Innovations

Students Assessment of Causes and Management of Stress in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated causes and management of stress among students in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study which serves as sample comprises 982 final year students of the Faculty of Education and Faculty of the Social Sciences. The instrument for data collection was an 85-item questionnaire which was validated by experts. The instrument was subjected to reliability. The internal consistency of the instrument was established by administering 155 copies of the questionnaire to final year students at Kwara State University, Malete in the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences. The data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha with the following results coefficients. Research question one 0.93, research question two 0.90 and research question three 0.88. A total of 1024 copies of the questionnaires were administered to final year students during their second semester examination 2019/2020 as 982 copies of the questionnaire were fully completed and returned (86% return rate). Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The finding on causes of stress among students are excess workload from the teachers, higher speed demand of the job from teachers, meeting too many deadlines, overcrowding classrooms, excess noise, poor office equipment. The findings on effects of stress are fast breathing, dry mouth, dry throat, lack of appetite, cold, back aches, dizziness, unable to fall asleep, fidgeting, while the findings on management of stress strategies are getting help from others, involvement of students in decision-making, the students may negotiate with teachers. It was recommended that excess workload should not be given to the students by their lecturers to avoid breakdown in their memories and students should sleep well at night atleast ten (10) hours daily.

Keywords: 1.Stress, 2.Symptoms, 3.Management, 4.Students, 5.University

Introduction

Stress is a process whereby human organisms act in response to internal difficulty or challenges. Stress impacts on the brain and the whole human anatomy such that failure to effectively coordinate and adapt to a stressful situation can result in brain malfunctioning, physiological problem, anxiety and pain among others (Hellhammer&Hellhammer, 2008). When the body is under stress, the adrenal gland releases corticosteroids, which are converted to cortisol in the blood stream that can affect the [proper functioning of the body system. (Longe, 2019). Bartwal and Singh, (2014) observe that stress is experienced when an individual's expectation surpasses their ability to cope.

Stress has negative consequences even though appropriate stress has been known to have positive result (Freedy and Hobfoll, 2017). There is stress in everyday life and living experience of individuals across the world since stress is required for the effective functionality of the human being.Stress has no age restriction and anyone can be at risk of it. Modern life of learning, work, social interaction, and tight schedules places demands on the human mind and body often to its detriment.

Stress results in health and social problems of anxiety and uneasiness that may directly or indirectly affect the outcome of work and responsibility (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). It can also have negative effect on an individual's mental health, state of mind and cognition capacities (Crockett, Iturbide, Torres, McGinley, Raffacili, and Carlo, 2007). Studies show that this social behaviour frequently occurs in children, teenagers, and young adults in tertiaryinstitutions (Caldera, Pulido, and Martinez, 2007; American College of Health Association, 2005).

Stress has been known as one of the fastest killers of man (Longe andSadoh, 2019). Trevor's (2009), study revealed that a certain amount of pressure is required to work effectively. However, stress occurs when the pressure one is exposed to is beyond what he can cope with. Hussein and Hussein (2006) observe that effective performance is difficult in anenvironment with extreme pressure where students or teachers experience aburden, where they are forced to do tasks beyond their capacity. Longe and Sadoh (2019) observed that stress is an obstacles to learning and comprehension in school.Chao (2012) notes that the institution of higher education particularly at the entry and graduating level presents more stress to students as a. result of transition experiences from secondary school to the university and from university to the world of work.

There seems a relationship between learning and stress among university students that affects their performance. Some of the causes of stress range from high expectations of parents and instructors over their wards and students performance in examinations to the challenges associated with coping with learning tasks (Hong and Zhang, 2011; Rajesekari, 2013). The causesof stress for most students and teachers include changes in the living environment, change in sleeping habits, combining work with studies, poor consumption habits, lack of adequate vacation and break, low grade and financial difficulties. Other causes are self-imposed, interpersonal difficulties with faculty members, peers and social relationships, overbearing self- expectation, distraction and frustration, reference group perception among others.

Peretomode (2008) maintains that factors associated with the job and the organization itself are called intrinsic job stressors. These include: work overload, work underload, High speed demand, Low speed demand, The nature of the job, poor or uncomfortable physical and working conditions, Information overload, ineffective communication, role conflict, role ambiguity, leader's behaviour, lack of job security, lack of structure for retirement, under-promotion/lack of career development, over-promotion (and the person has low self-efficacy, a feeling of not being able to perform effectively in the new position), poor interpersonal relationship (resulting from misunderstandings, conflicts and interpersonal conflicts), conflicting demands, over restrictive work rules, regulations and control systems, imbalance between demand and capacity, inadequate authority (not being in control), ineffective organizational design, unrealistic salary, competition for scarce resources, unpopular and unacceptable executive orders, lack of career progress or career progress that is too slow or too fast, responsibility for people and for things such as budgets, equipment and buildings and job performance evaluation process. Longe's (2019) study revealed the following as causes of stress among students in excess work load: personal issues, prolonged lecture hours, unfavourable learning conditions, too much assignment, emotional issues, challenges that come with each day, catching up with classes and study environment.

