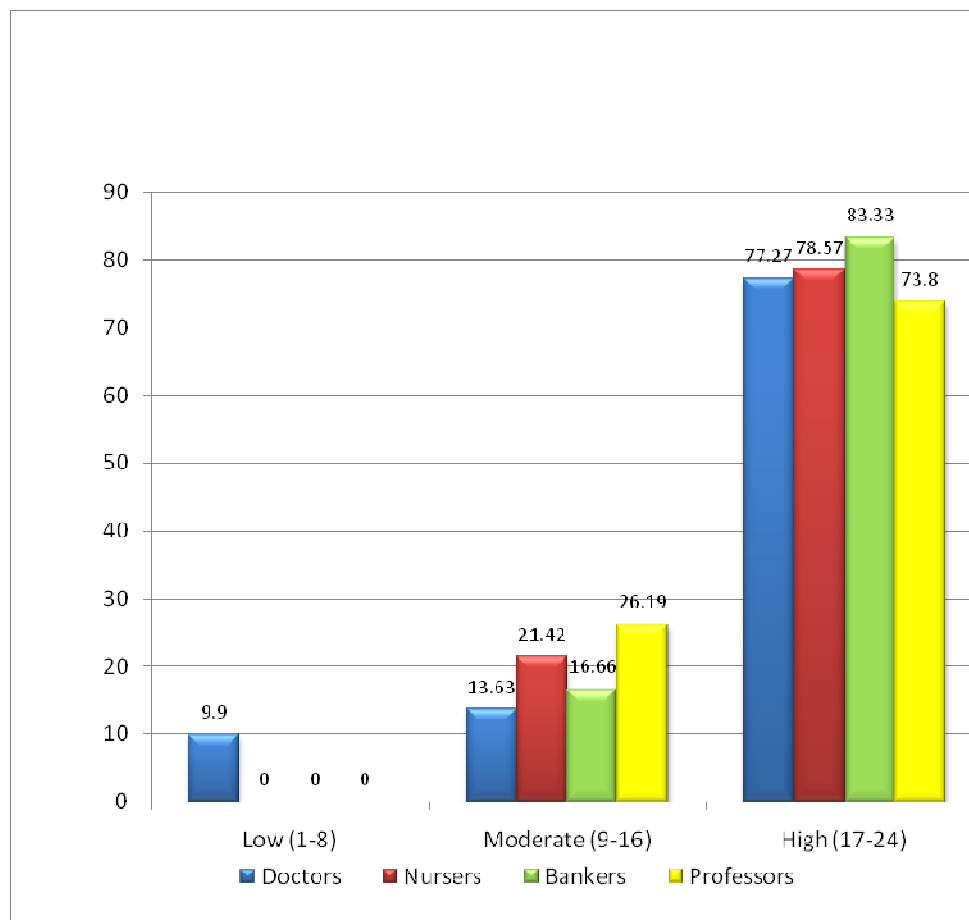


Figure-1
Distribution of respondents according to stress awareness level

As represented in figure-1, very few young doctors having lesser work experience fell under low stress awareness level category. Rest of subjects had good awareness about stress and stress management techniques as no one from other profession fell in this category. In descending order of stress awareness level, maximum number of bankers fell in the group of high awareness level followed by nurses, then doctors and in the last professors. Though there was not major differences, level of stress awareness of all subjects was quiet high.

highest and doctors on lowest side. Bankers (19.54 ± 3.20) were on top followed by nurses (18.93 ± 2.46), professors (18.36 ± 3.53) and in the last doctors (17.64 ± 4.51).

Table-2
Average stress awareness level among professionals

Professionals	N	Mean	Std. Error
Doctors	22	17.64 ± 4.51	.961
Nurses	15	18.93 ± 2.46	.636
Bankers	24	19.54 ± 3.20	.654
Professor	42	18.36 ± 3.53	.545

Table-2 showed that there was not much difference among average stress awareness level of professionals, bankers on

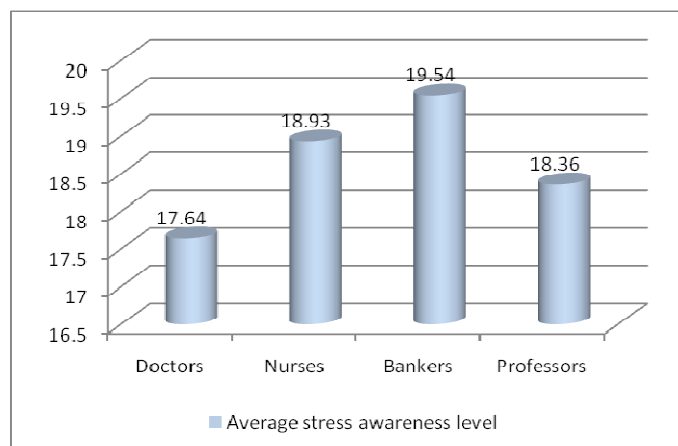


Figure-2
Average stress awareness level among professionals

Figure-2 depicted that bankers had highest stress awareness level among all the professionals and doctors had lowest. From

the following box-plot it was observed that the median line in the middle of the box for all professionals were overlapped with each other, this showed that there was not much difference among the stress awareness levels of professionals. As the box for bankers was placed higher than the box for other professionals, so bankers had highest stress awareness level. However, there were few professors (2) and doctors (3) with exceptionally low stress awareness level.

