

Stress situation of young people in Thai Nguyen city

Pham Thi Minh Khuyen¹, Nguyen Thi Hong Nhung²
¹(Thainguyen University of Technology, Vietnam)

ABSTRACT: *Stress is a common psychological problem that can occur in all ages, genders, and occupations. However, in recent years, stress has become an alarming problem among young people. The study used stress level research tests developed by two Russian psychologists, T.D. Azarnuk and I.M. Tusnhicov. This test has been standardized and adapted to the conditions by the Department of Psychology of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Vietnam, consisting of 22 questions. Research results from a survey of 800 young people aged 16 to 35 in Thai Nguyen city show that there is a clear difference in stress levels and causes of stress between two groups of young people: students and employees. The current student group has higher stress levels. The causes of stress for the student group are personal characteristics, family, and learning problems while for the group of young employers, the main causes are society, personal characteristics, and family.*

KEYWORDS – *Study pressure, stress, young people, work pressure.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress is a normal reaction of the body, but if stress lasts long and is not resolved, it will lead to serious consequences for physical health, mental health, academic performance, work, and relationships around people who are stressed.

Today, both children and adults can experience stress, within young people being the most at-risk group. Stress in students and young workers is an increasingly common problem. According to research by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of children and young people in some provinces and cities in Vietnam, conducted in the period 2021-2022, among 3,500 children and young people from 15-24 years old in 6 provinces and cities: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, Hai Phong, Da Nang, and Thanh Hoa, research results show that the rate of young people experiencing stress in Vietnam is 60%, of which the rate of young people experiencing severe stress is 20%.

Thai Nguyen is an educational and industrial center city in the northern midland and mountainous region of Vietnam with a relatively large proportion of young population. With the increasing number of students and young workers, along with the rapid urbanization process, stress in young people has also become an important issue that needs attention in this area.

The study was conducted to evaluate the stress situation of young people (ages 16 to 35) in Thai Nguyen city, evaluate the causes and ways to relieve stress among young people, and then propose some solutions to reduce stress and its consequences in young people in Thai Nguyen City.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Prevalence of stress in young people

Numerous studies highlight the widespread nature of stress among young people globally. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a significant proportion of adolescents and young adults report experiencing high levels of stress. For instance:

Global Studies: A report by the WHO (2020) indicated that about 10-20% of adolescents experience mental health conditions, with stress being a major contributing factor.

Regional Studies: In the United States, the American Psychological Association's "Stress in America" survey (2018) found that teenagers report stress levels similar to those of adults, with school pressures being a major contributor.

2. Cause of stress in young people

This review examines various factors contributing to stress in young individuals, focusing on: academic pressure, career concerns, family problems, social relationships, personal characteristics, and future uncertainty (and ability to cope with future uncertainty).

Academic Pressure: Academic stress is a predominant cause of anxiety and stress among young people. Studies highlight that high expectations from parents and teachers, coupled with the competitive nature of modern education, significantly contribute to students' stress levels (Deb et al., 2015). The pressure to achieve excellent grades and secure future opportunities adds to their burden, often leading to burnout and mental health issues (Pascoe et al., 2020).

Career Concerns: Uncertainty about future career prospects is another significant stressor. Young people often face pressure to choose the right career path, secure internships, and find stable employment after graduation. This uncertainty and the high expectations associated with career success contribute to significant stress (Mellor et al., 2015).

Family Problems: Family dynamics play a crucial role in the mental health of young individuals. Conflicts with parents or siblings, divorce, or separation within the family, and high parental expectations can create a stressful home environment (McLoyd et al., 2000). Studies show that supportive family environments are essential for mitigating stress, while dysfunctional family relationships exacerbate it (Repetti et al., 2002).

Social Relationships: Peer relationships, family expectations, and romantic relationships can also contribute to stress. According to Seiffge-Krenke et al. (2019), interpersonal stressors are a major cause of emotional distress among adolescents.

Future Uncertainty (and ability to cope with future uncertainty): Concerns about future employment, career prospects, and financial stability are common stressors for young adults. The study by Arnett (2015) on emerging adulthood underscores the stress related to life transitions and uncertainty.

