ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

As stress affects the individual capacity to function effectively; it has become important to understand the patient from his point of view. The meaning they attribute to stress in their life, its effect and how they deal or cope to alleviate stress to live a healthy and productive life. The nursing profession aims to enhance the quality of life of the sick with an understanding of the stressor affecting individuals and the strategies used by them to cope. The investigator had observed that people change their life style only when they realized stress at work has started affecting their health. While other stressors are rarely dealt, using any planned strategy, most of the time was spent grumbling or fretting over issues rather than pinpointing and identifying the stressor or finding a solution to what bothers them.

Stress and Coping are often studied in tandem. They can be considered from a risk and resiliency framework, with stress increasing risk for adverse outcomes, and effective coping behaviors providing resiliency to mitigate the likelihood of adverse outcomes and potentially enhance growth.
As a nurse, the investigator felt that if people are made aware and are trained to recognize their stressors and comprehend the negative effects of stress then as a nurse one can facilitate a positive coping skill that would help the individual to adapt or make the required modification in their life style, with an understanding of the stressor perceived by them as individuals living in Mumbai. Re-defining of stress, within the Indian culture and more specifically to the culture of Mumbai where constant reference has been made in the media that Mumbaikars bounce out of stressful situation in their need for survival. Mumbaikars who live here have adopted this city and made it their home; they have come here to earn a livelihood from different states. It would help the nurses to provide care with an understanding of the values, cultural mediation and their experience of stress. This would provide patients/people to adapt positive strategies and would provide an opportunity to live a health life.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Effect of stress on life style of individuals and measures adopted to reduce stress.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To identify the concept of stress among adult individuals living in Mumbai.
2. To identify the factors associated to stress among the individuals living in Mumbai.
3. To identify the perceived effect of stress on selected aspects of individuals life.
4. To find the measures adopted to cope with factors contributing to stress.
5. To establish the relationship between perceived effects of stress and changes in life style.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A Qualitative Research.

**RESEARCH APPROACH**

A *Descriptive Exploratory* approach.
RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research methodology was used which incorporated the principals of ethnography embedded with grounded theory. Data collected through in-depth interview and focus group, would be analyzed and theory stands in a reciprocal relationship with each other and issues relevant to the study area are enabled to emerge.

SETTING OF THE STUDY

The setting of the present study was Western suburban of Mumbai.

POPULATION

The population in this study comprised of individuals residing in Mumbai.

TARGET POPULATION

Individuals were residence of the western suburban of Mumbai.

SAMPLING FRAME

Individuals available, willing to participate and living in the western suburban of Mumbai. Those fulfilling the selection criteria and study objectives were selected until saturation point, until no new information or themes emerged from the data.

SAMPLE&SAMPLE SIZE

The study subjects consisted of fifty-one individuals which included twenty-five males & twenty-six females in the in-depth individual interview and fifteen each in three categories i.e. only males, only females and mixed group of males and females for focus group interview.
SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The samples were initially randomly selected based on the criteria, which then followed snowball technique for the individual interview group until the required sample size was obtained. For the focus group samples who fulfilling criteria were selected.

CRITERIA FOR SAMPLE SELECTION

Inclusion Criteria
- Individuals willing to participate in the study.
- Participants able to speak English, Hindi, Marathi.
- Participants who do not have a history of any illness in their families.

Exclusion Criteria
- Individual who have Mental illnesses.
- Individual who have physical debility or illness.
- Individual who is in financial debt.
- Individual who has cognitive disorders.
- Individuals living in disaster prone area.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUE USED FOR COLLECTION OF DATA

The data was collected from the sample with the help of a tool, which comprised of two parts. Part I was used to collect demographic data of the samples, while Part II was a “Topic Guide” which comprised of semi-structured questions based on the study objectives, which guided the interview and helped to elicit information related to stress from the participants of the study.

