

## Stress and Psychological Well-Being among Youth During Covid-19 Pandemic in Kerala

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### ABSTRACT

The current study was conducted to find “Stress and Psychological Well-Being among Youth during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kerala”. The study was conducted on youth aging 18-24 years and the sample was purposively selected for the study from different districts in Kerala. The study aims to examine the stress and psychological well-being among youth based on gender and to study the relation between stress and psychological well-being based on gender. A total of 126 individuals, both females and males (93 and 33 respectively) participated in the study. The required data was collected using a Perceived Stress Scale and Psychological Well-being Scale, all administered via online Google form. The data obtained were then analysed using the statistical analyses Students t-test and Pearson’s correlation. The results showed that there is no significant difference in stress based on gender. Autonomy, Personal Growth, Purpose in Life, Environmental Mastery, Self- Acceptance and Positive Relations with Others are the dimensions of psychological wellbeing. There is a significant difference in the dimension of positive relations with others between male and female except other dimensions. In this dimension, females have more wellbeing than males. It was also found that there exists a significant negative relation between Stress and Psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** *Stress, Psychological Well-Being*

The COVID -19 pandemic affect every aspect of lives in an unpredicted manner. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. Demand for mental health services became greater than before because of this pandemic. Many people are facing high level of alcohol and drug abuse, insomnia and anxiety during these days. These all show that Coronavirus has a great impact on mental health of individuals. This pandemic has led to a rise in fear, anxiety, stress, and depression among the population; especially among youth. As they face strict lockdown measures and have rarer resources to cope with it. Youth is sensitive to any suggestions; it may be determined by their experiences or a history only a youth who keep himself.

They were economically and emotionally dependent on the old generation. They undergo lots of changes in life during their young age.

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Risk factors for the prolonged stress can be high blood pressure, weaken immune system and may contribute to diseases such as obesity and heart disease. It can also lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression that were commonly seen among youth. Youth are expected to be the one who introduce positive changes for the betterment of the society. Thus, they need to manage stress by acquiring stress management skills. The stress upon them by life is huge. Therefore, knowledge about the sources and coping strategies of stress is very significant. Academic tests, interpersonal relationship problems, life changes, and thought about the future these all itself create high level of stress. Then, these high levels of stress may cause physical, behavioural and psychological problems. So, more emphasis can be given to the transition period of becoming an adolescent from a child. An optimistic and supportive environment could minimize the negative impact of stressors.

Stress is one of the most interesting and mysterious subjects we have since the beginning of time, study of stress is not only limited to what happen to the body throughout a stressful situation, but also to what occurs in the psyche of an individual the term stress was introduced for the first time by the Hans Selye and he described stress as the “nonspecific response of the body to any demand”. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that stress occurs when people perceived that the demands from external situations were beyond their coping capacity. Nowadays, the definition “stress is the process of interaction from resolution requests from the environment (known as the transactional model)” is broadly accepted. Stress is a physical and emotional change occurred as a response to what happens around us. Causes of stress may vary from person to person. Stress for short time may not affect much a person but if it last for a long time, then it may cause some illness like high blood pressure or stroke or heart disease, etc.

Psychological well-being is a positive mental state of feeling good and satisfaction of functioning efficiently. It does not require individuals to feel good all the time; the experience of painful emotions (e.g., disappointment, failure, grief) is a normal part of life, and being able to manage these negative or painful emotions is essential for long-term well-being. Psychological well-being is, however, compromised when negative emotions are extreme or very long lasting and interfere with a person’s ability to function in his or her daily life. An individual’s level of mental capital and psychological well-being is powerfully influenced by her/his early environment, particularly maternal care. While an adverse early environment can produce lifelong impairments in behaviour and neurobiology, compensation is possible at later stages in the life course. According to Bradburn, (1969) psychological wellbeing is a representation of an individual’s psychological health based on positive psychological function. The foundation of psychological well-being development is characterized by self-acceptance, positive relationship, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has led to raise fear, anxiety, and stress among the population especially in youth. Youth is a critical period because at this time they have to face lots of changes in his/her life. Pandemic creates a huge impact in the lives of youth. They were restricted to being in the home always due to the lockdown. And they become worried about their education, future and all. These all creates high stress among them. We all know that, physiological well-being and psychological well-being were correlated. Same as here, high stress leads to poor psychological well-being. So, this study focuses on the relationship between Stress and Psychological Well-being among youth during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala. Especially during this pandemic mental and physical health is very important. There will be negative correlation between stress and psychological well-being. Long term stress

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increases the risk of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and substance use problems, and sleep problems. Therefore, it is important to analyze the relationship between stress and Psychological well-being among the youth during COVID-19 Pandemic. The studies based on Stress and Psychological well-being during COVID-19 is very rare especially in Kerala settings. But it is a highly relevant topic. The study has a great scope in this COVID-19 pandemic scenario. Hence, this study is so significant that the findings of this study can help us to identify if there are differences in the stress and psychological well-being of people based on gender. Based on the findings of the study we can plan and implement strategies to reduce stress and enhance psychological well-being of the people.

