

## STRESS AND BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS AMONG UNDERGRADUATES COUNSELING IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL AND BEHAVIUIORIAL CHANGE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates stress and behavior problems among undergraduates and attempted to find out if stress experienced by undergraduates could be the underlying factor precipitating behavior problems. Descriptive survey research design was adopted and a sample size of 400 students was used. Two self constructed instruments namely undergraduates stress Rating scale and Behavior problems inventory were used to collect data from the respondents. Data collected were analyzed using t-test, Pearson product moment correlation, one way Analysis of Variance and Schaffer's Post Hoc test. The result of the investigation showed significant relationship between students experience of stress and behavior problems. There was significant difference between male and female undergraduates' stress experience in their involvement in behavioral problems; also there was significant difference among undergraduates' stress experience by course levels. These findings revealed the need to establish a big and well equipped counseling center in university campuses to be able to provide the necessary strategies for coping with stress.*

**KEYWORDS:** stress, behaviour and social

### INTRODUCTION

Stress occurs as individuals interact with their physical environments. Virtually all human activities seem to generate stress. Akinboye (2002) explained that stress is the body's response to any undesirable mental, physical, emotional and social situations in the environment. Akinade (2007) also showed that stress is any stimulus that either raises your excitement or anxiety level beyond what you regard as above your usual or personal tolerance levels. Hence, stress can be thought of as any event that strains or exceeds an individual's ability to cope.

It is worthy of note that educational problems being encountered on University campuses may be possible source of stress to students. Students that are subjected to very uncomfortable strenuous condition in the Universities may be stressed; for instance, inadequate seats and spaces in the lecture rooms as a result of student's population may cause stress. Some students scramble for seats and spaces in the lecture rooms and in the libraries, which make learning difficult. Disrupted academic calendar by incessant strikes in universities may cause stress. Science students often complain of lack of sufficient and up to date laboratory equipment for practical work. In some cases, students are made to provide chemicals to be used in the laboratories, while some bring stove as a source of heat. Biological specimens are often provided by the students, thereby causing stress among them.

Universities are regarded as citadels of knowledge where the needed high level manpower for any nation could be provided. Nonetheless, comments from the public have revealed that this traditional role of universities has been neglected due to the nefarious activities

of the undergraduates such as thuggery, hooliganism, cultism, rioting, vandalism, examination malpractices, drug addiction, alcoholism and sexual immorality.

Presumably, these behavior problems may be as a result of stress experienced by the students on the campuses. Some universities are closed down as a result of student's violent demonstrations.

Ajayi and Akinyemi (2004) opined that the causes of students crises among tertiary institutions are authority's imposition of decisions on students without consultation, sudden change of established statutory policies, inadequate facilities, arrest and failure of school authority to guarantee security of lives and properties. In the same vein, Akinboye (2002) categorized the symptoms of stress among university students as follows:-

i- Cognitive symptoms which include forgetfulness, attention deficit, distorted thought processes, preoccupation, reduced productivity, negative self-concept and negative perception of events.

ii- Emotional symptoms include anxiousness, restlessness, irritability, jealousy, angry out burst, hostility, depression, tendency to cry, withdrawal, sleeplessness, impatience and feelings of unreality.

iii- Physical symptoms include increased heart rates, pounding heart, elevated blood pressure, sweat palms, vomiting, headache, diarrhea, constipation, and fatigue, dryness of the mouth, chronic pain, stammering and susceptibility to minor illness.

iv- Behavioral symptoms include aggressive behavior, over/under eating, carelessness, compulsive behavior, impatient, hostility, accident-prones, withdrawal and increased alcohol and drug consumption.

It is worthy of note however that most of these symptoms are manifested by Nigerian undergraduates in almost all the tertiary institutions nowadays, which have necessitated this study with the view to providing counseling strategies for social and behavioral changes on the campuses.

Sample of four hundred undergraduates from Bayero University Kano were selected through stratified random sampling technique. The students were stratified according to faculties and course levels. Eight faculties were used and fifty students from each faculty were randomly selected from different course levels ranging between 100 and 500 levels respectively. In all, the sample consisted of 124 female and 274 males.