PILOT STUDY

A Pilot Study was conducted on five samples that had consented to participate and fulfilled the sampling criteria of the study. Samples were selected using randompurposive sampling.
The samples comprised of two males and three female participants. The interview was conducted using the prepared “topic guide” questions were put to the participants and responses were recorded on the A.V. Recorder. Later a focus group interview was conducted comprising of five women, question were put to the group and responses given, stimulated a further opportunity to encourage them to interact and respond. The data gathered was documented into a transcript, from which content was analyzed to identify words, phrases, themes and then grouped into categories. It was observed both from the individual interview and from focus group interview, that often one question would result in a flow of information from the participants, at times there was a need that the research had to gently bring them back to the question/topic under discussion. This prepared the researcher for the need to surge with the group when questions were posed, as some times answers were entwined from one question into another. There was the need to maintain flexibility so that the flow was not disturbed as the participants responded.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The prospective participants’ willing to participate in the study were contacted written consent was obtained after explaining verbally, prior to the interview. Privacy was ensured for all participants i.e. both from the in-depth individual interview as well as focus group interview. All the interviews were recorded using an A.V. recorder. Those who did not give consent for their interviews to be recorded, notes were made and validated by the participants. All focus group interviews were recorded. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to an hour, three to four participants were interviewed per day. While focus group interviews took approximately two hours to two and half hour. One focus group was conducted per day. The data collection process was completed by two months. The data gathered was then transcript for analysis and the interpretations verified. An informal style was maintained to ensure that all participants were relaxed and comfortable.

PLAN FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data would be analyzed as follows:

Demographic data would be presented using frequency and percentage.

The following steps were undertaken for the focus group and indepth individual interviews data analysis.
Immediate debriefing notes would be made after interviews. This would include comments about the focus group process and individual interviews and the significance of data.

Listening to the Video tape and transcribing the content of the tape

Checking the content of the tape and noting any non-verbal behavior, pick up parts of words, nonverbal communication, gesture and behavior that would indicate the intensity of perceived stress affecting the individual. Coding the transcript by going through the transcript line by line; and paragraph by paragraph, for significant statements and codes according to the topics addressed.

Compare the various codes based on differences and similarities and sort them into categories so that themes and words frequently used could be linked to the final theme.

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SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Description of characteristics of samples

1. Findings related to the demographic profile of the samples

Age: All the participants of the study belonged to the age group of 20yrs to 50yrs and few were above 50yrs

Religion: The participants were mainly Hindus, Christians and Muslims and one practiced the Buddhist faith.

Education: Most of the males and few females had completed their graduation and post graduation while some male and female participants were either S.S.C. or H.S.C. and one of the participants had completed only primary education.

Occupation: Most of the female participants were unemployed that is home makers while others were employed in skilled and unskilled professions. Except one male who was unemployed all others were employed in good organizations and few had their own business.
**Type of family:** Most of the participants were from nuclear family while few were from joint families.

**Marital status:** Majority of the participants were married, except one was a widow and few were unmarried.

**Position in the family:** The married female were either the eldest, second or the youngest daughters-in-law and few were the only daughter–in-law. Most of the males in the nuclear family were the head of the family while other in the absence of their parents were the head of the family. Only few males living in joint families were also head of the family. Similarly few of the female were head of their family in the absence of their spouse. Most of them living in nuclear families were financially supporting their parents too.

**Income:** Majority of the participants had a monthly income above Rs10,000/-some had an income ranging between Rs 45,000 to 60,000/-and few had an income between 5,000/- while some above one lakh.

2. **Findings related to the concept of stress among adult individuals living in Mumbai**

All the female and male participants of the study reported they had experienced stress. Majority of the participants reported that stress was experienced when they were unable to balance income and expenditure, unable to deliver according to expectation. Others stated they experienced stress when things became too much to deal with, not getting married on time, inability to handle new parenthood, raising kids and ill treatment by in-laws. While few of the males reported never experiencing stress they attributed it to having a happy go lucky attitude and yoga. While the other male participants mainly attribute their stress related to work.

Some of the words used to express stress by females were Tanav, Tan, Khichav, less Sahanshakti. Male participants used five word more dominantly i.e. lot of tension, pressure, dependency, constantly thinking of the same issue, some of the male experienced stress as they were unable to meet the needs of the family nor fulfill their own ambitions. While some of the male and female participants said stress meant painful experience.
Stress in context to work was mainly related to their inability to manage work and family, too much responsibility, negative attitude. Majority of the females expressed stress related to gender discrimination experienced at home and work place and as they were abuse by in-laws, spouse and employer.

3. Findings related to the factors associated to stress among the individuals living in Mumbai:

The participants of the study mainly attributed the following factors to stress i.e. factors related to work stress, family Stressors, daily hassles, financial stress, gender discrimination, factors related to the person, factors related to self.