### *Objectives*

- To find out the level of stress among youth during COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala.
- To find out the level of psychological well-being among youth during COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala.
- To find out the relationship among stress and psychological well-being of youth during COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala.

### *Hypotheses*

- H01: There is no significant difference in stress among male and female youth during COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala.
- H02: There is no significant difference in psychological well-being among male and female youth during COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala.
- H03: There is no significant bond among stress and psychological well-being of youth during COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample*

The sample consists of 126 youth and it included 33 males and 93 females. The age range of the participants ranged from 18-24 years of age. The participants were selected from different districts in Kerala.

### *Instruments*

**Perceived Stress Scale** - The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), developed by Cohen et al. (1983) is a 10-item questionnaire widely used to assess stress levels in young people and adults aged 12 and above.

**Psychological Wellbeing Scale** - Psychological wellbeing (1989) developed by Carol Ryff, is an 18 item self-report inventory. It measures six factors of positive functioning, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose of life, positive relation with others and self-acceptance.

### **Personal Data Sheet**

• Name • Age • Gender • Place • Educational Qualification • any health issues • Occupation, if any • any medication, if any

### *Procedures*

Permission to conduct the study was taken from the authorities. The entire Questionnaires were selected. And these were converted to Google forms and data was collected from the participants aged 18 – 24 years. Two scales were used in study; Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Psychological Well-Being Scale as a measurement tool. The participants were assured about the confidentiality of their responses and their right to quit as subjects at any

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point during the course of the study. All doubts were clarified. Respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire according to what they felt without being affected by friends or others. The score were calculated and interpreted as per the instructions provided in the manual of each scale and then it was subjected to statistical analysis.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Level of Stress in Youth Based on Gender**

Variable		Stress		
		Low (0-13)	Moderate (14-26)	High (27-40)
Gender	Male (33)	6(18.18%)	25(75.76%)	2(6.06%)
	Female(93)	20(21.5%)	70(75.27%)	3(3.22%)

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that stress occurs when people perceived that the demands from external situations were beyond their coping capacity. The definition “stress is the process of interaction from resolution requests from the environment (known as the transactional model)” is widely accepted. According to Perceived Stress scale developed by Cohen et al. (1983), stress can be divided in to three levels; low (0-13), moderate (14-26) and high (27-40).

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of level of stress in youth based on gender. The number of males who have low stress is 6 (18.18%), moderate stress is 25 (75.76%) and high stress is 2(6.06%). And the number of females who have low stress is 20 (21.5%), moderate stress is 70 (75.27%) and high stress is 3 (3.22%). These results showed that stress experienced by male and female have a large difference in number. Thus, it indicates that female experience more stress than males.

According to a study Stress in America; Gender and Stress which conducted by APA (2010) revealed that women are more likely than men (28 percent vs. 20 percent) to report having a great deal of stress (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale). Almost half of all women (49 percent) surveyed said their stress has increased over the past five years, compared to four in 10 (39 percent) men.

**Table 2: Mean, SD and t Value in Stress between Male and Female during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala**

	Gender				t value
	Male (N= 33)		Female (N=93)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Perceived Stress	18.52	5.669	17.82	5.521	0.612

Table 2 shows the mean, SD and the t value of stress during COVID-19 Pandemic on youth in Kerala based on male and female. There might be no significant difference between male and female in Stress. But there is a slight difference between the mean values of male and female. Mean value of male is greater than that of female. It is clear from the result that men perceive slightly more stress than female. Usually, all studies reported females have more stress than males. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that stress occurs when people perceived that the demands from external situations were beyond their coping capacity. The definition “stress is the process of interaction from resolution requests from the environment (known as the transactional model)” is widely accepted.

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A study on Stress in America; Gender and Stress by APA (2011) find out that men are more likely than women to report being diagnosed with the types of chronic physical illnesses that are often linked to high stress levels and unhealthy lifestyles and behaviour's, signalling that there may be some important gender differences when it comes to stress management. A study which titled Perceived Stress in a Gender perspective showed contradictory result that the female gender is associated with higher stress level. In particular, 11% men and 22.7% women showed high PSS values; therefore, the percentage resulted double among women.

