



Stress and Coping Mechanism among Undergraduate Students of Bayero University Kano

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Abstract

Stress is a global health issue which is regarded as a force that can propel every human being to behave either positively or negatively. School stress among student is very prevalent and creates havoc in their life. The study aimed to find out the stress level and coping mechanism among Undergraduate students of Bayero University Kano. A cross-sectional study was designed to identify the stress level and coping mechanism among Undergraduate Students in BUK. Student stress scale and coping strategies questionnaire were administered to 147 students. The information was analyzed using SPSS version 20, data were presented using frequency and percentage tables. The findings from the study showed that most of the respondents experienced moderate stress levels, followed by high and then mild. The study further revealed that lecture halls, lecture hours and a large number of courses are the major stressors with mean stress of 1.40, 1.37, and 1.31 respectively. The findings also revealed that coping strategies Utilised by the respondents are social support and symptom management. It is concluded that a moderate level of stress is the most common form of stress experienced by students and social support remains the leading coping mechanism adopted by students. It is, therefore, recommended that a social reorientation and awareness programme needs to be launched in the school to curtail the burden of stress.

Keywords: Stress, Coping, Students, Mechanism

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Introduction

Higher education institutions are believed to be one of the strongest pillars in the growth of any nation. Being the principal stakeholder, the performance of HEIs mainly relies on the success of its students (Virjkotte, 2000). To successfully compete in the prevailing dynamic industrial environment, students are not only supposed to develop their knowledge but are also expected to have imperative skills and abilities. In the current highly competitive academic environment, students' performance is largely affected by several factors, such as social media, academic quality, family and social bonding, etc (Yuwei Deng, 2022). Stress is a fact of life, wherever you are and whatever you are doing. You cannot avoid

stress, but you can learn to manage it. Stress refers to the "sum of physical, mental and emotional strains or tensions on a person". It is defined as a condition typically characterized by symptoms of mental and physical tension or strain such as depression or hypertension, which can result from a reaction to a situation in which a person feels threatened pressured or both (Fouladgar, 2018).

The term stress was first employed in the 1930's by the Endocrinologist Hans Selye who published a model of stress. In this model, stress is divided into eustress and distress. The stress which enhances function (physical or mental, such as through strength training or challenging work) is called eustress, while

persistent stress that is not resolved through coping or adaptation and may lead to anxiety or withdrawal (depression) behaviour is known as distress. (Sonia Ijaz Haider, 2017). Stress demands high expectations of oneself, which causes a feeling of tension and pressure. Literature indicates that undergraduate medical students experience stress during their academic years (Brobbe, 2021).

The word stress brings about the thoughts of depression, anxiety and other potentially life-threatening conditions in the mind of an individual. Every person is exposed to stress at some point in their lives, and it is an inevitable part of a student's life as it takes a role in their emotional well-being, academic performance as well as their physical health (Xiao, 2013). Different factors cause stress among students. These include relationships with family and friends, high expectations from family members, examinations, poor time management, social media, financial instability, future career thoughts, depression, anxiety and many more. Educational environments are extremely competitive, and students must be able to deal with academic-related stress by relying on their coping capabilities. Most students are unable to cope with stress (Skinner, 2011). This leads to different behavioural patterns such as alcoholism and substance abuse such as "dagga" (marijuana) and codeine to escape the harsh reality. This eventually leads to absentia in school and an increased number of school dropouts (Toppler, 2008). Stress is known to be the source of many problems among youth and its effects can be as toxic as suicide. Therefore, it's important that parents or guardians, teachers, the students themselves and the entire nation unite and ensure that supportive data is communicated to students so they to cope with their stress levels in a responsible manner (Miyoba Hachintu, 2022) According to Brobbe (2021), competition for grades, the need to perform well, relationships, career choices and many other aspects of the university environment are sources of stress. Before condemning stress outright, we need to understand that stress is only harmful when it

is excessive. Much of the stress that we all know is helpful and stimulating. The challenges of life tend to be stressful and an attempt to avoid stress completely would lead to a rather boring existence. The problem arises when you feel too much stress (Wilcox, 2016). Although some reactions to stress are part of deeper and more serious emotional problems, many are not and can be treated with relatively simple counselling and stress management techniques. Stress is a major source of problems that students face during their university education when they are struggling to achieve academic outcomes for their future lives (Brobbe, 2021)

According to Michaela (2020), the most important stressors encountered by students include high individual and external expectations, and stressful surroundings as well as academic motivators such as academic tasks, ranks and University recognition. Students believe that they would practice an improved way of life if these challenges were removed. In another study, it was noted that the most dominant stressors were thatemics and examinations (Michaela & Pascoe, 2020). The subject of academic stress and University students has been in the limelight for several years. During every semester, at specific periods University students experience pressure due to academic engagements and responsibilities, economic hardships and improper time management skills (Michaela & Pascoe, 2020). According to Lazarus & Folkman (2014), stress is a mental or physical phenomenon formed through one's cognitive appraisal of the stimulation and is a result of one's reaction with the environment. The existence of stress depends on the existence of the stressor. Feng (2012) and Volpe (2010) defined stressor as anything that challenges any individual's ability or stimulates an individual's or mentality. Stress can be caused by environmental factors, psychological factors, biological factors, and social factors. It can be negative or positive to an individual, depending on the strength and persistence of the stress, the individual's

personality, cognitive appraisal of the stress and social support. (Reka, 2018)

