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## Impact of Arsha Vidya on the perceived level of stress, coping and self-esteem of adolescents: A comparative cohort study

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**Aim:** The aim of this study was to investigate the perception of stress, coping methods, and self-esteem in students undergoing competitive entrance exams in India with and without spiritual knowledge (Arsha Vidya).

**Methods:** We prospectively compared two cohorts: one cohort (n=68) had not received Arsha Vidya, whereas the other (n= 67) had received Arsha Vidya. We assessed the impact using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), Self-esteem Scale, and the modified Ways of Coping Scale.

**Results:** Results indicated that students in Arsha Vidya experienced significantly less transient stress as compared with the comparison group ( $p<0.001$ ); had more positive self-esteem ( $p<0.0001$ ) and better coping mechanism ( $p<0.001$ ). There were chronic stress, avoidance, and proactive coping, and negative self-esteem reported in almost 72% of students in comparison group at the time of exams (comparing 19% in Arsha Vidya Group). Positive self-esteem in Arsha Vidya group was significantly correlated ( $p<0.01$ ) with coping behaviors. They coped by using both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping skills learned to study Arsha Vidya.

**Conclusion:** There is a need to review and evaluate impacts on students' stress levels by competitive exams, and also introduce strategies to improve self-esteem and coping mechanism to face life challenges. Spirituality as part of life can make a significant impact in dealing with high-stress situations.

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