

**THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

BY

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work was carried out by **JENNIFER OFEH DAMISA with the MATRICULATION NUMBER SSC2105903** of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

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Date

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for His endless grace, guidance, and strength throughout this academic journey. This work is also dedicated to my parents, family and friends whose constant encouragement, love, physical and financial support kept me going and of course also stood as a driving force towards accomplishing this academic milestone. Finally, this work is dedicated to the great students of my prestigious department; Sociology and Anthropology department, hoping that it serves as a valuable literature or understanding and addressing the challenges they encounter in their academic pursuits.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the impact of stress on students' academic performance in the University of Benin. A descriptive survey was adopted for this study. This study was conducted at the University of Benin. The theoretical framework used in this research is the Lazarus stress theory. The population of this study consists of students of the University of Benin. The sample size was limited to students in the department of social work of the University of Benin. The method of data collection that was adopted for this study was a two-time survey method using the face-to-face method. The research instrument used for this study is the questionnaire. This research identifies key source of stress, examines their impact on students' academic performance and evaluates the coping mechanisms utilized by these students. The results of the study, among other things, show that stress management is significantly dependent on the sources of stress. Stress significantly affects the academic performance of students at the University of Benin. Learning is possible only when stressors are properly dealt with. Stress can be managed if students adopt appropriate coping mechanisms. Based on the results of the study, it is found that students suffer from the stress that comes from various causes such as financial difficulties, academic workload and social relationships. This stress affects the academic performance of students at the University of Benin. The study also made these recommendations: there should be frequent interaction between academic staff and students on how best to plan intensive courses during the semester, school management should ensure that there's proper break in between lecture hours and students are advised to create time out of the busy schedule to rest as it has a great impact on their health.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Globally, stress is seen as a natural human response that prompts people to address challenges and threats in their daily lives. Han Selye, the father of stress research (1936) defined stress as the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. Stress has become a critical global issue which has also affected university students and has a great effect on the academic performance, mental health and overall wellbeing of these students (W.H.O, 2018). Globally, higher educational institutions have reports on the rising levels of stress students go through due to factors like academic demands and pressures, financial difficulties, social challenges, time constraints, and the challenge of having to balance their personal and educational responsibilities (Andrews & Wilding, 2004). Often times, stress is linked to mental health conditions like anxiety, depression, frustration which adversely affects student's academic performances (Larson, 2006). Stress demands high expectations of oneself which causes tension and pressure (Goedert, Cuenda, Craxton, Jakes & Cohen, 2007). Most people say our lives would be boring and possibly meaningless hence the need for stress which sets tension in us (Wilson, 2007).

In Africa, the distinct political and socio-economic challenges are aggravated by the stress experienced by university students. Economic hardship, limited access to quality education, political unrest and instability are often stressors experienced by most African students and can as well extend the duration of their academic program like when the academic staff union of universities (ASUU) goes on strike in Nigeria (Agolla & Onogori, 2009). Additionally, the issues of overcrowded classrooms, insufficient finance, inadequate support

services and political instability are factors that all contribute to promote stress levels among students of African Universities (Omigbodun et al, 2004). These challenges do not only have an impact on the students' academic performance but also has a great impact on their physical and mental wellbeing (Oye et al., 2012). Research has it that stress is a general issue which has significantly affected students' academic experience in African Universities (Babatunde, 2013).

In Nigeria, students often experience high levels of academic stress because of factors such as overcrowded lecture halls, poor and inadequate learning facilities, outdated learning materials (Adeniyi, 2016). Frequent academic disruptions as a result of strikes, protests, outbreak of a disease like COVID 19 leads to uncertainty and frustration, which increases stress levels for students (Omoniyi, 2007). Stress is caused by certain factors (stressors) that exist inside and outside the school environment (Zautra, 2006). These stressors can be intra-individual, inter-individual, institutional and extra-institutional stressors.

The students of the great citadel of Knowledge University of Benin also experience high levels of stress as a result of academic workload, frequent strikes, inadequate infrastructure, financial difficulties, limited time, short session, and so on (Omoroguiwa & Onoyase, 2014). Dealing with a short and an unstable academic calendar, academic pressure and managing personal finances are factors that have great impact on the wellbeing and academic performance of the students (Edwards & Onifade, 2018).

Having an understanding of the major sources of stress on the students of the University of Benin is important to develop the effective strategies and coping mechanisms to help students have a successful improvement on their academics as well as their physical and mental health (Uwaifo & Ugiagbe, 2020). With this in mind, this study sought to discover the impact of stress

on students' academic performance and recommend strategies for managing stress at the University level using the department of social work, faculty of social sciences, University of Benin as a case study.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Stress is a global phenomenon that individuals experience in all spheres of their daily lives, it is ubiquitous in nature and it is caused by different factors, some of these factors could be personal, work-related and so on. Stress has a way of affecting individuals. The impact of stress among people in the society is an issue that cannot be overlooked yet it remains under explored in academic literatures. Though some literatures have made attempts to deal with this phenomenon yet the problem remains unabated. Day-in-day-out, people are seen going through stress and its impact on them are not insignificant.

The environments of academic works have a unique way of shaping the levels of stress among students (Ross, Niebling and Heckert, 2010) Stress could come in form of psychological, emotional and physiological stress to students (Hans Selye, 1936). These include academic workload such as overwhelming assignments, projects or examinations. Pressure to meet deadlines and maintain academic performance to achieve high grades, struggling to balance academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities and personal life, worries about payment of tuition fees and living expenses especially in the present day Nigeria's economy, procrastination leading to last minute cramming, balancing studies with part-time work to fund education and other bills, limited access to technology for studies, and so on are some of the forms of stress for students.

The increasing rate at which students go through stress in the University of Benin cannot be overemphasized. The alarming rate of stress causes academic, social, economic, environment and even spiritual discomfort to students. A number of researches have been done to look at the correlation of many stress factors that university students experience and the impact of stress on their academic performance for example, in the year 2015 in Ghana; Duncan Williams studied school stress, academic performance and psychological wellbeing of upper secondary rehabilitation students in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. In 2018, Marwoan examined academic stress among undergraduate at King Saud University in Riyadh. In 2020, Emmanuel Brobbey investigated the impact of stress on academic performance of students in the university of Cape Coast, School of Business. In February 2025, Temitope Elizabeth identified the stressors and academic performance of sociology undergraduate students in the University of Benin.

Although several studies have been conducted on academic stress and students' academic performance in the University of Benin specifically, this study added more knowledge to the ones already conducted by identifying the major sources of stress, the relationship between stress and academic performance of students, assess its impact on students' academic performance, explore the different coping mechanisms employed by these students as well as the possible strategies that can be implemented to curb stress in the department of social work, faculty of social sciences, University of Benin.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were formulated for the guidance of this research:

1. What are the major sources of stress among students in the University of Benin?

2. What is the relationship between stressors and the academic performance of students in the university
3. What is the impact of stress on students' academic performance in the University of Benin?
4. What coping mechanisms do students employ to manage academic stress?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

General Objective:

The general objective of this study was to investigate the impact of stress on students' academic performance in the University of Benin.

Specific Objectives:

1. To ascertain the major sources of stress among students in the university of Benin
2. To investigate the relationship between stressors and the academic performance of students in the University of Benin.
3. To examine the impact of stress on students' academic performance in the University of Benin.
4. To analyze the coping mechanism employed by students in the university of Benin.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to explore the effects of stress on the academic performance of the students in the University of Benin and also to understand their coping mechanisms. This study would be of great relevance for several reasons. This study provided valuable insights to the specific stressors affecting students in the University of Benin. Also, this study provided a

comprehensive understanding of how stress affects the academic performance of students by investigating the relationship between stress and academic performance which can inform academic policies and support services.

Furthermore, by examining the impact of stress on students' academic performance, this study underscored the need for comprehensive mental health programs and counseling services. This study also helped in highlighting coping mechanisms for curbing and managing stress which can be shared among students and introduced into university workshops and counseling sessions. This study would help the university management, counselors and educators in identifying strategies for reducing stress like the need for stress reduction programs and improved student support services.

Lastly, this study would be used as reference to by policymakers and stakeholders in tertiary institutions and it is also very useful to future researchers who are interested in the topic or related topics, that is, it serves as a literature on stress-related issues and how to manage them.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out to investigate and discover the effects of stress on the academic performance of students in the University of Benin as well as the coping mechanisms used by these students. This study focused on the full-time undergraduate students of the University of Benin. It was specifically restricted to the full-time undergraduate students of the department of social work, faculty of social sciences, University of Benin. Part-time students of the department of social work as well as postgraduate students of the University of Benin and students from other universities were excluded from this study.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **Stress:** Stress is a physical and psychological reaction to pressures, demands, or difficult situations that disturb an individual's normal state of well-being. It is a physical and emotional response to challenging or threatening academic and social conditions (Cohen et al, 2007).

2. **Stressor:** A stressor is any physical, emotional, environmental or psychological event or condition that triggers stress response in an individual. According to Karaman et al (2009), stressor is any stimulus that stands as a threat to an individual's mental and physical wellbeing and demands adjustment, especially when coping mechanisms are limited.

3. **Mental Health:** It is the capacity of an individual to handle stress, sustain healthy relationships, make good decisions, and navigate life's challenges effectively. Mental health pertains to a person's general psychological wellness, including emotional, cognitive and social dimensions. It is a state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn and work well and contribute to their community (W.H.O, 2022)

4. **Undergraduate:** An undergraduate is a student who is enrolled in a tertiary-level program, pursuing their first academic degree typically leading to a bachelor's degree which typically takes between three-four to complete (UNESCO, 2022).

5. **Academic performance:** Academic performance is the measurable outcomes of a student's learning, typically reflected through grades, grade point average (GPA), examination scores or completion of academic tasks and objectives. It is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals (Mushtaq & Khan, 2018).

