

Stress and Stress Management Practices among Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Unizik), Awka, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined stress and stress management amongst undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Unizik), Awka, Nigeria. The person – environment fit theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. Cluster and simple sampling techniques were used for this research work, while the sample size used was 200. Data was collected via questionnaire and in-depth interview. Questionnaire data from the field was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The study revealed that there is no relationship between sex of a student and their awareness and knowledge of stress management techniques. Also there was no relationship between the academic level of students and their acceptance that stress influences academic performance in various ways. The researcher recommended that the school management should add stress management skills as part of the school curriculum, inform students in advance of the difficulties they might face and encourage them to develop their own strategies to achieve personal goals during the orientation week for new students. It was also recommended that close lecturer - student relationships be cultivated so that students can approach lecturers on personal issues to improve their academic performance. The paper concluded that when students are exposed to knowledge and skills relevant to stress management, they will effectively cope with school related stress, graduate with good grades and in turn, be in a position to contribute positively to national growth.

Keywords: Stress, stressor, stress management, undergraduates, stress reaction.

INTRODUCTION

Stress refers to physical or mental overexertion. It is a form of pressure or adverse influences and circumstances that disturbs the natural physiological balance of the body. Stress imposes unusual demands on an organism. Stress occurs when there are demands on the person which task or exceed the person's adjustive resources.

On the other hand, stressor constitutes of things that causes stress (i.e. factors that causes stress). Some conditions such as military combat, imprisonment, natural disasters (such as flood and fire, disabling injuries, incapacitating illness, terminal illness such as advanced cancer, or death of a loved one) are all regarded as universal stressors. Many environmental situations are not stressful for everyone and reactions to such stressors depend on the kind of person one is, for example, being evaluated in examinations. Generally, stimuli that cause stress are called stressor. They include emotional crisis, physical trauma, infection, physical restraint, extremes of heat or cold, etc.

Stress management involves the skill of controlling, directing or planning stress. Stress management strategies scales up an individual's psychological response to stress which is referred to as

'stress reaction'. Stress reaction often involves or stimulates behavioral attempts to deal with the stressor or with stress itself. Information or knowledge about stress, adopting correct attitude towards it and possession of skills in stress management among undergraduates (of any university) is very important for healthy, happy life and produces conducive environment for scholarship.

There have been many studies [1-4], which reported strong relationship between stress and undergraduates academic performance. Some individuals are more sensitive to some stressors than others, so the person's characteristics and behavior patterns must be looked at to determine their vulnerability to stress.

The experience of stress in human beings is universal, but there are also marked individual differences in how stress is experienced. According to Altmaier [5], stress has been known "to be the fuel the body uses to meet the challenges of our fast-paced modern life, although for others, it is the aversive by-product of such a life." Stress has been associated with major life events, daily life hassles, and changes in life. Stress is created by excessive environmental and

internal demands that need constant effort and adjustment.

The transition of moving to university and leaving home can be an added stressor for an undergraduate student. There are many first-year students who deal with being home-sick, whether it is mild and self-limiting or profound, creating grief and anxiety. There is a loss of control for students who are attending school and have to adapt to a different climate, new language, behavior, and social customs. The changes and transition are stressful for students because of this new environment. Fisher [2], notes that undergraduate students who are passive and mildly depressed prior to leaving home have been found to be those most likely to show raised level of homesickness following the move to university.

Many people recognize that stress comes in the form of negative tension that is caused by someone or something. Those who recognize stress as negative tension fail to realize that stress can generate a positive reaction to a stimulus. The positive reaction of stress can drive individuals to achieve and to test their potential to its fullest. Stress can be a positive aspect of learning. According to Robert and White [6], if students experience stress as a challenge, they can exhibit an increased capacity to learn. Many experiences distress rather than challenges which can lead students to feel threatened and helpless.

