

## **Stress Factors and Sustainable Development among Undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Stress is a serious problem that students tend to contend with in the course of their academic pursuit. The study investigated stress factors and sustainable development among undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. Descriptive research of the survey type design was adopted for this study. The population of the study consisted of all the students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. Sample for the study was made up of 450 students selected through simple random sampling technique from the six faculties in the university. Questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. One research question was raised and three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in the academic stress of undergraduates of AAUA. The Second hypothesis showed that there was a significant difference in the financial stress of undergraduates of AAUA. The third hypothesis also indicated that there was a significant difference in the psychosocial stress of undergraduates of AAUA. It was recommended that stress among the undergraduates should be handled through the help of counselors, financial assistance through the university work study. Adequate counseling should be made available to teach interpersonal skills and social adjustment programme should be made available for undergraduates.

**Keywords:** Stress, Sustainable Development, Undergraduates, Academic Stress, Financial Stress, Psychosocial Stress.

### **1. Introduction**

Stress is an essential component of everyday lives of the human beings. Man is confronted with a kind of stress or another. But the level of stress and the stressor among different people varies from one person to another. The mode of coping with it also varies from one person to another. From observation, it appears that certain level of stress are necessary for virtually everyone to cope with life challenges but when it seems excessive or going to the extreme, then it could be dangerous for human survival. According to Berstein, Penner, Clark-Stewart and Roy (2006) stress is basic to life, no matter how wealthy, powerful, attractive, or happy one might be. Students in their different institutions tend to contend with one level of stress or another. Exposure of an individual student to stress may make such students to see it as a stepping stone to greatness or challenges that could mar his/her development in life. Students in their different institutions are confronted with various categories of stressful conditions ranging from academic stress, financial, psychological and social stress. There are some students who had gone through these stressors and were able to cope successfully while some had given in to such stressors and developed depression and other health related challenges.

Stress is referred to as the body response to psychological perception of pressure. Stress can lead to hormonal changes and/or response in the body. Stress becomes life threatening or dangerous to the body, when it is prolonged or extended or unexpected (Samson-Akpan, John, Edet & Ella, 2017). Omoniyi (2013) defined stress as an organism's total response to environmental demands and pressure. Stress is also a necessary and unavoidable concomitant of daily living because without some stress one may not be able to cope as a living creature. To be successful as an individual, a level of stress is virtually necessary with such challenge. One may be forced to do some extra things which ordinarily one may not be ready to do under-relaxed mood. Devi and Mohan (2015) opined that stress is a mental as well as a physical phenomenon that occurs from cognitive appraisal of stimulation from individual interaction with the environment. Stress is said to be part and parcel of the human life (Kumar &

Hegde, 2012.; Kumar & Bhumar, 2013). Akande Olowonirejuaro and Okwara-Kalu (2014) stated that stress is a normal part of life and that it can come from any situation or thought that can make one frustrated, angry or anxious.

For students who are undergraduates in the universities stress may be caused by failure in academics, sports, financial problems or relationship problems with close friends, lecture venues, lecture time-table, assignment, lecture hours and note-taking. Events that bring about stress are called stressors (Elias, Ping & Abdullahi, 2011). According to Samson-Akpan, John, Edet and Ella (2017) college students are faced with many obstacles which they have to overcome for optimal performance. It is observed that there are some perceived stress in college students which sometimes takes the form of academic stress that involves multiple stressor the likes of academic demands which includes grades, paper assignments, physical health and health related issues and other self-imposed type of stressors (Pamela, 2009). Shamsuddin et al (2013) reported that there are high prevalence of stress anxiety and depression 27.09%, 47.1% and 27.1% respectively in certain group of Turkish students. They also found that females were having high level of stress, anxiety and depression and it was attributed to biopsychosocial factors that included factors like social roles and physiological status. Taha, El-Shereef, Althobaiti and Algethami (2017) also observed an increasing stress among university students in the last few years and this, probably linked to many negative academics, emotional and health problems among university undergraduate students. The important academic stress faced by most students is attributed to fatigue while reading, poor study habits such as poor time management, sleeplessness while studying for examinations and course work which may eventually lead to poor academic performance. (Baldwin, Wilkinson & Barkley 2009).