3. Tendency to Relieve Stress When in a Negative Mood

Managing stress when in a negative mood is a complex process influenced by various psychological, social, and physiological factors. Research in this area has explored the mechanisms through which individuals cope with stress and the effectiveness of different strategies. This review synthesizes findings from key studies on how people tend to relieve stress when experiencing negative emotions.

Stress is a common response to challenging or adverse situations, and it often coexists with negative moods such as anxiety, depression, or frustration. When in a negative mood, individuals are more likely to seek immediate relief from stress, which can lead to both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies.

*** Adaptive Coping Strategies**

Adaptive coping strategies are healthy and effective methods for managing stress and improving mood. Research has identified several key adaptive strategies:

Physical Activity:

Exercise: Numerous studies, including a meta-analysis by Rebar et al. (2015), have shown that physical exercise significantly reduces stress and improves mood by releasing endorphins and reducing cortisol levels.

Yoga and Mindfulness: A study by Streeter et al. (2010) highlighted the benefits of yoga and mindfulness practices in reducing stress and enhancing emotional regulation.

Social Support:

Talking to Friends and Family: Social support is crucial for stress relief. Cohen and Wills (1985) found that strong social networks can buffer against the effects of stress.

Support Groups: Research by Helgeson and Gottlieb (2000) demonstrated that support groups provide emotional support and practical advice, which are beneficial in stress management.

Relaxation Techniques:

Meditation: A study by Goyal et al. (2014) reviewed the effectiveness of meditation programs in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression.

Deep Breathing and Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Both techniques have been shown to reduce stress levels and promote relaxation, as found in research by McCallie, Blum, and Hood (2006).

Engaging in Hobbies: Creative Activities: Activities such as art, music, and writing can provide a mental escape and improve mood. A study by Kaimal et al. (2016) showed that engaging in creative arts can significantly reduce stress levels.

*** Maladaptive Coping Strategies**

Maladaptive coping strategies are unhealthy ways to manage stress that can lead to long-term negative outcomes. Key studies have identified the following maladaptive behaviors:

Substance Use: Alcohol and Drug Use: A study by Cooper et al. (1992) found that individuals often use alcohol or drugs to cope with stress, which can lead to addiction and further mental health issues.

Avoidance Behaviors: Procrastination and Isolation: Avoiding stressors can provide temporary relief but often exacerbates stress in the long run. Sirois and Tosti (2012) highlighted how procrastination is linked to increased stress and negative health outcomes.

Emotional Eating: Overeating or Underrating: Emotional eating is a common response to stress, leading to unhealthy eating patterns. Research by Adam and Epel (2007) indicated that stress-induced eating can result in weight gain and metabolic disturbances.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Sample

The samples of this research are young people in Thainguayen city.

The samples size: Using the formula calculated sample size when the population size is unknown or very large. This formula is based on the principles of statistical inference and is commonly used to ensure that the sample is large enough to provide reliable and meaningful results.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p * (1 - p)}{E^2}$$

Z = Z-score, which corresponds to the desired confidence level (with 95% confidence level: Z= 1.96). Use the estimated proportion p=0.5; Set the margin of error E=0.05. Plug these values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5 * (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2} = 384$$

So, the required sample size is approximately 384.

To ensure the representativeness and statistical significance of the research, 800 sample respondents were randomly collected from the young people in Thainguayen city.

2. Collect, process and analyze data

Conduct the online interview survey with the young people in Thainguayen city randomly. The questionnaire consists of 3 parts: Personal information section includes 3 demographic questions about gender, job and job detail; the second part is stress levels and symptoms test including 22 questions developed by two Russian psychologists, T.D. Azarnuk and I.M. Tusnhicov and adapted to the conditions of Vietnam by the Department of Psychology of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Vietnam.

After collecting the answer sheets, they are checked, basic information is processed on the form system, and then encoded information, entered information into the computer and used SPSS 22.0 software for processing the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Respondents' characteristics

Interviews were conducted with 514 students (64,25%) and 286 employees (35,75%); Meanwhile, according to the age structure, there are 401 people aged 16-23 years old and 399 people aged 23-35 years old. That is, up to 97 young people aged 16-23, who are of school age, stopped studying to go to work (accounting for 12.1% of the total number of respondents and 24.2% of young people aged 16-23 years old). Therefore, it

can be seen that the differentiation of career orientation in Thai Nguyen city is gradually rejuvenating in line with world trends.