Academic work may reflect some of the high level of stress that undergraduate students have reported. For instance, most undergraduate students experience grade pressures that cause them to have problems with stress. Too much stress can interfere with a student's preparation, concentration and performance. Yet, positive stress can be helpful to students by motivating them out of weak performance.

Schafer [7] had observed that when individuals fall short of their own or others' expectations in schools, job, athletics or any other activity, one risks both external and internal costs, threat to academic or career prospects, disapproval, rejection, humiliation, guilt, and a low to the self-esteem. Thus, fear of failure can help motivate the students to prepare and perform well, yet, sometimes fear of failure can become extreme, which then creates unnecessary stress.

One of the main causes to academic stress is test anxiety. Most undergraduate students seem to emotionally vulnerable to examinations related stress. Increased anxiety from tests has a debilitating effect on their performance. When information generated by worrying about the test reduces the capacity available for performing the tasks, the result is that performance breaks down and the result becomes self-confirming [2].

Some of the effects students have from the stressors can be characterized by a lack of overt skills in handling a stressful situation. This can be marked also by poor performance or avoidance because students lack the skill to deal with these stressors. Stress management techniques usually filter out some of the stress and equip individuals to cope with stress situations.

There are a variety of coping skills that can be used to help students with stress. One of the first ways to begin coping and managing stress is, knowing what ones physical and emotional limits are in order to eliminate negative stress that may occur in life. This is also applicable to students. He or she needs to identify the cause of the stress. As noted by Greenberg and Valetutti [4] a strong psychological adjustment on the part of an individual is known to effectively help offset the dysfunctional effects of stress. The coping skills selected by an individual or a student to stress situation need to be techniques that are available and ought to be among one of the best coping skills that meet such needs.

As applicable to other universities, students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka also encounter some level of stress as they attend to their daily schedules as students. The level of stress in Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Unizik) has made the students to often jokingly refer to the school as "Uni-Stress". Against the above background, it is important to investigate the subject of stress and stress management among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, with a view to proffering relevant measures to address shortcomings.

Statement of the problem

Undergraduates of universities face some level of stress like every other person in the larger world. A number of problems arise from exposure of undergraduates to stress situations. Such problems include poor academic performance that could lead to school dropout, poor health of students, and inefficiency of individuals, mar the family happiness and often increase the intake of drugs, mental illness and other health related issues that often leads to degeneration. These problems are also experienced by students in the study area on account of stress and related issues. Stress has also been implicated in various forms of pathology including mental illness, psychosomatic disorders [e.g. ulcers], and break downs in industrial productivity, substandard school performance etc.

Unfortunately, despite these associated problems of stress, especially among students, proper management of stress by the undergraduates which will help them excel in their academic endeavors has not been given adequate attention by school authorities, the

government and nongovernmental organizations. Consequently, the individual's (students) psychological response to stress which is referred to as 'stress reaction' has remained naïve. Stress reaction often involves or stimulates behavioral attempts to deal with the stressor or with stress itself.

Everyone reacts to stress, but within given species, some individuals react more strongly or differently than others. One explanation to this is early exposure because experiences during development influence the way an individual reacts characteristically to stress on attaining adulthood.

Given the above problems and features of stress, this study was undertaken to examine the forms of stress encountered by undergraduates and their management strategies in at Nnamdi azikiwe, Awka, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

- To what extent is stress a problem encountered by undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
- What are the types of stress encountered by undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University?
- What are the effects of stress on undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
- To what extent does stress affect the academic performance of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
- In what way can stress among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka be controlled / managed?

Study Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated to guide the study.

- There is a significant relationship between the sex of respondents (undergraduates) and their awareness and knowledge of stress management techniques at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
- There is a significant relationship between the academic level of respondents (undergraduates) and their acceptance that stress influences academic performance of students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Learning and memory can be affected by stress. Although an optimal level of stress can enhance learning ability [8], too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems [9-13].

