

St. Joseph's College

S3 IH Project Learning



Topic 3:

To what extent do secondary students in Hong Kong cope with stress effectively?

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A. Introduction

First, we will define what stress is and what causes stress. The word "stress" refers to an emotional strain due to demanding circumstances¹. Nowadays secondary students have much stress, and stress mainly comes from teachers, parents, peers, homework, tests, worries about future. In this project, we will be talking about the following questions: What causes stress? How is it affecting us? What could secondary students do to cope with their stress effectively?

B. Impact of stress

Hong Kong is a prosperous city, with the identity of 'international financial centre'. As students are the future of the city, parents and schools try their best to prepare us for the future. When facing massive amounts of work and exams, stress likely appears in students. This phenomenon may affect their performance in school, health, socialisation or may even cause different kinds of mental illnesses. According to South China Morning Post in April 2016, almost 24% of pupils had considered committing suicide two weeks before the survey, with around 1.9% saying they would do so if they had a chance. Meanwhile, 29.3% of pupils showed signs of anxiety, such as worrying about the future and being concerned that they were not good enough.

As seen above, stress has a far-reaching impact on them. It is critical for the students to learn how to cope with stress. Therefore, we choose this topic to have a more precise insight if students can cope with their stress effectively.

C. Work stress and life stress of secondary students

It is very average for us to have stress. In our daily lives, we face different kinds of problems. These problems may lead to stress and other mental illnesses. Stress can be classified into two main groups, work stress and life stress.

What are the causes of the stress of a secondary student? Students will get work stress from their schoolwork. According to a report, they have to attend school for at least 6 hours and then the tutorial class right after school. Afterwards, they have to finish their homework and then revise, with a rare break of relaxation. There is too much homework per day, as well as a tight schedule for examination, and it is uneasy for students to handle. These problems may lead to an increase of work stress in consequence when the workload is too much for a secondary student.

Apart from work stress, students may also have life stress. It refers to stress caused by other aspects apart from school. Parents often set unrealistic expectations, such as having the best performance academically comparing to fellow schoolmates, for their children. Students not

only have to handle busy schoolwork but also satisfy parents' expectations simultaneously, adding much burden physically and mentally.

D. Ways to relieve stress as a secondary student

How can students relieve themselves from their stressful lives? They can take a rest and listen to music whenever they feel stressed and when they are free. According to researchers, listening to music can imply a surprisingly relaxing effect on our minds and bodies, suggestively soft, quiet classical music. Stress can also be reduced by talking with people they trust: friends, families or even social workers. They can seek advice from them and try to solve the problems on their own. These methods can effectively help students to reduce stress.

E. Surveys about reliefs and impact of stress

According to a survey conducted by the Department of Health, three of the most common methods used to cope with stress are doing exercises (38.4%), watching TV/movies (23.6%) and socialising (10.5%).

Stress is a very alarming issue. As stated in the results of research conducted by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, there were 858 suicides in 2015, in which, 65 suicides (around 7.5%) were committed by people aged under 25 years. According to a study conducted in August 2015 by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG) which interviewed around 4,000 primary and secondary school students, 25% of the students had very high level of stress while 40% feel anxious about the new school year.

As reported by a study conducted by researchers from Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service and the Institute of Education, they interviewed 10,140 secondary 1 to secondary 6 pupils in 22 schools between October 2014 and 2015. 51% of students inclined depression, around 12.9% of students are moderately depressed, and around 6.5% are severely depressed.

F. Effects of stress on physical and mental health

As claimed by on.cc² and BBC³, the effects of stress can be seen on Hong Kong students, such as difficulty in breathing and even committed suicide in some extreme cases. As seen in the following table, the effects of stress cannot be ignored.

Here is the list of effects we have organised from multiple sources^{4,5,6}:

■ Minor issues ■ Moderate issues ■ Severe issues

Effects on mental aspect	Effects on physical aspect	Both mental and physical
■ Depression ■ Insomnia ■ Anxiety ■ Shortened attention span ■ Frustration ■ Overreaction to stimulations ■ Poor logical thinking ■ Mental strain ■ Neuroticism ■ Mental distress ■ Inferiority ■ Frequent misjudgments ■ Loneliness ■ Hostility towards people ■ Tinnitus ■ Fear of socialism	■ Fatigue ■ Lack of appetite ■ Decreased saliva secretion ■ Sweating ■ Rash ■ Panic ■ Muscle twitching ■ Weakened immune system ■ Tense muscles ■ Indigestion ■ Muscle pain ■ Joint sore ■ Diarrhea ■ High blood pressure ■ Heart attack ■ Difficulty in breathing ■ Abnormal change in body weight	■ Stammering ■ Nausea ■ Frequent headaches ■ OCD⁷ ■ Insanity

As suggested by the sources, stress can affect our daily lives, health and people around us. Some of the above effects combined can even lead to severe consequences such as self-mutilation^{9,10} or, in some extreme cases, death.

Hong Kong is not the only city where students suffer from stress. Stress can be observed worldwide among students", and it is our primary objective to let secondary students know more about the importance of handling stress correctly and effectively.

Appendix

Sources:

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| 1- | Oxford Dictionary | (Definition of stress) | https://goo.gl/vrrae |
| 2- | on.cc | (Difficulty in breathing) | https://goo.gl/c6LAHm |
| 3- | BBC | (Students suicide) | https://goo.gl/Gq4nZf |
| 4- | Healthline | (Effects of stress) | https://goo.gl/wBKA3v |
| 5- | MayoClinic | (Stress Symptoms) | https://goo.gl/SsVDi9 |
| 6- | WebMD | (Stress Symptoms) | https://goo.gl/rygTuN |
| 7- | Stress.org | (Stress Symptoms) | https://goo.gl/1MKw2b |
| 8- | Wikipedia | (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder) | https://goo.gl/Z6qTqE |
| 9- | CalmClinic | (Self-mutilation) | https://goo.gl/D7b8x1 |
| 10- | Huffpost | (Depression leading to self-harm) | https://goo.gl/ETZk5m |
| 11- | BBC | (Japan students suicide) | https://goo.gl/P5OQOI |