TABLE 1
Respondents' characteristics

Item	Characteristics									
	Total		Gender				Age			
	No	%	Male	%	Female	%	16-22	%	22-35	%
Students	514	64,25	235	29,375	279	34,875	304	38	210	26,25
TNUT	125	15,6	84	10,5	41	5,1	84	10,5	41	5,1
TUMP	105	13,1	36	4,5	69	8,6	36	4,5	69	8,6
TNUE	105	13,1	45	5,6	60	7,5	64	8,0	41	5,1
TUEBA	73	9,1	20	2,5	53	6,6	41	5,1	32	4,0
ICTU	30	3,8	17	2,1	13	1,6	19	2,4	11	1,4
TUAF	21	2,6	10	1,3	11	1,4	17	2,1	4	0,5
TNUS	25	3,1	9	1,1	16	2,0	20	2,5	5	0,6
SFL	30	3,8	14	1,8	16	2,0	23	2,9	7	0,9
Employee	286	35,75	148	18,5	138	17,25	97	12,125	189	23,625
Office staff	80	10,0	43	5,4	37	4,6	5	0,6	75	9,4
Free labor	54	6,8	21	2,6	33	4,1	12	1,5	42	5,3
Teacher	21	2,6	7	0,9	14	1,8	0	0,0	21	2,6
Worker	96	12,0	64	8,0	32	4,0	65	8,1	31	3,9
Business man	35	4,4	13	1,6	22	2,8	15	1,9	20	2,5
Total	800	100	383	47,875	417	52,125	401	50,125	399	49,875

Source: Research result

2. Stress situation in young people

Survey results show that the majority of TNUT students have limited financial literacy: The average score of 425 students reached 32.59; Popular score ranges are: From 31-40 points (165 students, accounting for 38.83%; from 21-30 points (127 students, accounting for 29.88%); from 10-20 points (56 students, accounting for 29.88%) 13.18%); the number of students scoring over 50 points is only 31 students, accounting for 7.29% (Figure 3).

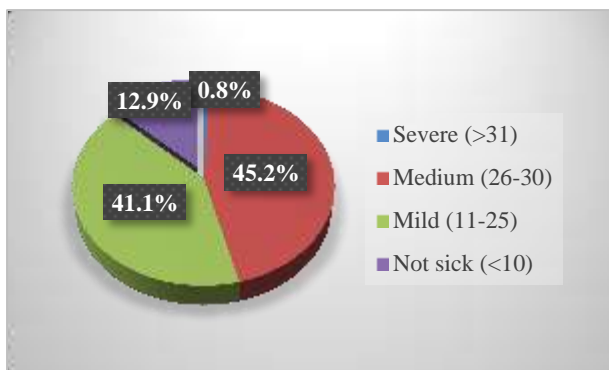


FIGURE 1
Level of stress in students
Source: Research result

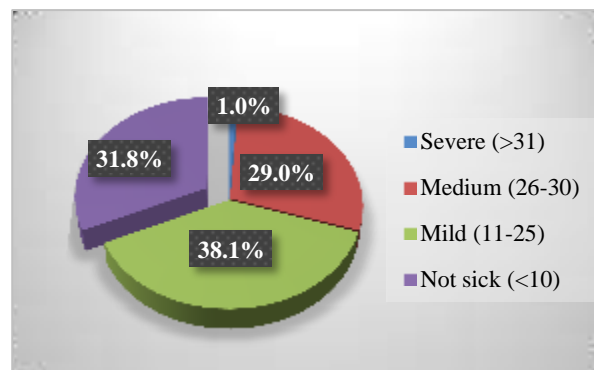


FIGURE 2
Level of stress in young employers
Source: Research result

3. Cause of stress in young people

There is a clear difference in causes of stress between two groups of young people: students and employees (Figure 3). The causes of stress for the students group are personal characteristics, family, and learning problems while for the group of young employers, the main causes are society, personal characteristics, and family. This research result is similar to the research results of Pascoe et al. (2020), Seiffge-Krenke et al. (2019), and Arnett (2015).