Recently stress has become an important topic in university circle as well as in our society. Many

scholars of behavioural science disciplines have carried out extensive research on stress and concluded that the topic needed more attention [14, 15]. According to Smith [16]; Tweed *et al.*, [17] and Stevenson and Harper [18] stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed. In addition, the adaptation to university life can bring a huge amount of stress those students to encounter.

The Extent to Which Stress is a Problem Encountered by Undergraduates

Undergraduates of universities of the world encounter stress as a problem. Living away from home, meeting new friends, challenging school work assignments, finding a job (for students who train themselves in school both regular and part-time programmes alike) and adjusting to residence hall life can make a student feel overwhelmed as discussed in [19]. According to Bessie Ong and Cheong [20] many discover themselves encountering stress and anxiety about a variety of new challenges. Their personal coping techniques may affect how they handle these stressors. Students suddenly experienced "new found" freedom never enjoyed before such as the lack of rigid school regulations and the absence dress codes which can be stressful. They have to make a lot of decision on their own.

Furthermore, Rees and Redfern [21], Ellison [14], Smith [16] and Bessie Ong and Cheong [20], noted that as students' progress through their university livelihood, they may discover the unique responsibilities of adult life becoming increasingly difficult. Challenging stimulus can lead to positive outcomes such as motivation and improved task performance while distress can result in anxiety, feelings of loneliness, nervousness, depression, social dysfunction, sleeplessness and even suicidal intention. Often times, stress management programs may not be created to address stress among university students. However, in order to create an effective stress management program, the stressor specific to university students must be identified.

Recently, a study by Richlin- Klonsky *et al.*, [22] found that stress is a physical and mental response to everyday demands, particularly those associated with change. It is normal for students to experience stress, especially as they adjust to university life at a highly competitive institution. However, if stress is severe and/or prolonged, it can reduce academic performance, interfere with a student's ability to participate in and contribute to campus life and increase the likelihood of substance abuse and other potentially changing behaviour.

Students in their teens are the one who are going through the transitional phrase, which is an

intermediate of childhood and adulthood. Tayularipin *et al.*, [23] argued that during the teen year, a lot of biological, physical, mental and emotional changes are happening, as well as the changes in responsibility and roles. In order to stabilize, the students are always confronted with problems and conflict, as in [24]. For some not capable of dealing with it, Newman [25], suggests the changes will create stress and tension to them. If this not dealt within the early stages, the student may experience mental problems. In addition, a student's life is subjected to different kinds of stressors such as the pressure of academics with an obligation of success, uncertain future and difficulties. Indeed, these students face social, emotional and physical and family problems which may affect learning ability and academic performance as discussed in [26, 27].

Conclusively, according to World Health Organization [28, 29], the young student population has always been vulnerable to stressful life condition especially in pursuit of higher professional education in a highly competitive environment. Brittany Gower *et al.*, [30] also noted that in attending a university, a student's experience of stress is likely to be a regular occurrence, given the nature of the transition that they are making.

Currently, as study by [31] defines stress as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them stress occurs. It is when individuals are confronted by a situation that they perceive as overwhelming and cannot cope up with. In additional [32], defines stress as a complex pattern of emotional state, physiological reactions and related. Thoughts in response to external demands they refer to the demands emanating from the environmental as stressor.

Types of Stress amongst Undergraduates

Types of school related stressors include academic performance, attendance, interactions with lecturers, and balancing one's leisure time with school [30]. Earlier inventories of school related stressors indicated nine types, including inadequate instructional methods, lecturer-student relationship, heavy academic work load, poor physical classroom, environments, and disorganization surrounding, academic assignments and schedules as well as discussed by [33].

In addition, research has consistently shown high levels of stress experienced by university students as in [34, 35]; study by [36]. Specifically, the study by Abouseric [36] investigated stress in undergraduates in relation to locus of control and self – esteem and found that they were experiencing a whole host of academic and life stressor studying for examinations and worrying about results, followed by having too much to do.

