



EFFECT OF STRESS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MARRIED FEMALE STUDENTS IN SOUTHWESTERN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Various studies across the globe have stressed that female students usually undergo more stress in the course of their study. Stress is a major factor in many psychological and social damages. Stress management can lead to trauma reduction. This study examines the effect of stress on student accomplishment. Undue stress could lead to psychological problems like depression and anxiety. The objective of the study was to assess stress among married female students of various educational institutions. This cross-sectional study was conducted from January 2021 to November 2021 among students from various Faculties in different Higher Institutions in southwestern, Nigeria, using a probability sampling technique. The study was conducted in 18 selected Government & private institutions in the southwestern, Nigeria and calculated total sample size was 157. Purposive sampling was use, 200 questionnaires were distributed and 157 were returned for analysis. A pretested self-administered questionnaire was used for the data collection. Analysis was done using percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Paired sample T-test. By percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Paired sample T-test on lifestyle factors, and academic factors were the significant predictors for stress. It concludes that Teachers and spouse should take proper care to reduce the stress among married female students and Teachers and spouse should search for time for married female students to talk and charts.

Key Words: Stress, Academic Performance, Married women, Southwestern Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION.

Background and Rationale of Study

Stress can take different forms and can disrupt an individual's physical and emotional well-being. In some cultures, like in Africa, stress is seen as a disturbance of inner peace, while in Western societies, it is viewed as a loss of control. However, regardless of how it is perceived, stress is an unavoidable occurrence that can lead to various health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and even heart problems. Women, in particular, tend to experience higher levels of stress due to their unique stress response, which is influenced by their hormonal makeup. This can lead to heightened emotions and emotional exhaustion. Stress has also become a common part of students' academic lives, as they face internal and external pressures to meet expectations. Married women, in particular, are often vulnerable to academic stress, as they deal with transitioning on both an individual and social level. Therefore, it is vital to understand the sources and effects of academic stress in order to implement effective intervention strategies.

The reason for choosing this title is the poor academic performance of married women students, which has been going on for one and a half years since they joined higher education institutions. There are several factors that can be attributed to this outcome. We speculated that the student's past performance, inadequate resources at our university, the new surroundings, the attitude of married female students towards education, lack of collaborative learning, insufficient guidance from teachers, and limited interaction among female students are among the main factors that lead to lower achievement compared to male students. Mental well-being is a crucial factor in achieving better performance in any community. There is a Greek philosophy; "Mens sana in corpore sano" Thales Translation: "A sound mind in a sound body.

Achieving academic success is the ultimate goal for students, teachers, and institutions within a specified period of time. A student's academic performance is highly reliant on parental involvement, to attain the highest level of academic excellence. Emotions often come into play for students, particularly females, as they face a great deal of stress at the school level. A multitude of factors affect their studies, such as present pressures, teachers' attitudes towards their efforts, strictness at home, and the weight of future job prospects (Hussain et al., 2012). Teachers, in particular, play a pivotal role in students' academic achievements. "Academic achievement" is the term used to describe a student's success in school. It encompasses the expectations put forth by parents, family, and friends, as students strive to excel in their studies and various aspects of school life.

They excel and thrive in their studies, achieving the highest level of performance in their chosen area of the school. Academic success is not just a certificate, but it defines every student. Any accomplishment in life is built upon academic achievement. The level of excellence in academic success is dependent on the active involvement of parents in their academic pursuits (Barnard, 2004).

The South West is one of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria which presents both a geographic and political region of the country. It comprises six states – Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo. The decrement in the standardized education linked with the poor qualities of graduates produced in education system has led to public outcry among married female students in Nigerians from all walks of life. This is continually leading to the production of ill- informed graduates who are unable to contribute positively to societal development. Early studies on stress and academic related issues by Adeoye (1992), Adeoye and Durosaro (2000) Alao (2003) and Ipem (2005) concentrated on stress among female managers; Stress among married female academics; Stress among secondary school students; Stress and academic achievements of married female University students respectively. From the researcher's point of view, a common factor to these studies is the apparent concentration on external factors that could adversely affect students' performance without considering possible psychological factors among the students themselves which could be implicated. One of such psychological factors could be stress. This research aims to bridge the current knowledge gap by exploring how gender differences and stress levels impact academic success among students in Nigerian universities. Specifically, it focuses on the effects of stress on academic

