



RESEARCH ARTICLE

LIFE EVENTS LEADING TO STRESS IN YOUNG PEOPLE

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2017  
Received in revised form  
25<sup>th</sup> October, 2017  
Accepted 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2017  
Published online 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017

Key words:

Life events,  
Stress,  
Adolescents,  
Personal conditions,  
Emotional disruption,  
Stress generators.

ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes life events leading to stress in young people; focused on second semester students of the Bachelor degree in Psychology from the Humanities Faculty of the Universidad Autónoma de Campeche. The objective of this paper is to identify what life event has a stronger impact in a young person to cause low or high stress levels. Instrument: The Life Events test was used, it measures 7 areas in different contexts (Family, Social, Personal, Behavioral problems, Achievements and failures, School health), this test assesses stress levels in adolescents. It was a non-probabilistic simple, it was formed by 86 people: 68 women (79%) and 18 men (21%), whom belonged to the Faculty of Humanities of the Bachelor degree in Psychology, ages 18 – 20, at the same time constituting two different subsets: ages 18-19, 19-20. The results were obtained by central tendency taking into consideration the mean for the group analysis. The results indicate that woman reported to have experienced more stressful life events, being Family the one that influenced stress formation the most in them and Behavioral problems the one for both genders. Therefore, it is revealed that women show stress in a higher intensity, while men possess the capacity to cope with and face stress-provoking situations. Both genders deal with stress using different means.

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Citation: Sandra Jhakeline López Morales, Alondra Odalys Sarmiento Nah y and Dra. Liliana García Reyes, 2017. "Life events leading to stress in young people", *International Journal of Current Research*, 9, (12), 63521-63525.

INTRODUCTION

University life is commonly a stage of different changes; it is the time when adolescents go through a transition, and transitions usually generate stress, which can make more difficult the process of becoming an adult; which as established in the focal-theory Coleman (1974), if too many life events occur at the same time, emotional disruptions are more likely to be presented. The aim of that research is to know deeply what problematic situations the students go through and in that way to identify which factors have more impact in that stage.

Statement of the problem

A recent study developed by the American Psychology Association claimed that 39% of people between 18 and 33 years old affirm to be stressed. (Updated 21/06/1016). Other investigations were conducted by national scholars, along with the confirmation that young people is more likely to live in this type of situations, they carried out a gender distinction, where women were the ones that consulted the most for psychosomatic issues. Richard Lazarus emphasizes the relevance of psychological factors (mainly cognitive) that

mediate between stressing stimuli and stress responses, giving to each individual an active role in the creation of stress. For Lazarus and Folkman (1986) stress has their origins in the relationships among the individuals and their surroundings, which the person considers as threatening and hard to face. The purpose of making this research is to understand which area leads to stress in adolescents of the Universidad Autónoma de Campeche and in that way to know how it influences their emotional life. Based on that fact, stress managing strategies can be provided. It is important that young people are able to manage their emotions and solve the situations that in a point during their lives might have not been able to be solved. Having a well stress management allows to have a calmer mood, a healthier mind and a better relationship with both areas, living in fulfillment and living in joy. It has also been showed that stress is very difficult to measure, besides most people can recognize when they are stressed. There are complex relationships between stress generators and the effects that they produce; among these factors, the importance of the subjective manner in which a person assesses the life event is recognized. Lazarus (1991) recommends to consider stress as a mainly subjective phenomenon rather than objective, during the stress generation measurement.

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## Research Questions

Which life events have a stronger impact on stress in the students of the Bachelor degree in Psychology?

## Objectives of the Study

### General

- To analyze the life events that have a major frequency in stress in students, through the applications of the instrument to offer strategies go have a better stress management.

### Specific

- To identify life events in stress of the university students.
- To identify whether men or women show higher stress levels.
- To describe the life event that has a stronger impact in stress.

