

Touch Deprivation: A Risk Factor for Stress Among Youngster's

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ABSTRACT

People go through stressful life situations which makes them difficult to cope with challenges in everyday life. The sense of touch plays a very crucial role in the development and normal functioning of the human body. It affects not only the physical functions, but also the efficient behavioral outcomes of an individual. Objective of the present study was to assess touch deprivation and perceived stress among young adults. The relationship between touch deprivation and perceived stress was assessed. Data was collected from a total of 120 participants. The measures used in the study are Touch deprivation scale by Narissra M. Punyanunt-Cater & Jason S. Wrench (2009) and Perceived stress scale by Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein (1983). From the results, it was evident that there was no significant difference in touch deprivation and perceived stress on the basis of gender. Correlation was also seen between touch deprivation and perceived stress.

Keywords: *Touch deprivation, Perceived stress*

Touch deprivation

It is possible for the deaf or blind to lead a meaningful lives in spite of loss of these very important senses. But as the biophysicist Dr. Frederick Sachs wrote in the sciences (1988) “an existence devoid of tactile sensation is another matter; sustained physical contact with other humans a prerequisite for healthy relationships and successful engagement with the rest of one's environment” (Sachs, 1988). Touch is a particularly powerful non-verbal method of assistance for communication that also helps to create and maintain social ties. In order to encourage affiliative and prosocial behaviour, social touch is believed to provide positive hedonic value. For example, it has been demonstrated that the impacts of touch in social encounters boost a person's likeability as well as their generosity and obedience. Social contact, on the other hand, acts as a means of connecting people together and strengthening bonds. In humans, contact from caretakers is crucial for development and growth throughout infancy as well as for happiness and bonding during adulthood. John Bowlby in his Attachment Theory has focused on the critical need for a child to form a safe attachment to his caretaker. Touch affects human bonding in a way that lasts a lifetime.

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Stress

Stress is a sense of pressure and tension. Perceived stress is defined as feelings of unpredictability in one's life situation, feeling unable to manage every day challenges and feeling that one's problems keep piling up. According to a review study, people who experience depressive symptoms have lower emotional regulation, are less able to focus on what others are saying, are more self-focused, and smile less when they engage with others. The way that the human body works physically can be significantly impacted by stress. As a result of this stress, the body produces more corticosterone and adrenaline, which in turn boosts blood pressure, heart rate, and other physiological indicators as well as placing more physical strain on internal organs. According to Cannon (who first described fight-or-flight reaction), when an organism detects a threat, the sympathetic nervous system and the endocrine system quickly arouse and motivates the body. This physical reaction prompts the organism to either defend itself against the danger or to run away. Hans Selye, a Hungarian endocrinologist, developed the Selye's general adaptation syndrome idea in 1956. It claims that humans react physiologically in the same way to various types of stress. Several studies have shown that young adults (18 to 25) experience higher levels of anxiety, distress, and depression than other adult age groups (Cao et al., 2020., Huang and Zhao,2020., Qiu et al.,2010). These results strongly imply the need to evaluate young adult's psychological conditions as well as their mental health outcomes.

Brett K Jakubiak and Brooke C Feeney (2019) conducted a study on Interpersonal touch as a resource to facilitate positive personal and relational outcomes during stress discussions. Result indicates that disclosers who received greater touch while they discussed their stressors perceived that they were more able to overcome their stressors and viewed their partners more positively than disclosers who received less touch.

Kyra Densing, Hippokrates Konstantinidis, Melanie Seiler (2018) conducted a study on Effect of stress level on different forms of self-touch in pre and post adolescent girls. Result indicates that increasing immobility might represent the inward focus of stressed participants that tried to focus on the task.

Albert et al., (2009) conducted a study named A randomized trial of massage therapy after heart surgery. Results indicates that touch therapy decreased blood pressure in cardiac patients.

Dowd, Kolcaba, Steiner & Fashinpaur (2007) conducted a study on Comparison of a healing touch, coaching and a combined intervention on comfort and stress in younger college students. Result indicates that on comfort and stress, healing touch had better immediate results, while coaching had better carryover effects.

