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Influence of Stress Factors On Students' Academic Performance in Three Selected Tertiary Institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of stress factors on students' academic performances in three selected tertiary institutions in Kwara State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study population comprises all business educators and students (Office Technology and Management inclusive) in the three selected tertiary institutions offering business education programme in Kwara State. A self-designed questionnaire titled influence of Stress Factors on Students' Academic Performances was used to elicit responses from the respondents. Two operational hypotheses were formulated and tested. The data gathered for the study was statistically analyzed by using mean rating and standard deviation to answer research questions and t-test statistics to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. The findings lucidly revealed that environmental stress factors have negative influence on academic performance of students and that academic stress factors are associated with the falling standard of education. Sequel to the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that well equipped laboratories, recreational facilities, e-library etc must be provided by the stakeholders in education (NCCE, NUC and NBTE) to achieve the desired objectives of education.

Keywords: Influence, Stress Factors, Students' Academic Performance, Tertiary Institutions, Kwara State, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions in Nigeria are facing series of challenges and seeking solutions to the problems is, therefore, essential for the growth and development of our educational system. However, competence and skills acquisition among graduates of tertiary institutions are forces to reckon with in our educational system. Every employer is looking for graduates that are well-trained in the skills, competencies and attitudes that will enable them to maximize their profits and earn high returns on investment. Also, the falling standard of education has been a topical issue of debate and concern for so many decades. Reports in both print and electronic media identified the key factors accounting for persistent fall in standard of education as indicated by poor performance of students academically. The key factors responsible for falling standard of education according to Musa (2015) are the parents' inability to guide and monitor their wards properly and the government's inability to provide necessary infrastructures to accomplish educational goals.

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Another factors is students' inability to concentrate fully on their educational career due to distortions from their academic environment among others. Musa further identified academic stress as one of the factors responsible for low performance of students in their examinations.

It is clear that the government at all levels has failed to provide infrastructural facilities that can help to enhance learning in our institutions. Adamu (2013) in "The Nation Newspaper" opined that government at all levels is largely responsible for the falling standard of education Nigerians are experiencing now. Governments do not equip the classrooms and laboratories appropriately to make for effective teaching and learning. However, in an attempt to bridge the gap between the missing link in our educational environment, students are subjected to unnecessary pressure. Students are often given too many assignments, no provisions are made for facilities that are not available, subjecting them to academic torture which in effect culminates into academic stress. According to Humphrey, Yow and Bowden (2000), stress is any factor acting internally or externally which makes adaptation to environment difficult and which induces increased effort on the part of the individual to maintain a state of equilibrium between himself and the external environment. Equally, Malach-Pines and Keinan (2007) defined stress as the perception of discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfill these demands. Busari (2014) opined that stress occurs when an individual is confronted with a situation that he perceives as overwhelming and cannot cope with. Busari (2012) equally cited Campbell (2006) to identify stress as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them.

Academic stress has long been researched into and among the stressors identified are: too many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money (Fairbrother and Warn, 2013), poor relationships with other students or lecturers, family or problems at home, institutional level stressors such as overcrowded lecture halls, semester system and inadequate resources to perform academic work, students' perception of the extensive knowledge base required and the perception of inadequate time to develop it. They went further that, environmental factors and students' relationship with his/her academic and non-academic environment have their own role to play. Stress occurs as a result of the imbalance between the environmental expectations and the students' demand and aspirations. They said stress is commonly found in everybody in this modern life due to man's constant interaction with his immediate environment. Formation of stress is highly associated with the social environment. Stress arises not only in a complicated and competitive environment but also in a monotonous and stimulus-less ones (Feng, 1992); Carveth, Gesse and Moss (1996); Ongori (2007); Awino and Agolla, 2008).

Goal attainment in learning depends largely on the learners' ability to co-ordinate, maximize and utilize available resources. A conducive learning environment with necessary tools and facilities to work will increase learners' ability to concentrate on his or her studies and have a desirable change of attitudes. Erkutlu and Chafra (2006) opined that the pressure to perform in the examination or test and time allocated makes academic environment very stressful. The experience of stress among college students is considered normal but "if stress is severe and/or prolonged, it can reduce academic performance, interfere with a student's ability to participate in and contribute to campus life and increase the likelihood of sustenance abuse and other potentially damaging behaviours" (Richlin-Klonsky and Hoe, 2003). To corroborate the views of other scholars, Mussarat and Seena (2013) cited Misra and McKean (2000) as saying that among college students, a strong relationship is found between stressful life events and reduced academic performance while there is also a link between health related quality of life and stress.