Stress has become an important issue in university environment as well as in the real society. A study carried out in multimedia university, Melaka, Malaysia in Malacca campus used the survey method, where 216 students responded to questionnaire. One of the findings showed that 89.7 percent students experienced stress; and 10.3 percent students' not experiencing stress. The finding of the study indicates that there are many factors influencing students' stress such as teaching quality, relationship with lectures, financial and environmental (campus and administrative) of the students which can impact on students life. The study further opined that investigating the different areas where stress occurs can help students learn ways cope with their stress.

Effect of Stress on Health and Academic Performance of Undergraduates

Stress has an influence on academic performance of undergraduates in the higher institutions of learning. Stressors included anything that may cause students to worry or it's a feeling of having too much to do with minimal time to do it; anything that may cause someone to get upset or frustrated and things that cause us to worry or become almost irritable as cited in Maureen [37].

Meanwhile, children are mostly affected by ongoing, enduring experiences, in particular those over which they have no control for example in an interview study by [38] with 342 children and adolescent aged 7 to 16years, 246 children (72%) reported stressful situations related school and performance oriented exercises or homework and 23 (36%) also reported situation related to social problems (as quarrels with peers or with parents).

Specifically, academic stress among undergraduates has long been researched on. Warn [39]. Identified the incriminated stressors to include too many assignments, competition with other students, failure, and lack of pocket money. In addition, other factors are poor relationships with other students or lecturers, family or problems at home, institutional [university level]. Further stressors are overcrowded lecture halls, semester system and inadequate resources to perform academic work [40, 41]. Also relevant is Campbell Jewett [42] and World Health Organization [28].

Academic performance was also found to be impaired for students who reported high levels of stress as in Leunley and Zane [43]; and Struthers *et al.*, [44]. Similarly, researchers at the University of Minnesota's Boynton Health Service surveyed 9,931 students at 14 different schools. Then they matched grade points averages with health problems such as stress, smoking and drinking as well as typical lifestyle choices such as gambling and excessive screen time. They found that

students with unhealthy behaviours had significantly lower GPAs. Stress was one of the biggest factors of the 69.9 percent (%) of students, who reported they were stressed, 32.9 percent said that stress was hurting their academic performance. However, the study found that ability to manage stress was equally important. Students who said they were able to handle their stress effectively performed much better than those who said they couldn't.

Physical, psychological, behavioural and academic difficulties were the cause of stress for university students. These students face social, emotional, and physical and family problems which may affect learning ability and academic performance as discussed in [26, 45].

A constant state of stress can affect all aspects of students' bodies; physical, mental, emotional, cognitive. Behavioural functions can go haywire under stress. Stress has a profound effect on your immune system and the individuals' state of equilibrium. Prolonged stress and sleepless nights can compromise health.

Stress in academic institutions can have both negative and positive consequences if not well managed [16-18]. Academic institutions have different work settings compared to non-academic and therefore one would expect the difference in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress in the two set up [46, 47].

It is important to the society that student should learn and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will in turn make them contribute positively to the development of the general economy of their nation. However, the intricate academic environment sometimes poses great medical problems to the student's lives [48-51] that tend to negate the positive gains that one would expect after completion of University.

"Stress is a common element in the lives of every individual regardless of place or cultural background" [52]. Stress has the ability to prevent students from being successful in their respective educational goals.

Theoretical Framework

The person environment – fit theory has been adopted as the theoretical platform for this research. The person – environment (R-E) fit theory was developed in the early 1970s by researchers at the University of Michigan, United States. The theory stated that strain develops when there is a discrepancy between the motive of the person and the supplies of the environment (job); or between the demands of the job.

Motive includes workload and job complexity [53-55]. The person – environment fit theory discusses the factors affecting how a person relate to the workplace environment; this can be through motivation, ability, and several other factors.

Stress is any situation that evokes negative thoughts and – feeling in a person. The same situation is not evocative or stressful for all people and all people do not experience the same negative thoughts and feeling when stressed.

