

**ACADEMIC STRESS AND SELECTED ASSOCIATED FACTORS AMONG OBAFEMI
AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.**

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TO

**THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH, FACULTY OF CLINICAL SCIENCES,
COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE.**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work was carried out by me under the supervision of DR. O. O. ALOBA and that it has not been submitted for any other examination elsewhere for publication.

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this project “Academic Stress and Selected Associated Factors among Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduate Students was carried out under my supervision by **OJELEYE Olubunmi Adetoun** of the Department of Mental Health, Faculty of Clinical Sciences, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Osun State.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Almighty Allah.

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ABBREVIATIONS

COR	Conservation of Resources Theory
HESI	Higher Education Stress Inventory
LOC	Locus of Control
ROT	Religious Orientation Test
SCSQ	Simplified Coping Scale Questionnaire
HADS	Hospital Anxiety and Depressive Symptom
SPSS	Statistical Products for Service Solutions
WCQ	Ways of Coping Questionnaire
STAF	Spielberger Trait Anxiety Form
MDD	Major Depressive Disorder
subscale of the Revised Child and Anxiety and Depression Scale	
CTAS	Children's Test Anxiety Scale
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
AWMA	Automated Working Memory Assessment
CANTAB	Cambridge Neuropsychological Test Automated Battery
WRAT 4	Wide Range Achievement Test 4

ABSTRACT

This study determined the level of academic stress among the undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University. It also ascertained the relationship between religiosity, mental factors (anxiety and depression), coping styles (active coping and passive coping), locus of control and academic stress among Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduate students. These were with the view to providing information on factors that account for failure in undergraduate education.

The study was a descriptive survey study carried out in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Three hundred and thirty three students were selected for the study using a multistage sampling technique. Students level of academic stress was measured using Higher Education Stress Inventory (HESI), level of religiosity was assessed using Religiosity Orientation Test (ROT) and the Locus of Control scale (LOC) was used to assess the generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement among the students. The Simplified Coping Style Questionnaire (SCSQ) was used to assess the coping style and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) was used to evaluate the level of depression and anxiety symptoms. Data collected were analyzed using proportions, frequency counts, one way ANOVA, independent t-test, chi-square and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics. The level of statistical significance was determined at $p < 0.05$.

The results showed that the prevalence rate of academic stress was 13.9%. The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between academic stress and religiosity revealed a non-statistically significant relationship ($r = -0.077$, $p > 0.05$). In addition, the results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis also revealed a non-statistically significant relationship between stress and locus of control ($r = 0.025$, $p > 0.05$). The result of the Pearson

Product Moment Correlation analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between academic stress and mental factors (anxiety $r = -0.025$, $p > 0.05$ and depression $r = -0.067$, $p > 0.05$). There was a significant relationship between stress and coping styles (active coping: $r = 0.366$, $p < 0.01$ and passive coping: $r = 0.416$, $p < 0.001$). The study showed that as academic stress is increasing, active and passive coping styles adopted were also increasing among Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduate students. The male undergraduate students had a significant higher mean stress score (84.17) when compared with the female mean stress score (78.59); [$t = -4.038$ $p < 0.01$].

The study concluded that student's coping style was the only factor that was significantly associated with academic stress among the undergraduate students.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

University life is a major opportunity for many undergraduates because they are given the chance to decide what to do with their life without the guidance from their parents. It is a completely new experience to most undergraduate students. Students make various decisions regarding all aspects of their lives such as academics, social life, and leisure activities (Baker 2003). The university environment is quite different from their home and secondary school backgrounds. As a result of this change, there is the need for students to struggle to meet the expectations of the University environment and the expectations of their parents in terms of academic performance, social interaction and religious beliefs. Smith and Renk (2007) stated that, amidst the new found freedom, in addition, the society believes that graduating from a standard university is a “pass” to get a good job, high salaries, and high social status (Ang and Huan, 2006). As a result, students are indirectly endangered by various stressful events that tend to affect their academic success (Sreeramareddy, Shankar, Binu, Mukhopadhyay, and Menezes, 2007).

University students are confronted by academic stress due to poor study habits such as poor time management (Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, and Phillips, 1990), studying only to pass exams - not necessarily for knowledge (Baldwin, Wilkinson, and Barkley, 2000), and course work mentality (Robotham, 2008), which may eventually lead to poor academic performance. In their attempt to get over the above mentioned stressful situations, students employ different coping strategies such as engaging in the use of alcohol and drug, denial and behavioral disengagement; while

some student cope through the adoption of attitudes such as acceptance, planning, and positive reframing and taking the necessary steps to overcome the academic stress (Screeramareddy et al., 2007).

Students experience major trials and claim to adjust in order to make changes during their university years. Coupled with academic stress, students pursue freedom from their parents and try to be more dependent on themselves, try to find recognition and respect from their peers in a world of mixed values, and more intimate relationships. All these changes seem to affect students' ability to perform well in their academics and as a result of these, they feel stressed and to proffer solution, many tend to adopt diverse techniques to manage the academic stress being encountered.

According to Keinan and Perlberg (1986), the level of stress undergraduate student experience may differ from peers who are not university students and, from one academic calendar school year to another. During the first year at the campus, undergraduate students are faced with challenges such as having the ability to assimilate a vast amount of academic materials in a limited period. They are required to develop effective study techniques and habits in order to cope with the volume of material assigned to them (Campbell and Svenson, 1992). It has been argued that the first experience of the undergraduate student to academic studies and to the highly routine university administrative procedure can also cause stress, because they have to make essential adjustment to their social environment as well. Stress being encountered by students is mainly because of interpersonal relationships with their peer. They experience substantial difficulties when trying to adjust to the university social network system (Shirom, 1986).

The pressure being felt by someone by the event happening to them is generally known as stress. For example, University students talk about being under stress when searching for materials through internet in order to complete pending assignments, time management, inadequate sleep, and poor performance in exams.

There are several factors that have been identified to be associated with academic stress among university students. These factors are religiosity, locus of control, anxiety and depressive symptoms. Religion is slowly gaining ground in psychological exploration because of the role it plays in daily functioning of the believer (Shafranske, 1996). Being religious can be associated to societal incidence in that religiosity can play a great role in dealing with the events of life and constitute means of dealing with stress. That is why religious belief, spirituality orientation and religious group participation can be linked to academic stress, good academic stand and time spent studying. It has also been observed that students seem to believe more in religious engagement as having a positive effect on their academic performance based on the kind of faith they have. They believe also that taking part in religious activities will create emotional wellbeing which as a result will reduce the stress been faced in the university environment.

Most studies on the effect of religion on academic success focus on personal religiosity or on religious participation and these indicators are likely to produce positive effects. In contrast, more sophisticated longitudinal research shows that sectarian religious affiliation and biblical fundamentalism have a substantial negative effect on educational attainment.

From the ongoing, students who have less confidence in themselves have been seen to participate more in religious activities as a booster and a relief of academic stress .“Several

studies have shown that religious students do better on critical indicators of academic success (Mooney 2005).

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