Stress affects the proper functional capacity of most students and neutralizes their ability to biologically and socially defend themselves (James, Omoaregba, and Igberase, 2011). Most students combine a busy schedule along with education resulting in anxiety and depression. This can result in sickness and other forms of illness (Awofodu and Emi, 2011). Stress among higher institution students can reduce their ability to concentrate. Stress negatively affects the productive level of students.Students have been known to breakdown during examination, faint, collapse and in extreme cases become mentally imbalance as a result and this can lead to death of students. The effect of stress may persist for several days or months as the case may be. The chance of getting normal physiological therapy and coherent alternation from stress is challenging. A stressed student tends to have a hard time coping with learning and maintaining productive academic focus. Stress creates an atmosphere of inability to cope

with class assignment, group or school work and also to maintain adequate social and emotional consistency in an academic session.Stress causes students to bum out. The outcome is generally one of poor social adaptation and relationship among students. Students' roles in school, either alone or in combination with others contribute to their wellbeing positively or negatively.

Research findings have revealed that there is positive relationship between stress and performance. George and Jones (1999), Mullins (1996), and Hanson (1985) pointed out that increasing stress in a constructive manner to increase efforts, stimulates creativity and encourage diligence in one's work and efficiency up to a point, a critical point.Excessive high stress may be counter-productive as it can break down a person's physical and mental systems and thus impair the individual's performance.

Peretomode(2008) identified the following stress management strategies:Involvement of workers in making decisions that affect them and their jobs, providing workers with job security in order to eliminate stressors that are related to economic insecurity, establishment of company Day-Care Centre. Use of flexible work schedules to help employees cope with conflicts between work and personal life such as a sick child.Use of job sharing method whereby two or more workers are responsible for a single job and agree on how to divide the job tasks and working hours. One worker might perform the job in the mornings and another in the afternoons; workers might alternate days, or each worker might be accountable for particular tasks and assignments. Job sharing enables workers to cope with competing demands on their time from work and personal responsibilities (George and Jones, 1999), provision of on-site exercise facilities that workers can use before and after work, provision of counselling services to employees to help workers reduce stressful feelings and emotions resulting from alcoholism, drug abuse and family problems, Improved working conditions for workers and periodic medical examinations of employees and treatment of stress related ailments.

Statement of the Problem

In every organizational setting, people interact daily and work towards the achievement of desired result. In tertiary institutions, students are admitted yearly.It is the expectation of the students that they graduate on time in order to have a good living. Students are expected to have good results and this has led the students to read daily, overnight reading, excess assignments from the teachers in order to complete their work schedules. Students find it difficult to cope with their examination work load from the teachers. This coupled with the desire to make good grades might negatively or positively affect their performance and cause stress. Stress is emotional imbalance in the students. The problem under study therefore is students assessment of causes and management of stress in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the students on causes and stress management strategies in Delta State University, Abraka. Specifically, the objectives are:

- To find out the causes of students stress
- To determine how stress affects students
- To determine the stress management strategies

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the causes of stress among students in Delta State University, Abraka?
- What are the effects of stress among students in Delta State University, Abraka?
- What are the stress management strategies among students in Delta State University, Abraka?

Method

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design which investigated causes and management of stress among final year students of Delta State University Abraka 2019-2020 academic session.The population of the study which serves as sample comprises982 final year students of the Faculty of Education and Faculty of the Social Sciences. The instrument for data collection was an 85-item questionnaire which was divided into two parts. Part A contains four(4) items of demographic variables of the respondents such as name of faculty, sex, department and age while Part B contains 84 items which are based on the research questions. Research question one contains 26 items, research question two contains 28 items while research question three contain 23 items. The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The face and content validity of the questionnaire was carried out by 9 experts,3 in Measurement and Evaluation, 3 in Sociology and Psychology and 3experts in Business education at the Delta State University, Abraka. All their suggestions were noted and effected before the final copy of the questionnaire wasproduced. The internal consistency of the instrument was established by administering 155copies of the questionnaire were administered tofinal year students at Kwara State University, Malete in the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences. A total of 1024 copies of the questionnaire were administered and 982 were fully completed and returned. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha with the following results coefficients. Research question one 0.93, research question two 0.90 and research question three 0.88.Date wereanalysed using mean and standard deviation. The options in the questionnaire are weighted as follows Strongly Agreed (4 points), Agreed (3 points), Disagreed (2 points) and strongly disagreed (1 point). In decision rule, any item with a mean score of 2.5 and above was regarded as agree while any item with a mean score of less than 2.5 was regarded as disagree.

