

Prevalence of academic stress among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the prevalence of academic related stress among business education students with special reference to their mode of entry, gender and institutions. The study was a cross-sectional survey. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed to obtain a sample of 659 students. Student Academic Stress- Related Questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was .84. Mean, standard deviation, and independent t-test were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that business education students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are highly stressed through overloaded instructional hours every semester and overcrowded lecture halls as the first two highest stressors of the students. Students admitted through UTME/pre-NCE experienced stress more than direct entry students. Similarly, business education students in the universities were found to experience less stress than students in the colleges of education. No significant stress difference was found by gender. It was recommended that school counsellors should periodically organize seminars and enlightenment programme to educate students on the different stress coping and management strategies.

Key Words: Academic stress, Business Education students, tertiary institutions

Introduction

Stress has become an important issue in educational institutions as it is perceived to exact some impact on the academic learning process and disposition of students. Ordinarily, stress is considered as part of human life as it has both positive (eustress) and negative (distress) dimensions. The positive dimension could motivate and enhance one's energy, while the negative dimension could lead to internalized disorder (anxiety, depression) and social dysfunction. Ezenwanne (2015) associated the latter dimension of stress to the students, as he noted that the type of stress students experience on campus is quite different and far from motivating them.

Studies by Kadapatti and Vijayalaxmi (2012); Adesola and Arowolo (2014); Ezenwanne (2015) have identified different sources of stress among students in tertiary institutions which could be academic, institutional and socio-interpersonal related. Academic- related stress is the task that exceeds the cognitive strength of students (Kadapatti & Vijayalaxmi, 2012). This is normally expressed in the students' perception of academic frustrations occasioned by demands of time, ability and energy to meet some academic tasks. Similarly, Affum-Osei, Asante and Forkuoh (2014); Dema (2015) identified academic related stress as academic workload, lack of resources to execute assignments and low level of reward or motivation. In the same vein, Adesola and Arowolo (2014); Joe, Kpolovie, Osonwa and Iderima (2014); Awino and Agolla (2008) identified institutional stress as over-crowded lecture halls, semester system, medium of instruction, inadequate resources/Learning aid to perform the required academic work as part of students' stress. So, institutional stress concerns the problems students encountered in the institution's environment. Students' academic related stress could be attributed to social-interpersonal factors like; the family, the relationship between students and teachers and among students.

Hence, Agolla and Ongori (2009); Awino and Agolla (2008) identified poor relationship among students and with fellow students or lecturers as part of students' stress. Hence, Joe, Kpolovie, Osonwa and Iderima (2014) asserted that pressure from parents and family members for student's academic achievement could cause the student mental distress with some anticipated frustration. Similarly, financial difficulties arising from the inability to pay tuition fee, other school charged and inadequate funds for personal upkeep could initiate stress on the students. Therefore, Trombitas (2014); Heckman, Lim and Mentallo (2014) posited that financial difficulties, personal finances and inadequate personal resources could heightened the academic related stress of students. Consequently, students' stress is a product of a combination of academic related issues that overwhelm the adaptive resources available to the individual student.

The concept of business education has evolved over time. Amaelwhule (2000) saw business education as a discipline that prepares youths and adults to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to effectively manage their personal business and economic system. It is a discipline that trains students for the acquisition of skills required for business, office, clerical occupation and business policy. Okoye (2013) described it as an education programme that orientate students in the art of business making (marketing), typing and shorthand skills, service delivery, office information system and management. So, it is an embodiment of vocational knowledge and skills needed for employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers and for the demand of the business world (Atakpa, 2011; Obiete, Nwazor & Ifeama, 2015). It is meant to promote business professional knowledge and enhance leadership skills and service delivery in the different facet of business life such as administrative management, data base management, business /marketing, advanced computer and technology applications. This educational programme like others in Nigeria tertiary institutions could subject the students to difference stressful situation ranging from academic to institutional and social personal related stress.

