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STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG STUDENTS IN THE

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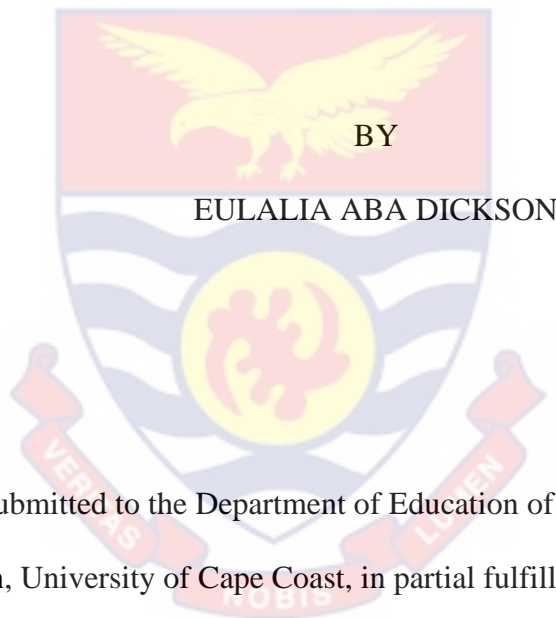
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2024

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG STUDENTS IN THE

ACCRA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, GHANA

BY

EULALIA ABA DICKSON

Thesis submitted to the Department of Education of the College of Distance

Education, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Guidance and Counselling

NOVEMBER 2024

DECLARATIONS

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature……………………   Date……………………

Name: …………………………………………………………………..

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature……………………….… Date………….…………

Name: …………………………………………………………………

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine stress and coping mechanisms of students of Accra College of Education. The descriptive survey design was chosen for the study. The population for the study was 1035 students of the Accra College of Education. Proportional stratified sampling method was used to sample 280 students. Data were gathered through the use of questionnaires. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Independent Samples t-Test, and One-Way Analysis of Variance. The study revealed that the common stressors posing high level stress included studying and writing tests and examinations, dealing with heavy academic workload and unclear assessments, difficulty paying fees and supporting themselves financially. Also, it was found that stress affected the academic performance of students since they could not study well and were unable to prepare effectively before examinations. Regarding the personal-social lives of students, the study revealed that stress made students worry, affected their health, wellbeing, sleep quality and eating habits. The study revealed that chatting with friends, leaving matters in God's hands, and praying, reading religious scripts and listening to spiritual songs were the coping strategies used by the students. Differences were observed in the stress and coping strategies of students on the basis of gender, age and marital status. It was recommended that the authorities of Accra College of Education make their timetable flexible and also provide a financial support scheme to help reduce the stress levels of students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely thankful to my supervisor Prof. Linda Dzama Forde, for her patience, guidance and support throughout the period of this study. Also, I greatly appreciate my parents, Mr. Isaac Percy Yankson and Madam Divine Amonoo for their encouragement.

Special thanks also go to my husband, Mr. Ezekiel Kwesi Dickson for all the support he has given me throughout the period of this study. Finally, I am grateful to my siblings Henry, Stanley and Divine Yankson for all the love and support they have shown me.

DEDICATION

To my children.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a common phenomenon that can have severe effects on people. For students, the effects of stress can negatively affect their academic work (Kotter, Wagner, Bruheim, & Voltmer, 2017). Most students find the college experience to be stressful since families invest a lot of money and resources in their children's education and place pressure on them to succeed, find work, and support their family financially (Ansong, 2013). In this sense, students are mostly under enormous pressure to learn and perform excellently in their academic work. The pressure continues to students securing for themselves some of the few job opportunities available so that their families would feel that they have not spent in vain (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013; Casely-Hayford, Arnot, Dovie & Salifu, 2010). Adopting coping mechanisms is crucial if you want to be able to handle pressure and difficult situations. Coping techniques, which can take many different forms and have varying degrees of effectiveness, are the precise actions people take to control, lessen, or avoid stressful situations (Gnilka, Chang, & Dew, 2012). There is therefore the need to explore the experiences of stress and coping strategies of students.