Results

The results of the research are discussed as follows

1. What are the causes of stress among students in Delta State University, Abraka?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings of Respondents on Causes of Stress among Studentsin Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria   N = 982

S/N	Items on Causes of Stress among students	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Personal issues	982	2.96	0.88	Agreed
2	Prolong lecturer hours	982	2.88	0.83	Agreed
3	Unfavourable learning conditions	982	3.01	0.96	Agreed
4	Too much assignment	982	2.69	0.89	Agreed
5	Emotional issues	982	2.95	0.74	Agreed
6	Challenges that come with each day	982	3.22	0.89	Agreed
7	Catching up classes	982	3.45	0.74	Agreed
8	Study environment	982	2.99	0.82	Agreed
9	Excess workload from the teachers	982	3.58	0.80	Agreed
10	Higher speed demand of the job from teachers	982	3.64	0.77	Agreed
11	Meeting too many deadlines	982	3.62	0.87	Agreed
12	Overcrowding classroom	982	3.50	0.90	Agreed
13	Excess noise	982	3.53	0.93	Agreed
14	Poor office equipment	982	3.57	0.79	Agreed
15	Overloading of information for students	982	3.25	0.78	Agreed
16	Ineffective communication from teachers	982	3.24	0.83	Agreed
17	Lack of leadership behaviour	982	3.07	0.94	Agreed

18	Inadequate security in the classroom	982	3.43	0.97	Agreed
19	Poor continuous assessment	982	3.37	0.86	Agreed
20	Poor interpersonal relationship	982	2.98	0.91	Agreed
21	Conflicting demand from teachers	982	2.78	0.72	Agreed
22	Restrictive work rules	982	2.95	0.78	Agreed
23	Poor communication network	982	2.76	0.78	Agreed
24	Ineffective organizational design	982	2.99	0.80	Agreed
25	Poor instructional facilities	982	3.01	0.87	Agreed
26	Unacceptable executive orders	982	2.73	0.90	Agreed
27	Fear of dropout	982	2.89	0.93	Agreed
28	Too much responsibility for students	982	2.83	0.79	Agreed
28	Poor performance of teachers	982	2.65	0.78	Agreed
29	Temperature extreme	982	2.67	0.83	Agreed
30	Poor lighting	982	2.55	0.94	Agreed
31	Unsafe classroom condition	982	2.96	0.97	Agreed
32	Excessive teaching hours	982	2.45	0.71	Agreed
33	Low speed demand	982	2.65	0.86	Agreed
	Grand mean		**2.76**	**0.83**	Agreed

In table 1, items 1 to 26 have mean score of 2.5 and above. Therefore,all the items are causes of stress among students in the university. The grand mean of 2.76 also confirmed it.

Research Question 2

What are the effects of stress among students in Delta State University, Abraka?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings of Respondent's Symptoms of Stress among Students in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria N = 982

S/N	Items oneffect of stress	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
34	Fast breathing	982	3.62	0.87	Agreed
35	Dry mouth	982	3.50	0.90	Agreed
36	Dry throat	982	3.53	0.93	Agreed
37	Lack of appetite	982	3.57	0.79	Agreed
38	Cold	982	3.25	0.78	Agreed
39	Back aches	982	3.24	0.83	Agreed
40	Dizziness	982	3.07	0.94	Agreed
41	Unable to fall asleep	982	3.43	0.97	Agreed
42	Fidgeting	982	3.22	0.78	Agreed
43	Breathlessness without exertion	982	3.37	0.83	Agreed
44	Headaches	982	2.98	0.94	Agreed
45	Boredom	982	2.78	0.97	Agreed
46	Depression	982	2.95	0.71	Agreed
47	Absence of sense of honour	982	2.76	0.86	Agreed
48	Loss of concentration	982	2.99	0.72	Agreed
49	Poor judgment	982	3.01	0.78	Agreed
50	Absence job learning satisfaction	982	2.73	0.78	Agreed
51	Change in usual communications	982	3.58	0.80	Agreed
52	Neglect of responsibility	982	3.64	0.77	Agreed
53	Poor decision-making	982	3.62	0.87	Agreed
54	Carelessness	982	3.50	0.90	Agreed
55	Reduced innovation yawning	982	3.53	0.93	Agreed

56	Procrastination	982	3.25	0.86	Agreed
57	Feeling of ugliness	982	3.24	0.72	Agreed
58	Inability to show true feeling	982	3.07	0.78	Agreed
59	Eating too less	982	3.45	0.71	Agreed
60	Lack of interest	982	2.78	0.86	Agreed
	Grand mean		**2.88**	**0.87**	Agreed

In table 2, items 27 to 53 have mean score of 2.5 and above. Therefore,all the items are effects of stress among students in the university. The grand mean of 2.88 also confirmed it.