## Body Text

### Literature Review

According to Ikeda Daisaku (2007), stress was used to refer to the effect that diverse pressure caused on the mental and physical well-being of humans. Stress, according to Melgosa (2006), is the “reaction that the organism has before any demand, or a strong state of physiological or psychological tension, preparation for attack or escape and the beginning of a series of sickness”. Other definition mentions that “it is a psychosocial disease very difficult to measure, but Mexican perceive it as “tiredness, oppression or being blue” (Arvizu, 2016). Author, Newsman (2016), mentions that stress is: A natural process of the body that generates an automatic response to overwhelming situations that can lead to diseases and psychological disorders. It make the body enter into a long and continuous defensive state. It is a state of fear that provokes concern and anxiety. As stated by Melgosa (2006), there are two sources of stress. First, the stressing agents that come from external circumstances, such as the environment, job, family, studies, etc. Secondly, the stress that is caused by one-self, it is to say the way in which each individual has to solve their own personality, temper or self-discipline issues; definitely the physical and mental health that each one possess. According to the objectives of this paper, the main source of stress that is taken into account are the various life events. Respecting to teenagers, there was found a relation (Gore and Colten 1991) between the total number of stressing life events that occur in diverse areas (family, school, fellow students and personal relationships) the probability of experimenting behavioral problems of other nature. It has been demonstrated that stress is also very difficult to measure, besides most people can recognize when they are stressed. Parolari F. (2005) mentions that the adolescence is a stage of growth, not only physical but also in aspects such as the intellectual, personality and as a whole being. As it is, that growth is accompanied by a crisis of values. Adolescence is a stage between the childhood and adult life, it brings a special gathering of adaptation issues caused by all the changes that occur, in every single aspect. The adolescent phase in our

society appears as a series of difficulties for the individual; some of these that the young person faces are due to the same situation of change from childhood to adult life. Takamishi (1993) assures that adolescence has not received the adequate attention, because a variety of authors and scholars in the subject do not give it the importance it should have because they see it as a temporary phase in the life of humans.

Jackson and Rodriguez- Tome (1993) consider that for most of the young people, the stage of the adolescent years include an expansion about the range and complexity of their social life. The nature of the relationship with parents changes at the same rate that teenagers try to acquire a bigger independence. Classmates start to have a central role in a lot of areas of the teenager’s life and the possibilities of a relationship with parents is explored. The time spent with the family is reduced at the same time the time spent in solitude or in companion of fellow friends increases. The interest and participation of sexual relationships is awaken, which has a further effect on social activities. The persons becomes more conscious and starts to have a broader social life, including possibilities and limitations. Adolescent’s psychology constitutes one of the most passionate research topics of these days. Adolescence is considered as a “turbulent” and “difficult” age, however, in the last years it has been seen as the golden years of our life. It opposes to the amount of studies relating to childhood, and the very little scientific attention dedicated to adolescence, however it most represent an immediate generation of chance in active population. Ornitz says that a deep look into the relationships between the neurophysiological development and behavior suggests three stages that overlap with the pre-school-school and adolescent stages. The emotional regulation depends upon endogenous and environmental factors. The most important environmental factors are a relationship with parents (Bhangoo and Leibenluft 2002). According to Coleman and Hendry (2003), the traditional perspectives upon the adolescence have been often associated with a notion of stress, overall what has been known as the concept of “storm and tension”. Adolescents as a life stage is not intrinsically overwhelmed by stress itself.

According to Schmitz (2005), he mentions a general way in which teenager react to tension in different yet consistent ways according to their personalities: some face the sources directly, others in an indirect way; and some of them are active when expressing stress, while other take a passive way of acting.

### Possible stress signals include the following:

- General irritation: they argue for everything, even minor things.
- Regressive or immature behavior. They are looking forward to enforce their will, what they want now, they do not tolerate a change in routine and are way too sensitive with demands, expectations or everything that sounds like criticism.
- Obsession for appearance in front of other or for material goods. They spend a lot of time making themselves “look good” and try to get the best haircut or have what is considered “right”
- Rejection for academic matters: They avoid school work, skip classes and suddenly downfall their academic achievement.
- Tendency to keep secrets. They lie about their actions or the places they were at.

- Disinterest for their previous enjoyments.
- Sleeping in excess or presenting insomnia.
- Difficult to focus on a task.
- Important changes in eating habits.
- Constant and excessive concern.
- Crying frequently.
- Increase in the number of accident.
- Recurrent flue or any other catching chronicle diseases.
- Isolation: They spend a lot of time alone, they reject friends' invitations.
- Daydreaming excessively.
- Hyperactivity
- Escapist attitude: they watch way too much television.

According to Media Newspan (2016), stress can originate: abdominal discomfort, headache, viruses attacks, articulating pain, psychological disorders. The academic report of Stress Management: brief version (2016), explains why stress symptoms change according to the person. These are some of them:

- Feeling tired all the time.
- Eating more or less than usual.
- Drinking more alcohol, smoking or using drugs more than usually.
- Necessity to use the restroom with more or less frequency.
- Feeling pain that was not caused by exercising.
- Changing sleeping habits.
- Observing other changes in the way of act or feel things.
- Feeling nervous or more angry than usual.