Academic stress can be conceptualized as a student's interactions between environmental stressors the student's cognitive appraisal and coping with the academic-related stressors, and psychological or physiological response to the stressors (Xiao, 2013) Academic stressors refer to any academic demands (e.g., environmental, social, or internal demands) that cause a student to adjust his or her behaviour. Michaela and Pascoe, 2020) Academic stressors are natural events in a student's life that affect student's academic performance and mental health.

Material and methods

Descriptive cross sectional survey design was used for the study. The study conducted in the Department of Nursing Sciences Bayero University, Kano. The population of the study included all nursing students in the department which was 489. The sample size was calculated based on the Nwana formula

(2010). Based his, 30% (30/100* 489) of the entire nursing students were employed. The instrument for the study was an adapted instrument developed based on Diagnostic and Statistical Manual VI (DSM-VI) which categorized mental stress levels mild, moderate and severe. The instrument validity was established using test-retest through pilot testing. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 20 and was ented in descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Ethical approval was obtained from Bayero University Research Ethics Committee

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1: Shows that nearly two-thirds (65.3%) of the respondents are between the age of 15-25 years with nearly two-thirds (60.5%) of the respondents as female and nearly one-fourth (21.2%) from 400 level.

Variables. N, 147	N	%
Age		
15-24	96	65.3
25-34	46	31.3
35-44	5	4.4
Gender		
Male	89	60.5
Female	58	39.5
Marital status		
Single	113	76.9
Married	34	23.1
Level of the student		
Level 1	19	12.9
Level 2	39	26.5
Level 3	29	19.7
Level 4	31	21.2
Level 5	29	19.7

Table 2: Level of Stress among respondents (N= 147)

It revealed that nearly two-thirds 89 (60.5%) of the respondents under the category of moderate stress

Level of stress	N	%
Mild	28	19.0
Moderate	89	60.5
Severe	30	20.5

Table 3: Coping Strategies Utilised by Respondents

Coping strategy	'I never do this'		'I sometimes do this'		'I always do this'	
	N	%	N	%	n	%
Discuss problems with parent	18	13.2	80	54.4	49	33.3
Discuss problems with colleagues	25	17.0	83	61.0	39	28.7
Develop peer support	56	52.5	67	49.3	24	17.6
Take drugs	111	75.5	23	16.9	13	9.6
Hobbies, Leisure, recreation	12	8.2	87	59.2	48	32.3
Turn to prayer or spiritual thoughts	21	14.3	47	32.0	79	53.7
Leave lecture for another	60	40.8	59	40.1	28	19.0
Have a close friend to confide	21	14.3	94	64.0	32	21.8
Group discussion	19	13.0	84	57.1	44	30.0
Attending tutorial	20	13.6	92	62.6	35	23.8
Accept this situation because there is nothing I can do	26	17.7	97	66.0	35	23.8

The table revealed that 'Turn prayer' (50.0%) of symptom management category was the most commonly used coping strategy.

Discussion

Findings from this study revealed that (19.0%) of the respondents experience mild stress, more than half (60.5%) experienced moderate stress and stress was severe among (20.5%) of the subjects. An overall mean stress level of 1.12 was estimated among one hundred and forty-seven (147). These presence findings are in line with the findings of a study conducted to assess the level of stress and coping strategies used by undergraduate Nursing Students in at the University of Calabar, Nigeria (Akpan *et al.*, 2015). Where more than half of the respondents (65.6%),

experience moderate stress and (33.8%) had high or severe stress. This is not surprising due to the challenges and high demand of demand for educational institutions in Nigeria, coupled with poverty that has been affecting our citizens. The lack conducive environment for effective teaching and learning process to take place is one of the major factors that contribute to the high stress level among undergraduate students in Nigeria (Edward *et al.*, 2010). However, this finding contradicted with the findings of a study conducted in Jordan, which showed almost half of the respondents experienced stress (47.82%),

followed by moderate stress (42.1%) while severe stress is the least reported among the students (10.08%) Fouladgar (2018). These differences might be because of the economic status that exists between Nigeria and Jordan, so undergraduate Nursing Students in Nigeria perceived moderate to severe stress than their counterparts in Jordan due to the limited amount of stressors in their academic institution sequel to better economic status of their country than the one in Nigeria.

Conclusion: It is concluded that moderate to severe levels of stress prevailed among undergraduate Nursing Students and social support is the commonest coping strategy adopted by studstudents

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