



## Family Social Support and community engagement as a buffer against Stress among Youth

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### Abstract

Youth is the most important segment of the society owing to its diversified qualities and potential to uplift the society. At the same time youth is the most vulnerable group because of unemployment, stress, and radicalization and to perform better in every sphere of the society. Youth population is also on rise in Pakistan and they encounter various problems in the society. Out of many problems they face, perception about stress is one of the most significant they hamper their positive role in the society. So, they tend to seek help and shelter from various social institution for the relief of that stress. The current study is an attempt to find out the relationship between family social support, community engagement and youth perception about stress. Theoretical foundations of the current study are based on buffering hypothesis that suggest that family social support is very important tool in managing various types of stress. The study is based on quantitative research technique by applying explanatory research design to establish the relationship between the variables. Youth from colleges the population for the current study. A sample size of 786 was selected with the help of research advisor formula and by applying multistage sampling technique. After analyzing the data and with the help of regression analysis it may be concluded that family social support and community engagement are the strong buffering factors against the youth stress. The role of family is slightly high in terms of helping the youth in controlling the stress among youth.

**Keywords:** Youth Stress, Buffering Hypothesis, Family Social Support, Community Engagement

### 1. Background of the study

Youth population being the most important segment of the population needs to thrive in every field of life. All the important stakeholders and social institutions must facilitate the positive development and growth of the youth population. By doing so youth, population would be in a better position to perform in a better way for the improvement of the society as well as personal growth.

However, due to the growing pressure by the society and family youth encounter multiple issues and become a victim of stress. This stress is a major hurdle for their stress and positive contribution in the society. Youth population in the society suffer pressure and burden to perform all the related fields in a positive way.

However, at the same time multiple stakeholders in the society mediate the stress among youth. The current study is an attempt to find out the role of two major stakeholders i.e. family support and community engagement as tool to counter and mediate the perceived stress among youth.

#### 1.1. Predictors of Stress among youth

Stress among the youth population is a growing concern in today's world. Various factors contribute to stress among young people, such as academic pressure, social media, peer pressure, family issues, financial problems, and the fear of the future (Yohalem & Pittman, 2011). Let us discuss some of these factors in detail:

**Academic Pressure:** The pressure to perform well in academics is one of the most common causes of stress among young people. The fear of failing exams or not meeting the expectations of parents and teachers can be overwhelming.

**Social Media:** The increasing use of social media has also contributed to stress among young people. The need to constantly update one's profile, the fear of missing important events, and the pressure to conform to social norms can cause anxiety and stress (Ostby, 2008).

**Peer Pressure:** Peer pressure is another factor that contributes to stress among young people. The desire to fit in with peers, the fear of rejection, and the pressure to conform to social norms can cause stress and anxiety.

**Family Issues:** Family problems such as parental divorce, financial difficulties, or abuse can cause stress and anxiety among young people. The lack of emotional support from parents can also lead to stress and anxiety (Brown, Larson, & Saraswathi, 2002).

**Financial Problems:** The financial burden of college fees, student loans, and the need to find a job after graduation can cause stress among young people. The fear of not being able to support oneself financially can also cause anxiety and stress.

**Fear of the Future:** The uncertainty of the future, such as finding a job after graduation, getting into a good university, or achieving career goals, can cause stress among young people.

In conclusion, stress among the youth population is a complex issue that can arise from various factors. It is essential to create a supportive environment for young people to manage stress and anxiety. Encouraging them to talk about their problems, providing emotional support, and teaching them coping skills can help young people deal with stress and lead a healthy life (Lisa, 2002).

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### 1.2. Social Support and buffering the stress among youth

Social support can be an essential factor in helping youth cope with stress. It can come from various areas and can provide different types of support. Here are some areas of social support that can help youth in countering stress: Family support: Family support is one of the most critical areas of social support for youth. Parents, siblings, and other family members can provide emotional support, advice, and encouragement. A supportive family can help young people feel secure and build their resilience to stress (Sampson & BeanL, 2006).

Peer support: Friends and peers can provide social support to young people. Peer support can come in the form of shared experiences, advice, and emotional support. A sense of belonging and connection with peers can help young people cope with stress.

Community support: Community support can come from religious or community organizations, sports teams, or other groups. These groups can provide a sense of belonging and support, which can help young people cope with stress.

Professional support: Professional support can come from mental health professionals, such as counselors or therapists. They can provide emotional support, advice, and guidance on coping with stress. Seeking professional help can be an effective way for young people to manage stress and develop coping skills.