**Table 3: Mean SD and t Value of Psychological Well-Being and its Dimensions between Male and Female during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala**

Variable Psychological well-being	Gender				t value
	Male (N = 33)		Female (N = 93)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Autonomy	14.272	3.023	13.495	2.709	1.304
Positive Relations with others	12.636	3.1	14.452	3.705	2.740*
Personal Growth	14.758	3.031	15.785	3.09	1.663
Environmental Mastery	13.454	3.401	14.172	3.178	1.059
Self-Acceptance	15.727	2.742	15.419	3.402	0.519
Purpose in Life	12.515	3.41	12.968	2.898	0.680
Psychological Wellbeing (Total)	40.88	6.855	42.84	7.13	1.396

\*. Significant at 0.01 level

Table 3 shows the mean, SD and t value of psychological well-being and its dimensions during COVID-19 Pandemic in youth based on male and female. There is a significant difference between male and female in the dimension of positive relations with others. Mean value of female is greater than that of male. This means female has more wellbeing in this dimension. In considering psychological wellbeing, male and female didn't show any significant differences. But, there is a slight difference in mean values of each dimension in the Psychological well-being. Mean value of men is higher than female in Autonomy, Self-Acceptance. So, it indicated that male has more well-being in the dimensions of autonomy and self-acceptance than female. And the mean value of men is lower than female in the dimensions of Environmental Mastery, Personal growth, and Purpose of life. It indicated that female has more well-being in these dimensions. And the total mean of Ryff Psychological well-being Scale shows that female has higher mean value than male. So, it is clear that female has comparatively greater Psychological well-being than of males. According to Diener (1997), Psychological well-being refers to how people evaluate their lives, and this evaluation may be in the form of cognition or in the form of effect.

A cross-sectional study titled Gender and Psychological well-being conducted by Matud, Lopez-Curbelo and Forter (2019) with a sample of 1700 men and 1700 women from the general Spanish population was conducted. The results showed that men scored higher than women in self-acceptance and autonomy, and women scored higher than men in personal growth and positive relations with others.

**Table 4: Correlation between Stress and Psychological Well-Being and its Dimensions**

	Autonomy	Positive relations	Personal growth	Environmental mastery	Self-acceptance	Psychological well-being (Total)
Perceived Stress	-.224*	-.203*	-.246**	-.439**	-.495**	-.297**

\*\**. Correlation significant at the 0.01 level*

\**. Correlation significant at the 0.05 level*

The above table shows that stress and psychological wellbeing were significantly negative correlated at the 0.01 level of significance among youth during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala. And the stress is also significantly negative correlated with autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, and self-acceptance. The COVID-19 Pandemic has led to raise fear, anxiety, and stress among the population especially in youth. They were restricted to being in the home always due to the lockdown. And they become worried about their education, future and all. These all creates high stress among them. We all know that, physiological well-being and psychological well-being were correlated. Long term stress increases the risk for mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse and sleep problems. Same as here, high stress leads to poor psychological well-being. This study focuses on the relation among stress and psychological wellbeing youth during COVID-19 pandemic. Results revealed that stress is negatively correlated with psychological wellbeing. That is, when one decrease other will automatically increase.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that stress occurs when people perceived that the demands from external situations were beyond their coping capacity. The definition “stress is the process of interaction from resolution requests from the environment (known as the transactional model)”. According to Diener (1997), Psychological well-being refers to how people evaluate their lives and this evaluation may be in the form of cognition or in the form of effect. A study which shows the similar results is , A cross sectional study on Iranian Female Adolescents on 2016 found that an inversely significant relation exists between stress and psychological well-being ( $r = -0.68$ ). Another study conducted on TESL foundation students on 2020 revealed that their stress and psychological wellbeing showed moderately inversed significant relationship.

### **Major Findings and Suggestions**

- The study illustrated that stress doesn't make any significant difference between male and female youth during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala.
- The study illustrated that psychological well-being have significant difference between male and female in the dimension of positive relations with others and there is no significant difference in all other dimensions during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala.
- The study illustrated that stress and psychological well-being shown moderately negative correlation among youth during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala.
- This study includes on two variables namely; stress and psychological wellbeing. Thus, involving more variables like resilience, emotional maturity could provide more explanation.
- There is a chance of bias due to the collection of responses through online method. It will be better when we conduct as a offline method. Bias can be reduced.

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- Gender is the only demographic variable included in this study. So, it is suggested to take a holistic approach, by not only taking in to consideration the gender, but also socio-economic status, occupation, health issues. It could be more reliable.

### CONCLUSION

The study intended to measure information about stress and psychological well-being among youth during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala and it concluded that there is no significant relationship between gender in stress and psychological well-being. But in the dimension of positive relations with others have shown a significant relationship between male and female. As well, stress and psychological well-being have moderate negative correlation among youth during COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala. When stress becomes overwhelming and prolonged, the risk for mental health problems and medical problems will increase. This study only includes two variables namely, stress and psychological well-being. Thus, involving more variables like resilience, emotional maturity could provide more explanation.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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