Results of analysis of variance in table-3 showed that there was no significant differences in the stress awareness level of different professionals i.e. professors, nurses, doctors and bankers, $F(3, 99) = 1.19$, $p = 0.32$. Stress awareness level of all professionals was more or less similar.

Awareness of stress management techniques and its adoption by respondents was summarized in table-4 which revealed that majority of respondents were aware of stress management techniques. Although all the fifteen nurses (100%) were aware about various stress management techniques followed by bankers (79.16%), professors (73.80%) and doctors (72.72%) yet comparatively lesser fraction of nurses (80.00%), bankers (66.66%) and professors (50.00%) and doctors (59.09%) were adopting stress management techniques to combat stress in their day-to-day work life due to lack of time.

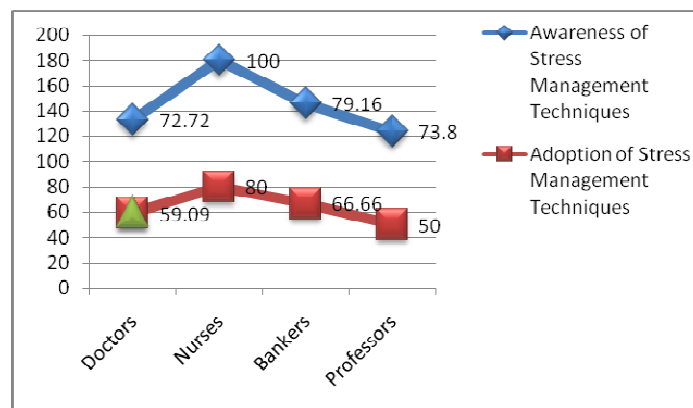


Figure-3
Comparison of awareness and adoption of stress management techniques

Figure-3 clearly represented that instead of having good awareness about stress and its coping techniques, adoption of these techniques to combat stress was very less among professionals. Lack of time was stated as the reason for not implementing this knowledge.

Data was collected regarding type of stress management techniques adopted by the selected respondents. Stress management techniques used by respondents were categorized as light activities, brisk walk/ yoga/ meditation and eating stress busting food. Amongst all stress management techniques adopted, brisk walk/ yoga/ meditation was made use at the maximum followed by light activities and eating stress-busting

food. Most of the professionals (38.83%) adopted brisk walk/ yoga/ meditation as stress busting tool. Regarding brisk walk/ yoga/ meditation as stress reliever, large number of nurses (60.00%) followed by doctors (45.45%), professors (33.33%) and bankers (29.16%) made use this technique. Light activities included listening music, reading, writing, gardening, playing with pets, taking a walk; spend time with family and friends. These were used by nearly thirty seven per cent professionals (36.89%) to get relieve from job stress. Among all professionals, one half of bankers (50.00%), majority of academicians (40.47%), nearly thirty two per cent doctors (31.81%) and least nurses (13.32%) were using light activities to fight stress. Out of total selected subjects only one twentieth of respondents (4.85%) were consuming special food as stress buster. More doctors (13.63%) relied on food as stress busting tool, whereas very few bankers (4.16%) and professors (2.38%) used this technique. However, none of the nurses relied on stress busting foods. On the other side, one fifth professionals (19.41%) adopted none of the technique to cope stress. In this group, more of nurses (26.67%) followed by professors (23.80%), bankers (16.66%) and doctors (9.09%) did nothing to relieve their stress.

It is useful to relax before work by arriving 15 minutes early to read the news paper; a little talk to people outside your department or going out to eat at lunchtime during work or immediately after work; by trying a crossword puzzle or taking a few minutes' walk; by listening to a few songs on a radio before a person goes to bed.