Background to the Study

Everyday living inevitably involves stress. Because it refers to any outside occurrence, whether pleasant or scary, it cannot be avoided. The way a person responds to stress depends on whether they view a situation as a risk or a challenge that can be overcomed (Coiro, Bettis & Compas, 2017). Threatening or distressing circumstances can result in social dysfunction, sadness, anxiety, and even suicidal intention, whereas challenging

circumstances might produce favorable results like motivation and enhanced work performance (Rheinberg & Engeser, 2018). (Tang, Byrne & Qin, 2018). This basically means that even though an average amount of stress is beneficial, a higher amount of stress might exacerbate mental health issues if it is not adequately controlled.

Stress is a major issue in schools which both students and staff are susceptible to (Yikealo & Tareke 2018). This implies that both students and staff are vulnerable to experiencing stress. For students, the experience of stress is a common feature of school life (Dahlin, Joneborg & Runeson, 2005). This is due to the fact that problems including course overload, academic pressure, a lack of chances, and strong competition have been shown to define the general school environment. These stressors lead to worry, tension, and anxiety in certain students (Jain & Sandeep, 2016). Relationships with close friends and loved ones could also be difficult. When there is tension between students and instructors, this connection can become a cause of stress.

Recently, there has been a lot of worry about the mental health of students in postsecondary institutions on a global scale (Milojevich & Lukowski, 2016). This concern has been borne out of the continuous reports of the several psychological problems of students in tertiary institutions such as stress, anxiety and depression (Blanco et al., 2008; Kim, Saw & Zane, 2015), with stress being the most common (Deasy, Coughlan, Pironom, Jourdan, & Mannix-McNamara, 2014; American College Health Association, 2018; Gustems-Carnicer, Calderón & Calderón-Garrido, 2019).

There are many pressures placed on tertiary students, both academic and extracurricular, that may have an impact on their wellbeing. Adapting to a

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new environment, being overworked, not having enough time to do their tasks, studying for and writing tests, and feeling under pressure to perform are all examples of academic pressures (Vizoso & Arias, 2016; Erschens et al., 2018; Webber, Skodda, Muth, Angerer & Loerbroks, 2019). Non-academic pressures may include shifting residences, beginning new personal-social interactions, being away from family and friends, worrying about finances, and uncertainty about one's future employment possibilities (Galatzer-Levy, Burton & Bonanno, 2012; DeRosier, Frank, Schwartz & Leary, 2013; Beiter et al., 2015).

Stress comes with significant harm to the student's academic performance such as reduced ability to pay attention and less dedication to study as well as to the student's personal-social life such as substance abuse, insomnia, anxiety, and physical and emotional exhaustion (Chou, Chao, Yang, Yeh & Lee, 2011; Turner, Bartlett, Andiappan & Cabot, 2015; Waqas, Khan, Sharif, Khalid &Ali, 2015). The effects of stress on students can cut across every sphere of their lives including their academic and personal-social lives. For instance, stress has been found to affect academic life since students can be stressed to the point that they may miss lectures and class work and also pay less attention to academic work (Thomas & Borrayo, 2016). In terms of personal-social life, research has demonstrated that stress can affect the relationships of students as well as their personal lives (Coccia & Darling, 2013).

People utilize a range of coping techniques to deal with stressful events since stress has a detrimental impact on health. Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the earliest authorities on coping with stress, defined it as a collection of

deliberate actions and mental processes used to manage a stressful situation or event with the aim of minimizing its negative effects. Coping involves making a thorough cognitive appraisal of one's ability to deal with the stressful situation. There are several ways to cope, including emotion-focused coping, which focuses on reducing negative emotional reactions, and problem-focused coping, which seeks a feasible solution to difficult situations (Jex, Bliese, Buzzell & Primeau, 2001). Additionally, there are two types of coping: active and passive, or approach and avoidance (Anshel, 1996). Internet surfing, relaxing and sleeping, watching television or movies, and instant chatting with friends were the five most popular coping mechanisms among students, according to Sideridis (2008).

Globally, stress is experienced in the family, workplace, industrial, and academic settings (Okoro, 2018). Everybody experiences stress on a regular basis, regardless of age, culture, or religion. Daily difficulties and large life events can seriously hamper a person's ability to perform at their best, even though the consequences of stress on an individual are not necessarily negative (Kaufman, 2007). According to the widespread consensus, students must identify the source of any negative stress in order to remove it from their lives (Nelson, Dell'Oliver, Koch & Buckler, 2001).