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1.1 Statement of the Problem

Every social system such as educational institution has its own component parts that interact meaningfully to achieve a desirable outcome. It is a clear fact that knowledge cannot be transferred in an environment characterized by various forms of distractions or distortions. No institution is completely free from any form of academic stress as there is no perfect system anywhere.

Nigeria does not have all the necessary facilities that can make teaching and learning pleasurable for goal attainment. Due to lack of required facilities and unconducive learning environment, students are stressed up, forcing them to use the old methods and facilities that can no longer stand the test of time. Students become academically stressed when the required facilities are not provided and the environment such as laboratories and classrooms are not conducive for learning. A student who cannot assimilate may be tempted to involve himself or herself in examination malpractice, or develop persistent headache or "examination fever" which may make him faint or collapse or being rushed to the school clinic or hospital during examination. Students engage in all these social vices because intellectual appreciation in Nigeria is denoted by paper qualification irrespective of whether the degree holder has the valued capacity that should normally be exhibited from such paper qualification.

Also, low performance of students in various examinations is becoming worrisome. Educational sector is facing series of challenges responsible for low academic performance, among them is academic stress. However, academic stress occurs through the learner's interaction with the learning environment such as; unstable academic calendar, overload of work, financial problems, home background/intervention etc. All these factors have direct bearing on the students' attitude towards his educational pursuit.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to investigate and evaluate the influence of stress factors on the academic performance of students. The study specifically:
1. Examines the influence of environmental stress factors on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions in Kwara State.
2. Determines whether academic stress factors have any influence on the falling standard of education in tertiary institutions in Kwara State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:
1. What are the influence of environmental stress factors on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions in Kwara State?
2. What are the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institutions in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were used to guide the study and would be tested at 0.05 level of significance:
1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators and undergraduate students regarding the influence of environmental stress factors on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions in Kwara State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators and students regarding the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institutions in Kwara State.

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3. METHOD

The research design used for this study is descriptive survey. The target population for the study comprises all the Business Educators and students in tertiary institutions in the North Central Senatorial Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. This included 42 Business Educators and 3,136 Students making the total population for the study to be 3,178. However, at the Polytechnic level, the programme is referred to as Office Technology and Management.

The instrument used in gathering data for this study is self designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled: **"Influence of stress factors on students' academic performance".** The questionnaire designed by the researcher was validated by experts consisting of two principal lecturers from a polytechnic and a Professor from the Department of Business Education and Entrepreneurship, Kwara State University, Malete. . The Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and the reliability coefficient of 0.85 was calculated. The questionnaire items were administered personally by the researcher and one research assistant who has been well educated on the subject matter. Mean rating used was to answer the research questions, while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for this study is that any item with a mean value of 2.5 and above will be considered as agreed while any item with a mean of 2.49 and below will be considered as disagree. If the calculated value of the t-test is equal or less than the table value, the null hypotheses will be rejected, if otherwise, it will be accepted.

Research Question one: What are the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institutions in Kwara State?

Table 1   Mean and standard deviation of responses on the influence of environmental stress factors on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions

S/N	Items	$\overline{\mathrm{X}}$	SD	Remark
1	Students academic environment contribute immensely to their academic achievement	3.41	0.48	Agree
2	Incompatibility of the home background/ environment with the school is a source of academic stress on students	3.36	0.62	Agree
3	Poor interpersonal relationship among teachers and students contribute/affect students' academic performance.	3.47	0.64	Agree
4	Social and cultural environment of the school contribute significantly to students' academic performance and eliminate stress in students	3.43	0.59	Agree
5	Conducive learning environment has significant contributions on students. Academic performance	3.60	0.54	Agree
6	Isolation arising from disease or illness constitute a major threat to academic achievement	3.47	0.54	Agree
7	Transfer of family problems to academic environment has tremendous influence on students' performance.	3.46	0.66	Agree
8	Lack of confidence and fear of failure have significant influence on students' performance	3.54	0.54	Agree
9	Lack of adequate motivation from the learning environment serves as a threat to academic performance of students	3.51	0.59	Agree
	Weighted Average	**3.47**	**0.58**	**Agreed**

Source: Field survey, 2019

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Table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed on item 1 with (mean = 3.41), item 2 (mean = 3.36), Item 3 (mean = 3.47), item 4 (mean = 3.43). Item 5 (mean = 3.60), item 6 (mean = 3.47), item 7 (mean = 3.46). Item 8 (mean = 3.54) and item 9 (mean = 3.51). All the 9 items have their standard deviation ranged from 0.48 to 0.66. This means that the responses of the respondents are not wide spread as it is close to the mean. Overall, the respondents agreed to all the constructs in the table which implied that environmental stress factors have influence on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions, (mean = 3.47, SD = 0.58).