Walking is a perfect non-strenuous aerobic exercise to spend some time in the fresh air and nature can be good for a person. Swimming can also be enjoyable in the company of other people. Swimming exercises all muscles of the body without putting strain on a person's back⁸. Social support of a person can reduce the impact of stressors in teachers enhancing job satisfaction and well-being while reducing physical illness risk. Teachers seek support from colleagues, family and friends by share feelings to receive advice, understanding, emotional support and sympathy. Teachers having supportive personal lives tend to experience less stress at workplace⁹. While about thirty nine per cent professionals (38.83%) practiced brisk walk/ yoga/ meditation as stress – busting tool with maximal practicing of brisk walk for at least half an hour daily. Although widely acknowledged as beneficial, regular exercise is an under-utilized therapy. A regular exercise program can decrease the cardiac death rates by one half, more than many of present therapies for controlling cholesterol or blood pressure. Exercise not only decrease all cause mortality and morbidity¹⁰, aid in the treatment and prevention of many lifestyle diseases like CAD, obesity, diabetes, joint disease, but also enhances the quality of life¹¹. Exercise counters the negative effects of stress by limiting the increase in adrenaline triggered by stress, allowing the body to react to the fight or flight alarm more efficiently, and improving the circulation and respiration while relieving stress. Walking, jogging, rowing, skipping and swimming are some of

the good exercises for providing relaxation stimulates the body's parasympathetic nervous system, which controls stress responses like respiration, heart rate and digestion. When a person relaxes, he or she feels calmer¹². Stress management programmes are developed in organisations to acquaint the employees with various techniques such as meditation, yoga, relaxation training and managing of lifestyle¹³. Only five per cent subjects (4.85%) ate stress busting food. Nearly twenty per cent respondents (19.41%) practiced nothing and let the stress go unattended. Mind-body interventions are of two types: Mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) and Cognitive - Behavioral stress reduction (CBSR) may both be effective in reducing perceived stress and depression. Mindfulness based stress reduction may be more effective in increasing mindfulness and energy and reducing pain¹⁴.

Various Stress management techniques like progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic training, relaxation response, biofeedback, emotional freedom technique, guided imagery, diaphragmatic breathing, transcendental meditation, cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness based stress reduction and emotional freedom technique are easy to learn and practice, have good results in individuals with good health or with a disease¹⁵.

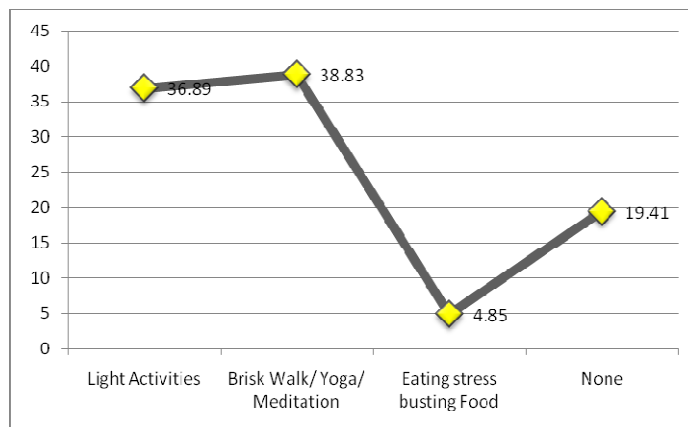


Figure-4
Different stress mgt. techniques used by respondents

This figure-4 represented the distribution of subjects according to stress management techniques adopted and it seemed that brisk walk/ yoga/ meditation and light activities were used by respondents in more or less same frequency. Eating stress-busting food as stress coping technique was adopted by very few respondents. About one fifth of professionals had not adopted any stress management technique.

Table-3
Analysis of variance of stress awareness level among professionals

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	45.714	3	15.238	1.198	.315
Within Groups	1259.625	99	12.723		
Total	1305.340	102			

Table-4
Awareness and adoption of stress management techniques by respondents

Professionals	Awareness of stress management techniques	Adoption of stress management techniques
Doctors	16(72.72%)	13(59.09%)
Nurses	15(100.00%)	12(80.00%)
Bankers	19(79.16%)	16(66.66%)
Professors	31(73.80%)	21(50.00%)

Table-5
Different stress management techniques used by respondents

Techniques used	Doctors	Nurses	Bankers	Academicians	Total
Light Activities	7(31.81%)	2(13.32%)	12(50.00%)	17(40.47%)	38(36.89%)
Brisk Walk/ Yoga/ Meditation	10(45.45%)	9(60.00%)	7(29.16%)	14(33.33%)	40(38.83%)
Eating stress busting Food	3(13.63%)	0(00.00%)	1(4.16%)	1(2.38%)	5(4.85%)
None	2(9.09%)	4(26.67%)	4(16.66%)	10(23.80%)	20(19.41%)

Conclusion

Awareness about stress and stress management techniques is an effective tool to beat day-to-day stresses. Though stress awareness level of professionals was quite high, yet this knowledge was not used in coping with stress. Lack of time was main reason for not adopting stress management techniques. Many professionals were adopting different stress management techniques to fight their stress while giving least preference to stress-busting foods. One fifth of professionals had not adopted any stress management technique.

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