One model that is useful in understanding stress among students is the person – environment – fit model. According to one variation of this model, stressful events can bring with them, a sense of competence and an increased capacity to learn. However, stress can elicit feeling of helplessness and a sense of loss. A critical issue concerning stress amongst students is its affect on learning. The Yerkes- Dodson law [56] postulates that individuals under low and high stress learn the least and that those under moderate stress learn the most. Field study and laboratory tastes support the notion that excessive stress is harmful to students' performance.

Stress is necessary to challenge students to learn. Approaches are needed that reduce the negative aspects of stress (distress) which lessen students' learning and performance. The key to reducing distress is providing students with a feeling of control, information about what to expect, and feedbacks regarding what can be done to improve their performance.

Good teaching cannot be over estimated as a tool for minimizing distress among students. To make good teaching possible, lecturers must be adequately remunerated and must not be stressed. This theory thus gives better understanding of stress and stress management amongst undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The design adopted for this research work was survey design. The area of the study was Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka located in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria. The University was named after Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe [57] the first president [ceremonial] of Nigeria. Nnamdi Azikiwe University has fourteen [14] faculties and the university's motto is 'Discipline, Self reliance and Excellence'.

This research studied regular undergraduates at the University during 2012/2013 session. According to the office of the Director for academic planning (DAP), the number of undergraduates as at 2012/2013 academic session was 22,123. The population of health

workers stood at 73, while that of security and student affairs staff which are classified as school management was 530. The total population was 22,726.

A sample size of 205 respondents was chosen to represent the population. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample. The process incorporated simple random sampling and cluster sampling techniques.

Two instruments, the questionnaire and interview schedule was used for the study, while the

statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was used to process quantitative data. Frequency distribution tables and percentage (%) was used for presentation while chi-square (X^2) tool was used for hypotheses testing.

RESULTS

Out of 200 questionnaires distributed by the researcher and research assistants, only 185 (95.5%) were correctly filled and consequently used for quantitative analysis.

Table-1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

S/N		Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	Distribution of respondents by sex	Male	88	47.6
		Female	91	49.2
		No response	6	3.2
		Total	185	100
2	Distribution of respondents by age	18-27	135	73.0
		28-37	38	20.5
		38-47	8	4.3
		No response	4	2.2
		Total	185	100.0
3	Distribution of respondents by religious affiliation	Christianity	133	71.9
		Islam	30	16.2
		Traditionalist	13	7.0
		No response	9	4.9
		Total	185	100.0
4	Distribution of respondents by marital status	Married	42	22.7
		Divorced	1	.5
		Separate	6	3.2
		Single	129	69.7
		No response	7	3.8
		Total	185	100
5	Distribution of respondents by programme of study	Regular	95	51.4
		CEP	85	45.9
		No response	5	2.7
		Total	185	100.0
6	Distribution of respondents by level of study	100 level	4	2.2
		200 level	42	22.7
		300 level	54	29.2
		400 level	47	25.4
		500 level	23	12.4
		600 level	11	5.9
		No response	4	2.2
		Total	185	1.5

Table-1 indicates that (47.6%) of the respondents were males, while (49.2%) of them were females. The mean age of respondents' was 18.6 years old.

Analysis of Research Questions

The researcher asked five (5) research questions to guide the course of the research work.

These questions are re-stated below and analyzed accordingly.

Research Question 1: "To what extent is stress a problem encountered by undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka." Tables 2 to 5 were used to provide answer to b the research question.

Table-2: Distribution of respondents (undergraduates) by their opinion on whether they understand the concepts of ‘stress’ and ‘stress management’

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	120	64.9
No	31	16.8
Don’t know	30	16.2
No responses	4	2.2
Total	185	100.00

Table-2 shows that 64.9% of the respondents claimed to have knowledge or understanding of the concepts of ‘stress’ and ‘stress management’. Data from the in-depth interview also showed that most undergraduates have knowledge of what constitutes stress but are unaware of how to manage stress. One of

the participants for the in-depth interview strongly argued that most undergraduates have experienced one type of stress or the other at Unizik. According to him, another name for Unizik is ‘uni-stress’, life as an undergraduate in the university I full of stress all the way.