Research Question 3

What are the stress managementstrategies among students in Delta State University, Abraka**,** Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings of Respondent's Stress Reduction Strategies amongStudents in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria   N = 982

S/N	Items on Management of Stress	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
61	Getting help from the others	982	3.62	0.87	Agreed
62	Involvement of students in decision-making	982	3.50	0.90	Agreed
63	The students may negotiate with teachers	982	3.53	0.93	Agreed
64	Providing students with learning security	982	3.57	0.79	Agreed
65	Use of flexible work schedules	982	3.25	0.78	Agreed
66	Use of job-sharing method	982	3.24	0.83	Agreed
67	Provision of on-site exercise facilities	982	3.07	0.94	Agreed
68	Provision of counselling services	982	3.08	0.83	Agreed
69	Improve learning conditions	982		0.70	Agreed
70	Periodic medical examinations	982	3.18	0.68	Agreed
71	Avoid unrealistic deadlines	982	2.88	0.78	Agreed
72	Eat well-balanced nutrients meals	982	2.81	0.73	Agreed
73	Doing the things, you like	982	3.14	0.70	Agreed
74	Good management of your time rationally	982	2.79	0.77	Agreed
75	Be positive in your thinking	982	2.54	0.62	Agreed
76	Avoid bad stimulants	982	2.86	0.74`	Agreed
77	Avoid unpleasant situations	982	2.88	0.73	Agreed
78	Focus on your good qualities	982	2.68	0.71	Agreed
79	Avoid unnecessary competition	982	2.76	0.74	Agreed
80	Recognize your limit	982	2.70	0.80	Agreed
81	Listening to music of your interest	982	2.46	0.77	Agreed
82	Opening up to trusted persons	982	2.58	0.87	Agreed
83	Engaging in behaviour of self-control	982	2.66	0.90	Agreed
84	Loving others as oneself	982	2.78	0.93	Agreed
	Grand mean		**2.82**	**2.77**	Agreed

In table 3, item 54 to 77 has mean score of 2.5 and above.Therefore,all the items are stressmanagement strategies among students in the university. The grand mean of 2.82 also confirmed it.

Discussion

The findings on causes of stress among students are excess workload from the teachers, higher speed demand of the job from teachers,meeting too many deadlines,overcrowding classrooms, excess noise, poor office equipment, overloading of information for students, ineffective communication from teachers, lack of leadership behaviour,inadequate security in the classroom, poor continuous assessment,

poor interpersonal relationship, conflicting demand from teachers, restrictive work rules, poor communication network, ineffective organizational design, poor instructional facilities, unacceptable executive orders, fear of dropout, too much responsibility for students, poor performance of teachers, temperature extreme, poor lighting, unsafe classroom condition, excessive teaching hours   and low speed demand. This study is consistent with earlier students of Peretomode (2008), Chao (2012) which identified causes of stress among students.

The findings on effects of stress are fast breathing, dry mouth, dry throat, lack of appetite, cold, back aches, dizziness, unable to fall asleep, fidgeting, breathlessness without exertion, headaches, boredom, depression, absence of sense of honour, loss of concentration, poor judgment , absence job learning satisfaction, change in usual communications, neglect of responsibility, poor decision-making, carelessness, reduced innovation yawning, procrastination, feeling of ugliness, inability to show true feeling , eating too less and lack of interest. This study is in consonance with Peretomode's and Peretomode's (2008) study on effect symptoms of stress among workers in an organization.

The findings on stress management strategies are getting help from others, involvement of students in decision-making, the students may negotiate with teachers, providing students with learning security, use of flexible work schedules, use of job sharing method, provision of on-site exercise facilities, provision of counselling services, improved learning conditions, periodic medical examinations, avoid unrealistic deadlines , eat well-balanced nutrients meals, doing the things you like, good management of your time rationally, be positive in your thinking, avoid bad stimulants, avoid unpleasant situations, focus on your good qualities, avoid unnecessary competition, recognize your limit, listening to music of your interest, opening up to trusted persons, engaging in behaviour of self-control and loving others as oneself

Conclusion

Stress is inevitable in human endeavor and in organizations. It is therefore imperative that students should be able to know the causes of stress, effects and strategies to manage it in order to avoid crisis in the school system.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the study:

- Excess workload should not be given to the students by their lecturers to avoid breakdown in their memories.
- Students should sleep well at night atleast ten (10) hours daily in Nigerian Universities.
- Students should have sufficient rest after much reading in Nigerian Universities.
- Students should eat balanced diet to build up worn out cells in their body.
- Students should regularly visit counsellors for professional guidance.

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