Factors at work related to stress

Majority of the employed female and majority of themale participants from in depth interview attribute having to perform “error free work on time and under pressure”, having to complete work at “short notice”, with in “deadlines” and under pressure from the boss. Short staff and too much “work load”, while teachers (7)26.88% reported experiencing stress because of student’s parents, students academic performance, correction of papers, when not punctual or incomplete assignment. While participants from aviation department said dealing with difficult customers and passengers on the phone that spoke rudely; deadlines assignments like dispatching reports to head office/superior or circular to agents, competition in the market caused them stress. All working participants expressed stress related to work.

Factors related to the person

Some of the participants brought out factors related to the person at work place causing them stress. Quite a few of the female participants reported difficulty with colleagues, cheating behavior, casual and indifferent attitude of their colleagues was a source of stress. Majority of the females expressed misunderstanding created at work place. Few of them reported they were upset or disturbed when they were called to work on their off days or holidays as they had to make changes in their plan at a short notice. Few male and female participants reported they experienced stress because of their boss.

Factor related to self

Some of the participants reported stress arising from themselves feared falling ill and not being able to get to work as causing stress similarly at time were not sure of their own
potential. They also reported high expectation from self, unable to get work done according to their own expectation or standard, not willing to share responsibilities as they felt their children or spouse may not do the job properly and similarly at work did not trust their subordinates to do a good job. Most of the males’ participants said their decision to be the sole breadwinners. Wanting to do things perfectly, their own behavior i.e. rash decision or reactions in situations ended up becoming cause for stress. While other participants said, high expectation from self, wanting to maintain standard, and one of the participants reported that focusing too much on improving one’s life style rather than on life was the cause of stress. From themixed focus group i.e. (4)26.64% of the male as well as female participants expressed that their stress was due to their inadequate ability/skill required to get good jobs.

**Family Stressors**

The family stressors focused on three main areas i.e. children, spouse and household chores. Majority of the female participants i.e. homemakers as well as those employed experienced family stressors. Their stressors included worry about their children’s education, too much portion to study, not kept their room tidy, refusal in the household chores, poor eating habits of the children, fear of children falling sick, and anxiety regarding the influences from T.V./media. The participants who had female children feared regarding their daughters safety. Ill-health of a spouse or an argument on issues like household chores also caused stress for some women. Whereas unmarried females reported going through high stress because of their parents, one participant had lost her father. While other participant’s father had been admitted in the ICU followed by her mother developing non-healing wound, they also expressed feeling stressed due to difference of opinion or argument with their parents. Male participants experienced stress related to three main areas, namely parents health, children and inability to give adequate time to family which was expressed by almost all the married male participants they experienced stress related to children in the same way as the female participants. Some of the males handling operations and infrastructure for their organizations said family life was disturbed because of their 24×7 job. 12% male participants said death of their father was stressful to them as it was a “big blow”. Some of the male participants said that being the only earning members hence having to meet the expense of the family and siblings who were studying. Their stress increased if anyone was sick, as finance became tights. Stress was experienced by the participants when spouse specially husband lost the job as often it would create tension which trigged arguments.
**Daily hassles**
Both male and female participants reported daily hassles causing them stress. Females referred to it as “roj ka kit-kit” i.e. day to day hassles resulting in more stress than the major ones as it snapped their energy, whereas big stressors came once in a while. The female participants indicated daily hassles were like “what to cook?, shopping, pollution, noise, fear of getting robbed, travelling, difficult neighbors, inconsiderate people, traffic jam, crowded transport. Whereas males attributed travelling by their own vehicle, traffic jam and senselessly blowing horn in traffic as causing them stress, especially when getting back from work or when they were already running late for meetings. Some of the participants said rising cost of housing, commodities, the infra structure of the city i.e. meager roads, pollution, noise and dirt also contributed to their stress.

**Financial stress**
Majority of the participants did not experience financial stress. As most of the females reported their spouse were doing well. Whereas some of the participants reported experiencing financial stress as their income was poor. Few of the male had experienced financial stress as they had experienced loss in their business, crash in the share market, big medical bill to clearer having to pay the EMI for relative’s house. Some experienced stress due to unplanned investments. The participants felt inadequate salary, a large family with too many needs was difficult; they were only able to meet the most essential needs. They also felt that the earning was just enough to run the household and was not enough to fulfill their desires.