Table-3: Distribution of respondents by their opinion on what activities generate stress situation upon students in the university

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Academic pressure with an obligation to succeed	35	18.9
Excessive home work	48	25.9
Unclear assignments	23	12.4
Relationship with friends and roommates	17	9.2
Difficulties of integration into the school systems	20	10.8
All of the above	38	20.5
No responses	4	2.2
Total	185	100.0

Table-3 shows that excessive homework was considered by many students as their major source of stress in the university. Other sources are as shown on the table. Data from the in-depth interview showed that stress experienced in the banking hall during payment of school fees is additional stress to undergraduates, coupled with their academic work. A female interviewee stated that “there are many processes which constitute stress for undergraduates at Unizik,

good examples are Admission clearance and Graduation clearance processes which are usually strenuous”.

Another participant interviewee added that “accommodation problem in Unizik presents an added stress to academic work load. There is also poor power supply, which makes it difficult for students to study efficiently at night”

Table-4: Distribution respondents by their opinion about the exact points or locations and activities at which undergraduates of Unizik encounter stress situation in their school environment

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
During admission Clearance	21	11.4
Payment of school fees and other levies in the banking hall	12	6.5
Lack of financial resources for student’s upkeeps	13	7.0
Reading for examination and quiz	40	21.6
Transportation system in the school	13	7.0
The transition of moving into university and leaving home	4	2.2
All of the above	81	43.8
No response	1	.5
Total	185	100.0

Table-4 shows that 43.8% of the respondents (which is the majority) experience stress at all the locations or activities listed in the table (ie during admission clearance, during payment of school fees and other levies in the banking hall; due to lack of financial

resources for student upkeep; stress when reading for examination; experience of stress due to transportation system in the school; experience of stress during the transition into the university and leaving home).

Table-5: Distribution of respondents by their opinion on how regularly they experience study related stress as undergraduates at Unizik.

Respondent	Frequency	Percent
Occasionally	110	59.5
In a greater measure	43	23.2
Not at all	1	.5
All the time	25	13.5
No response	6	3.2
Total	185	100.0

Table-5 shows that (59.5%) of the respondents experience recurrent stress occasionally, (23.25) of the respondents do not experience recurrent stress in a greater measure.

Research question 2: What are the common types of stress amongst undergraduates of Unizik?

Table-6 shows that most of the listed items constitute stress in differing degrees to the students.

Table-6: Distribution of respondent by their opinion about the types of stress amongst undergraduates of Unizik.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
- long lecture hours	52	28.1
- examination / quiz periods	46	24.9
- series of assignments from different lecturers	28	15.1
- over populated lecture halls	45	24.3
- disorganized transportation system within the school and around the school	7	3.8
- None of the above	6	3.2
- No response	1	.5
- Total	185	100.0

Researches Question 3: What are the effects of stress amongst undergraduates of Unizik?

Table-7 shows that majority of the respondents (29.7%) were of the view that all the listed outcomes were truly the effects of stress on students.

Table-7: Distribution of respondents by their opinion about the effect of stress.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
- lack of concentration	39	21.1
- frustration / low esteem	35	18.9
- mental illness disorder	11	5.9
- Poor academic performance	31	16.8
- Increased number of school dropout	12	6.5
- All of the above	55	29.7
- No responses	2	1.1
- Total	185	100.0

Research Question 4: Does stress affect the academic performance of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Table-8 shows that majority of the respondents (62.7%) agree that stress generally influences the academic performance of students at Unizik.