6. Coping mechanisms: They are behavioral and psychological strategies used to manage stress and emotional discomfort.

7. University of Benin: A federal tertiary institution in Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria, serving as the context for this study.

8. Stress Management: Stress management refers to the systematic application of measures, strategies and techniques aimed at identifying, understanding and effectively handling stress to maintain a healthy physical and mental wellbeing (Wikipedia, 2023).

9. Academic stress: It is a mental anguish pertaining to school failure or even an awareness of the possibility of such failure. It is a body's response to academic-related demands that exceeds an individual's adaptive capacity which often leads to anxiety, sleep disturbances, reduced academic performance and emotional debilitation (Pascoe et al, 2020; Deb et al, 2021).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of stress is a dimensional phenomenon that affects different areas of life and it is pertinent to have a clear understanding of what this term means, most especially its impact on academic performance and general wellbeing of an individual in the society. Stress is seen as a transactional process between individuals and their environment, where the individual appraises the stressor as well as his/her ability to cope with it (Lepore and Revenson, 2010). This definition comprises of the individual's response to stressors both physiologically and psychologically which automatically frames stress as a subjective experience that can vary significantly from individual to individual. According to Ekpenyong, Daniel & Aribio (2013), stress is also seen as the physical and mental condition induced by various stressors on students. Stress could also be seen as a body's response to perceived challenge or threats (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). This definition is simply stating the significance of perception in the stress experience. Stress is described as the demands made on people to whom they respond and it in turn affects their physical, psychological and behavioral characteristics (Dwyer & Cumming, 2001). Hans Selye (1936) proposed the first and most generic definition of stress "as a non-specific response of the organism to any request for change".

Stress happens when a burden exceeds an individual's available assets. According to the study carried out by Vermunt and Steensman (2005), stress is defined as the perception of the incongruity between the environmental burdens (stressors) and a person's ability to fulfill them. Researchers often describe stress as the unpleasant reaction people experience under intense

pressure or some other forms of strain imposed on them. Stress occurs when an individual a situation he or she recognizes as irresistible and cannot cope with (Khan, Altaf, & Kausar, 2013). Research has identified stress symptoms to be high blood pressure, energy loss, depressed mood, increased desire, focus trouble, impatience, nervousness and anxiety (Agolla & Ongori, 2009). Having a basic and an in-depth knowledge of the concept of stress is crucial for investigating how stress affects university students especially those in high demanding programs like social work.

Notably, an academic environment is a prominent source of stress for students explicitly characterized by high expectations, rigorous coursework, and also the need to strike a balance between multiple responsibilities. Academic stress is as a result of factors like excessive workload, social pressures and time management (Misra & McKean, 2000). If the stress is chronic and prolonged, it can lead to a reduction in academic performance, limits the ability of a student to become involved and contribute to campus life and increase their likelihood of abuse of substances and other potentially destructive behaviors (Richlin, Klonsky & Hoe, 2003). The person-environment is a significant model for understanding stress among students of a university (Misra & McKean, 2000). This model simply tries to explain how people might view stressful events as demanding or frightening.

According to Smith, Johal, Wadsworth & Peters (2000), students are subjected to stress in an advanced educational organization like a university, where burden imposed on this students is based on time limit. The various stressors experienced by students of the department of social work in the University of Benin is particularly different due to the very demanding nature of their studies and the need to use composite theoretical concepts to elevate stress levels. With this

in mind, it is necessary to have a detailed investigation on how these stressors impact academic performance and general wellbeing of students.

Students encounter stress due to various factors; these factors include: time management issues, financial issues, interaction with lecturers, personal subjective goals, social behavior and adjustment in lack of cultural support (Wilks, 2008). According to Masih & Gulrez (2006), admission process, high expectations of parents, curriculum with complex concepts, unsuitable lecture hours, improper and unhealthy student-lecturer relationship and interaction, teaching methodology, unconducive classrooms, too many complex tasks, the careless attitude of lecturers and the emphasis on weaknesses rather than recognizing strength.

More so, aside academic demands, there are several other primary sources of stress that students from the department of social work face though other students face these challenges too but for the purpose of this study, this study will examine just the department of social work in the University of Benin. It is no news that finances is a significant concern as many students struggle to manage tuition fees, cost of textbooks and living expenses which can lead to stress and anxiety (Hollis & Givens, 2005). Financial stress arises when students who do part time jobs to support themselves are pressured to perform well academically thereby adding to their overall burden.

Furthermore, another source contributes to the stress of these students is social pressures and interpersonal relationships. Switching to university life usually involve navigating new social networks and conforming to different social environments. Balancing academic responsibilities with social life creates strains on these students which therefore ignite another level of stress on them as they try to manage the competing demands on their time and energy. Also, according to Beiter et al., 2015, peer pressure arises, the need to maintain friendships and

involvement in departmental activities, group work and projects further intensifies the stress level of these students.

Similarly, many social work students have been occupied with personal issues such as family responsibilities, health issues or concerns coupled with the burden of maintaining a work-life balance. To explain the above assertion, Dusselier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley & Whalen (2005), opined that the strong relationship between stressful life events and decreasing academic performance is found among university students as well as a link between health-related quality of life and stress. Reports of undergraduate students of Universities have it that the most common factor among all the health factors that affect their academic performances is the physical and psychological health (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). Psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, mental breakdown and stress have an impact on students' academic performance. These are all pointers to key stressors of students. The connectivity between personal and academic stressors highlights the dimensional nature of stress experienced by these students thereby raising the need to address these challenges by aiming for support strategies (Rothstein et al., 2005).

Studies have shown over time that there is a link between academic stress and poor academic performance. The increased level of stress among students has a negative impact on their grades and academic performance (Pritchard and Wilson, 2003). With this, there is the constant need to address stress among these students in order to enhance their academic success. Stress has an impact on a student's cognitive function that is memory and concentration which further leads to a complication in the student's ability to perform well academically (Eysenck et al., 2007). Stress can negatively affect a student's academic performance; it is therefore pertinent for students to manage stress in order to overcome the negative effect of stress

(Mushtaq, I., & Khan, S.N., 2012). Developing effective and functioning support and coping mechanism is essential after having an understanding of how stress influences the academic performance of students.

Coping mechanisms also has an important role to play in managing and curbing its effects on the academic performance of students. There are various coping mechanisms as identified by Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) that students can use in handling stress, they include; problem-focused and emotion-focused mechanisms. Understanding the most effective and efficient can lead to the development of a targeted invention. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), differences in individuals' perception of stress and coping effectiveness can highlight the need for personalized support approaches.

Institutional support systems and services are essential for helping students manage stress though effectiveness varies from individual to individual. The importance of academic advising, stress management programs and counseling services cannot be overemphasized (Hudd et al., 2004). According to Robotham and Julian (2006), the effectiveness of the above mentioned support services can be influenced by factors such as students' awareness to these services, the quality of the services being rendered as well as the accessibility to these services. Improving the quality, awareness and accessibility of these services is a necessity as it ensures that students' needs are met and as well enhances their ability to manage stress effectively.

This study is an overview of literature that is focused on the impact of stress on the academic performance of students and the related risks when stress is not handled properly, in the University of Benin.

2.2 ASPECT OF STRESS

Stress is an inevitable part of life, affecting individuals in various ways depending on its source, intensity, and duration. It manifests in physical, emotional and psychological forms, influencing daily functioning and overall wellbeing. By examining the various aspects of stress, we can better understand its nature, causes, impact, and also develop strategies and mechanisms to effectively manage stress.

Anxiety

Anxiety refers to the way a person reacts, accepts and interprets stress (May, 2015). With this understanding of what anxiety is, stress is seen as a pathway to anxiety. Simply put, anxiety is the result of stress and how an individual deals with stress. A person who manages stress well is likely to experience little or zero form of anxiety, while those who lack effective coping skills are prone to high level of anxiety (May, 2015).

Burnout

Burnout is a situation in which a person loses enthusiasm and motivation to pursue a particular type of study or activity due to external and internal factors, skills and competence are still active but the desire to do it is dead in the person as such activities or studies become a big responsibility without joy (Graham, 1960). Burnout destroys a person's motivation and can kill those who are not active in studies or school services such as lecturers, counselors and other agents experience these problems a lot and sometimes make them hostile towards the people they engage with (Herbert, 1974). It usually affects people whose studies interact with people such as team leaders, managers, and so on (Morse et al., 2012). Burnout also affects people whose studies are a set amount of time. It also affects those who adhere to a strict schedule. In a

situation where an activity requires a detail explanation, burnout is likely to happen to people pursuing such activity. Feeling frustrated with studies, studying extensively and accomplishing little results, bored of academic activities, and having difficulty in getting sleep due to worry about getting an academic task done are all results to burnout in a student.

Distress

Distress is a time of great pain, grief, acute physical and mental suffering, torment and turmoil (Dictionary.com, 2016). Stress resulting from the inability to manage or cope with a situation or a challenge encountered during a particular activity or study. Anxiety causes physical and emotional pain. Examples of distress include emotional pain, sadness, drug use, violence, lack of concentration in studies, low participation in social activities, and so on. Many a time, distress is caused by external factors.

Fear

According to Laycon (2016), fear is a chain reaction in the brain that begins with a stressful stimulus and ends with the release of chemicals that cause an increased heart rate, rapid breathing, and energized muscles, among other things, also known as the fight-or-flight response. Here's your paragraph revised with correct citations and dates. I used well-established health and psychology sources that describe fear, the nervous system, and the fight-or-flight response. Fear is a common aspect of human emotion that is connected to our nervous system. Fear is the result of an instinct in humans that reacts to a sense of danger or uncertainty. It protects us and alerts us to impending danger and helps us prepare for that danger. It is a natural aspect of being human and, in some cases, is beneficial because it can be a warning or a signal that tells us to be very careful. However, fear can also be extremely dangerous to a person's life. Fear can be mild or

intense, and it can be short-term or long-term. When a person feels fear, the brain immediately responds and sends signals that affect the nervous system. This causes various aspects of the body to react to the nervous system's reaction, and its main symptoms include shortness of breath, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, sensations in the legs, hands, head, and chest, and profuse sweating (Harvard 2024; StatPearls, 2023). The "fight-or-flight" response describes how the body reacts to these symptoms, either by fighting the fear or running quickly to get away from it.