**Gender Discrimination:**
Some of the females from the age group of 20-30yrs reported that their cause stress were parents who neglected them because they were females. They reported their brothers were encouraged to get educated while they had to fight to get educated. Some of the female participants reported their spouse would physically and mentally abuse them. Many of the participants expressed feeling humiliated and questioned their worth. Most (13) i.e. 86.58% of the females from the female focus group attributed the cause of stress to themselves, as they were not assertive. They attributed gender discrimination being aggravated due to uneducated parents who in turn, forced them into child labour, badly treated by employees, and also pointed to the status of women. Most of the female participants often gazed
downwards or their eyes were poignant or fixed on some object, this may indicate low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence and depressed.

4. Findings related to the perceived effect of stress on selected aspects of individuals life:

The effect of stress was experienced by the participants of the study in four main areas as expressed by them. Effect of stress was found to have an impact on their health, work/job, in their behaviour and on their relationship.

Impact of stress on their Health
Many of the participants expressed that stress they affected their health as a result they experienced fatigue, anger, doldrums, were depressed, crying spells, withdrawn or kept sullen silent. Some said they did not pay attention to their appearance and dressed shabbily, did not feel like talking to any one were unable to sleep well, mentally disturbed. Other symptoms that they manifest were getting irritated, taking out work pressure on others, had poor concentrate, acidity, hardened stomach, excessive perspiration, palpitation, felt like frequently visiting the washroom, inferiority complex, got short tempered, took out their frustration on the kids, later regretted. Male participants also experienced headache and sleeplessness; few expressed feeling the pressure building up. They also reported stumpy mood, restlessness, anger, irritation. Some of them also reported experiencing fatigue, lethargy and felt disturbed. Some of the participants reported that if they did not deal with their stress levels they were at a risk of developing diabetes, hypertension or end with high cholesterol level as a few of them had already noted changes in their physiology.

Impact of stress on their behaviour
Many of the participants reported that when they got stressed, their tone of voice changed i.e. got loud, as if they were screaming their head off, got impatient with colleagues, wanted to be left alone, often in an unfriendly mood, get ratty, unable to gel with others. Whereas others reported that even if there was a change in behaviour, they had not realized nor noticed. Some reported losing their temper, getting rude, flaring at the wrong person, getting aggressive, agitated, and getting in to fights. Some of them reported that when they were stressed they failed to appreciate what they were eating. Few were angry with themselves for not being to deal with the situation.
Impact of stress on their work:
Few of the female participants reported that stress affected their work, they made mistakes or were unable to complete their work on time, or they took long time to complete work, took wrong decisions, felt the quality of their work had gone down. Others said, they had learned to disconnect work and home affairs, when at work they shut their mind to household issues and when at home, left office outside their door. Few of the participants reported they could not afford to let stress affect their performance and put their job at stake.

Impact of stress on their relationship:
Few of the participants reported that stress brought about argument with their spouse, and worried about its effect on their kids as they ended displacing on their kids. Some reported their relationship with relatives got affected when they criticized or found faults with them. The female participants reported their change in behaviour often ended affecting their relationship with their children and spouse. Whereas few male participants from the indepth interview group said that they ended up hurting and upsetting their spouses or their children. Some reported they got annoyed with subordinate’s though they later apologies. Bachelor male’s participant reported their girlfriend walked out on him due to lack of proper accommodation and low salary or unable to settle down due to long working hours as a result ended in a broken relationship.

5. Findings related to the measures adopted to cope with factors contributing to stress:
The participants used different types of coping strategies to deal with factors contributing to stress namely appraisal coping strategy, emotional coping strategy, problem solving coping strategy and spiritual strategy.

Appraisal strategy
Most of the participants reported they appraised the situation and tried to remain cool and calm, the housewives tried to take a short nap, listened to music, watched a movie which helped to calm their nerves, read a good book, block their mind when at work so that they do not have to deal with the situation. Some changing their way of looking at the situation i.e. began seeing it in a positive manner and found alternatives to the situation. They tried minimizing the problem by look at others who had huge problems; this resulted in their stress
reduction said that exercise, meditation and yoga helped them to distress and energies. While other laughed and joked to ease their stress.