Table-8: Distribution of respondents on whether they agree that stress influences academic performance of students of unizik.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Not agreed	6	3.2
Agreed	116	62.7
Strongly agreed	58	31.4
Not at all	2	1.1
Undecided	1	.5
Not response	2	1.1
Total	185	100.0

Table-9: Percentage Responses on the Extent to Which They Think Stress Affects Students Academic Performance

Responses	Frequency	Percent
To a greater measure	82	48.6
Partially	90	44.3
Not at all	1	.5
No response	12	6.5
Total	185	100.0

Table-9 shows that 48.6% of the respondents believed that stress affects student’s academic performance to a greater measure. Data from the in-depth interview did agree to the fact that stress generally influences the academic performance of

students of Unizk. A female participant in the in-depth interview stated that “*stress destabilizes the student in such a way that the student would be unable to concentrate in their studies, the result is poor result at the end of the day*”,

Table-10: Distribution of respondents by their opinion on how stress affects the student academic performance of undergraduates at Unizik.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Inability to concentrate while studying due to stress	14	7.6
Inability to assimilate what is being studied due to stress	51	27.6
Low grades/Poor academic performance	54	29.2
All of the above	64	34.6
No responses	2	1.1
Total	185	100.0

Table-10 shows that majority of the respondents (34.6%) believe that all the effects listed on the table arise from stress and affect academic performance of students negatively.

Research Question 5: In what way can stress among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University be checked / managed?

Table-11: Distribution of respondents by their opinion about which way stress could be managed

Responses	Frequency	Percent
- improving campus mental health services	12	6.5
- organizing peer counseling an self -help groups	41	22.2
- informing students in advance of what difficulties they might face as students	25	13.5
- Stress management skills being introduced into our school system	39	21.1
- All of the above	67	36.2
- No response	1	0.5
- Total	185	100.0

Table-11 shows that 36.2% of the respondents, constituting the majority believed that all the options provided are the best way by which stress could be managed while (0.5) of the respondents did not indicate their options.

Table-12 shows that 65.4% of the respondents have not being educated / enlightened on how stress can be managed among undergraduates.

Table-12: Percentage responses on whether education /enlightenment programme for stress management were provided to undergraduates at Unizik?

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	59	31.9
No	121	65.4
No response	5	2.7
Total	185	100.0

Table-13: percentage responses on whether they think stress management skills are necessary for undergraduates at Unizik

Responses	Frequency	Percent
- Yes	174	94.1
- No	6	3.2
- No response	5	2.7
- Total	185	100.0

Table-13 shows that majority of the respondents (94.1%) were of the opinion that stress management skills are a necessary for undergraduate students of Unizik.. Data from the in-depth interview did agree with what was gathered by the quantitative one, that there is a need for stress management skills for undergraduate students in Unizik. One of the male interviewees asserted that “if the undergraduates of unizik are educated or enlightened on how best to manage school related stress, the students are likely to

attain greater height and better grades. Also, if stress management skills are introduced into the school curriculum, the use of ‘uni-stress’ by students to jokingly describe their university will no longer be necessary. This is because every student would have had knowledge of how best to manage any stress that comes to them as undergraduates. The one week orientation given to students upon their admission is grossly inadequate.

Table-14: Percentage response on the best way to manage stress among the undergraduates of Unizik?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Through emphasis laid on visiting the course advisers of each course for proper understanding of each course	48	25.9
Bursary assistance to financially challenged students	23	12.4
Provision of more buses for easy transportation to lecturers and examination halls for students	23	12.4
Creating a friendly lecture/students relationship so that student can approach lecturers on personal issues.	34	18.4
It could also be managed through interactive session between the student and the school authority.	54	29.2
No response	3	1.6
Total	185	100.0

Table-14 shows that respondents rated interactive sessions between school authority and students as one of the best approaches to addressing stress.

Test of Hypotheses

The research tested the two hypotheses postulated for this study. The hypotheses are re-stated and results of tests reported below:

Hypothesis 1: “There is a significant relationship between sex of respondents and their awareness/knowledge of stress management techniques among undergraduates of Unizik Awka”.