School support: School support can come from teachers, school counselors, or other staff members. They can provide academic support, emotional support, and guidance on managing stress. Schools can also provide resources such as stress management workshops, counseling services, and peer support groups.

In conclusion, social support can come from various areas and can be essential in helping youth cope with stress. A strong support system can provide emotional support, advice, and guidance, which can help young people develop coping skills and resilience to stress. Encouraging young people to build and maintain supportive relationships and seek professional help when needed can promote their mental health and wellbeing (UN, 2010).

### 1.3. Youth stress in south Asian countries

There has been some research conducted on youth stress in the South Asian region. A study conducted in Pakistan found that academic stress was a significant predictor of psychological distress among university students (Aslam, Tariq, & Ali, 2018). A study conducted in India found that financial stress, academic stress, and interpersonal stress were significant predictors of mental health problems among college students (Shukla, Ahuja, & Bhatia, 2019). A study conducted in Sri Lanka found that exposure to traumatic events was a significant predictor of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms among youth (Rasanayagam & Henderson, 2018). A study conducted in Bangladesh found that family conflict, academic pressure, and socio-economic status were significant predictors of stress among university students (Islam, Khan, & Hasan, 2017). A study conducted in Nepal found that social support was a significant protective factor against stress among adolescents (Kohrt, Maharjan, & Worthman, 2018).

Overall, these studies suggest that youth stress is a significant issue in the South Asian region and that various factors, including academic pressure, financial stress, trauma exposure, and family conflict, contribute to stress levels among young people in the region. Additionally, social support appears to be an important protective factor against stress in this population

### 1.4. Objectives

The current study is based on following objectives

- To see the level of perceived stress among youth in Pakistan
- To examine the role of family social support in countering the perceived stress among collegiate youth.
- To examine the role of community engagement in countering the perceived stress among collegiate youth

### 1.5. Significance of the study

Social science research is based on the idea of bringing positive outcome in the society. It has been found from the existing literature review that youth is the victim of higher level of stress owing many reasons, which needs to be catered. Youth being the most important segment of the society require proper support mechanism from the family and community to thrive as the stress among youth is on rise. It has tremendous socio-economic and psychological outlays and has many social and psychological implications for youth (Harre, 2007). The improvement of the interaction between the family, youth and community is necessary for the smooth functioning of the society (Paterline & Brent, 2000). The current study will bring positive attribute and policy recommendation to manage the stress among youth.

## 2. Methods and Materials

The current study applied quantitative research inquiry technique to see the relationship between family social supports, community engagement as a buffer against stress among collegiate youth. The topic of the study and nature of the relationship to be established guided the nature of inquiry i.e. quantitative research. Quantitative research is the most appropriate and suited for such topics.

### 2.1. Research Design

Research design is a framework for conducting research and it guides the way of analysis. There are three major research designs i.e. descriptive, explanatory and exploratory research designs most commonly used in social

science research. However, keeping in view the objectives of the study researcher applied explanatory research design for the current study.

### **2.2. Population of the study**

As the topic of the study pertains to the youth population, researcher intends to include collegiate students as the population for the current study. Therefore, all the college students of district Lahore were considered as the population of the current study. According directorate of education the total number of students in all the colleges of district Lahore is around 90000.

### **2.3. Sample Size**

As the data cannot be collected from entire population, therefore determination of the sample size is very critical and important. The total sample size for the current study was 786 students adjust by maintaining 95% confidence interval 3.5 margin of error according the research advisor formula of 2006 for known population

### **2.4. Sampling Technique**

Actually, reaching at the sample size requires a scientific method of sampling technique. Broadly, the researcher applied probability-sampling technique for the identification of the respondents. Multistage cluster sampling was used in the current study, which includes four basis stages.

- The first stage of the sampling process obtained a sampling frame. A list of all the colleges and respective enrollment was obtained in the first stage of the sampling process
- At the second stage, the researcher separately clustered the boys and girls colleges enrollment
- At the third stage the researcher used the proportional sampling method and used it on the total enrollment of the college students
- At the fourth stage, simple random sampling was used by obtaining list of the students from each college.

### **2.5. Variables of the study and measurement scales**

The current study is based on the explanatory research design hence contains both independent and dependent variables.

- Family social support and community engagement have been treated as the independent variables for the current study. For the measurement of family social support, Family Social Support scale developed by Mohammad Abbas Uddin, Anowarul Jalal Bhuiyan have been used in the current study. Although the original scale is meant for the elderly population but can be applied to the youth as well being the vulnerable segment of the population. Similarly, Community support index developed by Chicago youth development study was used to measure the community support.
- While stress perception have been treated as the dependent variable. For the measurement of perceived stress among youth, perceived stress scale developed by Sheldon Cohen, 1994 was used.