Olson et al., (1992) conducted a study on Therapeutic touch and post-Hurricane Hugo stress. Result indicates that stressed people report themselves to be less stressed following therapeutic touch ($p=.05$). Time of therapeutic touch intervention varied significantly between the touches, with a range of 6.8 to 20 minutes.

Need and significance

Touch is an essential component of communication and is crucial for developing and sustaining interpersonal connections. According to Tiffany field (2014), sexual taboos and the development of medical technologies have led to the increasing touch-avoidant patterns of behaviour. A no touch standard has emerged in public spaces due to the fear of sexual offences. At the Miami Touch Research Institute, Field conducted research on this topic and discovered that light touch or massage has therapeutic effects. Since then, it has been used to

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improve immune function, accelerate growth and increase alertness and performance. These results emphasise the significance of interpersonal contact, especially intimate touch, during difficult and uncertain times. Hence from these contexts arise the need for the study 'Touch Deprivation: A Risk Factor For Stress Among Youngster's

METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement

The present study aims to assess the touch deprivation and perceived stress among young adults.

Research design

The present study follows a quantitative research design.

Objectives

- To assess touch deprivation and perceived stress of young adults based on gender.
- To assess the relationship between touch deprivation and perceived stress in young adults.

Hypotheses

- H01: There will be no significant gender difference in touch deprivation.
- H02: There will be no significant gender difference in perceived stress.
- H03: There will be no significant relationship between touch deprivation and perceived stress based on gender, namely,
 - a) males
 - b) females

Key Words

Touch deprivation, perceived stress, gender, young adults

Operational definition

- **Touch deprivation** - In this study, touch deprivation refers to lack of physical touch one experiences than they are used to.
- **Perceived stress** - In this study, Perceived stress refers to the degree to which a person experiences stressful event.

Method

Participants

The present study consists of 120 participants. In this research participant age group ranges from 18-25 years. The samples were collected from Karnataka and Kerala. Their touch deprivation and perceived stress was tested. Convenience sampling (also known as availability sampling) is a sampling that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in study.

Inclusion Criteria

- Young Adults between the age group of 18-25 years.
- Both males and females were included.
- Young adults pursuing under graduation and post-graduation
- Young adults from Karnataka and Kerala

Exclusion Criteria

- Young adults who are differently abled
- People below 18 years
- People above 25 years
- Young adults outside Kerala and Karnataka

Measures

- **Variable: Touch deprivation and Perceived stress:** The following tools were used to get necessary data regarding the different variables in the study. Brief description of the tools used for the data collection is given below.
- **Touch Deprivation Scale:** The touch deprivation scale was developed by Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter and Jason. S. Wrench (2009). It consisted of 14 items with a three factor structure that measured the variable on a five point likert scale, with the responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The first factor has 8 items measuring the absence of touch. The second factor consisted of 4 items measuring an individual's longing for touch. The last factor consisted of 2 items measuring an individual's use of sexual contact to get touch. In assessing the factorial validity, the first factor has an α of 0.85, the second factor has an α of 0.77, the last factor has an α of 0.60. The scale is reliable and has factorial, concurrent, predictive and criterion validity
- **Perceived stress scale (PSS-10):** The Perceived stress scale (PSS-10) is a 10 item questionnaire originally developed by Cohen et al. (1983). It evaluates the degree to which an individual has perceived life as unpredictable, uncontrollable and overloading over the previous month. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.83 (Factor 1), 0.77 (Factor 2) and 0.87 (Total score). The test-retest reliability scores were 0.83 (Factor 1), 0.68 (Factor 2) and 0.86 (Total score).
- **Personal Data Sheet:** Personal data sheet is a questionnaire that is often given for the purpose of eliciting specific information related to the individual. The respondents were asked to fill up personal details required in the data sheet which included name, age and gender.
- **Informed consent form:** Informed consent ensures that research participants are aware of all the potential risks and costs involved in a treatment or procedure. For informed consent to be considered valid, the participant must be competent and the consent should be given voluntarily.