Poor finance could constitute another level of stress among university undergraduates. Students often need money to meet so many financial obligations while they are in the school. The payment of school fees is a necessity that students are confronted with per session or yearly. For instance, increase in the school fees most especially in Adekunle Ajasin University recently has made many students to abandon school while some are often in search of money for the better part of the semester. Hence, such students hardly have time to attend lectures and may probably be in the lecture room some few days to the commencement of examinations. Parents and guardians who are supposed to be of great assistance to these students financially may not be able to do so due to the fact that they are also handicapped financially and probably faced with other financial obligations/problems elsewhere. The increasing level of unemployment, retrenchment and non-payment of salaries is not making parent to discharge their responsibilities to their children and wards. This is becoming a very serious stressor to the students in the higher institutions. This is also supported by some studies that indicated that sex and socio-economic statuses are the most important predictors of these disorders (Mirza & Jenkins, 2004) Samson-Akpan et al (2013) also asserted that parental low socio-economic status could also contribute to depression, anxiety and stress among students.

Psychosocial is another important stressor that many university students tend to contend with while they are in school. The type of friend that a student relates or interacts with could either make an individual to be stable emotionally or destabilised. Some students that are properly brought up in terms of training and discipline in a good home may start to relate with wayward and troublesome students. This could be a great source of stress and distress for such students. Khamar and Kaur (2011) observed that students grappled with social, emotional, physical and family problems which may interfere with their academic performance. Some of these students get involved in relationship with the opposite sex that could become detrimental to their academic performance. Samson-Akpan et al (2013) vividly discussed the importance of social support in assisting students to cope with stress in the university. Fresh students coming into the university need this type of social support system to be able to cope with different stressors in their new environment. Social support is concerned with the actual care an individual received or assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network (Samson-Akpan et al 2013). Fair brother (2011) observed that social support is important for maintaining proper physical and mental health. It is noted that positive social support of high quality can build resilience to stress, help protect against developing traumatic induced disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and reduce medical morbidity and mortality (Ozbay et al, 2007). Therefore, the issue of stress is very germane to the student's academics and even overall success in life. Stress if not properly handled could become detrimental to the overall development of any university student.

Sustainable development deals not only in terms of ecological, economic and social environment but also in terms of improving the quality of life of every human being (Di Fabio, 2017). Sustainable development is concerned with the primary prevention of the perspective that can foster well-being of individual to function effectively in their daily living. The United Nations was able to proposed 17 sustainable development goals which includes no poverty, no hunger, good health and wellbeing; quality education, gender equality; clean water; sanitation; affordable and clean energy decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructural growth; reduction in inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions; partnerships to achieve goals

(United Nations, 2017). Thus, these goals underline the importance of increasing opportunities for progress and promoting the development of individuals, families and communities to ensure sustainable development and global growth. It is on this basis that the researcher tends to utilize this sustainable development goals principle in order to make use of different psychological approaches to assist the undergraduate students to reduce the incidence of stress among them. Hence, this study investigated stress factors and sustainable development among AAUA undergraduates of Akungba.

## **2. Statement of Problem**

The students in the higher institutions are confronted on daily basis with one form of stress or another. These ranges from academic stress, social stress, and financial stress, religious and other psychological or emotional stress. There are some students who despite this stress are able to struggle and forge ahead in life whereas some may not able to cope but stumble under such stressful situation. Ability to manage stress is vital if students will emerge victorious at the end of the day academically. Stress is part of every human being the ability to cope is what distinguish one individual from another. Studentship is a phase, hence students should not see it as something that last forever, thus while they are in the school they must play their part well with all their power and strength to succeed and make it in life.

Again, there are avoidable stresses which students often put on themselves. These often weigh them down and prevent them from being the best. For example a student that is not sound academic may refuse to prepare for his/her semester examination until the last minute. Such student may be putting himself/herself under unnecessary stress, which could be avoided if he/she has been consistent with his/her readings and preparation for examination. Therefore, students should try as much as possible to avoid every stressful situation that could hamper their academic progress. Thus, there is the need to assist students to go through their academic, psychosocial and financial life with less stress so that they can perform greatly and not become drop-out in life.

## **3. Research Question: What is the mean of stress on the basis of gender among AAUA undergraduates?**

## **4. Research Hypotheses**

- There is no significant difference in the academic stress of undergraduates of AAUA.
- There is no significance difference in the financial stress of undergraduates of AAUA.
- There is no significant difference in the psychosocial stress of undergraduates of AAUA.

## **5. Methodology**

This research is a descriptive research of the survey type designed to capture large sample size from the population to make generalization.

The population of the study consisted of all undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. The 450 sample used for the study was randomly selected from male and female students from the six faculties in the university. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondent for the study.

A questionnaire titled Stress Factors among Undergraduate Students Questionnaire (SFUSQ) was developed by the researcher from relevant literatures. The questionnaire has four sections A,B,C,D Section A consisted of demographic data on respondents such as age range, gender, and faculty. Section B,C, and D consisted of ten items each on factors responsible for academic stress, financial stress and psychosocial stress.