Test result showed that the computed value of chi square is 5.700 while the table value of chi-square at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom (df) of 4 is 9.488. Since the computed chi square value is less than the table values the researcher rejected the alternative hypothesis. It follows therefore that there is no significant relationship between sex of respondent and their awareness/knowledge of stress management techniques among undergraduates of Unizik Awka. This implies that sex does not influence

awareness/knowledge of stress management techniques among undergraduates of Unizik Awka.

Hypothesis 2: “There is a significant relationship between academic level of respondents and their acceptance that stress influences academic performance of undergraduates in Unizik Awka”

Test result showed that the computed value of Chi square is 14.821 while the value of chi- square at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom (df) of 20 is 31.410. Since the calculated chi-square value is less than the table value, the researcher rejected the alternative hypothesis. It implies that there is no significant relationship between academic level of respondents and their acceptance that stress influences academic performance of undergraduates in Unizik Awka. It follows that academic level of respondents has no influence on acceptance that stress influences academic performance of undergraduates in Unizik Awka.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study found that there is stress in greater measure amongst undergraduates of Unizik, whereas

there is no stress management skills/techniques taught to the students. The common types of stress at Unizik include the pressure of academic with an obligation to succeed, excessive home work, unclear assignments, relationship with friends and roommates, difficulties of integration into the school system. Other forms of stress are over crowded lecture halls, poor relationship with others or lecturers, problems at home, institutional (university level) semester system, inadequate resources to perform academic work etc. All these are similar to the positions of Ongori [40, Awino and Agolla [58], Jewett [59] and World Health Organization [28].

Academic performance was also observed to be impaired for students who reported high levels of stress; this is also in line with the studies of Lumley and Zane [43] and Struthers *et al.*, [44]. These students of Unizik face social, emotional, physical and family problems which may affect learning ability and academic performance as discussed in Fish and Nies [26] and Chew Graham *et al.*, [45], Ellison [14], Tiweed *et al.*, [60] and Richlin-Klonsky *et al.*, [22].

It was further observed that undergraduates of Unizik experience intense stress during processes of admission/graduation clearance, payments of school fees and other levies in the banking halls, lack of financial resources for students up keeping, reading for examinations and quiz, transition or moving into university and leaving home. This finding aligns with views of Salpanis [61] which stated that the young population has always been vulnerable to stressful life condition especially in pursuit of higher professional education in a highly competitive environment. Similarly, Brittany Gower *et al.* opine that the experience of stress is likely to be a regular occurrence in the lives of both new and old university undergraduates given the nature of the transition that they are making.

On how to manage stress amongst undergraduates of Unizik, the need for school authority involvement was strongly canvassed by respondents. The school authority can help reduce the stress of the undergraduate by including stress management as a course in general studies (GS) and during fresher's orientation in the university, at induction into their various departments etc

This study concludes that stress amongst undergraduates at Unizik with its adverse effect on students' learning and academic performance calls for adequate attention. This is to mitigate failure in examination, mental disorder and high rate of school dropout which could have negative effects on the state and nation at large. Consequently, stress management techniques should as a matter of priority, be provided to Unizik students to aid learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made in order to reduce / manage stress amongst undergraduate students. They include

- Students should be informed in advance of what difficulties they might face and encourage them to develop their own strategies to achieve personal goals during the orientation week of fresher's.
- The school management should add stress management skills into the school curriculum or through seminars and workshops or through interactive session between the student and the school authorities to enlighten and educate undergraduates on stress management.
- Improving campus mental services and organizing peer counseling and self-help group can be of help in managing stress.
- The school management should create a friendly lecture / student's relationships so that students can approach lectures, quiz and examinations with some measure of ease.
- It is important to the society, that students should learn and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will in turn make them contribute positively to the development of the general economy of the nation.
- Finally, before these students leave their high/secondary school, it is important to inculcate into them stress management skills so that they would graduate from their secondary schools with the fore knowledge of stress management skills, there would not be a challenge of stress on gaining admission into the higher institution.

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