

White Paper on

# Stress, Antecedents & Coping Mechanism – An Exploratory Study In the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic



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# Stress, Antecedents & Coping Mechanism – An Exploratory Study

*In the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic*

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## **Acknowledgment**

This white paper acknowledges the contribution of RISE summit, idobro, and Rajagiri Business School in facilitating the discussion around SDGs and creating a platform of like-minded people to come together and share ideas that can truly benefit us on a global scale. The summit was a good platform for experts and activists to come, share, debate, and arrive at meaningful conclusions in a respectful and timely manner. This report puts on record the usefulness of different virtual chat rooms which were facilitated as part of the summit. We have garnered tremendous insights through those informal chats that happened in those virtual chat rooms.

## **Introduction**

SDGs are considered to be the common goals by the entire world concerning the theme of sustainability. This study is materializing on the backdrop of a global pandemic, COVID-19, which has affected the entire globe indiscriminately. Economies have shrunk, lifestyles of people have been altered and new paradigms of human evolution have taken place as never seen before by the current generation. This bleak situation has created stress in an unprecedented manner for people around the globe. This study tries to understand the antecedents of stress and its outcome manifested as a coping mechanism for people.

## **Objectives**

1. To understand the antecedents of stress for people during the COVID-19 pandemic times
2. To understand various coping mechanisms used by people to overcome stress during the COVID-19 pandemic
3. To explore the moderating effect of demographic parameters like gender, family type, and age on the process of stress creation and subsequent coping mechanisms

## **Methodology**

This research chose to work with the SDG of “Good health & Well Being”. The mission of Rajagiri Business School was closely aligned with social sensitivity. We conduct regular events to spread social sensitivity among our stakeholders. One of such events was an e-marathon with a focus to create both physical and mental wellbeing among people in our community. This study was conceived as a follow-up to understand the impact of such events. It was also well in line with the theme of SDG - “Good health & Well Being”.

## **Sampling Process**

This research study used an exploratory research design to fulfill its objectives. A questionnaire method is used to collect responses from participants of this research about their stress factors and the coping mechanisms employed by them.

Respondents were chosen using a convenience sampling process through online data collection tools (google forms). Respondents were chosen from the pool of participants of two main events, which had a strong link to one of the SDG goals; “Good Health and Well Being”. First, the Rajagiri e-marathon initiative which happened during September-October of 2020. This event was organized combined by Rajagiri Business School (RBS) and Rajagiri College of Social Sciences (RCSS) with the active support of the Ministry of Ayush, Govt of India. Second, the RISE Summit, which saw students, academicians, corporate leaders, and researchers from across the globe participate in a two-day (January 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021) conference format. There were special interest group-based round-tables on aspects of specific SDGs in the summit. The online questionnaire was shared with all the participants of both events and responses were extracted for further analysis.

## **Questions asked to the respondents**

Apart from questions on age, gender, family size, occupation, and education, the following questions were asked to understand the source of stress and the kind of relief measure they resort to while recovering from stress. All answers were extracted in a qualitative format and the word-cloud technique was used to elucidate inferences.

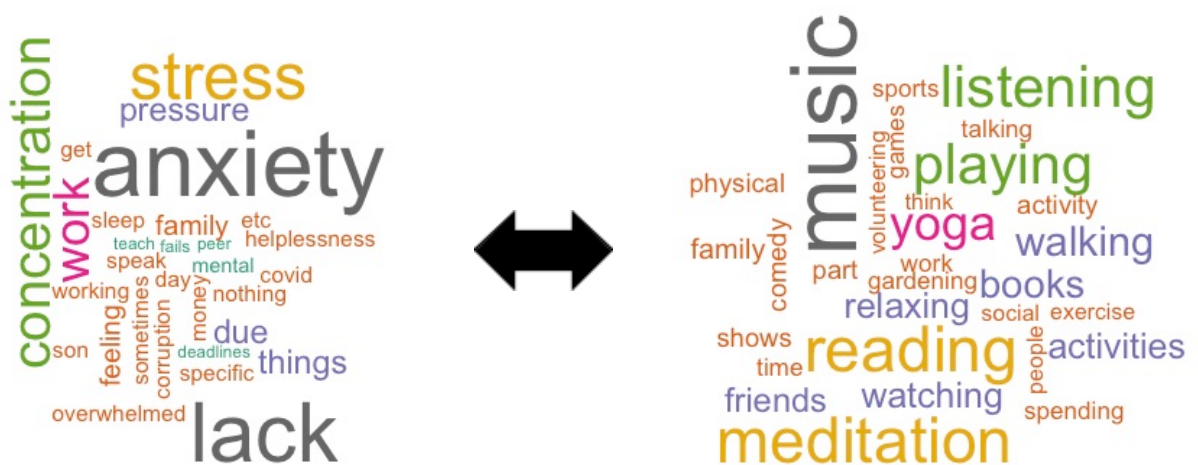
1. Can you state some examples of the kinds of stress (anxiety, lack of concentration, etc) you undergo depending on the situation:
2. What are some relaxing activities that you are actively involved in?