In Ghana, Colleges of Education (CoE), formerly known as Teacher Training Colleges, are a component of postsecondary education. The Basel Mission founded Ghana's first Teacher Training College at Akropong-Akwapim in 1848. Currently, there are 46 Colleges of Education in Ghana. The Colleges of Education in Ghana are places where student teachers can receive the professional development and academic preparation they need to

work in non-formal and pre-tertiary institutions of learning (Government of Ghana, 2012). Colleges of Education have experienced several modifications to their status, accreditation, and the certifications the school awards to its output.

The Colleges of Education Act, 2012, Act 847 provides that a College of Education is to train students to acquire the necessary professional and academic competencies for teaching in pre-tertiary institutions and non-formal education institutions and build the professional and academic capacities of serving teachers through regular continuing education. Also, colleges of education are supposed to provide programmes that will promote the effective teaching of science, mathematics, information and communication technology and other related subjects to meet the needs of contemporary society; and foster links with relevant institutions and the community in order to ensure the holistic training of teachers.

According to the Colleges of Education Act, 2012, a college of education must choose the disciplines it will teach based on their particular relevance to the demands of the nation's educational system and for national growth (Asare & Nti, 2014). Additionally, among other things, Colleges of Education must make sure that fundamental research and action research are a vital component of teacher preparation. The reforms in the structure and governance in the College of Education system imply that students may find themselves in situations where they may have several demands and thus may be vulnerable to stress.

In Ghana, people enter colleges of education usually right from the senior high school. Students who transfer from high school to college may

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experience psychological, intellectual, and social distress (Tenkorang, 2020). Due to the significant differences in this educational level, students must adjust to new instructional strategies, academic standards, student-faculty relationships, and living conditions (Yikealo & Tareke, 2018). Students could encounter numerous forms of stress due to these changes, which may harm their emotional, social, and academic well-being. Students in the Accra College of Education have to cope with a lot of demands in their daily lives. Some students hurry along the hallways reading quickly from the notice board, while others stop to speak with friends about their studies and forthcoming deadlines. Students at the Accra College of Education routinely discuss stress and grumble to one another about how overwhelmed they are with their to-do lists. This investigation was carried out in this context.

Statement of the Problem

It has been shown that many young individuals experience stress when enrolling in college (Pierceall & Keim, 2007). There are several indicators to identify students' discomfort, including depression, anxiety, tension, and sleeping problems (Petrov, Lichstein, & Baldwin, 2014). There is usually a learning curve in adjusting to the college atmosphere for the majority of young people entering Colleges of Education in Ghana directly out of high school. Living alone, managing finances, upholding academic integrity and standards, and adjusting to a new social life are a few of the adjustments that may need to be made (Okoro, 2018). Students may feel stressed as a result of those factors.

Numerous studies from across the world, including those from the US, the UK, and Saudi Arabia, have shown that stress among students is commonly brought on by a heavy workload in the classroom, trouble reading

textbooks, problems with family or health, and financial challenges (Al-Sowygh, Alfadley, Al-Saif, & Al-Wadei, 2013; Chao, 2012; Saklofske, Austin, Mastoras, Beaton & Osborne, 2012).

There have been several studies on student stress in Ghana. However, the majority of these research either concentrated on university students or students in senior high school. For instance, Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) discovered that some University of Cape Coast final year distance education students utilized drugs and alcohol to cope with stress. Azila-Gbettor, Atatsi, Danku and Soglo (2015) also revealed that business students in Ho Polytechnic experienced stress mostly relating to academic work and their adjustment to campus. Duncan-Williams (2015) also revealed that senior high school students experience academic stress which affects their entire lives. Students in Colleges of Education appear to have been left out. This presents a gap in the literature to be filled by the current study.

