

**An impact of
Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation (JPMR)
in Managing the Perceived Stress Level among College Students**

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“How we perceive a situation and how we react to it is the basis of our stress. If you focus on the negative in any situation, you can expect high stress levels. However, if you try and see the good in the situation, your stress levels will greatly diminish”.

Catherine Pulsifer

Abstract

The current study focuses on how the perceived stress can be reduced through using *Jacobson's relaxation technique*, also called progressive relaxation therapy. It was developed by Dr. Edmund Jacobson over half a century ago. This technique relaxes the entire body by releasing muscular tension that accumulates as a person experiences a stressful situation. Current research aims at understanding how the perceived stress level can be managed by using the *Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation*.

Key words ; stress, progressive muscle relaxation.

Introduction

According to Neuman, a stressor is *any relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing*. The relationship can result in either a beneficial or a harmful outcome (2002). Daily stressors in life cannot be avoided, nor can major life changes. Stressful events that change one's life for an extended period can lead to health related problems. Events that may cause unhealthy stress includes, *death, divorce, moving away from home, serious illness, financial struggles, suicidal ideation, and self harming* (Wong, Perry, &Hockenbury, 2002). Stress related health problems are uncontrollable in our society. An estimated 75-90 percent of all primary health care providers see patients with stress related problems (Peckham, 2001). Research supports that students in higher education have higher stress levels. It's no secret that many college students spend most of their time on campus stressed out. Stress seems to be an especially common feature of college student life,

particularly at highly competitive colleges and universities. Balancing classes, tests, projects, extra-curricular activities and work is enough to make anyone feel overwhelmed, especially with final exams right around the corner. College life has become a lot more competitive. In addition to surviving academically and preparing themselves for further graduate or professional training, students are involved in becoming unique and independent adults, deciding on career alternatives, creating personal value systems, and developing significant relationships.

Stress is a term that refers to the sum of the physical, mental and emotional strains or tensions on a person. Feelings of stress in humans result from interactions between persons and their environment that are perceived as straining or exceeding their adaptive capacities and threatening their well-being. (Definition of stress by the Gale Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders (2003)).

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is an anxiety-reduction technique first introduced by American physician Edmund Jacobson in the 1930s. The technique involves alternating tension and relaxation in all the body's major muscle groups.

A study conducted on 40 subjects of hypertension outpatient clinics in Taiwan showed decreases in pulse rate (2.9 beats/min), systolic blood pressure (5.1 mm Hg), and diastolic blood pressure (3.1 mm Hg) PMR significantly lowered patients' perception of stress, and it enhanced their perception of health. PMR is beneficial for patients with essential hypertension, and nurses may use it to enhance their independent function as well as their quality of life. (Sheu, Sheila, Irvin, Barbara L. et al, 2003). Mind body interventions using muscular relaxation on pregnant women showed that pregnant women have health benefits from mind-body therapies used in conjunction with conventional prenatal care. Intervention group outcomes included higher birth weight, shorter length of labor, fewer instrument-assisted births, and reduced perceived stress and anxiety. (Amy E. Beddoe', Kathryn A.

Lee,2008). Broota, Aruna; Dhir, Rima (1990) Evaluated the efficacy of E. Jacobson's (1943) progressive relaxation technique (JPR) and A. Broota's (in press) relaxation technique (BRT) with 30 depressed outpatients (aged 19–48 yrs) and a control group. Ss were assigned to a JPR group, a BRT group, or a no-treatment group. The 4 exercises of BRT were based on *breathing, spine stretching, leg raising, and cycling*; the JPR technique involved *muscle relaxation*. A symptom check list was administered twice, pre- and post relaxation setting. Both relaxation techniques were found effective compared with the no-treatment group. *Research has indicated that removing stress helps to increase a person's health.*

Objectives

- ☞ To study the Perceived Stress level.
- ☞ To study the effect of JPMR on perceived stress level.

Methodology

A single group design was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of 30 post graduate students, both male and female. With an average age of 23 years. Perceived stress scale was administered to all of them. The scores were collected. Jacobson's relaxation exercises were administered to all of them consecutively for ten days. Perceived stress scale was again administered to them to measure their stress level. Scores on the perceived stress scale was compared before and after the relaxation exercise using 't' test.

Assessment Tools

- ✓ The Perceived Stress Scale Sheldon Cohen (1988).
- ✓ JPMR verbal instruction.

Analysis of the Results

Each of the response sheets was scored and tabulated and analyzed. Feedback collected from the participants; all of them had tensions regarding the examination results. After the exercise they felt relaxed, calm, energetic, happy, fairly active and able to solve their problems and think positively.

Few interesting responses from the participants:

“While studying, at some point, I really feel that I can’t study further. But if I am taking a gap for relaxation, it is helpful”.

“I really felt relaxed after the exercise. I was unable to sleep for few days ago before doing the relaxation exercise .I am getting sound sleep after the relaxation. It made my mind and body both relaxed. I can control my temper”.

“The relaxation technique was really helpful in bringing about a change in my stress level. After the exams my stress level was quite high and now it has reduced. This exercise helped me a lot”.

Scores on Perceived Stress Scale

| Before Relaxation | | After Relaxation | | N | ‘t’ Value |
|-------------------|------|------------------|------|----|-----------|
| Mean | S D | Mean | SD | | |
| 18.88 | 4.73 | 7.77 | 2.54 | 30 | 11.13 ** |

*Note. ** Significant at .01 level*

significant difference obtained between pre and post intervention conditions on Perceived Stress. Hence the results bring to focus that by practicing relaxation exercise has reduced stress level of students. This shows that relaxation exercise is very helpful for students to face their difficulties in a relaxed way.

Implications of the Present Study

- ↪ Relaxation exercise can be used by everyone to enhance their energy level.
- ↪ This exercise can help students to reduce their tension.
- ↪ Improved attention and concentration help the students to study better and more content can be learned within limited time.
- ↪ Relaxation exercise improves the memory and hence it helps students to perform better in their examinations.
- ↪ Students feel confident and can face other challenges in life.

Limitations

- ↪ More samples could have been used.
- ↪ Equal number of male and female could have been selected.
- ↪ Relaxation exercise could have been conducted for one month or more to assess the effectiveness.

Conclusion

There is a significant decrease in the perceived stress of students who had practiced JPMR. JPMR is effective in reducing perceived stress.

Reference

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AUTHORES PROFILE



Dr. Rema.M.K has awarded PhD on “ A personality study of patients with certain Psychosomatic illnessess’ from Calicut University under the guidance of Dr. Anita Ravindran in 1996. She has extensive counseling experience in the field of women, children, alcoholism, mental illness, HIV/AIDS, couple counseling and adolescent issues . She had worked as assistant professor at Jain University, Bangalore University and Montford college ,Bangalore . She had attended several national and international conferences, workshops and seminars. Presented and published several research papers. Currently working as assistant professor of psychology at Kristujayanti college ,Bangalore



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