## Data Analysis

The study received 132 responses from the participants of both events and after data cleaning (omitting partially filled responses), the study received 128 data points for further analysis. The study used 'word cloud analysis to understand the various underlying factors creating stress on people and their corresponding coping mechanisms. As the study was exploratory, all the factors leading to stress and corresponding coping mechanisms were extracted using open-ended questions. Hence, only qualitative analysis was only possible based on the gathered information. Since the study resorted to a qualitative methodology, we had to elucidate inferences from the textual data provided by the respondents. Understanding the general theme or mood of the respondents was of prime importance. For this, all the textual data was put to a word-cloud software to extract the maximum repeated words among the responses. The study also clustered respondents based on age, gender, and family structure, and used these clusters to do moderated analysis separately.

## Research Findings

Stress and Coping Mechanism – Overall (all respondents combined)



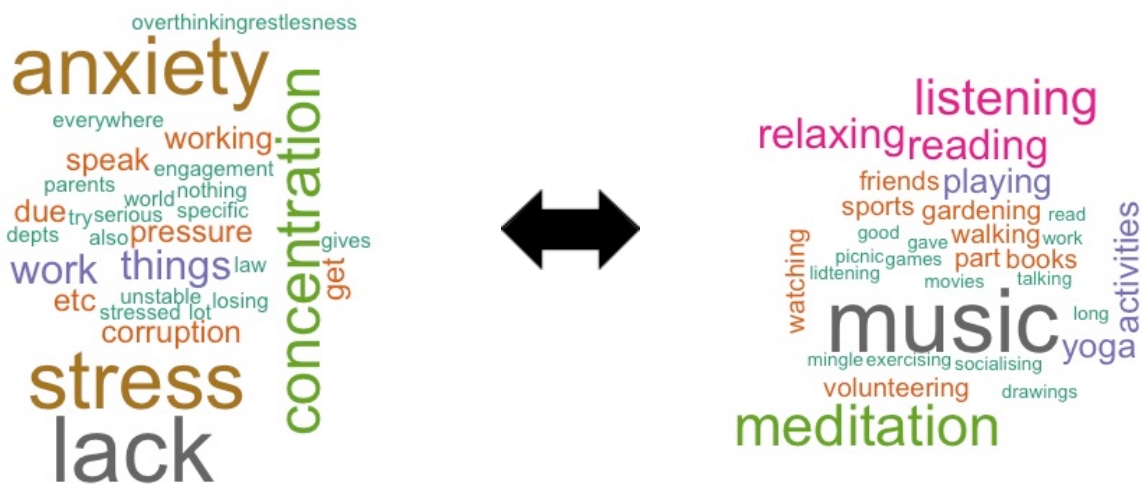
Anxiety came out as a major theme (factor) creating stress in general with the people and leisurely activities related to music came out as a major coping mechanism adopted by the people.