Experts opinion were consulted to ascertain the validity of the instrument. Test-retest method was used to find the reliability of the instrument. The data collected through the use of Test-retest approach were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for each of the section of the questionnaire and the reliability coefficient were found to be 0.70, 0.68 and 0.67 respectively.

The service of research assistants were employed to help in administering the instrument to 450 respondents in Adekunle Ajasin University. The research assistants and students were thoroughly intimated with the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents by hand and retrieved immediately after the completion for the purpose of data analysis.

## 6. Results: Research Question:

1. What is the mean of stress on the basis of gender among AAUA undergraduates

Table 1: Stress factors on the basis of gender.

Stress Factors	Gender	N	Mean	S D
<b>Academic Stress</b>	Male	233	22.61	5.55
	Female	217	21.94	5.08
<b>Financial Stress</b>	Male	233	23.67	6.83
	Female	217	21.13	6.52
<b>Psychosocial Stress</b>	Male	233	24.46	5.01
	Female	217	24.12	4.54

The result in table 1 indicated the various stress factors on the students on the basis of gender. The factor of academic stress indicated that the males had higher stress of 22.61 for mean score with Standard Deviation of 5.55 while the females had a lower mean of 21.94 and Standard Deviation of 5.08. This indicated that the male students had greater stress when it comes to the issue of their academics. The result of financial stress indicated that the male students had the mean score of 23.67 and Standard Deviation of 6.83 which was higher than the female students with 21.13 for the mean score with Standard Deviation of 6.52. This was lower than the scores for the males. Thus it also indicated that the male students scored higher than the females in financial stress. In psychosocial stress the males had the mean score of 24.46 with the Standard Deviation of 5.01 while the female students scored lower than the male students with the mean score of 24.12 and Standard Deviation of 4.54. Thus, again the males tend to have higher mean score than the females which indicated that the males are experiencing greater stress in the psychosocial aspect of their lives.

H0<sub>1</sub> There is no significant difference in the academic stress of undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University.

In testing this hypothesis, the means and standard Deviation values of the date collected on factors of academic stress among AAUA students were subjected to chi-square analysis and tested at 0.05 alpha level.

Table 2: Test of significant difference on academic stress of undergraduates of AAUA.

Items		Response					
			VMT	GT	RT	NT	Total
1	The movement from one lecture room to another is not often easy.	F	260	119	52	19	450
		%	57.8	26.4	11.6	4.2	100.0
2	It is not easy reading and preparing for examination.	F	124	182	105	39	450
		%	27.6	40.4	23.3	8.7	100.0
3	It is not easy attending lectures.	F	123	125	135	67	450
		%	27.3	27.8	30.0	14.9	100.0
4	Largeness of the class often make it	F	174	146	85	45	450

	difficult to listen in the class	%	38.7	32.4	18.9	10.0	100.0
5	I have difficult in coping with the different lecturing styles of the lecturers.	F	111	170	114	55	450
		%	24.7	37.8	25.3	12.2	100.0
6	It is not easy taking note during lectures.	F	104	131	119	96	450
		%	23.1	29.1	26.4	21.3	100.0
7	It is not easy getting reading materials to assist while reading.	F	123	134	125	68	450
		%	27.3	29.8	27.8	15.1	100.0
8	I always have problem with limited time during each semester.	F	123	133	129	65	450
		%	27.3	29.6	28.7	14.4	100.0
9	I have problem coping with many courses in each semester.	F	110	122	143	95	450
		%	24.4	27.1	31.8	16.7	100.0
10	I have problem of not passing my courses as I desired.	F	109	116	123	102	450
		%	24.2	25.8	27.3	22.7	100.0
Average Total		F	136	137	113	65	450
		$\chi^2$	308.26				
Chi Square		df	9				
		p	<.05				

The result in table 2 showed that the calculated  $\chi^2$  was 308.26 more than the table value of 16.92. Thus, the result showed that there was significant difference in the academic stress of undergraduates of AAUA.

$H_0$ : There is no significant difference in the financial stress of undergraduates of AAUA.

To test this hypothesis the data collected on financial stress among AAUA students was subjected to chi-square analysis and tested at 0.05 alpha level.