The study of Business education requires two major modes of gaining admission to any university in Nigeria. They are the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), conducted by Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and direct entry candidates using certificate like National Certificate in Education (NCE), National Diploma and other Higher National Diploma Certificates. The entry requirement for colleges of education is the basic knowledge as expressed in the O/level qualifications in SSCE/WASEC, NECO etc (ie 3 credit passes in the relevant subjects). It is, however, expected that all the students admitted into any programme in Nigerian Tertiary institutions, irrespective of the mode of entry should be able of cope with the academic stress. However, Adeniyi (2003); Ipaye (2004); Ojo (2005) observed that direct entry students are able to manage their academic stress better. Conversely, Olajide, Okewole, and Agboola (2015) revealed that the UTME students are able to control the stress factors and consequently have a better performance. Nevertheless, Ezema (2006) asserts that significant difference does not exist between stress and performance level of UTME and direct entry students.

The works of Agolla and Ongori (2009); Bataineh (2013); Dema (2015) have shown different degrees/levels of students' stress factors. Bataineh (2013); Lai (2014) asserted that academic pressure arising from academic workload and overload are the major sources of students' stress. While Elias, Ping and Abdullah (2011); Dema (2015) noted that sitting for examinations and school assignments remain the highest stressors of undergraduate students. Conversely, Joel et al (2014) assert that inadequate resources to execute given assignment ranked highest source of academic stress. However, Andrew and Wilding (2004) and Agolla and Ongori (2009) posited that financial difficulties as well as lack of interpersonal relationship evident in conflict with fellow students are major sources of students' stress. This is established on the premise that poor interpersonal relationship creates hostile learning environment for students which could be detrimental to their emotional and even physical well-being.

Students' stress appears to differ by gender. Dema (2015) noted that female students experience more academic-related stress than the male students as shown in the sample of 428 with females 229 (53.7%), while the males were 199 (46.3%). Similarly, Thawabieh and Qaisy (2012); Kumar and Bhukar (2013) revealed in

their work that stress level of girls were found to be higher than boys level. Conversely, the study of Agolla and Ongori (2009) revealed that no significant difference exists in the stress level of male and female students.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing complaint of academic- related stress by students (including business education) has become a great concern to both educators and researchers as it appears to hinder work efficiency and alter emotional stability of students. Students seem to often attributed their low disposition and want of enthusiasm towards schooling to stressful situations they are faced with. These stressors appear to have great impact on the well being and stability of the students. However, research evidences have shown a dearth of studies with business education students in this regard. More importantly, the discipline (business education) is relatively new in the pedagogical transformation from its traditional orientation with obsolete learning resources to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based curricula delivery in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This new technological orientation could be an additional stress as the equipments and facilities are in short supply to meet the demand of the new technology. What indeed is however not known empirically is the prevalence of academic-related stress among business education students in Tertiary Institutions in Southern Nigeria. The finding of this study would assist students to identify the different academic-related stressors and seek means of managing them.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- 1 What are the academic- related stressors of business education students in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria?
- 2 What is the prevalence of academic related stress among business education students in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There will be no statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by mode of admission.

H1: There is a statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by mode of admission.

Ho₂: There will be no statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by gender

H2: There is a statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by gender

Ho₃: There will be no statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by type of institution (college of education and university).

H3: There is a statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by type of institution (college of education and university)

Methodology

Research Design

The study was a descriptive survey that adopted the quantitative paradigm. The design was considered appropriate as the study was meant to identify the academic- related stressors and their prevalence among business education students.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was 2929 business education students. One thousand eight hundred and eighty-two (1,882) were from the universities, while 1047 were from the colleges of Education. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted for the study. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the population which was

733 was proportionately and randomly sampled. Of this sample, 471 were from the universities, while 262 were from the colleges of education.

Instrumentation

Student responses to stress were gathered using Student Academic Stress Related Questionnaire (SASRQ) developed by the researchers. The instrument had two sections (A and B). Section A contained the demographic information and Section B contained 24 structured items of a four-point likert-type scale (low extent=1, moderate extent=2, high extent=3 and very high extent=4). The mean of each item is 2.50. The scale mean is $2.50 \times 24 = 60$. Therefore a student that scores below 60 is considered to be within the normal stress range, while a student that scores between 61- 83 has moderate stress and the student that scores 84-96 (96 being the maximum) is considered as having a high stress prevalence. The content validity was ascertained by 3 experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation, Business Education and Counselling Psychology in Faculty of Education. The internal consistency of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha Statistics and the reliability co-efficient of .84 was obtained. The value was considered statistically adequate.