## Stress and Coping Mechanism – Moderation effect of Gender

### Males



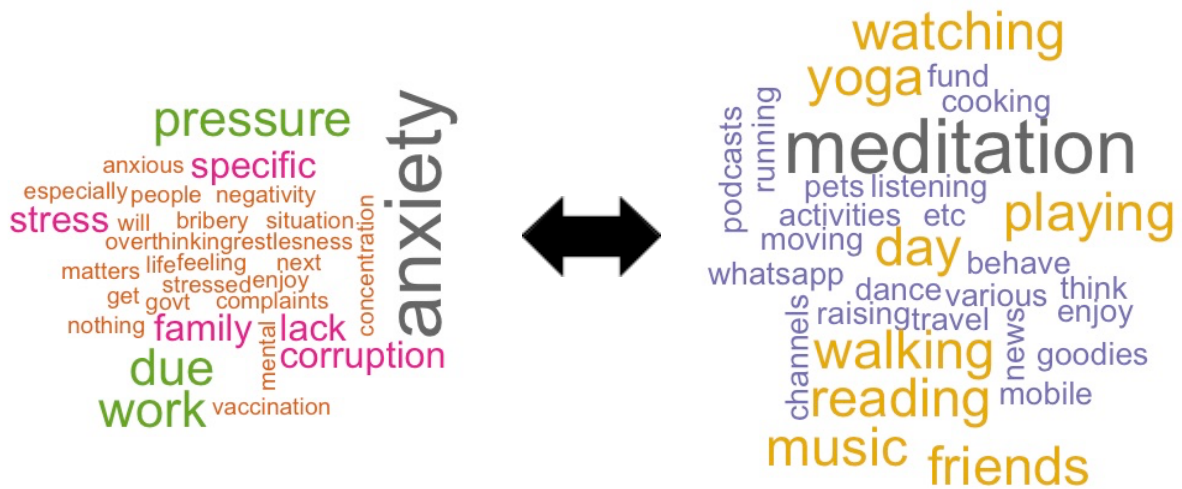
### Females



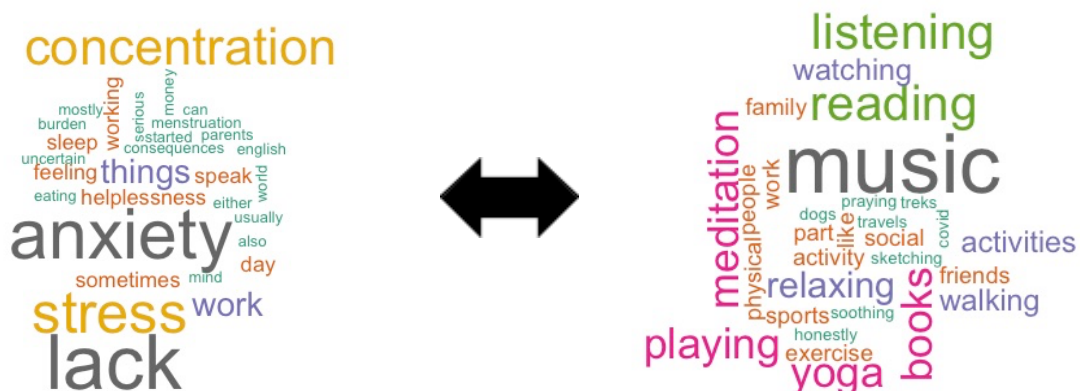
While anxiety and lack of concentration came out as antecedents to stress for both the gender, how both genders cope with the stress came out to be different. While males get involved in more physical activities to relieve their stress, females found their coping mechanism in a less physical way involving music, reading, and meditation.

