

Contents

Acknowledgements	I
Abstract	III
Tables	V
Figures	VI
Abbreviations	VII
1 Introduction	1
2 Theoretical Background	4
2.1 Stress	4
2.1.1 Psychological Definitions of Stress.....	4
2.1.2 Acute and Chronic Stress	7
2.2 Psychological Stress Responses	8
2.3 Physiological Stress Responses.....	8
2.3.1 Autonomic Nervous System.....	9
2.3.1.1 Anatomy and Physiology	9
2.3.1.2 Sympathetic Nervous System.....	10
2.3.1.2.1 Indicator: Heart Rate	11
2.3.1.2.2 Indicator: Salivary Alpha-Amylase.....	13
2.3.1.3 Parasympathetic Nervous System	16
2.3.1.3.1 Indicator: Heart Rate Variability.....	16
2.3.2 Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis.....	19
2.3.2.1 Anatomy and Physiology	19
2.3.2.2 Cortisol.....	20
2.3.2.2.1 Cortisol Secretion under Acute Stress Conditions	22

2.3.2.2.2 Long-term Assessment of Cortisol Secretion.....	24
2.3.3 Summary	36
2.4 Methods of Stress Induction.....	37
2.4.1 Laboratory Stressors.....	37
2.4.1.1 Trier Social Stress Test	38
2.4.1.2 Trier Social Stress Test for Groups	39
2.4.2 Real-life Stressors	40
2.4.2.1 Basic Military Training	40
2.4.3 Summary	42
2.5 Conclusion and Aims of the Studies	43
3 Empirical Studies	45
3.1 Mood and Autonomic Responses to Repeated Exposure to the Trier Social Stress Test for Groups (TSST-G)	45
3.1.1 Introduction	45
3.1.2 Materials and Methods	48
3.1.2.1 Participants and Procedure	48
3.1.2.2 Measures.....	49
3.1.2.3 Data Analysis	52
3.1.3 Results	52
3.1.4 Discussion	60
3.2 Air Temperature and Air Humidity affect Hair Cortisol Levels: a Longitudinal Study	65
3.2.1 Introduction	66
3.2.2 Materials and Methods	68
3.2.2.1 Participants and Procedure	68
3.2.2.2 Measures.....	69

3.2.2.3 Data Analysis	71
3.2.3 Results	72
3.2.4 Discussion	75
4 General Discussion	80
4.1 Summary of the Results of the Empirical Studies.....	80
4.1.1 Mood and Autonomic Responses to Repeated Exposure to the Trier Social Stress Test for Groups (TSST-G)	80
4.1.2 Air Temperature and Air Humidity affect Hair Cortisol Levels: a Longitudinal Study.....	81
4.2 Discussion of the Results	81
4.3 Limitations and Strengths.....	86
4.4 Conclusion and the Directions for Future Studies	88
References	92