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achievement for married women enrolled in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study seeks to determine if there are variations in stress levels based on academic environment and whether there is a difference in academic performance for married women who experience low versus high levels of stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In their research, Reddy et al. (2018) found that students experience varying levels of stress throughout their studies. It is crucial to address this stress on a personal, social, and institutional level. Solutions such as receiving feedback, interacting on social media, practicing life skills, mindfulness, meditation, and psychotherapy have proven to be effective in managing stress. Understanding the root cause of stress is key in successfully dealing with it. Professionals can create customized strategies to help students cope with stress. The overall well-being of students not only benefits the individual, but also the institute. Dimitrov (2017) emphasized the importance of students prioritizing their own welfare in order to manage stress. This includes paying attention to food, exercise, work, and recreation. He also suggested that the education system often focused solely on academic qualifications, neglecting the holistic development of students. Subramani and Kadhiravan (2017) revealed the link between academic stress and mental health among students. He supported that academic stress and mental health are related and that students are incommensurate with the academic structure. Parents and schools influence the students way too much for the higher grades that weakens the students, advance to add on there is inadequate support from the parents and school in terms of guidance. The students are mentally strong when they perform structurally in the academic forums. They also propounded that students from private schools are more stressed as compared to students from government schools due to the excess of homework and academic related assignments. Significant difference in mental health of students from private and government schools was found. He asserted that students from private schools have a different nurturing and severe influence as compared to government school students who belong to poor socio economic background and lack of exposure. This is one of the reasons for the increase of stress.

Gender Variations, Stress Levels and Academic Fulfillment of Students in Nigerian Universities

It has been observed that the performance of married female students is the worst. There are several factors that have been attributed to poor academic achievement among female students. According to Eze (2008), this issue is linked to the educational development of the country, such as inadequate financial and academic planning by the government, stress from managing household responsibilities, shortage of qualified teachers, and inadequate provision of necessary equipment in schools. Amao (2008) also pointed to home and marital responsibilities, cultural bias towards male superiority, early marriage expectations, and pressure from male teachers/lecturers as contributing to female educational backwardness. Bandele (2008) attributed it to low parental expectations for girls, societal views on women as inferior, household responsibilities, increasing poverty levels in Africa, and lack of self-confidence among girls. While acknowledging the significance of these factors, researchers believe that stress levels among students may also be a plausible explanation for poor academic performance. This is because stress is a universal experience that can impact the academic performance of both male and female students. Stress is a state of tension that arises when an individual's coping mechanisms are unable to keep up with the demands placed on them (Ipem, 2005). Similarly, Adeoye (1992) defined it as a syndrome that occurs when individuals perceive an inability to deal with the demands of life, work, and other situations or events.

Stress is present when individuals face demands beyond their ability to adapt, as stated by Fawole (2004). The effect of stress on student achievement has been thoroughly researched, with numerous studies suggesting that a certain level of stress is necessary for productivity (Adegoroye, 1995, Oladimeji, 2000, Alao, 2003, Mapfumo, Shumba and Daniel, 2008). According to Kaplan and Sadock (2000), stress can impact learning and memory. Adeoye (2009) identifies stress as the key hindrance to students and their performance. In addition, Selye (1980) warns of the damaging effects of stress on overall health, and how an unhealthy student cannot reach their full academic potential. When a university student is unsatisfied

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with their studies, they are more likely to experience stress. Without proper understanding and coping mechanisms, a distressed student can become even more overwhelmed and disheartened.

METHODOLOGY

There are various methods for gathering data, such as questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of stress on academic performance among married female students in southwestern Nigeria. Data was collected from 157 participants through questionnaires, using the convenience sampling approach. The collected data was then analyzed using percentile analysis. During the study, we closely observed and interviewed our target group, which consisted of married female students. We asked them about their attitudes towards education, their response to their surroundings, their plans to improve their achievements, and other related topics. The selected subjects belonged to the management, science, and engineering departments, as specified by the research title. The study was carried out in 18 governmental and private institutions located in southwestern Nigeria. It was not feasible to collect data from the entire population, so samples were used instead. This was due to practical constraints, such as limited resources of time, money, and personnel. Data collected by using those mentioned tools has been analyzed using descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation, and Paired sample T-test. Those collected data has been processed using Statistical package for social science (SPSS V-20).

RESULT:

Hypothesis 1: Is there any significant difference in the stress effect experienced by married female students in the Nigerian tertiary Institutions based on academic environment.

Table 1. Independent samples t-test of mean difference in stress perception among married female students

Gender	N	M±SD	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	95% CI
Female	157	28.08±5.87	-5.169	798	.000	-2.24912	-3.103,-1.395

M±SD=Mean, Standard Deviation; N=Number of Respondents, CI=Confidence Interval.

Result in Table 1 showed that there is a statistically significant difference in stress effect experienced among married female students in the Nigerian tertiary Institutions based on academic environment., $t(157)=-5.169$, $p=.000$, $95\%CI=-3.103,-1.395$. Female students had a high level of perceived stress compared to their male counterparts.