Table 3: Test of significant difference on financial stress among AAUA undergraduates

Items		Response					
			VMT	GT	RT	NT	Total
1	I often have difficulty in the payment of my school fees	F	144	160	90	56	450
		%	32.0	35.8	20.0	12.4	100.0
2	I have difficulty in meeting my daily needs	F	125	149	126	50	450
		%	37.8	33.1	28.0	11.1	100.0
3	I do not have enough	F	129	149	123	49	450

	money to buy my essential needs as a woman/young man.	%	28.7	33.1	27.3	10.9	100.0
4	I have no enough money to buy necessary reading materials	F	157	160	83	50	450
		%	34.9	35.6	18.4	11.1	100.0
5	I have no enough money to buy good dress and shirt.	F	139	134	127	50	450
		%	30.9	29.8	28.2	11.1	100.0
6	I do not have enough money to get good accommodation	F	123	144	108	75	450
		%	27.3	32.0	24.0	16.7	100.0
7	I must hustle as a student to survive in the school	F	100	139	110	101	450
		%	22.2	30.9	24.4	22.4	100.0
8	My financial constraint does not allow me to belong to the right social; group that I desired.	F	117	158	85	90	450
		%	26.0	35.1	18.9	20.0	100.0
9	My parents are not financially buoyant to meet my needs	F	111	132	114	93	450
		%	24.7	29.3	25.3	20.7	100.0
10	I often have to depend on my friends to survive financially.	F	88	130	109	123	450
		%	19.6	28.9	24.2	27.3	100.0
Average Total		F	123	145	108	74	450
		X <sup>2</sup>	170.46				
Chi Square		Df	9				
		P	<.05				

The result in table3 showed that the calculated  $X^2$  was 170.46 more than the table value of 16.92. Thus, the result showed that there was a significant difference in the financial stress among AAUA undergraduates.

H0<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference in the psychosocial stress of undergraduates of AAUA.

Table 4: Test of significant difference on psychosocial stress of undergraduates of AAUA.

Items		Response					
			VMT	GT	RT	NT	Total
1	I am not stable emotional due to the level of stress that I go through as a	F	102	108	133	107	450
		%	22.7	24.0	29.6	23.8	100.0

	student.						
2	I am very anxious about succeeding in this university	F	153	155	94	48	450
		%	34.0	34.4	20.9	10.7	100.0
3	I am fearful about making it in life	F	134	128	106	82	450
		%	29.8	28.4	23.6	18.2	100.0
4	I enjoy good relationship with my friends on campus	F	131	139	94	86	450
		%	29.1	30.9	20.9	19.1	100.0
5	I do not relate with my schoolmates/classmates	F	108	135	113	94	450
		%	24.0	30.0	25.1	20.9	100.0
6	I relate well with the people of the opposite sex here on campus	F	100	153	109	88	450
		%	22.2	34.0	24.2	19.6	100.0
7	I mingle well with my colleagues here on campus	F	110	153	114	73	450
		%	24.4	34.0	25.3	16.2	100.0
8	I am hostile with students here on campus	F	76	143	138	93	450
		%	16.9	31.8	30.7	20.6	100.0
9	I have plenty of time to relate and socialize with people	F	74	117	147	112	450
		%	16.4	26.0	32.7	24.9	100.0
10	I am not a social person	F	76	119	136	119	450
		%	16.9	26.4	30.2	26.4	100.0
Average Total		F	107	135	118	90	450
		$\chi^2$	154.71				
Chi Square		df	9				
		p	<.05				

The result in table 4 showed that the calculate  $\chi^2$  was 154.71 more than the table value of 16.92. Thus, the result showed that there was a significant difference in the psychosocial stress among AAUA undergraduates.

## 7. Discussion

The first hypothesis indicated that significance difference existed in academic stress among the students of AAUA. This showed that the students often experience stress in their academics. This result supported the assertion of Elias, Ping & Abdullahi (2011) that undergraduate students in the universities may experience stress due to failures in academics, sports, financial problems or relationship problems with close friends. Samson-Akpan, John, Edet and Ella (2017) observed that college students are faced with many obstacles which they have to overcome for optimal

performance. The result of this finding also lend credence to the findings of Pamela (2009) that there are some perceived stress seen in college students which sometimes takes the form of academic stress that involves multiple stressor the likes of academic demands which includes, paper assignments, physical, health and health related issues and other self-imposed type of stressors. Shamsuddin et al (2013) equally noted that there are high prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression 27.09%, 47.1% and 27.1% respectively in certain group of Turkish students. Thus, stress especially academic stress is a common phenomenon among the students of Adekunle Ajasin University.

The second hypothesis also indicated that there was significant difference in financial stress of undergraduates of AAUA. That is all students are exposed to financial stress in the institution. The reality is very clear, since these students need to spend money on daily basis for their everyday need. The students spend money on feeding, clothing, accommodation and school fees payment. Many of these students are the ones responsible for themselves with no parents to assist them with their financial obligations. Often times some of these students engaged themselves in business to sustain themselves in the school. This supported the findings of Samson-Akpan et al (2013) that parental's low socio-economic status could also contribute to depression, anxiety and stress among students. Mirza and Jenkins (2004) also supported this finding that sex and socio-economic status are the most important predictors of these disorders. Whereas, Fisch (1996) did classified stressor into three main categories these are academic pressures, social issues and financial pressures.