Worry

Worry is the result of thinking about an existing or future problem and often takes the form of repetitive negative thinking about uncertain outcomes (Brosschot & Verkuil, 2013). It is a continuous reflection and meditation on a challenge or fear that may or may not be controllable (Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies / [ABCT], 2018). Worry also focuses on what is likely to happen in the future because of the current situation, creating an anxious anticipation of potential threats (ABCT, 2018). This tendency to dwell on possible negative outcomes disrupts composure or peace of mind (Brosschot, Gerin, & Thayer, 2006). Furthermore, chronic worry causes mental distress and is linked to physical ailments such as high blood pressure, headaches, and stomachaches (Schiffrin, 2020).

2.3 TYPES OF STRESSOR

Stress is a reality of our daily lives as individuals seek help, regularly dealing with circumstances and stressors in their lives that leave them emotionally and physically distressed. According to center 2010, 4-6; Davidson, 2001, a stressor is any activity or circumstances that stress you. Stressors are chemical or biological agents, environmental conditions, external

stimulus or an event that causes stress to an organism. Countless people feel as if they have very few resources or help to cope with high levels of stress. Stress is not negative things that happen, positive things also cause stress in our lives. We know that stress is bad, but that is not the situation in all cases.

There are two types of stressors: positive stressors, also known as eustress, and negative stressors, also known as distress. There are positive situations that can cause stress in a person. For example, a promotion at work, starting a new job, getting married, and having children are some examples of these circumstances. Positive stressors are usually not noticed because they have certain characteristics while negative stressors are bad things or events that cause us stress and types of stressors are easily noticed. For example, negative stressors are the death of a loved one, unemployment, divorce, and illness, and so on. The following are the characteristics of negative stressors; it causes anxiety and makes an individual feel overwhelmed, it seems unpleasant and disturbing, it reduces productivity and morale. Luke Seaward (2012) mentioned several types of stressors, which are annoyance, which is any type of information or sensory stimulus that is perceived as irrelevant.

2.4 THE MAJOR SOURCES OF STRESS

According to Bernstein et al (2008) students of university face a whole lot of stress which affects their academic performance in various ways. The sources of stress are those events or occurrences that threaten to nullify the daily functioning of people's lives which causes them to make adjustments.

According to Phinney and Haas (2003), the basic sources of stress experienced by students includes difficult financial challenges, shuffling between schooling and working,

domestic responsibilities as well as a heavy academic load (for example, having deadline to meet up with, assignments and preparing for tests which can sometimes be impromptu, putting measures in place for a better grade in school, and so on). The major sources of stress are relationship, finance, social factors, and academic factors, psychological and personal factors.

2.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESSORS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG STUDENTS

Students of the department of social work are faced with numerous challenges that contribute to their stress level in the course of their academic journey. These students are faced with comprehensive complex academic theories, conducting in-depth research through field practicum, full participation in extensive course work and so on, all of which demands a significant cognitive and emotional concentration. Stress is the process of appraising and responding to demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This has become a major experience in the lives of these social work students. It is therefore important to have an understanding of how various stressors affects academic performance of these students and with this information, developing essential coping mechanisms and strategies for these students will help to enhance their academic performance and overall wellbeing.

In measuring a student's educational attainment and academic success, it is purely determined by a manifold number of stressors, they cut across academic, social, financial, personal, environmental, psychological and institutional spheres. The relationship between these various stressors tends to create a multifaceted environment that can significantly impact a

student's ability to perform well academically. Misra & Mckean (2000) have it that while some kind of stress can stand as a form of motivation for students to perform excellently well, heightened stress levels often results to negative outcomes such as low grades, dissatisfaction with academic experience, mental health issues amongst others. Therefore, by analyzing the major stressors experienced by students of the department of social work at the University of Benin as well as the impact it has on their academic performance, we can obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the problems these students face and identify effective coping mechanisms and strategies to support them.

Academic Stressors

Academic stressors are a rampant and crucial source of stress among students (Struthers et al., 2000) of the department of social work at the University of Benin. These stressors involve a wide range of challenges such as regular and frequent examination, extensive heavy course work, long field practicum and tight academic deadlines. Using examination to explain this, the era of examination causes so much stress to a student as examination is a means by which a student proves beyond reasonable doubt that he or she is eligible for better grades and for this reason, the students tends to a lot of brainstorming as well as revising everything he or she has been thought during the course of the semester and by so doing, stress arises in different forms like psychological stress, mental stress and in some cases, health stress sets in, the stress becomes worse when the student involved has no other option that to cram to the examination hall. In the University of Benin where examination has become a frequent thing that is done quarterly, students gets confused, troubled and frustrated as most of them do not know what to do when they feel like they are not up to tasks. Also, according to Ratana (2003), another source of academic stress to students is receiving a lower score than they expected.

There is also the pressure to meet up with high expectations and also to do excellently well academically which often results in increased anxiety and a reduced cognitive function. Students also get burdened by the complexity and volume of their assignments, this makes it difficult for them to have grip of their time which therefore leads to a cycle of stress and procrastination. Procrastination is the delay or avoidance of a task that needs to be done. According to Edward (1742), procrastination is the thief of time. It is a common attitude among students. Some students derive pleasure in postponing academic work for less critical errands. This situation is made aggravated by the rigorous nature of social work course work, which often requires her students to do engage vigorously in complex theoretical concepts, calculations and extensive field practicum and research. This type of academic demand can cause a strain in students' cognitive resources, thereby making it difficult for students to keep to high academic standards and ultimately leading to poor and low grades and reduced academic engagement.

The extreme levels of academic stress are linked with poorer academic outcomes, like lower grades and low participation in academic activities. This interrelation is partly due to the cognitive load created by stress, which can be worsen memory, attention, and the ability to solve problems. The ability of students to concentrate on their studies reduces which leads to a decline in the quality of their performance; this is because these students are frequently stressed out about their academic performance.

This academic pressure does not only affect these students' academic performance but also their overall wellbeing as the stress demands of academic demands spills over into other aspects of their lives, leading to issues like anxiety, depression, distress, worry, fear and burnout. Understanding these aspects is essential for developing effective coping mechanisms and

strategies to help these students manage and reduce their academic stress and increased productivity in their academic performance.

Financial Stressors

Financial challenges are also a prevalent and relevant source of stress that has a great impact on the academic performance (Renk, K. & Smith, T., 2007) of the students of department of social work at the University of Benin. Life is challenging for a student who has academic workload and financial constraints to deal with. The cost of textbooks, living expenses, and tuition fees amongst others can create a volume of financial constraint for a lot of students. This financial burden often leads students to shuffle between academic activities and getting a part-time employment to cover his or her expenses. Schooling and working comes with a whole lot of stress which might be difficult for these students to handle as it results to chronic fatigue and burnout which in turn increases their stress levels. Although this decision is beneficial to these students but on the other hand, it subtract from the time and energy they are supposed to dedicate to their studies. This financial stress leads to a situation where students will allocate little or no time for academic activities, leading to a poorer academic performance which therefore intensifies their stress levels as students struggle to meet their educational goals.

Students facing financial constraints are more likely to experience challenges (Hollis & Givens, 2005). These challenges include lower academic motivation, difficulty in concentrating and worst case scenario, poorer academic outcomes. Financial stress can worsen cognitive functions like memory and attention, which are essential for learning and academic success. More so, the psychological burden of financial constraints can result to increased anxiety and depression which further reduces a student's ability to perform excellently well academically.

Students face a lot of challenges especially when they combine work with studies due to financial constraints that create a debilitating stress atmosphere which in turns makes it very difficult for students to excel in their studies. Understanding the critical nature of financial stress and the impact it has on students is essential for developing support systems that can reduce these pressures. Support systems like financial aids, scholarships programs and programs that can provide academic and psychological support to students in needs like the NELFUND program of the government of the federal republic of Nigeria.

Social Stressors

Another stressor that is influence the academic performance of the students of the department of social work at the University of Benin is the social stressors through social pressures and interpersonal relationships. Moving and transforming to University life requires students to adapt to new environments and the need for social networking, which is sometimes exciting and equally stressful. Establishing and maintaining good relationships with one's peers is a necessity as it helps to navigate social strata and also to add a level of complexity to university experience. Peer pressure can either manifest in a subtle way or in an overt way. It is subtle if it involves one's peer pressuring him or her to conform to certain behaviors and lifestyles and if it involves participating in social activities, it is said to be in its overt form. Social influence through peer pressure can divert a student's attention from the basic reason he or she is in a learning environment and create internal conflict most especially when the student is torn between their social and academic responsibilities.

Social stressors such as feelings of isolation, conflict with one's peers and the pressure to engage in social activities and events can distract students from academic focus and productivity

(Beiter et al., 2015). Group projects as well as departmental activities can also be a source of stress. Working with people when it comes to group work can be quite challenging sometimes especially when there are differences in mode of communication, work ethics and academic goals among group members; this often results to conflicts and frustrations, making what's supposed to be beneficial to be stressful. Managing interpersonal differences can be quite stressful and draining both cognitively and emotionally which leaves students with less strength, energy and focus for their academic activities. Also, not been able to meet up with group expectations can add to stress levels which therefore affects the overall wellbeing of such student. Disappointing one's peer can also add to stress levels.

Having problem with one's roommate can be a source of stress to a student. Studies have shown that the academic motivation can be given by a roommate to a student which has a positive impact on the student's academic success (Blai, 1972). Basically, students who do better academically can create less stress for their roommates and therefore allow them perform better (Ryan M.M, et al., 2004).