Data collection and Analysis

The instrument was administered to the sample of 733 students with the assistance of some colleagues. The completed copies were collected the same day. Of the copies returned, 659 were found useable. The data obtained through the questionnaire administered and from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question, while independent t-test was adopted in the testing of the three hypotheses.

Results

The results of the study are presented in the following tables.

Research question 1: What are the academic related stressors of business education students in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria?

To answer this question the mean of the stress items and the standard deviation were calculated and ranked as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of business education students’ stress factors with Mean, Standard deviation and ranks.

S/N	Item	N=659	Sum	Mean	Std	Rank
1	Overloaded instructional hours every semester		2155	3.27*	.848	1 st
2	Overcrowded Lecture halls.		2117	3.21*	.916	2 nd
3	Too much assignment.		1972	2.99	.965	11 th
4	Shortage of Learning materials.		1947	2.95	1.09	13 th
5	Course content overhead.		2066	3.13*	.913	3 rd
6	The method of teaching business education course		1899	2.88	.980	16 th
7	Inability to access relevant learning materials.		1970	2.98	1.07	12 th
8	Taking courses from other faculties.		1985	3.01	1.00	9 th
9	poor relationship with lecturers in the department .		1843	2.79	1.07	18 th
10	Use of obsolete facilities for learning skills course		1912	2.90	1.05	15 th
11	Inadequate finances to meet academic demands.		2063	3.13*	1.00	3 th
12	Fear of failure of examination.		1939	2.94	1.07	14 th
13	University policy on cumulative average.		1792	2.71	.952	19 th
14	Inability to take dictation in the classroom.		1741	2.64	1.09	20 th
15	Classroom fittings not comfortable for taking dictation.		1892	2.87	1.08	17 th
16	Lack of good lighting where shorthand dictation is taken.		1990	3.01	1.04	9 th
17	Inadequate time allotted to practical courses.		1998	3.03	.989	8 th
18	Unstable school calendar.		2012	3.05	1.03	6 th

19	Compartment of examination time table.	2009	3.04	.963	7 th
20	Shortness of revision period before examination.	2022	3.06	1.06	5 th
21	Insufficient time on the time table for practical courses.	1977	3.00	.976	10 th
22	Inadequate students' welfare support services.	2022	3.06	1.06	5 th
23	Late release of examination results	2116	3.21*	1.06	2 nd
24	Lack of suitable chairs and tables for typing.	2035	3.08	1.09	4 th

The data in Table 1 revealed that business education students are faced with academic related stress, since all the items identified have means higher than the benchmark mean of 2.50. The data also revealed the ranks of the stressors. The mean of 3.27 with standard deviation of .848 for overloaded instructional hours every semester was the highest ranked (1st) stressor for business education students. The second ranked (2nd) stressors were overloaded lecture halls and late release of examination results with the mean of 3.21 and standard deviation of .916 and 1.06 respectively. The third (3rd) highest ranked stressors were content overload and inadequate financial resources to meet up with the demand of the course with the mean of 3.13 and standard deviation of .913 and 1.00 respectively. The fourth (4th) and fifth (5th) stressor were lack of suitable chairs and tables for typing shortness of revision period before examination and lack of suitable chairs and tables for typing respectively. Inability to take dictation in the classroom was the least (20th) stressor for the students with the mean and standard deviation of 2.64 and 1.09 respectively.

Research question 2: What is the prevalence of academic related stress of business education students in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria?

To answer this question the range of the different prevalence with their frequency and percentages were computed as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Stress prevalence among business education students in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria with the frequency and percentages

	Range	prevalence	N (f)	Percentage (%)
	0-60	Low	99	15.0
	61-83	Moderate	457	69.3
	84-96	High	103	15.7
Total	-		659	100.0

The data in Table 2 revealed that 99 (15.0%) respondents had a low prevalence of stress, while 457 (69.3%) respondents had moderate stress prevalence with 103 (15.7%) had a high stress prevalence. The data revealed that most business education students in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria are moderately stressed, while a good number of them are highly stressed as shown in the Table 2. It is therefore concluded that most business education students in Nigerian tertiary institutions in the South are faced with academic related stress.