**Emotional strategy**

Emotional coping strategy was largely adopted by the female participants from both in-depth interview and focus group. They accepted the blame for what had gone wrong; and were first to always apologize. Other felt it was better to keep it in their heart, as nothing can be done. While, another commented that, keeping a distance from relatives or those people who were cause of their tension was the best alternative. They also felt helpless and had self-pity they preferred to blame their destiny and felt tears were the only way. While some of the males chose alcohol, to chill out or take a puff of nicotine. They did agree it was an inappropriate solution but felt it was ok for sometime during stress.

**Problem solving strategy**

Most of the employed participants used problem solving strategy when they experienced stress. They analyzed the situation, thought about the alternatives and chose the best option. They felt one must do what one can, or let it resolve on its own. Some preferred to share the issue with friends or family members, hoping their advice or guidance would help find consolation and solution. Few preferred to handle the issues on day to day basis rather than accumulate. Few of the participants changed their jobs which were stressful. Some reported they focused on the work and not on the person when they got stressed. Few had undergone stress management program or got tips to manage their stress.

**Spiritual coping**

Most of the participants reported going to the temple or church which helped to calm themselves. Some of the participants attributed stressful situation as having a reason. Few participants prayed routinely or said their daily family prayers thus, fulfilled their religious obligations. Some reported that praying did help them. They said one must have faith, only if you believes and trust in God; one will find solution and relief. Some said reading religious books and visiting temples also helped also leave certain issues to God, they put their trust in God and felt the divine power would help find answers to their problems but when there was no relief they preferred to be atheist. Spiritual strength can be attributed to the participant’s religious upbringing and religious teaching.
Other strategies reported by the participants i.e. four (15.38%) of the female participants from in-depth interview had begun counseling sessions. Most of the married (male and female) participant had found support to deal with stress from their spouse

6. Findings related to the relationship between perceived effects of stress and changes in life style:

The investigator observed that the participants did not make any conscious effort to bring change in their lifestyle. Many did not realize that changing their lifestyle could alleviate their stress levels.

Most of the female participants did not think that they could make any modifications in their lives to reduce stress, especially some of the housewives felt they had no choice but live with it till death, which only indicated their state of vulnerability. Some of them did not realize that they could do something to reduce stressor that was within their ability. Some of the male participants had attempted to bring about a change in their life style to reduce the effect of perceived stress by changing their working style specially those who had their own business. Some of them had stopped eating oily food, ate on time and when regularly for walks. Few of the male participants had taken up outdoor sport to unwind themselves. According to many a change of lifestyle was not their priority, a modification of lifestyle was usually done only because of the advice of their friend or physician when stress took toil on their health.

Conceptualization from the findings:
From the study the “Proposition Emerged” was that the impact of environment on individual is mutual so also the perception of stress thus learning to cope, seeking counselling or learning new strategies is an individual’s choice. A positive modification of lifestyle will help to cope better with stress in any given situation. All these are interrelated parts of the human psyche’ and thus, move to & fro in a continuous cycle, influencing the health-illness continuum. This research study brings about an awareness of this fact and orients nursing profession towards a road map to a need-based care process. This study would help in creating a better nurse patient relationship, which will co-create in changing health patterns for an individual entering the health system to find relief from stress induced health problems syndrome.
Conclusion

Stress is experienced by individuals in all walks of life and by all age groups. Every individual handles stress differently, which is based on their own experience of dealing with stress. The different measures adopted may help to deal with or to resolve the issue causing stress. As one may find the situation stressful while another challenging. There is a choice an individual can make which is based on how the situation is perceived. The negative impact of stress, could affect their performance, relationship, health and personality.

This study highlighted that the majority of the participants experienced stress. They found it comfortable vocalizing stress related to work and finance. Whereas it was difficult to express stress that was related to relationships and family issues. From the study I found that the Mumbaikars on the whole depended on their spiritual strength and their own belief systems concerning values, religion and the Indian background. They focused on the effects of stress on their health rather than changing their lifestyle that affected them due to stress which would help them to a great extend. It is important to uses diverse strategies to live a stress free lifestyle which can help individuals to be happy and contended.

This study helped to develop a theory which highlights that concepts and meaning attributed a great influence of culture on the population of the Mumbaikars and in general the Indian Society.