The above social stressor with academic stressors and pressures imbedded in University life creates a sophisticated and an overwhelming atmosphere for students. Understanding the effects of the social stressors on academic performance was essential for developing coping mechanisms, strategies and support systems that helps these students to navigate these challenges. Support systems like counseling services, peer support groups and conflict resolution training.

Psychological Stressors

Anxiety, depression and self-esteem issues are all psychologically stressors that play a significant role in influencing and shaping the academic performance of the student of the department of social work at the University of Benin. The pressure to perform well academically can significantly lead to mental health conditions as well as trigger new psychological issues. The unending demands of university life can result in high stress environment and atmosphere. These demands include meeting tight deadlines, preparing for exams, comprehensive and extensive course work, excessive assignments and the need to maintain high grades. A common response to the above stated pressures is anxiety and it can worsen cognitive functions like memory, attention and concentration (Eysenyk et al., 2007).

Cognitive impairments such as difficulties in absorbing new material, retaining knowledge, and performing well on assignments, projects, and examinations are well documented consequences of anxiety. For example, a study by Youcefi, Irfan, and Aldylaylan (2023) found that anxiety significantly reduces working memory capacity among undergraduates, which in turn diminishes academic performance. Similarly, a meta-analytic review by Chang et al. (2022) demonstrated that anxiety and anxiety disorders are negatively related to academic achievement, particularly in language and mathematics, as well as reducing self-concept in academic domains. Chronic stress arising from persistent anxiety has also been shown to impair physical and psychological health and act as a pathway to burnout; for instance, in 2024, researchers in China reported that anxiety and depression symptoms among primary and middle school students were strongly associated with academic burnout, with lower self-efficacy and resilience mediating that relationship (Zhang et al., 2024).

Students experiencing high levels of psychological stress frequently struggle to sustain concentration on their studies. For example, Zhang et al. (2022) found that academic stress

among Chinese college students was significantly associated with anxiety symptoms and feelings of hopelessness, which in turn predicted depressive symptoms. Similarly, in a study of medical students, Sinval, Oliveira, Novais, Almeida, and Telles-Correia (2025) showed that higher depression, anxiety, and stress (DAS) levels were strongly linked to lower academic engagement and increased dropout intentions, ultimately impairing their academic performance. In Nigeria, Agesin and Olabimitan (2025) demonstrated that test anxiety and academic stress jointly predicted depression among undergraduates at the University of Ilorin, with both constructs significantly contributing to students' difficulties completing assignments and preparing for exams. Thus, when these students feel low motivation, hopelessness, or a sense of inadequacy, their classroom participation, task completion, and exam preparation are compromised. Over time poor performance itself can exacerbate anxiety and depression, establishing a difficult cycle of academic struggle and worsening mental health.

The role of self-esteem is crucial in students' academic lives: when students have low self-esteem, they frequently doubt their own abilities and lack self-efficacy, which undermines their capacity to tackle academic challenges. For example, a study in Manado by Tumboimbela, Tumbuan & Pandowo (2019) demonstrated that both self-efficacy and self-esteem have a positive and statistically significant effect on performance among university students. In Nigeria, Ojeleye, Adegbile & Apanpa (2023) found that self-esteem and academic resilience together significantly predicted better academic performance among students in Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda. Likewise, a large-scale study of rural students in China by Yu, Qian, Abbey, Wang, Rozelle, Stoffel & Dai (2022) reported that higher self-esteem is strongly associated with higher scores in standardized mathematics tests. These results underscore the need for mental health supports such as counseling, peer group support, and stress management programs zto

bolster self-esteem and self-efficacy, thereby helping students to overcome psychological stressors and improve academic outcomes.

Environmental Stressors

The environment a student lives in plays a vital role in shaping how his or her life will be in University. The environment of a student can stress them up and cause them not to stay glued to their studies. According to Downey (2005), bad living conditions are a significant environmental source of stress, impacting individuals' mental, physical, and emotional well-being. These conditions can manifest in various ways, including poor housing quality, overcrowding, inadequate access to basic amenities, and unsafe neighborhoods. When students start to ponder about these issues, they get stressed up and lose focus. When students are in learning and teaching environment for a long period of time, it affects their mental capacity thereby making them unfocused, tired, lazy and relentless in continuing studies at that point in time. This makes the students stressed up since they do not have the needed energy and zeal to continue the process.

Several studies in Nigeria show that tertiary institutions often lack basic technological infrastructure, that many students do not have sufficient computer skills, and that these gaps contribute to academic stress. For instance, Ogunode, Somadina and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2021) found that public higher institutions during COVID-19 suffered from “inadequate ICT facilities,” “unstable electricity,” and “poor computer literacy of students,” all of which impaired effective teaching and learning. In Osun State, Abdulkareem & Lennon (2023) report that some UTME candidates from public schools had never used a computer beforehand and those without prior computer experience performed worse in the computer-based UTME test, highlighting how lack

of exposure to computing tools undermines students' performance. Another study by Okoye, Ogechukwu, and Okwuogu (2020) on ICT literacy in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State shows that lecturers also receive inadequate training, and that the number of ICT facilities is insufficient, which limits students' and lecturers' ability to use computers for teaching and learning. These findings lend credence to the idea that in many Nigerian universities (potentially including UNIBEN), students struggle due to both lack of access to computer facilities and low computer literacy, which can generate stress when curricula increasingly require technological competence.

Personal Stressors

Personal stressors play a vital and a complex role as it adds another level of complexity to the stress experienced by the students of the department of social work at the University of Benin. These personal stressors range from family responsibilities to health concerns and work related challenges. Personal stressors differ from individual to individual because people have different perceptions, views, attitude and behavior about life. Many students are not only trying to navigate their way through school via academic performance but also trying to take care of vital family responsibilities that demand their attention and time; contributing to household income, catering and caring for younger siblings, elderly or sick relatives. These responsibilities are time and attention demanding and this leads to a reduction in the time allocated for academic activities; it therefore increases stress levels in the lives of concerned students as they struggle to balance these roles.

Furthermore, health issues also complicate stress levels be it physical or mental health concerns as health is a major concern to any individual most especially in the life of a student.

Health issues can cause a lot of stress which can lead to health complications like headaches, high blood pressures, chest pains, and insomnia. Research has it that stress can worsen certain illnesses and diseases (Selye, 1936). Physical ailments can make a student to miss classes and assignments; mental health issues such as anxiety and depression can kill motivation and concentration in academic activities. Health problems also include; sleep patterns, nutritional routines such as poor eating habits like malnutrition. Chronic illnesses, mental health issues and frequent illnesses can greatly worsen a student's ability to concentrate on their studies and perform excellently well in his or her academics. Students who experience personal stressor often exhibit a low participation in class, lower grades, and a higher level of absenteeism which has a negative impact on their academics (Rothstein et al., 2005). Being able to balance personal and academic obligations demands effective time management and adequate coping skills and when students lack these skills, it leads to increased stress and poorer academic outcomes.

Balancing personal and academic responsibilities creates a constant state of tension and conflict as many students tend to prioritize one over the other; and this is really detrimental their academic performance. Students faced with personal stressors often experience burnout, reduced academic engagement, and a decline in overall wellbeing. Personal stressors are a significant barrier to a students' academic success. Identifying these challenges and addressing them through flexible academic policies, access to healthcare services within the school environment and designing programs that will help students develop effective time management and coping mechanisms.

2.6 THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

The Negative Impact of Stress

Stress is a normal phenomenon in everyone's life. As long as one exists, one is bound to experience stress in all facets of life. Students go through several high levels of stress in different aspects of their lives. This has become a baseline for further research and an effective means of intervention for university mental health professionals. Study curriculum in universities is quite challenging. Combining education with a busy life schedule automatically causes all manner of stress as well as depression in some cases. When stress is managed probably or minimal, it's leads to a great performance.

Consequently, when stress is not controlled, it leads to depression, fatigue, tiredness, and other illnesses. When stress becomes too much or unbearable for students, some may decide to commit suicide ,some go as far as taking hard drugs like cocaine, molly, marijuana, Canadian loud, and so on, to ease off their stress. University students experience an intense stage taking care of their anxiety and misery. This anxiety includes the weight to do well, assignments, projects and practical, home issues, connection at school and other weights which eventually adds up to stress and depression. Basically, the stress students encounter in a way tests their coping and adaptation mechanism to any environment they find themselves. The impact of stress on students can be viewed from the academic, social, physical and emotional angle.

The Academic Impact of Stress

Research has shown that stress affects a student's ability to concentrate and stay focused on academic activities. Stress also affects the academic performance of students which leads to a

poor performance and low grades. Stress causes confused in students and they also suffer from amnesia.

Stress at the long run, can affect the plan students have for the future. It can also affect the initial skills that students have. Many students when stressed up lack the ability to be innovative and creative to solve problems therefore when these students are faced with minor challenges which might be easy to solve because they're stressed up, they have difficulty in racking their brains to find solutions to that problem.

In the short run, stress ironically improves concentration for a short period, this is because when students are a little stressed up, they tend to focus to try to get the issue at hand which stresses away, however, these concentrations do not last for long since they have to get it out of the way so as to enable them focus on other assignments or school activities which demands long term concentration from them. Stress also determines the productivity and output that university students make. A student becomes more productive at his or her maximum when the individual is less stressed resulting to better and great outputs of grades. Stress also does not give students enough and adequate time to make preparations for tests, practical, projects and examination. Stress makes students spend lesser time in trying to get some school work done properly as they do it shabbily without following due processes.

In the academic life of university students, they have misunderstanding with some of the courses or topics that have been taught in school while some can be forgetful about what they've been taught because they're bothered about the issues stressing them. The above mentioned effects of stress on students cause them to perform poorly in their academic work.