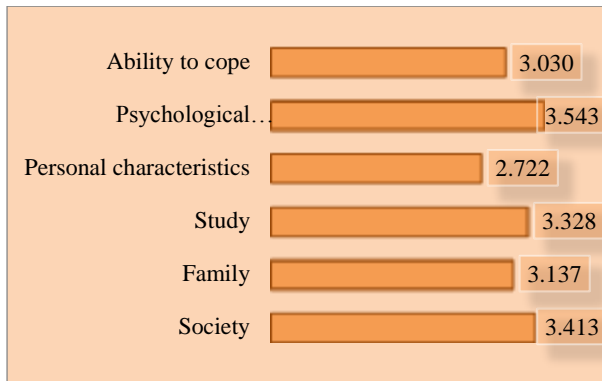


FIGURE 3
Cause of stress in students
Source: Research result

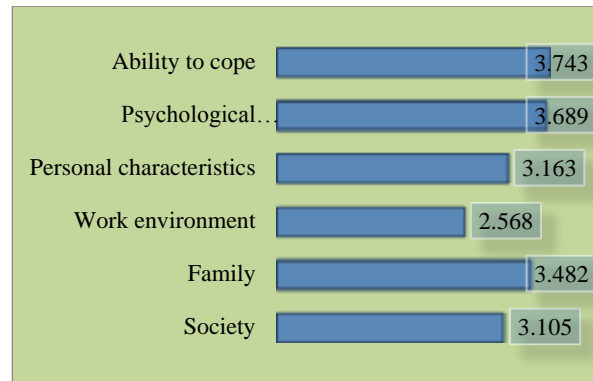


FIGURE 4
Cause of stress in young employers
Source: Research result

The provided table lists the average stress scores from various causes for students and employees in Thainguyen city. The scores indicate the intensity of stress perceived by these groups from different sources. Here are some observations and comments based on the data:

Society: Students report higher stress from societal factors (3.413) compared to employees (3.105). This suggests that societal pressures, such as expectations and social norms, may weigh more heavily on students, possibly due to peer pressure and academic competition.

Family: Family-related stress is higher among employees (3.482) than students (3.137). This could be attributed to greater family responsibilities and pressures faced by employees, such as financial obligations and work-life balance.

Study pressure with students and work pressure with employees: As expected, study-related stress is significantly higher for students (3.328) compared to employees (2.568). This highlights that academic challenges are a primary stressor for students, while employees are less affected by this factor.

Personal Characteristics: Employees experience more stress from personal characteristics (3.163) compared to students (2.722). This could be due to personality traits influencing workplace performance and relationships, which might be less critical in a student's life.

Psychological Characteristics: Both groups report high stress from psychological characteristics, but employees (3.689) score slightly higher than students (3.543). This indicates that mental health issues and emotional stability are significant stress factors for both groups, though slightly more for employees.

Ability to Cope with Difficulties: Employees have higher stress scores related to their ability to cope with difficulties (3.743) compared to students (3.030). This may reflect the increased complexity and number of challenges faced in a work environment, requiring better coping mechanisms.

Society and study are more significant stressors for students, emphasizing the impact of social expectations and academic pressures during this life stage. Employees experience greater stress from family responsibilities, personal characteristics, psychological characteristics, and their ability to cope with difficulties. These factors likely reflect the multifaceted pressures of adult life, including maintaining family relationships, navigating workplace dynamics, and managing mental health.

These observations underscore the importance of developing targeted stress management interventions that address the specific needs of students and employees. For students, support systems focusing on societal pressures and academic challenges may be beneficial. For employees, programs that enhance coping mechanisms, support mental health, and address family-related stressors could be more effective.

4. Tendency to Relieve Stress When in a Negative Mood

The provided bar chart illustrates the various stress relief strategies employed by students and employees, highlighting both similarities and differences in their approaches. Here are some observations and comments based on the figure 5:

Confiding in Friends: This is the most common stress relief strategy for both students and employees, with 44.9% of students and 46.2% of employees choosing to confide in friends. This similarity indicates the importance of social support networks across both groups in managing stress.

Destroying Things: A higher percentage of employees (24.8%) resort to destroying things as a way to relieve stress compared to students (18.7%). This difference may reflect varying coping mechanisms or possibly higher frustration levels in the work environment.