In the Accra college of education, there are several reports of problems being faced by students which create stress for them. For example, Ansah (2019) noted that the Accra College of Education (ACCE) has limited number of teaching staff and this affects the academic work in the college. This ultimately puts a lot of academic stress on students since the tutors become stressed as a result of teaching a lot within a limited time. Also, the Accra College of Education (2020) Annual Report revealed that human resource capacity and infrastructure were all inadequate and this affected the lives of students on campus increasing their stress levels. In recent times, the Guidance and Counselling Unit has organized programmes aimed at equipping students to deal with stress and improve their academic performance (Accra College of

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Education, 2022). Through these programmes, it became clear that the students had a lot of stressful issues affecting their academic work.

From the forgoing, it is clear that students in Accra College of Education are faced with a lot of stressors and these affect them in their academic and personal lives. This implies that attention needs to be paid to the stressful experiences of students in Accra College of Education to help make their academic and personal-social lives easier on campus. The current study is considered necessary on this basis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate stress and coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education. The study's specific objectives were to:

1. Explore the common stressors among students of Accra College of Education go through,

2. Investigate the perceived impact of the stressful experiences on the academic performance of students of Accra College of Education,

3. Investigate the perceived impact of stressful life experiences on the personal-social lives of students of Accra College of Education,

4. Identify the coping strategies of students of Accra College of Education in managing stress experiences,

5. Identify the differences in the experience of stress of students of Accra College of Education on the basis of gender,

6. Identify the differences in the coping strategies of students of Accra College of Education on the basis of gender

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7. Identify the differences in the experience of stress of students of Accra College of Education on the basis of age,

8. Identify the differences in the coping strategies of students of Accra College of Education on the basis of age,

9. Identify the differences in the experience of stress of students of Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status, and

10. Identify the differences in the coping strategies of students of Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the most common stressors of students?

2. What is the perceived impact of stress on the academic lives of students?

3. What is the perceived impact of stress on the personal-social lives of students?

4. What are the most prevalent coping strategies that students employ in managing their stressful situations?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

H_01: There is no statistically significant gender difference in the stressful experiences of students.

H_11: There is a statistically significant gender difference in the stressful experiences of students.

H_02: There is no statistically significant gender difference in the coping strategies of students.

$H_1 2$: There is a statistically significant gender difference in the coping strategies of students.

$H_0 3$: There is no statistically significant difference in the stressful experiences of students on the basis of age.

$H_1 3$: There is a statistically significant difference in the stressful experiences of students on the basis of age.

$H_0 4$: There is no statistically significant difference in the coping strategies of students on the basis of age.

$H_1 4$: There is a statistically significant difference in the coping strategies of students on the basis of age.

$H_0 5$: There is no statistically significant difference in the stressful experiences of students on the basis of marital status.

$H_1 5$: There is a statistically significant difference in the stressful experiences of students on the basis of marital status.

$H_0 6$: There is no statistically significant difference in the coping strategies of students on the basis of marital status.

$H_1 6$: There is a statistically significant difference in the coping strategies of students on the basis of marital status.

Significance of the Study

In order to safeguard students' interests and, ideally, take steps to lessen the effects of stress, the study would first aid Ghana's colleges of education in understanding the unique stressful life situations of their students. It is hoped that the findings of this research would contribute to raising

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awareness of the role of counsellors and the necessity of having a College Counsellor who would regularly conduct seminars for all students.

The study would help other institutions such as non-governmental organisations, corporate bodies and individuals who have direct interest in the effects of stress experiences among students, to be informed about the current situation in Ghana in order to develop the right systems to support students grow in a healthy environment by developing the right stress management strategies.

The study's findings would serve as a reference material for researchers in education, Colleges of Education, College Counsellors, and policy makers. The study would also better position parents to be more supportive to their children in their times of stress and alert them to adopt measures to minimize or eliminate stress disorders.

Delimitations

Only students in the Accra College of Education used for the study. The study's focus was on how stress events impact students' academic and personal-social life as well as the coping mechanisms they use. Stress experience and coping strategies on the basis of gender, age, and marital status were also the delimitation of the study.

Limitations

The study had a few drawbacks. Firstly, because the study only looked at one college of education, there were limitations on how far the findings could be generalized. Also, the use of the quantitative approach in the study produced large data which lacks the depth that could have been provided with the use of a qualitative approach. These limitations did not affect the results of

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the study because the instrument for collecting the data was structured in such a way that every necessary aspect of the study was covered.