The Social Impact of Stress

Man by nature is a social being (Aristotle, 350BCE). Aristotle argued that humans are naturally inclined to form communities and live in society, as they rely on collaboration for survival and fulfillment. No man can live in isolation, as there always a need to interact. Students are not exempted from this. Students are social beings by nature especially in the university setting. Students typically cherish keeping a social bond which is of great benefit to all as social relationships fosters feelings for social inclusion and an eventful reproductive success. Social stress sets in when this relationship is threatened and disrupted.

Isolation is a major effect that stress has on the social life of students most especially when they are tensed about certain issues and they feel the best way to resolve those issues is to be alone and think. When this isolation exceeds the expected time, students are at the risk of losing friends which causes more harm than good to this fellow. Stress also causes resentments in students in whatever they do as they get easily irritated and angry over any little thing because they are stressed and this resentment pushes people away from them therefore making loneliness to set in.

Furthermore, stress can reduce a student's sex drive. A sexually active married student or one who is in a serious relationship can have serious issues with their partners or spouse because of low sex drive reason being that their minds are stationed on how to solve the academic issues they're experiencing which is causing them a lot of stress therefore their desire for sex becomes low and this affects their marriage or relationship as sex is an important element and has a vital role to play in one's life. Stress can also make students to nag and complain even when it is not necessary. All these social effects, gives bad names and status to students who exhibit these behaviors which will have an adverse effect on their academic life.

The Physical Impact of Stress

Stress that continues without break can lead to a state called distress, a negative stress reaction. Distress can lead to physical problems. The Physical impact of stress basically reflects on the health of the student. Stress can make you breathe tougher. That's not a problem for most people, but for those with asthma or a lung disease such as emphysema, getting the oxygen you need to breathe easier can be difficult. In addition, stress can cause the swift breathing or hyperventilation that can cause a panic attack in someone prone to panic attacks. Also, stress can cause the muscles to tense up. By sudden onset stress, the muscles tense up all at once and then release their tension when the stress passes. Chronic stress causes the muscles in the body to be in a more or less constant state of guardedness.

Furthermore, stress also causes restlessness in a student. Students who happen to be in situations that stress them up are unable to sit at one place but rather will just be walking to and fro to find solutions to their worries. This makes them always busy and tired causing them not to be able to have proper sleep and rest during the night which is not good for the body system. Also, stress causes the increase of alcohol, drugs and tobacco use among students. Some students have the habit of taking alcohol, drugs and smoking tobacco when they feel under pressure to calm them down. Stress worsen this because it increases the intake of whatever thing the student use and at the long run causes health implications for them. Some might even contract severe diseases which may be incurable.

Lastly, stress causes fatigue on students. When students are stressed up, they are always tired because they use the energy they have in just thinking about whatever issue that's making them stressed. When this happens they have no energy left in them for academic purposes or to

even do other things for themselves. Being fatigued can make students mess up a whole lot of things which are supposed to help them in life (Akpan Lucky, 2018).

The Emotional Impact of Stress

Psychoneuroimmunology research has found that chronic stress triggers sustained activation of the nervous-endocrine-immune systems, which can lead to or worsen mood disorders like depression and anxiety, cognitive difficulties, personality changes, and problematic behaviors (Wolf & Rene, 2019; Daniel, 2024). For instance, studies have shown that stress alters hormone levels (such as cortisol, CRH, ACTH), which can have sedative or depressive-like effects when persistently elevated (Stress and Sleep Disorder review, 2013; Sleep & Wakefulness hormonal studies, e.g. Hu et al., cited in Stress and Sleep Disorder, 2013). Habitual negative appraisal styles (for example low self-efficacy or believing one cannot cope with stressors) further increase vulnerability to depression by amplifying psychological stress responses. In a study of adolescents, high self-efficacy was found to buffer the impact of daily stress on symptoms of depression and anxiety (Beesdo-Baum et al., 2023). Similarly, in psychiatric nurses, general self-efficacy was shown to mediate the relationship between occupational stress and depressive symptoms (2022 study; see Lei et al., 2022).

Here is a paragraph with author-date citations to support the ideas about outward signs of anxiety, physical symptoms of stress, discouragement, giving up, and making excuses.

Students under high stress often exhibit observable behavioural signs such as fidgeting, nail-biting, pacing or tapping their feet, restlessness, or avoidance of tasks (Ahmed, 2019; Frontiers et al., 2022). Physical and somatic symptoms—like racing heart, sweating palms, nausea, or a sense of impending doom—are commonly reported in studies of chronic anxiety and

stress among university students (Frontiers et al., 2022; Psychosocial Stress & Health Problems, Maria Danielsson et al., 2012). These psychological and emotional burdens may also lead to feelings of discouragement or low self-confidence: some students believe that whatever they try will fail, leading them to abandon assignments or projects midway (Frontiers et al., 2022; Influence of Anxiety on Academic Performance in South-Western Nigerian Tertiary Institutions, Adeosun & Oladipo, 2022). In addition, self-blame or excuse-making is often observed—students attribute failures to external causes rather than acknowledging personal responsibility, which compounds the stress and anxiety (Egwuonwu & Olonade, 2014; Ahmed, 2019).

Mood swings is another common effect of stress on students. Students are unable to have a particular mood for a long period of time. Although mood changes are common for every student, the rate at which it changes is very fast with students who are stressed and depressed. This mood swing makes it difficult for other students to even communicate or help them out. This frequent changing of moods ruins the days of students and makes them unable to concentrate. Lastly, stress causes irritability and bad temper in students. Students who are stressed easily get annoyed with the least thing that another person does. Stress in its own way kills the tolerance of students, making them vulnerable to temper issues. Students try to be calm but because they are worried and disturbed they lose that control easily (Akpan Lucky, 2018).

The Positive Impact of Academic Stress

According to experts, stress is an explosion of one's energy. Stress has its benefits though it is in small doses. Stress can help an individual overcome everyday challenges and motivate such fellow to reach his or her goals. Stress helps you do things more effectively which increases memory retention. Researchers believe that that some stress helps in strengthening

one's immune system; for instance, stress often improves the functioning of the heart and it also guides the body against infection. Studies have it that people with normal stress levels before embarking on surgical process will be able to survive faster than those with lower or higher stress levels. Stress serves as a significant alert system as it produces the fight or flight response. When the human brain detects a certain type of stress, it begins to flood the body with chemicals like epinephrine, norepinephrine, and cortisol. This creates different types of reaction in the body.

2.7 COPING MECHANISMS EMPLOYED BY STUDENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK TO MANAGE STRESS

At the University of Benin, in the department of social work, the students make use of various coping mechanisms to handle the magnitude of stress they experience. The major typology of coping strategies includes problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-oriented coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Problem-Focused Coping Mechanisms

This mechanism involves directly curbing the source of stress through practical strategies. Problem-focused coping which involves efforts to change or eliminate the source of stress is generally found to be more effective when the stressor is controllable; it tends to be associated with better psychological outcomes, greater positive affect, and lower distress (Chen & Sun, 2019; Cong et al., 2021). In other words, this mechanism is aimed at addressing the source of stress directly rather than regulating emotional response to it. This mechanism is only effective when individuals perceive the stressors are controllable. For the students of the department of social work, the measures of problem-focused mechanism they use include;

planning, time management, and seeking instrumental academic support. Students can manage their time effectively by prioritizing tasks, organizing time to reduce workload and setting attainable goals, through this, students can make their academic workload manageable. Studies have found that students who use this mechanism such as proactive planning and proper time management have lower levels of academic stress and have a higher academic performance (Zhang et al., 2023).

Other common techniques that can be used include; getting help from professors and peers, breaking assignments into small tasks to enable that individual do them on time, and creating study schedule like a personal reading time table. The problem-focused coping mechanism is generally connected to better academic outcomes; this is because it directly addresses the stressors thus giving the students a sense of control over their academic workload (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). The success of these mechanisms solely depends on the students' consistent implementation and access to resources such as academic counseling and tutoring.

Emotion-Focused Coping Mechanisms

Emotion-focused coping involves strategies aimed at managing the emotional distress associated with a stressor, rather than changing the stressor itself. Emotion-focused coping seeks to manage the emotions arising from stress rather than the stressor itself can be adaptive (such as positive reappraisal or acceptance) under conditions of low controllability, but may lead to worse outcomes if overused or if emotion-focused methods are maladaptive (Undheim et al., 2016; Breton et al., 2015). In other words, it is a mechanism that is designed to reduce the emotional distress that accompanies stress. Social work students may engage in activities that can help

them relax, activities like exercise, meditation, or conversing with loved ones. Getting emotional support from family relations and loved ones can be quite helpful as it makes them feel loved, understood, and less isolated in their problems. Common emotion-focused coping mechanisms include emotional expression, cognitive reappraisal, acceptance, distraction, mindfulness, and seeking emotional support. This mechanism helps students reduce the psychological impact of stress by regulating internal emotional states which effectively improves concentration thereby leading to positive academic performance. Mindfulness-based emotion-focused coping mechanism significantly reduces anxiety and emotional exhaustion among healthcare workers during high-stress periods (Lee, Park & Kim, 2023). This study highlights that emotional regulation techniques, particularly mindfulness and acceptance, plays a vital role in enhancing resilience and wellbeing in stressful environments.

It is also vital into put into recognition that emotion-focused coping strategy plays a crucial role in maintaining a student's mental health especially during the course of intense academic pressure. According to Biddle & Asare (2011), participating in physical activities releases endorphin that naturally reduces stress levels and mood. Practices like muscle relaxation and deep-breath-taking can help these students manage the physiological signs of stress which includes increased heart rate (McCraty & Tomasino, 2006),

Though these mechanisms do not eradicate academic stressors, they can aid a student's resilience and capacity to cope with stress in the short term. However, while this mechanism can help to reduce immediate emotional stress, they mostly fail to address the underlying causes of academic stress thus the effectiveness of this approach might be limited except they are used in line with the problem-focused coping mechanism (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Avoidance-Oriented Coping Mechanism

Avoidance-oriented coping refers to strategies in which the individuals attempts to evade dealing with the stressor or the emotions it causes. Avoidance-oriented coping (e.g. inaction, distraction, denial), however, is often less effective or even harmful in the long term; research shows it is associated with increased psychological distress, poorer adaptation, and worse health outcomes (Thomassen et al., 2022; the systematic review by Livneh, 2019). In other words, this mechanism involves directly sidestepping the stressor instead of addressing it. Avoidance coping often involves denial, distraction, substance use, procrastination, or withdrawal from stressful situations. Procrastination has led to a cycle of stress and last minute studying which often leads to high levels of anxiety and poor academic performance. This strategy is typically used when individuals feel overwhelmed or perceive the stressor as entirely uncontrollable. According to Carver, Scheier & Weintraub (1989), avoidance coping does not solve the major issues rather; it intensifies stress over time though it is maladaptive.