Research Question Two: What is the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institutions in Kwara State?

Table 2   Mean and standard deviation of responses on the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institutions

S/N	Items	$\overline{X}$	Std	Remark
1	Overload of academic activities constitute a major threat to students' performance	3.54	0.60	Agreed
2	Lack of adequate information on academic activities has great influence on students' performance	3.50	0.60	Agreed
3	Lack of relevance of some course contents serves as a major threat to students' academic achievement	3.36	0.59	Agreed
4	Poor financial condition of the students affects students' academic performance.	3.38	0.52	Agreed
5	Poor time allocation/management affect students' academic performance in the classroom	3.35	0.63	Agreed
6	Administration of too many assignment at a time affect the performance of students in the class	3.46	0.67	Agreed
7	Poor eyesight and other health related problems affect students academic performance in the school	3.42	0.59	Agreed
8	Students attitude and behavioral patterns have great influence on their achievements	3.59	0.55	Agreed
9	Good interaction among classmates brings about academic success.	3.46	0.56	Agreed
10	Students' academic performance is dependent on their mental and physical state of mind.	3.46	0.66	Agreed
	Weighted Average	**3.45**	**0.60**	**Agreed**

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 2 revealed that the respondents agreed on item 1 (mean = 3.54 and item 2 (mean = 3.50). Item 3 (mean = 3.36) and item 4 (mean = 3.38). Item 5 (mean = 3.46), item 6 (mean = 3.42), item 7 (mean = 3.59), item 8 (mean = 3.46) and item 9 (mean = 3.46). Respondents agreed that all the 10 items have their standard deviation ranged from 0.52 to 0.66. This means that the responses of the respondents are clustered around the mean. On the overall, the respondents agreed that academic stress factors have positive relationship with the falling standard of education (mean = 3.45, SD = 0.60).

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Table 3 **Summary of t-test of the mean ratings of the views of business educators and students on how environmental stress factors affected academic performance of students in tertiary institutions**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value	Decision
Business educators	31	3.48	0.32				
				0.449	334	0.654	NS
Undergraduate Students	305	3.51	0.35				

Source: Field survey, 2019   P>0.05

The data in Table 3 revealed that there are 31 Business educators and 305 undergraduate students. The undergraduate students had mean ($\overline{X}$ = 3.51;

SD = 0.35) and Business educators ($\overline{X}$ = 3.48; SD = 0.32). The Table revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses on the views of business educators and undergraduate students on how environmental stress factors affected academic performance of students in tertiary institutions (t_{334} = 0.449, P=0.654). Therefore, the hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators and undergraduate students regarding the influence of environmental stress factors on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions was not rejected.

Table 4 **Summary of t-test of the difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students on the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institution**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value	Decision
Lecturers	31	3.44	0.29				
				0.935	334	0.351	NS
Students	305	3.50	0.35				

Source: Field survey, 2019   P>0.05

The data in Table 4 revealed that there are 31 Business educators and 305 undergraduate students. The undergraduate students had higher mean ($\overline{X}$ = 3.50; SD = 0.35) than Business educators ($\overline{X}$ = 3.44; SD = 0.29). The Table revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators and students regarding the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institution (t_{334} = 0.935, P=0.351). Therefore, the hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators and students regarding the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institutions was not rejected.

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4. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The following are the major findings of the study:
1. Environmental stress factors have negative influence on academic performance of students in tertiary institutions.
2. Academic stress factors have significant contribution on the falling standard of education.
3. There was no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators and undergraduate students regarding the influence of environmental stress factors on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions (t_{334} = 0.449, P=0.654).
4. There was no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators and students regarding the influence of academic stress factors on the falling standard of education in tertiary institution (t_{334} = 0.935, P=0.351).

5. CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it is evident that there exist a positive relationship between the stress and environmental factors on the students' academic performance. This in effect means that poor environmental conditions are serious threats to students' academic achievements. In addition, the study revealed that the falling standard of education is occasioned by overload of academic activities, poor financial conditions of students, lack of adequate information on academic activities, lack of relevance of course contents, poor time allocation/management etc.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:
1. Since environmental stress factors have been identified to have negative influence on academic performance of students in tertiary institutions, it is hereby recommended that well equipped laboratories, recreational facilities, e-library etc must be provided by the stakeholders in education (NCCE, NUC and NBTE) to achieve the desired objectives of education.
2. Also, the course contents in academic institutions should be periodically reviewed in order to meet up with the societal needs and values and promote collaborative efforts of teachers and students in order to improve the falling standard of education.

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