Going for a Relaxing Massage: This strategy is more popular among employees (23.1%) than students (11.9%). Employees may have more financial resources to afford massages or might find it a more necessary respite from work-related stress.

Doing Exercise: A larger proportion of students (17.1%) engage in exercise to relieve stress compared to employees (15.7%). This could be due to students having more flexible schedules or being more aware of the physical and mental health benefits of exercise.

Seeing a Doctor: Both groups show a relatively low but similar tendency to see a doctor for stress relief, with 13.0% of students and 18.2% of employees. This suggests that medical consultation is not a primary strategy for stress management for either group.

Going to the Entertainment Area: Students (21.0%) are more likely to go to entertainment areas compared to employees (16.5%). This may reflect lifestyle differences, with students perhaps having more leisure time or seeking more social activities.

Shopping: Employees (25.2%) are significantly more likely to shop as a way to relieve stress compared to students (10.3%). This might be due to employees having greater disposable income or using shopping as a form of immediate stress relief.

Other Methods: A higher percentage of employees (13.3%) use other unspecified methods to relieve stress compared to students (8.2%), suggesting a wider range of coping strategies among employees.

The chart reveals that both students and employees heavily rely on social interactions (confiding in friends) as their primary method of stress relief. However, employees tend to engage more in activities that might require financial resources, such as massages and shopping, while students lean towards more accessible options like exercise and entertainment areas. These differences highlight how financial independence and lifestyle factors can influence stress relief strategies. Both groups exhibit diverse approaches, indicating the need for tailored stress management programs that consider the unique preferences and circumstances of each group.

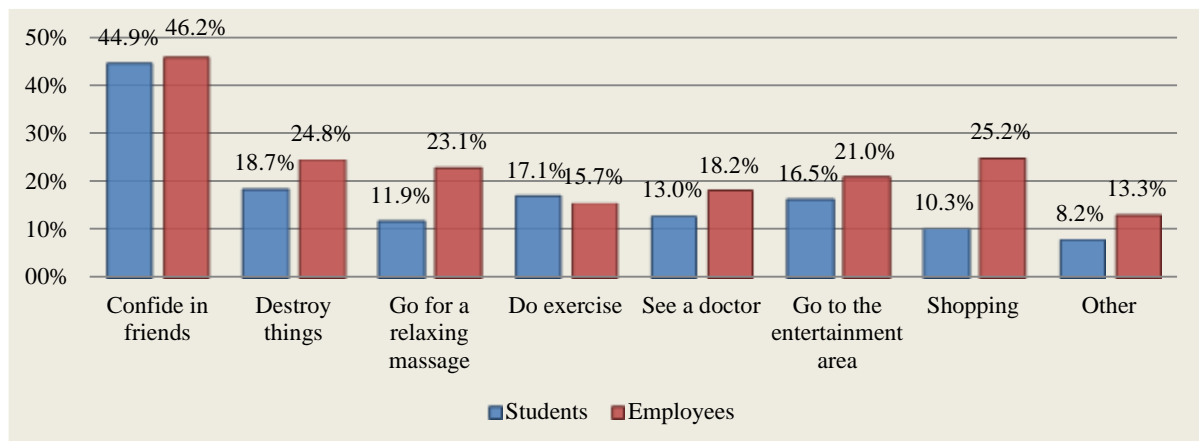


FIGURE 5
Tendency to Relieve Stress When in a Negative Mood of young people in Thainguyen city

Source: Research result

V. CONCLUSION

The prevalence of stress among young people in Vietnam is a significant concern, influenced by academic pressures, social expectations, and socio-economic changes. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive strategies, including mental health education, support services, and policy interventions to create a supportive environment for young people. Further research and localized studies are essential to develop targeted interventions that effectively address the unique challenges faced by Vietnamese youth.

Research on stress in young people in Thai Nguyen City is vital for developing effective, context-specific interventions to support the mental health and well-being of the city's youth. By identifying the prevalence and sources of stress, informing policies and educational practices, enhancing community support, providing a basis for further research, and contributing to national and global understanding, such studies play a crucial role in addressing this pressing issue.