Developing this, avoidance-oriented strategy has severe effects on students' academic journey. For instance, when a student consistently ignores or delays his or her academic work, not only do they experience the pressure of meeting up with deadlines, they also tend to miss out the they gradual learning process of academic journey. This practice often leads to poor retention of knowledge and information, superficial learning and so on as their basic focus shifts from understanding the material to merely completing the tasks. Last-minute cramming often leads to anxiety and stress which can worsen cognitive functions like memory, attention and concentration; this further hinders good academic performance (Schmeichel & Baumeister, 2004). If this cycle continues, it results to a decline in academic achievement and overall wellbeing.

Avoidance-oriented coping over time affects a student's mental and emotional wellbeing. Continuous avoidance leads to feeling of guilt and shame when these students become aware of their unproductive behaviors yet they're are unable to change them. Heightened stress levels usually leads to more avoidance which makes the cycle a repeated one. More so, avoidance can cause a strain on a student's relationship with peers and instructors; for instance, missed deadlines and low performance may lead to conflicts and a lack of support. However, research has it that chronic use of avoidance coping strategy is linked to anxiety, depression and poor physical health. Studies by Alvarez et al. (2023) have shown that individuals who relies on avoidance-oriented coping mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced heightened levels of psychological distress and a decline in overall life satisfaction. This study emphasized categorically that while avoidance may temporarily reduce emotional stress and discomfort, it also prevents effective processing and resolution of stressors.

To alleviate this cycle, students should be encouraged to adopt a more proactive coping mechanism such as setting realistic goals, gradually building better time management skills and seeking help when necessary. Developing and expanding on these skills will help these students transit from avoidance to more adaptive coping mechanisms thereby improving academic performances and overall well-being simultaneously.

Institutional Support and Resources

Social work students face unique stressors (such as exposure to client trauma) leading to burnout, compassion fatigue, and mental health challenges. For example, a qualitative study by Kapoulitsas & Corcoran (2015) showed that social workers who work with distressed clients experience compassion fatigue, and that the organizational context (supportive or unsupportive)

influences resilience and self-protection. A field study of social work students noted that during practicum or field placement, students experienced high emotional stress due to exposure to others' trauma, reporting symptoms similar to burnout, depression, anger, frustration, and exhaustion (Adams & Riggs, 2008; Bride, Jones & Macmaster, 2007; Dane & Chachkes, 2003). Wilks (2015) found in "Resilience amid Academic Stress: The Moderating Impact of Social Support among Social Work Students" that perceived social support moderates the relationship between academic stress and resilience: students with stronger support systems are better able to cope. Regarding institutional support (academic advising, counseling) helping reduce mental health issues, a recent cross-sectional study involving nursing students in Egypt and Saudi Arabia found that satisfaction with academic advising and counselling services was significantly associated with lower odds of depression and mental health disorders. Peer support programs have also been shown to improve psychological resilience and mental health in educational settings; for example, a study by Vitus (2025) in Nigeria explored the role of peer support programs in enhancing mental health and psychological resilience among students.

More so, the establishment of support systems with higher educational institutions can promote a supportive and stress-resilient academic environment. Some of these systems are conducting regular workshops on time management, study methods and stress reduction can help inform students with practical skills to handle their academic workload effectively. Resilience training and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) sessions are also effective interventions. Peer support programs, tutoring and mentorship can create a sense of belonging to a community and a secured emotional safety. This also promotes a sense of shared learning, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting collaboration. Senior students or alumni can offer

guidance to new students, especially during fieldwork or emotionally tasking coursework. These programs also encourage collaborative coping, which is vital in the social work profession.

Several studies show that access to counseling and mental health services helps students manage academic stress, burnout, and secondary trauma. Utilization of counseling services by medical students at Baylor University found that many with high burnout or depressive symptoms did not use available counseling despite need; the authors recommended increasing awareness, reducing barriers, and ensuring services are well publicized. (Chang, Eddins-Folensbee & Coverdale, 2012). In Nigeria, a study of postgraduate students at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli, in Anambra State, found that Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) significantly reduced perceived academic stress, and the effects were maintained at four-week follow-up. This suggests that structured, clinical counseling formats can be effective. (Ekwelundu, Okeke & Obi, 2023)

With regard to flexibility during fieldwork, there is research showing that adapting course design and assessment to reduce stress during placements helps. For example, Betts, Bojkowski & Peschar (2023) reported on how a social work programme in Australia adapted its curriculum during field placement by offering flexible and accessible course materials and adjusting assessment deadlines, which reduced student stress and improved learning outcomes. In addition, the longitudinal comparative study by Stanley & Buvanewari (2022) on Indian social work students found that problem-focused and emotion-focused coping predicted resilience; while institutional supports (such as counselling and stress management interventions) are implied as necessary to build resilience over the course of their training.

Academic advisors trained to support social work students' unique pressures can help tailor academic plans that promote both learning and overall wellbeing. Financial assistance is another way to alleviate stress by offering these students stipends, grants, or emergency funds as it will help to reduce their financial burden especially during unpaid internships. Access to food pantries, subsidized transport and housing support will help to reduce non-academic stressors.

Furthermore, creating a classroom culture that supports inclusion, emotional expression, and students' voice contributes to a psychological safety. This will help to enhance the emotional climate of the classroom, making it a more supportive learning environment. For students in the department of social work, field placement is a major source of stress therefore the department should provide regular debriefing sessions and reflective supervision. This offers safe spaces for students to process complex client experiences, ethical dilemmas, and emotional fatigues. By continuously and consistently adapting to these support systems, the university can create an environment where students are well-equipped to handle stress which in turns enhances their academic success and overall wellbeing.

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For some decades, various theories have been developed by a number of researchers to help students understand the concept of stress, its manifestation and its impact on the overall wellbeing of an individual. For the purpose of this research, this study made use of the Lazarus stress theory which is also known as "the coping and transactional stress model".

The transactional model of stress is a cognitive model. This model of stress emerged in the twentieth century. This model is traced to authors like Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989), Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984) developed the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which conceptualizes stress not merely as a stimulus or response, but as a dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment. This model highlights the role of cognitive appraisal and coping strategies in determining how stressful events are experienced and managed. The transactional model argues that stress results from the on-going transaction between an individual and their environment, where the person's resources, perceptions, and coping mechanisms play central roles. The model emphasizes that stress is not inherent in the situation itself but arises from the way an individual appraises and responds to the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The transactional model of stress theory assumes that stress is not something that exists solely in the environment or within the person, but rather emerges from the continuous interaction between both. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), what matters most is how an individual interprets or appraises a situation. A circumstance becomes stressful only if it is judged as harmful, threatening, or beyond one's resources to manage. This means that stress is highly subjective; two people may experience the same event differently depending on how they evaluate it (Lazarus, 1991).

The model also explains that coping is central in determining how stressful experiences affect health and well-being. Coping does not eliminate stress immediately but influences whether the impact is reduced or intensified over time (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Since people differ in their resources, skills, and support systems, their coping styles and outcomes also vary. Stress is therefore not a fixed reaction but a dynamic process, constantly shifting as individuals reassess situations and adjust their responses (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman developed this model in the 1980s. They explained stress to be a condition or feeling that is felt when an individual senses that the demands exceeds the personal and social resources that the individual can gather to manage the condition. An individual's perception of the psychological situation he finds himself is a critical factor. The impact of stress on an individual is based on the feeling of threat, vulnerability to cope with that individual than on the stressful events itself (Lazarus, 1984). This model also describes how a person reacts to certain stressors in the external environment. To Lazarus and Folkman, no event, situation or activity is naturally stressful but rather, the subjective judgment of the situation that is considered threatening is what defines the stressor. The way people will react to a particular stressor varies from person to person due to the perception they have. Too many assignments within a short period of time can make a student believe that they will not be able to finish up the assignments within the given time or deadline; this explains why Lazarus is of the opinion that psychological stress is a particular relationship between the individual and the physical environment that the individual rates as taxing or exceeding their resources and put their overall wellbeing at risk. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional stress model theory is very much relevant as an analytical framework as this model helps researchers have a better understanding of major stressors that can ultimately affects students' academic performance and how best to manage and control these academic stressors.

Lazarus and Folkman through this model introduced the concepts of primary assessment (when a person decides if a situation is threatening or positive by assessing how serious, difficult or harmful the threat is, as well as the positive aspect of the stressor. If a situation is found to be threatening; injury, illness, worry, anger, disgust, disappointment, anxiety and fear are possible effects. For instance, a student will become worrisome and probably fall sick if he or she senses

a high probability of failing a particular course even before the event occurs) and secondary assessment involves evaluating coping resources that are available to fight or cope with the stressors. An individual may decide to use external forces or internal forces. Internal options such as willpower, internal strength while the external options are peers, professional help, and so on; take for instance, a student that does not understand a certain lecture may decide to dedicate more time to this particular lecture or ask his course mates or the course lecturer(s) for help on that course.