Definition of Terms

The key terms used in the study are defined below:

Stress: This is used to refer to the reaction of students to situations deemed to be threatening or challenging.

Academic Lives: This is used to refer to the academic work of students which are affected by the experience of stress.

Personal-Social Lives: This is used to refer to the personal lives of students as well as their interactions with peers, staff and other people within the college environment.

Coping Strategies: These refer to the strategies and mechanisms that students use to deal with or manage their experience of stress.

Organisation of the Study

The study was organised in five chapters. The first chapter dealt with the introduction of the study. It covered the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, hypotheses and the significance of the study. It also dealt with the delimitations, limitations, definition of terms and the organisation of the study.

The second chapter deals with the review of literature. It covers the theoretical and conceptual framework as well as the review of related empirical studies. Chapter three of the study focuses on the research methods for the study. This covers the research design, study area, population, sampling procedures, data collection instrument, data collection procedures and the data processing and analysis.

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The fourth chapter presents and discusses the results of the study. The data collected are analysed, interpreted and discussed to answer to the research questions and also test the hypotheses of the study. The fifth chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study as well as the suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate stress and coping strategies among students in the Accra College of Education. In this chapter, literature is reviewed. Theoretical review, conceptual framework, conceptual review, and empirical review are all covered.

Theoretical Review

In this section, the theories that are related to the study are reviewed. The theories reviewed include Selye's Theory of General Adaptation Syndrome and the Transactional Theory of Stress.

Selye's Theory of General Adaptation Syndrome

The work of endocrinologist Hans Selye has contributed significantly to the adoption of the stress idea in science and the public (Krohne, 2002). Seyle was of the view that there are nonspecific changes in the body which produce some responses from individuals. According to Selye (1976, p.4), these "*nonspecifically caused changes* constitute the stereotypical, i.e., *specific*, response pattern of systemic stress". Selye (1976, p. 64) defined this stress as "a state manifested by a syndrome which consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes in a biologic system". Selye designated this stereotyped reaction pattern as the "General Adaptation Syndrome" (GAS). General adaption syndrome, defined by Higuera (2018) as a three-stage process, outlines the physiological adjustments the body makes in response to stress. Alarm, resistance and exhaustion are the three stages Selye proposed stress experiences go through.

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Alarm Stage:

The alarm stage, according to Higuera (2018), describes the first signs of stress that the body exhibits. This instinctive response equips the person to escape or defend themselves when confronted with danger. During the alarm stage, there is an initial shock that causes an increase in heart rate, increased discharge of adrenaline and gastro-intestinal ulcerations (Krohne, 2002). Following the first shock, there occurs a counter-shock that kick-starts the defense mechanisms and is characterized by elevated adrenocortical activity.

Resistance Stage:

After experiencing the first shock of a stressful event and going into fight-or-flight mode, the body begins to mend itself by generating less cortisol to enable heart rate and blood pressure to return to normal (Higuera, 2018). At this stage, the symptoms of the alarm reaction disappear, which can indicate that the organism has adapted to the stressor. The body remains on high alert for some time even as it enters this period of recovery. If the person is able to overcome the stress experience and the situation is no longer an issue, the body keeps healing itself until hormone levels, heart rate, and blood pressure reach a pre-stress condition (Krohne, 2002).

There are certain stressful circumstances that last for a long time. The body remains on high alert and adjusts to enduring the stressful circumstance if such events are not handled (Higuera, 2018). Blood pressure is still elevated, and the body is still secreting the stress hormone. If the resistance stage continues too long without pauses to offset the effects of stress, the weariness stage may follow (Krohne, 2002).

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Exhaustion Stage:

Chronic or extended stress has led to this stage. Long-term stress can deplete a person's physical, emotional, and mental resources to the point that the body is unable to cope with stress (Higuera, 2018). The individual can give up or believe that nothing can be done. Fatigue, burnout, melancholy, anxiety, and a diminished ability to handle stress are all indications of exhaustion. The physical side-effects of this stage may also compromise the person's immune system and increase their chance of contracting diseases linked to stress.

The General Adaptation Syndrome idea is pertinent to the current study because it sheds light on the negative effects that stress may have on students if it is not managed. This implies that students should be able to deal with stress else their personal lives may be affected badly when they get to the exhaustion stage.

Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC)

The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping was developed by Richard Lazarus in the late 1960s (Lazarus, 1966). The dynamics of challenging situations attracted the attention of social personality psychologist Richard Lazarus, who developed and tested a Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC) (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress, according to Lazarus (1966), is not a cause of an event but rather the result of a person's interaction with their environment.

The transactional theory of stress and coping states that people engage in behaviours that have a direct influence on outcomes while screening potentially sensitive inputs and evaluate their capacity to minimize loss, harm, or difficulty (Dillard, 2019). The theoretical framework that Lazarus created

continually emphasizes the crucial role that assessment plays in how a person responds, feels, and behaves. Appraisal was stressed by Lazarus (1966) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as the primary mediator in person-environment interactions. In essence, appraisals moderate the connections between antecedents and consequences (Lazarus, 2012). The term perception first arose in Lazarus's work in place of evaluation; nevertheless, Lazarus concluded that perception was too neutral and did not appropriately stress the evaluative aspect of cognitive mediation (Dillard, 2019).

There are three different kinds of appraisals: primary, secondary, and reappraisal. Initially, only primary and secondary appraisal were found. The process of determining a situation's significance, its interaction with one's own beliefs, values, ambitions, and commitments, and the likely outcomes of situational investment is known as primary appraisal (Lazarus, 2012). However, secondary appraisal happens when links between a person and their surroundings have significance (Lazarus, 2012). The person determines the choices accessible for managing the problem during secondary appraisal.

Primary appraisal may be defined as a judgment about what a person thinks a situation has in store for him or her. The potential impact of demands and resources on wellbeing is evaluated. When a person is under stress, a scenario may be evaluated as unimportant or distressing during the primary appraisal. A danger or challenge may be perceived in the stressful scenario. Threat describes an impending harm that may or may not be unavoidable. Threat, on the other hand, has an usually negative tone, whereas challenge calls for extraordinary efforts from the person (Tenkorang, 2020).

In secondary appraisal, the individual assesses whether they possess the skills, social networks, and other resources necessary to manage stresses and restore balance between themselves and their environment (Schwarzer, 2001). Secondary appraisal is the process of determining what coping strategies or approaches are available to deal with a hazard and how effective they may be. Reevaluating one's situation may lead to the realization that one's resources and coping mechanisms are either sufficient to reduce risk or insufficient to deal with a problem. In some situations, the primary appraisal variant and secondary assessment options could no longer be appropriate. Reappraising is the process of reviewing primary and secondary evaluations when circumstances change rather than being a different type of appraisal (Smith & Kirby, 2011). Re-appraisal simply is the process of continuously evaluating, altering, or relabeling prior primary or secondary evaluations as a situation changes. In this way, something that was at first considered as frightening can subsequently be seen as a challenge or as irrelevant (Tenkorang, 2020).

Lazarus' approach includes a crucial idea on how to cope. Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping are the two categories of coping that Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified. While emotion-focused coping methods, such as avoiding, blaming, minimizing, wishful thinking, and venting feelings, are aimed at reducing emotional pain, problem-focused coping strategies are comparable to problem-solving techniques used to handle difficult circumstances.

The Transactional Theory of Stress and coping states that interactions between a person, their environment, and their circumstance lead to stress

(Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress can result in both short-term and long-term psychological anguish as well as physical symptoms, depending on how these interactions play out (Hellhammer, Wüst, & Kudielka, 2009). These interactions are motivated by evaluations and coping, which comprise beliefs of importance, risk of harm, and adaptability (Benight & Bandura, 2004). It could be useful to employ the cognitive appraisal and coping components of the transactional theory of stress and coping to mediate the relationship between student stress experiences in order to offer appropriate metrics through which students' lives may be improved.