Some solutions to reduce stress situation in young people for Thai Nguyen city: *Local Studies and Surveys*: Conduct local surveys to gather specific data on stress levels among young people in Thai Nguyen; *Educational Initiatives*: Implement educational programs in schools and universities focusing on stress management and mental health awareness; *Support Services*: Establish or strengthen mental health support services, including counseling and helplines for young people; *Community Engagement*: Involve local communities in creating a supportive environment for young people in the city.

VI. Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the Thainguyen University of Technology - Thainguyen University for sponsoring this research.

REFERENCES

- [1] World Health Organization (WHO). (2021-2022). *Research on the Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-being of Children and Young People in Vietnam*.
- [2] World Health Organization. (2020). *Adolescent mental health*.
- [3] American Psychological Association. (2018). *Stress in America: Generation Z*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- [4] Deb, S., Strodl, E., & Sun, J. (2015). Academic stress, parental pressure, anxiety and mental health among Indian high school students. *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 5(1), 26-34.
- [5] Pascoe, M. C., Hetrick, S. E., & Parker, A. G. (2020). The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 104-112.
- [6] Seiffge-Krenke, I., Aunola, K., & Nurmi, J. E. (2019). Changes in stress perception and coping during adolescence: The role of situational and personal factors. *Journal of Adolescence*, 72, 1-14.
- [7] Mellor, D., Webster, C., & Lun, V. M. C. (2015). Uncertainty and career concerns: The impact on stress levels among young adults. *Journal of Career Development*, 42(5), 420-433.
- [8] McLoyd, V. C., Jayaratne, T. E., Ceballo, R., & Borquez, J. (2000). Unemployment and work interruption among African American single mothers: Effects on parenting and adolescent socioemotional functioning. *Child Development*, 71(3), 1097-1117.
- [9] Repetti, R. L., Taylor, S. E., & Seeman, T. E. (2002). Risky families: Family social environments and the mental and physical health of offspring. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128(2), 330-366.
- [10] Arnett, J. J. (2015). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. Oxford University Press.
- [11] Rebar, A. L., Stanton, R., Geard, D., Short, C., Duncan, M. J., & Vandelanotte, C. (2015). A meta-meta-analysis of the effect of physical activity on depression and anxiety in non-clinical adult populations. *Health Psychology Review*, 9(3), 366-378.
- [12] Streeter, C. C., Gerbarg, P. L., Saper, R. B., Ciraulo, D. A., & Brown, R. P. (2010). Effects of yoga on the autonomic nervous system, gamma-aminobutyric-acid, and allostasis in epilepsy, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Medical Hypotheses*, 78(5), 571-579.
- [13] Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). *Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis*. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310-357.
- [14] Helgeson, V. S., & Gottlieb, B. H. (2000). Support groups. *Handbook of Health Psychology*, 3, 823-846.
- [15] Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310-357.
- [16] Helgeson, V. S., & Gottlieb, B. H. (2000). Support groups. *Handbook of Health Psychology*, 3, 823-846.
- [17] Goyal, M., Singh, S., Sibinga, E. M., Gould, N. F., Rowland-Seymour, A., Sharma, R., Berger, Z., Sleicher, D., Maron, D. D., Shihab, H. M., Ranasinghe, P. D., Linn, S., Saha, S., Bass, E. B., & Haythornthwaite, J. A. (2014). Meditation programs for psychological stress and well-being: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 174(3), 357-368.
- [18] McCallie, M. S., Blum, C. M., & Hood, C. J. (2006). Progressive muscle relaxation. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 13(3), 51-66.
- [19] Kaimal, G., Ray, K., & Muniz, J. (2016). Reduction of cortisol levels and participants' responses following art making. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 33(2), 74-80.

- [20] Cooper, M. L., Russell, M., Skinner, J. B., Frone, M. R., & Mudar, P. (1992). Stress and alcohol use: Moderating effects of gender, coping, and alcohol expectancies. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 101(1), 139-152.
- [21] Sirois, F. M., & Tosti, N. (2012). Lost in the moment? An investigation of procrastination, mindfulness, and well-being. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy*, 30, 237-248.
- [22] Adam, T. C., & Epel, E. S. (2007). Stress, eating and the reward system. *Physiology & Behavior*, 91(4), 449-458.