Lazarus (1984) went further to develop two basic strategies that can be used to handle and manage school stress. They are coping with problems (problem-focused) and emotional adaptation (emotion-focused). Problem-focused coping is used when we feel that we are in control or we can handle the source of the stressor. With this, there are four primary ways to manage this particular stress; they are: defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, learning new skills to deal with these stressors and re-evaluating new standards of behavior. Emotion –focused coping is aimed at alleviating the emotional effect of stress through activities like relaxation, talking to friends, and so on.

Theories of stress can be classified into three aspects according to Laurence, Williams and Eiland (2009); they are response theories, stimulus theories and transaction theories. By response theories, stress is seen as a response by individuals to external stressors such as too many assignments in a short period of time. A stimulus theory on the other hand, seeks to explain stress from the perspective of major events such as humanitarian disasters, chronic activities and other life threatening activities. Through transactional theory, stress is seen as complex sets of interaction and adjustments between an individual and his physical environment.

Through the transactional model theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), they emphasized the nature of stress by arguing that it is a two-way process.

In applying this model to the context of the students of the department of social work, it becomes vivid that a holistic approach to stress management is important. Students need support systems and strategies that will address the challenges they experience both internally and externally. Improving students' cognitive assessment procedures in helping them frame how they view stressors, it also provides problem-focused and emotion-focused coping resources that will significantly improve these students ability to handle and manage stress. This approach also fosters better academic performance, outcome and overall wellbeing. If Lazarus transactional model is implemented, universities will be able to create more support systems wired toward the specific needs of their students. This will involve programs that can help students handle their academic obligations and general wellbeing; by so doing, students' resilience to stress will propel their academic success and contribute to their mental health if universities authorities can improve on them.

In conclusion, this model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the stress faced by students of the department of social work at the University of Benin. The model promotes both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms that universities can use to prepare their students to deal with stress properly which will enhance their academic performance and overall wellbeing.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, this study analyzed the diverse methods that were used, and how we can use the different methods in reaching the objectives of this study. These methods include: research design, population of the study, sample size, sampling technique, method of data collection, instrument for data collection, validity and reliability of research instrument, ethics in social research and method of data analysis.

3. 1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted a descriptive research design. These designs helped to ascertain the major sources of stress among students in the University of Benin, to investigate the relationship between stress and the academic performance of students, to examine the impact of stress on academic performance, to identify the different coping mechanisms used by these students as well as stating the possible strategies that can be helpful in reducing stress for students. This study also made use of mixed-methods by quantitative and qualitative instruments of data collection and analysis which includes the use of semi-structured questionnaire, which provided a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The main focus of this study was on the students of the University of Benin. According to a source from the academic planning of the University, there are over 77,000 + 1 students in the

2024/2025 academic session which cuts across the different faculties. However, the targeted population is the 555 full-time undergraduate students spanning from first-year to final-year in the department of social work, faculty of social sciences, University of Benin. This is because the study area is closer to the researcher and access to information was easy.

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size for this study was 200 respondents. This number constitutes the maximum sample size for undergraduate studies in the department of sociology and anthropology. 200 respondents constitute about 36% of the total population therefore significant enough to generalize. These respondents will be selected from the different levels of the department ranging from first-year to final-year students out of the total population.

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

This study adopted a probabilistic and a non-probabilistic sampling technique for which students were selected using the stratified random sampling technique as it is best suitable for this study, the reason being that this technique guarantees the different levels of the department of social work which are included in the study. Classifying the students of this population into specific strata based on the relevant factor that is, academic level and randomly selecting respondents from each academic level, this study obtained a more thorough and representative comprehensive understanding of the sources of stress, the relationship stress has with academic performance, its impact on academic performance, the coping mechanisms as well as strategies

that can help to reduce stress among social work students in the University of Benin. In cases where a respondent was reluctant, the study adopted a non-probabilistic sampling technique using the convenient sampling technique in selecting respondents who were willing to participate in the study. Stratified sampling was used because this research is based on academic level. The study also randomly selected items from each stratum to ensure representatives using the ballot techniques using the table below:

LEVEL	POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE
100	120	44
200	108	39
300	205	73
400	122	44
TOTAL	555	200

3.5 INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

For this study to be effective there was a need to adopt quantitative instrument of data collection. For the quantitative instrument of data collection, the semi-structured questionnaires will be administered to get numeric data. The questionnaire was made up of five sections; section A- E. Section A will examine the socio-demographic of respondents while section B-E attempted to elicit answers to the research questions.

3.6 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

This study adopted a multiple time survey method of data collection where the researcher visited the study area once to administer questionnaire in a face to face basis and upon which the

questionnaires will be retrieved the second time to give the respondents sufficient time to answer or fill the questionnaire.

3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

To ensure validity, the research instruments were crafted to precisely reflect the topic of discussion which is supported by theoretical framework. Also, to ensure the validity of this research, some of the lecturers of the great department of sociology and anthropology were consulted and they affirmed the research to be valid. Reliability was developed through pilot test to confirm the similar and creditable outcomes among the different respondents. The instruments are thoroughly tested to verify their capability to bring accountable and repeatable results.

3.8 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

For this study, the data analysis used is the descriptive statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) which includes tables, percentages and frequency to analyze and interpret the information for the quantitative (questionnaire) method.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethics in research were adopted for this study: informed consent, confidentiality, non-maleficence, beneficence and cultural sensitivity so as not to expose the respondents to psychological harm and discomfort which will infringe upon their fundamental human rights.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter displays and analyses the data that was collected on stress, stressors, and the impact of stress on the academic performance of students of the department of social work in the University of Benin. This analysis is done using descriptive statistics which includes frequency, counts and percentages. The findings were classified based on the questionnaire sections: demographic characteristics, understanding of stress, major sources of stress, and the impact of stress and coping strategies. Each table represents a summary of responses, followed by an interpretation of the results. The analysis provides insights into the students' experience with academic stress and suggests measures to improve stress management.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Table 4.1.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	87	43.5%
FEMALE	102	51%
OTHERS	11	5.5%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

The table presents the gender distribution of respondents in the study. Out of the total of 200 respondents, 87 respondents (43.5%) identified as male, which indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents were male. 102 respondents (51%) identified as female, making them the majority of the study. 11 respondents (5.5%) identified as others, which suggests that a small percentage of respondents either identify outside the normal gender binary or prefer not to disclose their gender.

Table 4.1.2: Age Distribution of Respondents

AGE RANGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
16-20	80	40%
21-24	75	37.5%
25-29	45	22.5%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

The majority of students (37.5%) are between 21-24 years old and 40% are between 16-20 years which indicates that most of the respondents are in their early academic years.

Table 4.1.3: Level of Study of Respondents

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
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100	44	22%
200	39	19.5%
300	73	36.5%
400	44	22%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

This study shows the representation of students across all levels.

Table 4.1.4: Marital Status of Respondents

MARITAL STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE	182	91%
MARRIED	12	6%
OTHERS	6	3%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

The table above shows that 91% of the respondents are single which therefore indicates that most students may have fewer family-related obligations that could contribute to academic stress. However, 6% of the respondents who are married are likely to experience additional challenges balancing family responsibilities with their studies. The remaining 3% belong to the category of “others” which could include those in complicated and complex relationship which might influence their academic stress level.

4.2 UNDERSTANDING OF STRESS

Table 4.2.1: Awareness of Stress among Students

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	185	92.5%
NO	15	7.5%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

The table above shows that 92.5% of the respondents are aware of what stress is while 7.5% of the respondents do not know what stress is about.

Table 4.2.2: Experience of Academic Stress of Respondents

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
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YES	190	95%
NO	10	5%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

From the table above, it is seen that a high percentage (95%) of students experience academic-related stress.

Table 4.2.3: Frequency of Stress Experience

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
NEVER	8	4%
RARELY	25	12.5%
SOMETIMES	100	50%
OFTEN	35	17.5%
ALWAYS	32	16%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

This table shows that 50% of the respondents experience stress sometimes, while 17.5% of the respondents often experience stress, 16% of the respondents always experience stress, 12.5% experience stress rarely and 4% of the respondents never experience stress. This simply tells us that stress is common but it varies in intensity.

4.3 MAJOR SOURCES OF STRESS

Table 4.3.1: The major causes of stress

STRESSORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
ACADEMIC WORKLOAD	130	65%
FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES	100	50%
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES	64	32%
PEER PRESSURE	39	19.5%
EXAMS AND GRADES	140	70%
OTHERS	15	7.5%

Interpretation:

From this table, it can be deduced that exams & grades (70%) and academic workload (65%) are the most common stressors, while financial difficulties, family pressures, peer pressures and others have 50%, 32%, 19.5%, and 7.5% respectively.

Table 4.3.2: Balancing Academic Work with Personal Commitment

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES
YES	170	85%
NO	30	15%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

A high percentage (85%) of the students experience stress from balancing academic work with other personal commitment (or example, work, family, social life).

4.4 THE IMPACT OF STRESS

Table 4.4.1: Experience of Health Issues due to Stress

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	130	65%
NO	70	35%

TOTAL	200	100%
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Interpretation:

From the table above, 65% of the respondents often experience health issues like headaches, fatigue, digestive problems due to stress while 35% of the respondents do not experience any of the above stated issues.

Table 4.4.2: Emotional Effect of Stress on Respondents

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	150	75%
NO	50	25%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

This table shows that 75% of the respondents have been affected emotionally due to stress while 25% of the respondents have not been affected emotionally.

Table 4.4.3: The Negative Effect of Stress on Respondents Academics

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE

YES	150	75%
NO	50	25%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

The above table shows that 75% of the respondents opined that stress has a negative effect on their academics while 25% of the respondents stated that stress as no negative impact on their academics.