## **3. Analysis and findings of the study**

This section provides the analysis and findings of the current study. Apart from presenting socio-demographic features regression analysis was used in the current study.

### **3.1. Age of the respondents**

Age is an important factor when it comes to study youth and related aspects. The developmental assets decrease with the increase in age (Scales, 1999). Hence, it is very important to clearly identify the age of the respondents. Mean age of the respondents was 21.86 years with a standard deviation of 1.55 (Range 17-25 Years). Most of the respondents were 22 years of age (29.9%) however only 3% of the respondents were of 17 years.

### **3.2. Gender of the respondents**

Gender is an important factor that is associated with youth stress and different social support patterns available to them. Keeping in view the relationship of gender with developmental assets it was earlier decided by the researcher to include both genders for data collection. 439 (44.1%) were male and 347 (55.9) were female. It was kept in mind to keep both gender equal or relatively equal for a representative sample.

### **3.3. Regression analysis**

Regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the study variables i.e. role of family support and community engagement in buffering the stress among youth population. Before applying the regression analysis, some key assumptions were addressed.

- In the first place and most importantly, normality of the dependent variable was ensured by applying the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.
- After that, Durbin Watson statistics were applied to test the autocorrelation in the model, which was less than 4 which is acceptable before applying the regression analysis.
- Multicollinearity was also checked before applying the regression analysis

The given table shows the model summary of the regression analysis used in the current study. The adjusted R-Square of .898 indicates that approximately 89.8% of the variation in youth stress can be explained by the linear relationship between the dependent variable (youth stress) and the two independent variables (family support and

community engagement) in the model. This is a relatively high value and suggests that the model is a good fit for the data.

**Table No. 1 Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square |                 | Change Statistics |     |     | Durbin-Watson |               |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----|-----|---------------|---------------|
|       |                   |          | R Square          | R Square Change | F Change          | df1 | df2 |               | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .948 <sup>a</sup> | .898     | .898              | .898            | 1089.024          | 5   | 616 | .000          | 1.967         |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Social Support and Community Engagement  
b. Dependent Variable: Youth Stress

The fact that family support and community engagement are significant predictors of youth stress suggests that these factors are important in buffering the stress levels among young people. Specifically, this analysis suggests that as levels of family support and community engagement increase, youth stress levels decrease. This is an important finding, as it highlights the potential importance of social support and community involvement in promoting the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

Overall, the regression analysis suggests that family support and community engagement are important factors to consider when examining youth stress levels, and further research could help to identify specific strategies to promote these protective factors and reduce youth stress.

**Table No. 2 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |                       | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics |       |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------|-------|
|       |                       | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      | Tolerance               | VIF   |
| 1     | (Constant)            | 7.426                       | .081       |                           | 91.880 | .000 |                         |       |
|       | Family Social Support | -.402                       | .012       | -.449                     | -      | .000 | .990                    | 1.010 |
|       | Community engagement  | -.397                       | .011       | -.476                     | -      | .000 | .994                    | 1.006 |

a. Dependent Variable: Youth Stress

A negative coefficient value indicates that as the independent variable increases, the dependent variable decreases. In this case, the negative coefficients for family social support (-.402) and community engagement (-.397) suggest that as levels of family social support and community engagement increase, youth stress levels decrease. This is a desirable outcome and suggests that family social support and community engagement are important protective factors for youth mental health.

However, it is important to note that the magnitude of the coefficients is relatively small, which suggests that the effect of family social support and community engagement on youth stress levels may be modest. Other factors not included in the model may also contribute to youth stress levels, and the study design and sampling methods used to collect the data may affect the generalizability of the findings.

Overall, while the negative coefficients for family social support and community engagement suggest that these factors are important predictors of youth stress, further research is needed to identify specific strategies to promote these protective factors and reduce youth stress levels.

#### 4. Conclusion

It may be concluded from the above regression analysis that family social support and community engagement are important factors to consider when examining youth stress levels. Regression analysis has been conducted to examine the relationship between youth stress as the dependent variable and family social support and community engagement as independent variables. The adjusted R-Square value for the model was reported as .898 in the table No.1 and may indicate a strong relationship between the variables. In the table No.2, the coefficients for family social support and community engagement were reported as -.402 and -.397, respectively. These negative coefficients suggest that as levels of family social support and community engagement increase, youth stress levels decrease

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