Procedure for Data Collection

Respondents were approached and informed that they had been randomly selected to be the respondents for the study. Data was collected using Google forms. Questions and doubts regarding the questionnaire were cleared and confidentiality was ensured.

Statistical Technique Used for Data Analysis

For analysis of the data, t test and correlation were performed

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was aimed at investigating touch deprivation and perceived stress among young adults. This part deals with the results and discussion of the results obtained from data collected using different tools. The data was consolidated and scored. The data was statistically analyzed using statistical package for the social sciences (spss 25).

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To evaluate the hypothesis that there will be no significant gender difference in touch deprivation t test was done and the results are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison between males and females on touch deprivation

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	t test	Significance
Touch deprivation	Male	57	42.63	1.896	.060
	Female	63	40.68		

Table 1 shows the mean value of touch deprivation as 42.63 in males and 40.68 in females. The score of t test is 1.896 and p vale is 0.060 (>0.05). The obtained score is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis that there will be no significant gender difference in touch deprivation is accepted.

The reason for this result may be touch is equally important for both men and women irrespective of sex as it is the most effective form of communication. It was said that when a person doesn't get enough physical touch, they can become stressed, anxious, or depressed. As a response to stress, their body makes a hormone called cortisol. This can cause heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, and breathing rate to go up, with bad effects for immune and digestive systems.

To evaluate the hypothesis that there will be no significant gender difference in perceived stress was analysed using t test and results are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison between males and females on perceived stress

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	t test	Significance
Perceived Stress	Male	57	22.12	0.312	0.642
	Female	63	21.79		

Table 2 shows the mean value of perceived stress as 22.12 in males and 21.79 in females. The score of t test is 0.312 and p vale is 0.642 (>0.05). The obtained score is not significant at 0.05 levels. Hence the null hypothesis that there will be no significant gender difference in perceived stress is accepted.

One reason for not seeing significant gender difference in perceived stress may be in this busy world every individual is going through stressful life events in their colleges as well as working places. It was said that the degree of stress experienced and the ways in which a person reacts to it can be influenced by a various number of factors such as personal characteristics, lifestyle, social support, appraisal of the stressors, life events, and socio demographic and occupational variables.

To evaluate the hypothesis that there will be no significant relationship between touch deprivation and perceived stress Pearson's correlation was done and the results are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationship between touch deprivation and perceived stress

Touch deprivation	Perceived stress	
	Correlation	0.397
	Significance	0.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Table 3 gives relationship between touch deprivation and perceived stress. The correlation coefficient for touch deprivation and perceived stress is 0.397 and p value is 0.000 (<0.05). Hence the null hypothesis that there will be no significant relationship between touch deprivation and perceived stress is rejected.

From the results it is evident that there is a correlation between touch deprivation and perceived stress. It means that the scores of touch deprivation influence scores of perceived stress and vice versa.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study had been done to analyze the Influence of touch deprivation on perceived stress among young adults. This chapter is concerned with giving a brief summary of the investigation, major findings, implications and limitations of the study along with suggestions for further research.

Findings of the study

The following are the findings obtained when the data was analyzed.

1. There is no significant gender difference in touch deprivation.
2. There is no significant gender difference in perceived stress.
3. There is a significant correlation between touch deprivation and perceived stress.

Implications

The results obtained through this can be used in understanding influence of touch deprivation on perceived stress among young adults. From this study it is evident that there is a significant relationship between touch deprivation and perceived stress. May be in this busy world, everyone running behind their own gallop this lack of tactile communication lead people to be more distressed. It is okay that everyone has their own work load but at some point of time it is better to get in touch with friends and family via communication systems so that we can ensure that every one is in contact with their friends, family and relatives there by reducing the stress.

Limitations

- The data was collected through Google forms. Hence there was no opportunity to meet participants in person. There is also a probability for bias. Since the information was collected through google forms, there is a chance of people to lie in their responses or give false statements.
- The study was conducted within a short period of time.

Scope for further studies

- A larger sample can be made available and further detailed analysis can be done.
- Further studies on this topic can be done among adolescents and older adults
- Young Adults from different states of India can be included.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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