Schmitz (2005) says that, individual differ to their conscious of stress. Some of them seem not to realize and others are too sensitive. Generally, consciousness of stress is born with the experience of physical discomfort or any other limitation. People dealing with chronic stress usually star to notice a cycle, a pattern, in terms of the factors or events that proceed the symptoms or that contribute to the condition. They decide to try the offensive response and try different remedies or programs: aerobic exercises, sports or group therapies. According to Hans (1936), there are two types of stress.

**Positive stress (Eustrés):** If these changes are produced in the person as an external demand, and it is positive, it is to say, if the responses are adequate to the stimuli. Or if they are adapted to the physiological norms of the person we are talking about Eustres or a "good stress" that is necessary for the development and function of the organism and the adaptation the medium. Eustres represents the kind of stress where the individual interact with the stress generator but keep the mind open and creative. The person shows pleasure, joy, well-being and balance. The person with positive stress is characterized by being creative, wanting to satisfy the stress generator. In this way the person can express a special talent, in addition to their imagination and initiative. Summarizing, eustress is a state in which the improvement of knowledge is empowered, as well as the cognitive performance that provide motivation. Eustress is essential for our functioning and development.

**Negative stress (Distrés):** If demands in the medium are excessive, intense and/or extended, yet pleasant and overcome the capacity of resistance and adaptation of the organism, we

reach Distress or a bad stress. Each factor of the stress will have a specific response according to the agent that caused it, but it will be accompanied by "supplementary biological response" and common for all the factor which means non-specific, that is to say, independent to the type of factor that caused it and that can be interpreted as a compound of changes, and biological and organic reactions of general adaptation.

## Methods

### Study

This research is descriptive, its design is quasi-experimental, intact groups.

### Subjects

The research was made with a simple of 86 people, from which 68 are women (79%) and 18 are men (21%) belonging to the Facult of Humanitios of the Bachelor degree in Psychology ages 18 through 20 years old with two different subsets: 18-19, 19-20 years old.

### Instruments

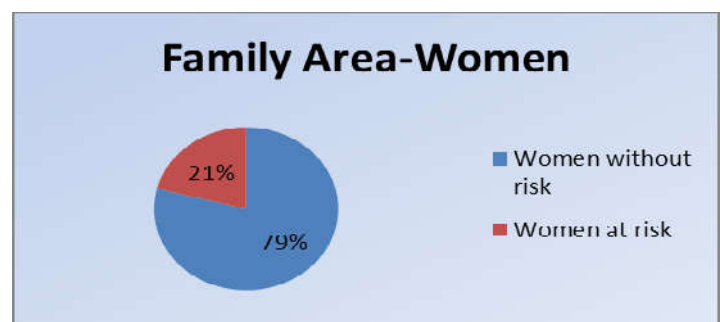
The instrument that will be used for this research, is the Life Events, from Emilia LucioGómez-Maqueo y Consuelo DuránPatiño, made with the purpose of detecting emotions in adolescents, beginning with stressing situations and the effective assessment that the young person makes about them. The Life Events instrument (Adolescents version) is a self-inform compounded by 129 prompts and an open question that allow to assess in a reliable manner seven areas: Family, social, personal, behavioral problems, achievements and failures, health and school.

## General Results

### Family area

#### Women

In graph 1, the obtained results for the family area are presented, within a total of 68 women, 79% of them shows not having experience stress, while 21% of them have the possibility of being facing a moment of stress.

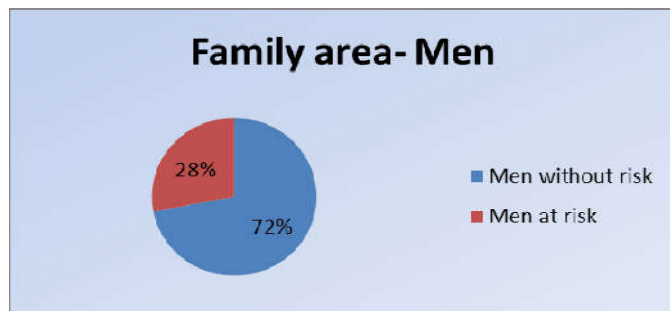


Graph 1. Family area - Women

#### Men.

In graph 2, the obtained results for the Family area are presented, within a total of 18 men, 72% of them have not

showed any probabilities of suffer from stress in this area, while 28% have the possibility of being at risk.