Two research-designed instruments were used for the study. The first was labeled Undergraduate Stress Rating Scale (USRS) and the second was Behavior Problems Inventory (BPI).

i- The undergraduate stress Rating scale had four sections. Section A consisted of items seeking information on the bio-data of respondents such as sex, faculty and course levels. Section B consisted of 14 items on institutional/academic stress symptoms. Section C consisted of 14 items on emotional stress symptoms and section D consisted of 12 items on physiological stress symptoms. Altogether 40 items were generated.

ii- The Behavior problems Inventory had five sections. Section A consisted of items on bio-data, section B consisted of 13 items on truancy,

section C consisted of 15 items on drug addiction, section D consisted of 10 items on examination malpractices and section E consisted of 10 items on rioting and vandalizing of university property. In all, there were 48 items generated on behavior problems. Students were to indicate 'agreed' or 'disagreed' for each of the items. The two instruments were validated by administering the cognitive stress test questionnaire designed by Akinboye (2002) and behavior assessment scale designed by Akinboye (1980) alongside with the USRS and BPI respectively on 100 students from different faculties and course levels in KUST Wudil for paralled validities. The correlation coefficient of 0.75 was obtained for (USRS) and 0.81 was obtained for (BPI) at 0.5 level of significance. The reliability was also obtained by administering the instruments on two different occasions at two weeks interval on the same students. The reliability coefficient of 0.05 level of significance. The instruments were administered on the students during the free periods in the university lecture hall with the assistance of their class representatives.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 shows that Pearson product correlation and r-cal (0.493) is greater than r-table (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis one was therefore rejected. This means that there was significant correlation between undergraduates stress experience and their involvement in behavior problems.

**Table 1;** Pearson product moment correlation of stress experience of undergraduates and involvement in behavior problems.

variable	N	r-cal	r-table
Stress Experience	400		
		0.493	0.195
Behavior problem	400		
P<0.05			

**Table 2** shows that the calculated (3.419) were greater than t-table (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis two was therefore rejected. This means that there was significant difference between male and female undergraduates stress experience in their involvement in behavior problems.

**Table 2;** t-test summary of gender differences of undergraduates stress experience in the involvement in behavior problems.

group	N	X	Df S.D	Df	t-cal	t-table
Male	276	59.58	11.23			
				398	3.419	1.96
Female	124	57.20	9.71			
P<0.05						

**Table 3** one way ANOVA summary of undergraduates stress experience and their involvement in behavior problems.

Source	Sa	Df	Ms	f-cal	f-table
Between group	6059.5384	1514.681			
				10.13	2.37
Within table	109046.9	395	109.595		
Total	115106.4	339			
P<0.05					

This shows that there was significant difference among undergraduates stress experience by course level in their involvement in behavior problems.

#### DISCUSSION

The results in the tables revealed in the first hypothesis that there was significant correlation between undergraduates stress experience and their involvement in behavior problems. This finding supports the finding of Ogbodo (2004) who discovered that some students in Nigerian Universities joined secret cults when they were fed up with prevailing situations on the campuses. Also Capsi, Bolger and Eckenrode (1987) found that daily fluctuation in stress correlated with daily fluctuations in mood. That is, as stress increases, mood tends to become more negative. Therefore stress affects human effectiveness and precipitates behavior problems. It was also revealed that there was significant difference between male and female undergraduates stress experiences in their involvement in behavior problems. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Ranjita (2000) who discovered that significant gender difference exists between male and female undergraduates

#### Counseling implications for Social and Behavioral change.

The findings revealed the need for the establishment of Counseling Center in Nigerian Universities where students will be provided with various stress management techniques by professional counselors. However, most universities do not have adequate Counseling Centers because of their little or no recognition for counseling services. Priority is usually placed on the cognitive development of students at the expense of the affective development. Where as,

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when faced with academic stress. Males prefer to employ avoidance strategies such as smoking, consumption of alcohol, visit to club houses, use of tranquilizers and drugs to cope with stress. These strategies may eventually lead to the manifestation of behavior problems.

The Female undergraduates usually prefer relaxation, crying talking out their emotions, praying and watching films which may not necessarily lead to behavior problems. Although on the average, women appear to be more emotionally distressed when exposed to the same stressors with men and they experience more of sleep problems than men (Fullerton, Ursano, Epstein, Crowley, Vance, Kao, Dougal & Baum, 2001).

Tables showed that there was significant difference among undergraduates stress experience by course levels in their involvement in behavior problems.

This finding supports the assertion of Nivadiani and Ofoegbu (2001) that the level of perceived academic stress is very high among fresh undergraduates. In other words, fresh undergraduates are more prone to behavior problems than the 400 or 500 level undergraduates.

university education is for all round development of the student.

#### CONCLUSION

Undergraduates manifest various behavior problems when they experience stress on their campuses. Male undergraduates are more involved in behavior problems than female undergraduates when stressed. Similarly, fresh students (new) were found to engage more in behavior problems than students in upper levels (stale), due to their experience of stress on the campuses.

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