Hypothesis 2: Is there any difference in the academic achievements of married female students in the Nigerian tertiary Institutions who experienced high and low level of stress?

Table 2. Mean difference among married female students in the Nigerian tertiary Institutions who experienced high and low level of stress?

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Married Female St	157	22.08	6.44

Result in Table 2 revealed while married female students had mean stress of 28.08 with a standard deviation of 5.87. These mean scores suggest that singled female students experience less stress than their married counterparts.

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DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 showing the age of the respondents

Age	Number	Percentile
22-32	68	44
33-43	51	32
44-54	38	24
Total	157	100

Interpretation: The table shows the age of the respondents. Out of 157 respondents 44% belonging to the age group of 22-32, 32% belonging to 33-43 and 24% for 44-54.

Table 2 showing the type of Courses

Course	Number	Percentile
Science	45	28
Management	81	52
Engineering	31	20
Total	157	100

Interpretation: The table shows the type of courses. 28% of respondents are studying in sciences, 52 % are studying Management course while 20% are studying Engineering

Table 3 showing the type of Institution

Preference	Number	Percentile
Government Institutions	12	67
Private Institutions	6	33
	18	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The table shows the type of educational institution. 67% of respondents are studying in Government Institutions, while 33% are studying in private institution

Table 4 showing the worry about Academic stress

Option	Number	Percentile
No	29	18
Yes	128	82
Total	157	100

Interpretation: The table shows the worry of married female students regarding the examination. 82% respondents agreed that they were very much worried at the time of examinations. 18% are not having this problem.

Table 5 showing that exam stress act as a motivational tool

Option	Number	Percentile
No	82	52
Yes	75	48
Total	157	100

Interpretation: The above table shows, whether exam stress act as a motivational tool or not. 48% of respondents opined that exam stress act as a motivational tool.

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**Table 6 showing teacher help during stress opine**

Option	Number	Percentile
No	98	62
Yes	59	38
Total	157	100

Interpretation: Table shows teacher help during stress. 44% of students opined that the teacher provides support and motivation while they are stressed. 62% didn't get that help.

Table 7 showing the feel when stressed

Option	Number	Percentile
Angry	12	7
Can't Sleep	18	11
Don't feel well	12	7
Feeling tired	22	14
Nervous	43	27
Silent	19	12
Worry	31	22
Total	157	100

Interpretation: The table shows the effect of stress. Out of 157 respondents, 27% of students opined not feeling nervous and 22% were worrying; 14% said that they are feeling tired 12% are silent.

Table 8 showing a person who met while stressed

Option	Number	Percentile
Friends	57	36
Husband	48	31
Teachers	52	33
Total	157	100

Interpretation: The table shows the person met while stressed. 36% share their feeling with their friend; 31% disclose their feelings with their husband; 33% reveal their feelings with their teachers.

Table 9 showing how often felt stress a lot

Option	Number	Percentile
During Exams	112	71
Every Day	14	10
Once in a Week	31	19
Total	157	100

Interpretation: The table shows the occasion they felt stressed. Out of 157 respondents, 71% felt stress during the exam time and 10% every day, face stress

Table 10 showing the Coping Mechanism adopted to reduce stress

Option	Number	Percentile
Eating	9	6
Listening Songs	15	9
Meditation	17	10
Use of Social Media	59	38

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Watching Movies	24	15
Hanging out	13	9
Share feelings with husband	20	13
Total	157	100

Interpretation: The above table shows the coping mechanism adopted by the married female students to reduce stress. 38% of respondents said that they use social media. 15% like watching movies, 13% share their feelings with husband; 10% like to meditate, 9 listen to songs; 9% like hanging out with friends.

FINDINGS

Majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 22-32

The majority of the respondents were studying in Government Institutions.

Most of the students opined that the syllabus was overloaded.

82% of respondents were opined that they felt much stress during examinations.

Most Teachers do not provide support during stress.

Most of the students feeling nervous and become tired when stressed

Students shared their feelings with friends and teachers.

Most of the students faced exam stress

The students using a coping mechanism like using social media, share feelings with husband, listening to music, watching movies, and hanging out with friends etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Academic institutions should take the lead in guiding and motivating students to alleviate their stress levels.

Decisions should be made to reduce overloading by cutting down on syllabuses.

Teachers should approach married female students amicably to foster their personal growth.

Raising awareness through appropriate orientation is crucial for married female students.

It is essential to provide tailored care and support to these students based on their specific needs and engaging them in extracurricular activities would also contribute positively.

Both teachers and spouses must prioritize taking care of married female students and finding time to have meaningful conversations with them.

In conclusion, it was evident that married female students experienced higher levels of anxiety compared to their male counterparts. Stress is a pressing concern in academic institutions and can significantly impact academic performance.

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