Null hypothesis 1: There will be no statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by mode of admission.

This hypothesis was tested using independent t-test statistic as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of independent t-test of stress prevalence among business education students by mode of admission.

Mode of entry	N	Mean	Std	Mean diff.	Df	t-value	Sig.
UTME/Pre-NCE	509	72.52	11.17	2.13	657	2.02	0.04
Direct Entry	150	70.39					

The data in Table 3 shows the t-value of 2.02 that is statistically significant at 0.04 with df of 657 at the alpha level of .05. It shows a statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students in tertiary institutions by mode of admission. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate is accepted that says; there is a statistically significant difference of stress prevalence among business education students by mode admission (direct entry and UTME/Pre-NCE).The Table also shows the mean value of 72.52 for students admitted through UTME/Pre-NCE which is higher than the mean of students admitted through direct entry. This is an indication that students admitted through UTME/Pre-NCE have higher stress prevalence than those admitted through direct entry.

Null hypothesis 2: There will be no statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by gender.

To test this hypothesis, independent t-test statistic was utilized as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of independent t-test of stress prevalence among business education students by gender.

Gender	N	Mean	Std	Mean diff.	df	t-value	Sig.
Male	203	72.20	11.75	.235	657	.224	.807
Female	456	71.96					

The data in Table 4 shows the t-value of .244 that is not statistically significant at .807 with df of 657 at alpha level of 0.05. It shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by gender. So the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate is rejected. The Table equally shows the mean value of 72.20 of male students which is slightly higher than the mean value of 71.75 of female students. Although this is not statistically significant, it is an indication that the male students have slight high stress prevalence than the female students.

Null hypothesis 3: There will be no statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by type of institution (college of education and university).

This hypothesis was tested using independent t-test statistic as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of independent t-test of stress prevalence among business education students by institution (University and College of education).

Institution	N	Mean	Std	Mean diff.	df	Df	t-value	Sig.
University	446	71.30	11.73	-2.27	657		-2.41	.016
College of Education	213	73.58						

The data in Table 5 shows the t-value of -2.41 that is statistically significant at .016 with df of 657 at alpha level of 0.05. It shows a statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by type of institution. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternate is accepted that says; there is a statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence among business education students by institution. The Table equally shows the mean value of 73.58 of college of education students which is higher than the mean value of 71.30 of university students. This is an indication that college of education students have higher stress prevalence than the university undergraduate students.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that most of the business education students had moderate prevalence of stress with a total of 457 (69.3%) from the total of 659 in this category, while a total of 103 respondents from 659 had high prevalence of stress. This suggests that a total of 560 respondents from the total of 659 were stressed. This finding confirms the increasing complains students on academic- related stress that spurred the researchers to embark on this study. The finding of this study also revealed that business education students are faced with overloaded instructional hours every semester which ranked highest (1st), with overcrowded lecture halls, late release of examination results and course content overhead ranking 2nd and 3rd respectively (which are institutional stressors). This finding confirms the assertions of Ezenwanne (2015); Adesola and Arowolo (2014); Kadapatti and Vijayalaxmi (2014); Bataineh, (2013); Purna and Gowthami (2014); Awino and Agolla (2008) that tertiary institutions students are exposed to different academic- related stressors and that institutional stressors remain the major sources of students' stress. This could be attributed to the students' inability to successfully manage semester lecture time-table, schedules for lectures and other academic demands. When such happens, the likelihood of students missing some lectures would arise as it goes beyond their ability to control when lecture hours should be scheduled. Similarly, overcrowded lecture halls imply that most of the classrooms are too small for the students' population. Students are often found standing while some squatting in and outside some lecture halls during lecture hours. Even those who are seated for lectures may not be able to write conveniently as the sitting positions are usually too tight. This could result in both emotional and psychological discomfort among the students. Equally, late release of students' examination results confirms the findings of Affum-Osei, Asante and Fortuoh (2014) and Dema, (2015) of low motivation which could lead to low enthusiasm, zeal and emotional stress in students.