4.5 COPING STRATEGIES

Table 4.5.1: Coping Mechanisms Employed by Students

COPING STRATEGIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
TIME MANAGEMENT	125	62.5%
SEEKING HELP FROM PEERS/LECTURERS	47	23.5%
EXERCISE/PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES	40	20%
RELAXATION TECHNIQUES	28	14%

(MEDITATION, YOGA, E.T.C)		
TALKING TO FRIENDS/FAMILY	41	20.5%
PROCRASTINATION OR AVOIDANCE	20	10%

Interpretation:

From the table above, time management (62.5%) is the most used coping mechanism, while seeking help from peers, exercise/ physical activities, relaxation techniques, talking to friends and procrastination are 23.5%, 20%, 14%, 20.5%, and 10% respectively.

Table 4.5.2: Effectiveness of Coping Strategies

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY EFFECTIVE	40	20%
MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	70	35%
SLIGHTLY EFFECTIVE	60	30%
NOT EFFECTIVE	30	15%

TOTAL	200	100%
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Interpretation:

This table shows that only 20% of the respondents rate coping strategies as “very effective” while 35% of the respondents rate it as “moderately effective” then again, 30% of the respondents rate it as “slightly effectively” and lastly, only 15% of the respondents rate it as “not effective” respectively.

Table 4.5.3: A Need for More Coping Strategies

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	140	70%
NO	60	30%
TOTAL	200	100%

Interpretation:

This table shows that 70% of the respondents need more support or new strategies to coping with stress while 30% of the respondents do not need more support or new strategies to coping with stress for reasons best known to them.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study was carried out to determine the impact of stress on students' academic performance in the University of Benin using the department of social work of the faculty of social sciences as a case study. The study found that all the respondents have experienced one form of Academic Stress or the other. This shows that academic stress is a common phenomenon among University students particularly social work students in the University of Benin and that stress affects students' academic performance. Different things take place in the day-to-day activities of the academic processes that stresses students. This topic was highly relatable amongst students as they discussed how it affected them because of academic workloads, financial difficulties, family responsibilities, peer pressure, examination and grades amongst others. The study further found that, the major source of academic stress is examination and grades, and academic workload even though there were other sources.

Furthermore, this study examined the relationship between stressors and academic performance. It was discovered that many of the respondents who happened to be students affirmed that academic stress affected their academic performance.

This study is an eye opener to the tension and pressure faced by students of the University of Benin particularly those of the department of social work. Many researchers have observed that an emotionally disturbed situation triggers the human system and body leading to psychosomatic illnesses such as indigestion, anxiety, depression, stomach ulcers, etc., hence a need to regulate stress levels. Majority of the respondents argue that having enough time and getting engaged in extracurricular activities like sports and other entertaining hobbies play an important role in helping students to cope with stress.

This study has helped to discover that students yearn for a student-lecturer relationship to help lecturers understand that they are going through stress and also help them to regulate and cope their stress levels. This study found also found out that through the coping strategy time management, students would be able to cope with stress well if only they schedule their time properly and stop procrastinating amongst other factors.

According to Wheeler (2017), stress is a physics word which refers to the amount of force used on an objects and stress relates in real life as how certain issues that carry force apply to human lives.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Every problem attempted to be prevented or resolved may or may not always have a complete strategy to be implored in order to eliminate the problem completely. In the case of stress amongst students in the University of Benin, conducted in the department of social work, this study concluded that stress cannot be totally eliminated but it can only be managed by using the coping or managing strategies that has been researched on.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

It is necessary to note that the objective of this study was to ascertain impact of stress on the academic performance of students using the department of social work students of the University of Benin as a case study.

In the preceding chapter, the relevant data collected for this study were presented, critically analyzed and appropriate interpretation given. Certain recommendations will be made which in the opinion of the researcher will be of benefits in addressing the challenges of stress on the academic performance of students.

5.1 Summary

This study is on the impact of stress on the academic performance of students using the department of social work of the University of Benin as a case study. Four objectives were raised which included: To ascertain the major sources of stress among students, to investigate the relationship between stressors and academic performance of students in the university of Benin, to examine the impact of stress on academic performance of students of the University of Benin sand to analyze the coping mechanisms employed by students in the University of Benin. The researchers used questionnaires as the instrument for the data collection. Descriptive Survey research design was adopted for this study. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentages and frequencies. .

5.2 Conclusion

Due to the negative impact of stress on student's life, such as ineffective studies, poor academic performance and health status, putting effective measures in place is a priority to their academic

success and general life. This is done by identifying the main causes of stress. Stress leads to absenteeism in class, reduces academic morale of students and also leads to failure in completing assignments on time. Hence, academic stress has an inverse relationship with students' performance. The more the stress, the less the student will perform at school. In addition to that, the study indicated that by educating students on how to manage stress, staying focus, having enough rest, exercising a lot and effective time management can help to manage stress in order to enhance students' academic performance.

A lot of research have been done on stress and it management and useful solutions given and we hope that, based on the analysis made, this thesis will be of great help to students to have an excellent academic life.

5.3 Recommendations

Coming to the conclusion that academic stress has a negative impact on students' academic performance; it is also pertinent to make certain recommendations and suggestions to help reduce and address academic stress on University students specifically those from the department of social work. Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

University authorities should ensure good academic environment for the students and ensure that there are measures to minimize academic stress are put in place, measures such as: appropriate course load, appropriate lecture hours, good lighting in lecture halls, proper lecture schedule, non- congested lecture halls, and reduce load on assignments. The institution should also conduct regular assessments of students needs as this will help to refine and adapt institutional support services and systems to evolving the needs of the students.

There should also be a balanced academic environment where there should be a structured course work and assessment to help to challenge students and not to overwhelm them; this can be done the inclusion of periodic breaks in the academic calendar as it will help students to recuperate properly. Management of tertiary institutions should create room for stress management courses in the school's curriculum and also, organize stress management forum and campaigns to help to address stress.

Management of Universities is to organize workshops and seminars in order to teach students practical stress management techniques such as time management, mindfulness practices and relaxation exercises. These will help students build resilience against stress. Academic advisors (level advisors or each level that is 100-400) are also to play an important and active role in guiding students to overcome academic challenges effectively.

Guidance programs such as seminars and public lectures on stress awareness should be conducted from time to time for students so that they can be adequately equipped with the necessary skills to handle academic stress-related issues. Students should be encouraged to make use of the counseling centers provided by the university to help them build a positive perception on academic stress. The University should also increase the availability of mental healthcare professionals. These professionals are meant to cater to students psychologically to help them cope with stress and their services should be more affordable or if possible, free so that students can access them whenever the need arises.

Lecturers and educators should focus on intrinsic motivation which will have greater impact on students in achieving high academic performance amidst academic stress. Creative games should be organized during lectures that have longer hours from 3-6 hours in order to

relief stress from students, refresh their minds and make them active in class. The University's management should create room for interaction between lecturers and students on how best to schedule intensive courses in the course in the semester's work.

To help students reduce financial stress, the federal government should introduced more measures to help like the NELFUND loan project of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, there should be more scholarships, grants and in-campus employment opportunities as this will help to relief students who are experiencing financial strain.

Good eating habits should be a form of priority to students in relation to stress management. Students are also advised to create time out of their busy schedules to rest as it has a great impact on their health. Having enough sleep and exercise is an important remedy to stress management.

Lastly, Sports competition like football, volleyball, tennis and other social activities like picnics, talent shows, and so on, should be organized for students in order to relieve them from distress and enhance their academic performance.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Study

The following suggestions are made for further study:

Researchers should research more on inter-disciplines in order to discover how different programs are perceived by students in terms of their stress levels, future research should use larger sample size from other institutions to validate these findings. More research should be done to examine the impact of academic stress on university student's performance as a whole in relation to other universities in order to investigate university activities that induce stress. Also,

an investigation should be done on the impact of academic stress on students' health. Finally, more studies can be carried out using longitudinal method to find the role culture and social class play in academic stress.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

QUESTIONNAIRE

**THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, USING SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT AS A CASE
STUDY**

Dear Respondent,

REQUEST TO FILL THE QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a student in the above department and institution. As part of the requirement for my B.sc programme, I am conducting a research on the topic: **THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, USING SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT AS A CASE STUDY**. I wish to appeal to you to assist this student by sparing few minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire; your responses will be confidential and used strictly for the purpose of this research work.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

DAMISA JENNIFER OFEH

SECTION A: Demographic characteristics of the respondent. Please tick as appropriate.

1. Gender: Male () Female () others ()
2. Age : 16-20() 21-24 () 25-29 ()
3. Level: 100 () 200 () 300 () 400 ()
4. Marital status: single () married () others()

SECTION B: Understanding of Stress

5. Do you know what stress is? Yes () No ()
6. If yes, explain what you understand by stress

7. Do you experience academic stress? Yes () No ()
8. How often do you experience stress during the course of the semester? Never ()
Rarely () Sometimes () Often () Always ()

SECTION C: Major Sources of Stress

9. What do you think are the major causes of stress in the academic journey of a student?

Please select all that apply.

Academic workload ()

Financial difficulties ()

Family responsibilities ()

Peer pressure ()

Examinations and grades ()

Others (please specify): _____

10. Do you experience stress from balancing academic work with other personal commitment (for example, work, family, social life)? Yes () No ()

11. If yes, please explain how this affects your academic responsibilities.

SECTION D: The Impact of Stress

12. Have you experienced any health issues like headaches, fatigues, digestive problems, and mental health issues due to stress? Yes () No ()

13. Have you ever been emotionally affected like being depressed, mood swings, and anxiety due to stress? Yes () No ()

14. Does stress have any negative effect on your academics? Yes () No ()

SECTION E: Coping Strategies

15. What strategies do you typically use to cope with academic stress? Please select all that applies

Time management (for example; study schedules) ()

Seeking help from lecturer or peers ()

Exercise or physical activity ()

Relaxation techniques (for example; yoga, self-meditation) ()

Talking to friends and family ()

Procrastination\avoidance ()

Others (please specify): _____

16. How effective do you find your coping strategies in managing stress?

Very effective ()

Moderately effective ()

Slightly effective ()

Not effective ()

17. Do you think you need more support or new strategies to cope with stress? Yes () No

()

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