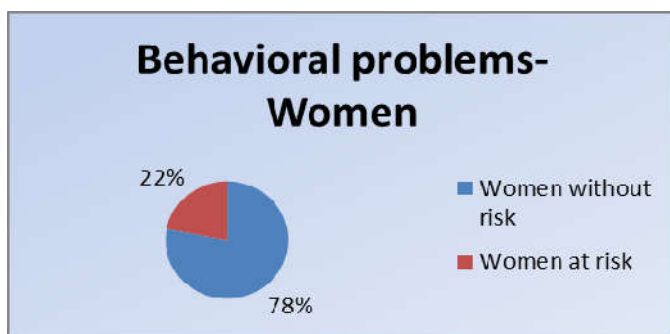


Graph 2. Family area - men

## Behavioral problems

### Women

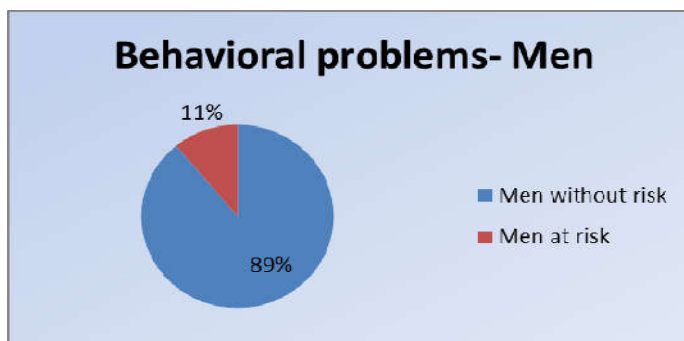
In graph 3, the obtained results in the behavioral problems area are presented, within a total of 68 women, 78% show no risk of suffering stress in this area, while 22% have a probability of being at risk.



Graph 3. Behavioral problems-women

### Men

In graph 4, the obtained results in the behavioral problems area are presented, within a total of 18 men, 89% show no risk of suffering stress in this area, while 11% have a probability of being at risk.



Graph 4. Behavioral problems - men

## DISCUSSION

Stress possess diverse sources. It can be the family, social, personal, behavioral problem, achievements and failures, health and school area. But answering to the question that has

guided this research respecting to which life event has a stronger effect on stress in students, it was obtained that the most outstanding life events that generate a high level of stress in women is the Family area and behavioral problems, while in the case of men it was found that the level of stress in the same areas is too low. In the family area, relating to women it was observed that the most outstanding variables were the separation of parents, socio-economical level, a relative's passing, communication with parents, diseases and a pet's passing; differing from men, where only two variables were found, family income and a pet's passing, these stressing events took place in the last 12 months. Respecting the variables that predominate in women, it can be seen that female adolescents go through more stressing events than male adolescents. Women are more emotionally expressive, which affects them in a higher degree, on the contrary men show more strength and manage better stressing situations. The presence of stress in young university students of psychology was identified; however, this does not mean that both parts cope with stress in the same way. It is remarkable that so men go through a higher level of stress than men, even if both parts are in the same school level and in the same age range, the way in which each one deals with it is very different. It is important that having the results of the factors that lead to stress in young people, measures are taken, so that they allow us to improve the habits respecting to how to manage stress that is generated in different life situations, so that it allows each person to have a healthier life. In the same way, it is important to have conversations with professors, teachers and even the counselors within the institution, so that with their help, they look for strategies to be efficient when identifying if a student is going through a life even that is stressing, and at the same time find a solution.

According to Schmitz (2005) there are people that are not generally conscious of stress: they do not know what they feel, not even what makes them feel "good" or "bad". They can present a chronic state of lethargy or apathy. They might will not be in any stressful situations. It is more likely that they are in a denial state. Adolescents in this stage can adopt a position of "nothing bothers me" or "I am awesome". They can also be intolerant with people that are willing to talk to them about the challenges of life. Other explanation for the apparent lack of consciousness of stress is that it has been pervasive throughout all their life, so adolescents don't know what it is like to feel cautious but relaxed. Other people, especially teenagers can say: "Yes, I understand what tension is and I see it within me", they have internalized the information that they acquired in a previous point and they can detailed their pattern or their personal stress cycle. In this stage, people have learned enough about their own bodies, mind and customs to know their tolerance levels for quite many hours at work.

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