The study also revealed statistically significant differences in the academic stress prevalence of students by their mode of entry into the institution. It showed that Direct Entry students have less academic related stress when compared with their counterparts admitted through Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME and pre-NCE route). This confirms the assertion of Olajide, Okewole and Agboola (2015); Adeniyi,(2003); Ipaye (2004) and Ojo (2005) that students in tertiary institutions experience different academic related stress. That the direct entry students are able to manage academic related stress than the students admitted through UTME and pre-NCE can be attributed to different academic experiences of the two groups of students. The direct entry students by virtue of their academic exposure are more matured and stable than UTME/pre-NCE students. They are actually more emotionally mature as their academic experience goes beyond the secondary school level by virtue of their pre-degree, National diploma and other diploma certificate programmes. They are more able to understand stressful situations.

The study revealed no statistically significant difference in the academic stress prevalence of business education students by gender. This finding corroborates the assertion of Agolla and Ongori (2009) that male and female students experience the same academic stress prevalence. This is in contrast to study of Lai (2014); Dema (2015) that posit variation in the academic stress prevalence of students by gender. The finding of this study could be attributed to the individual student's appraisal of the different situations and stressors. It is likely that the participants of this study have had the collective support of parents and family members that assist them to manage and cope with the stressors, hence this result of the study on gender experience of stress. This could also be attributed to the fact that both male and female students of business education are exposed to the same academic environment.

The study equally revealed statistically significant difference in the academic stress prevalence of business education students by institutions (college of education and university). It shows that the College of Education students experienced more academic stress than University students. Although there is a dearth of literature in this regard, this finding runs contrary to the assertion of Dema (2015) which revealed that University undergraduate experience academic stress more than the College of Education students. This finding could be attributed to the fact that University students are more emotionally mature than the College of Education students. Beside some of the University students have obtained National diploma certificates which could be through the Colleges of Education and polytechnics. Therefore, they are better equipped with stress coping strategies than the UTME/pre-NCE students who are just young school leavers from the secondary schools.

Summary/Conclusion

From the findings, it was revealed that business education students experience high prevalence of stress in their academic pursuit. Overloaded instructional hours, late release of examination results and overcrowded lecture halls were the major stressors of business education students. While students admitted through UTME/pre-NCE were found to have high prevalence of academic-related stress than those admitted through direct entry. College of Education students were found to have higher prevalence of academic-related stress than University undergraduate students. There was no statistically significant difference in the stress prevalence by gender of students. It was therefore concluded that business education students in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria experience academic- related stress.

Counselling implications for Business Education students

That institutional stressors (overloaded instructional hours, overcrowded lecture halls, course content overhead and lack of suitable chairs and tables for typing) were the major stressors implies that the school environment and facilities have a lot of impact on the emotional disposition of students. It means that students are psychologically and emotionally impeded by the school environment and the available infrastructure. This could have multiple effects on the students such as; low motivation level, restiveness, poor performance, poor social-interpersonal relations and even mild depression in students.

The finding implies that students admitted through UTME/pre-NCE are highly vulnerable to emotional distress than direct entry students which could affect their wellbeing and even social life. This calls for a proper orientation programmes to assist the students to adjust into the new school environment and activities. It becomes pertinent for the school counsellors as it is appropriate to their profession. More so, the disparity in the stress level of College of Education and University business education students shows that College of Education students are more stressed than the University students. It implies that College of Education students are more susceptible to different emotional disturbances which could lead to anti-social behavior on campus. It is therefore imperative on the school counselling unit to initiate intervention programme that would assist the students to successfully manage the different stressful situations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that the school administration should address the institutional stress factors such as; overcrowded lecture halls and overcrowded instructional hours by properly re-evaluating the curriculum and spaced lecture hours accordingly. School Counsellors should put in place counselling intervention programmes which will assist students to manage stressful situations successfully. Consequently, counsellors should organized seminars and workshops where students will be exposed to different stress coping and managing strategies. The disparity in emotional stability of students by mode of admission into the tertiary institutions implies that intelligence is not equivalent to emotional strength. Hence, the government through the ministry of education is required to introduce compulsory intermediate education programme like Higher School Certificate (HSC) for two years for secondary school leavers prior to their university education. This could build up their emotional stability as it is evident with the direct entry students of this study.

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