## Stress and Coping Mechanism – Moderation effect of Age

### Above 45 yrs



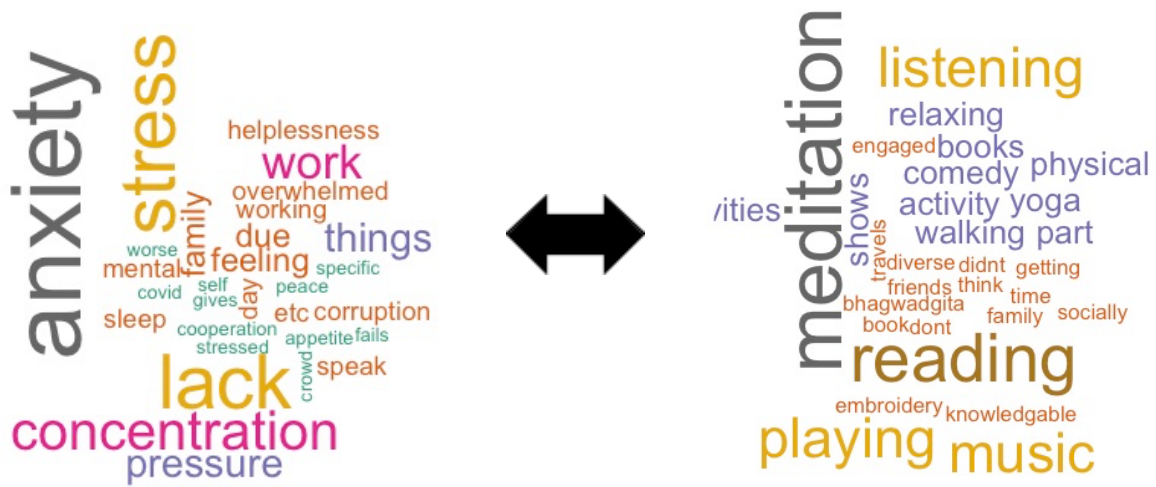
### Below 45 yrs



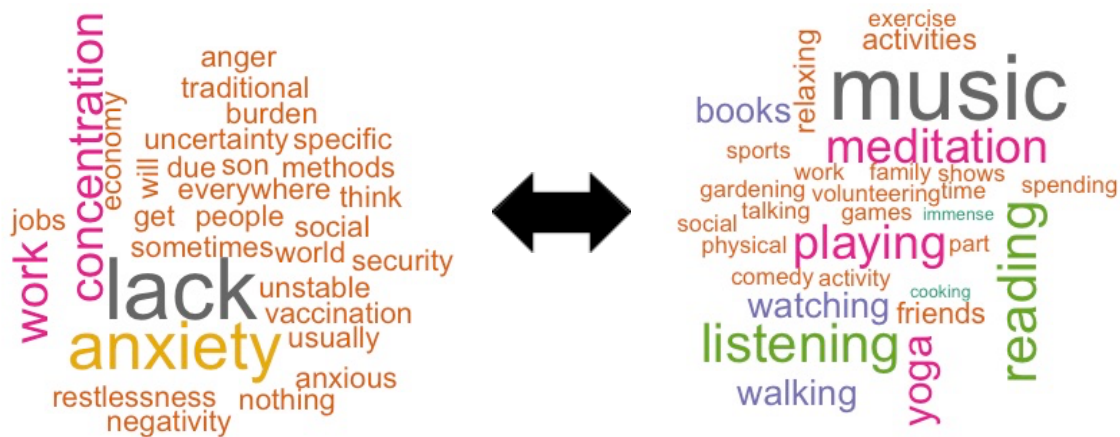
While anxiety has come out as a major stress-causing factor, the way two age groups cope up with stress is different. Elderly people tend to rely more on friends and light activities, the younger generation finds stress busters in music, reading, and physical activities such as sports.

## Stress and Coping Mechanism – Moderation effect of Family Structure

### Nuclear Family



### Joint Family



There was no substantial difference in the way two-family structures were impacted by stress-causing factors. Also, it was found that both family structures helped people to cope with the stress almost in a similar manner.



## **Conclusion**

As a result of the analysis and allied findings, it became clear that the family structure has no significant impact on the coping mechanisms employed by people to cope with stress created due to the pandemic situation of COVID-19. It became clear that both men and women perceive stress in different ways and they both act differently to cope with this stress. While men resort to more physical ways by engaging in sports activities, women resort to more emotional ways of coping with pressure. Age did not moderate the factors leading to stress, but it moderated the coping responses. Young adults resorted to more physical activities than old-aged people as a measure to cope with stress.

Anxiety came out as a major contributing factor towards stress in people. Arguably, in the context of the pandemic situation, people are all anxious about the future of their job, earnings, ability to travel, ability to meet their near and dear, etc. This aspect came out as one of major the findings of this study.

--- End of Report ---