The third hypothesis also indicated that there was significant difference in the psychosocial stress of undergraduates of AAUA. That is the undergraduate students of AAUA had psychosocial stress. This deals with the psychological, social interaction and emotional stability among the students. A student that is not stable and well-adjusted emotionally may find it difficult to cope with his/her academic challenges. Thus, the emotional, psychological and social relationship of an individual can go a long way to establish the psychological and physical well-being of an individual students. Hence, this aspect of the student's life must not be taken for granted. This is equally supported by the assertion of Karmar and kaur (2011) that student grapple with social emotional, physical and family problems which may interfere with their academic performance, Samson-Akpan et al (2013) were able to stress the importance of social support in assisting students to cope with stress in the university. Fairbrother (2011) suggested that social support is important for maintaining proper physical and mental health

## 8. Conclusion

Stress is a major problem that students in the university contend with on regular basis. But the attitude and the reaction of these students to this stressful situation will go a long way to assist these students positively. Everybody in life are confronted with one form of stress or another but their attitude and manner of management is what differentiate each individual. Students' should try to develop positive attitude to every stressful situation that come their way. They should try to resolve the ones within their capacity and the ones that they may not be able to tackle should be left or a referral could be encouraged.

Academic stress can be avoided by adequately planning, attendance at lectures, doing assigned assignment, seeking for assistance when confronted with difficult topics before the commencement of examination. There should be adequate preparation through effective studying for examination. Question answering skills can be learnt by the students

Financial stress could be handled by the students when they learn to live within their means. Students should desist from the act of comparing themselves with other students. For students with serious financial challenges they must not pretend that all is well, but should go to the university work study office to register for assistance. Loans can be taken to assist such students. Thus, students with financial difficulties should come up for help and assistance.

For the students with psychosocial stress, assistance can be sought in their interpersonal relationship with others. This group of students could seek the assistance of professional counselors on how to develop good interpersonal relationship skills. Those with emotional and psychological instability could be assisted to become stable emotionally. There is no need for any students to be under any stress as long as they can visit the counsellors.

## 9. Implication for Counselling and Sustainable Development

The issue of stress is a global one that affect every human being, but the way that the individual manages it is what makes a difference. Whether, one likes it or not man goes through stress on daily basis. The mechanism which a person employs in managing it is what makes the difference. Some will see stressful situation as something that they can handle and make something good out of. Whereas, some may become anxious and eventually develop depression and may not be able to get through such challenges.

Therefore, stress management should be inculcated into the university curriculum to reduce the incidence of crumbling under the weight of stressful situations. Many students had ended their lives due to one stress or

another especially those related to academics. Some students have become cultists due to the negative influence of bad friends. Whereas, financial challenges have made students to company with bad guys which had lured some into wrong gangs or groups. Some students had to join the company of Yahoo boys just “to belong” to the “happening guys” on the campus. All these have resulted into untold hardship and challenges not only for the students but also for their parents. These students must be properly helped to cope and avoid every stressful situation in the course of their academic pursuit in the university.

- Adequate Counselling must be provided to the students on stress management Counselling programmes that would be provided should include academic counselling, financial counselling and psychosocial counselling. All these programmes will help the undergraduates to be able to handle every stressful situation that may be confronting them.
- Financial assistance should be provided for the indigent students so that they would be able to cope financially even while they are in school. Avenue should be provided to identify students that are having financial difficulties to register and be employed in the university work study programme. There should be adequate information made available for these students so that they would be properly informed about the various opportunities that are available for student that are financially handicapped. There are loans within the university system that the students could accessed. Thus, students must be aware of this privileges and should be able to take advantages of such.
- Students with academic challenges must be able to seek for assistance from the intelligent and smart students to assist them to enhance their performance.
- Seminars and lectures can be organized to assist students to cope and address all these stressors.
- Academic seminars can be organized to help to improve students with poor academic performance
- Financial seminars can also be organized to teach students on how to create and make wealth.
- Interpersonal relationship programmes can be organized to teach good relationship among the students.
- Many other necessary skills can be taught to enhance the overall development of these students.
- Counselling clinic in the university should be more alive to its responsibilities in assisting these students to solve their everyday problems/challenges. More counselors should be employed and be made to do the work of assisting these undergraduates.

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