It may be concluded from the present study that the ways in which students appraise events in connection to their resources and strengths determines their experience of stress. For instance, if students perceive an impending examination to be too difficult that they cannot pass, they are likely to experience stress as compared to when they feel they have the capacity to pass the examination.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study is shown in Figure 1. The framework depicts the relationship that exists between the key variables in the study.
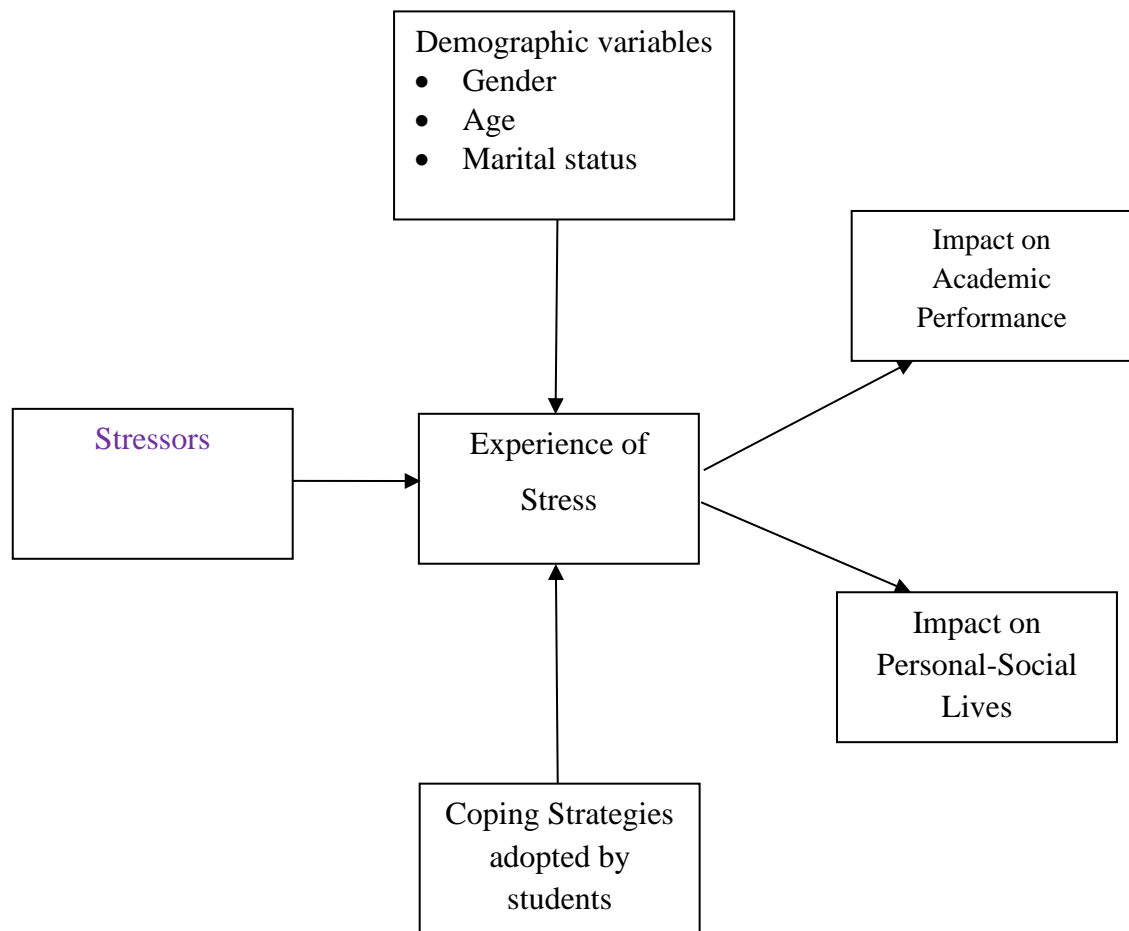
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Impact of Stress on Students

Source: Researcher's Construct

The key variables in the study are depicted in figure 1. Stress is typically accepted as a normal part of life, and while it is unavoidable, it may occasionally become harmful if the body is not given the time to recover (Jins & Radhakrishnan, 2013). Numerous factors can cause stress, and if it is not controlled, stress can negatively impact students' academic and personal-social life. In order to reduce negative impacts on persons and the quality of production, it is necessary to care about and encourage the health and well-being of those who work (Carr, Kelley, Keaton & Albrecht, 2011). In dealing with the experience of stress, students adopt a variety of coping strategies. Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping are the two basic forms.

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Emotion-focused coping entails focusing efforts on minimizing unpleasant feelings, whereas problem-focused coping is thought to be coping oriented on reducing a threat (Evans & Kelly, 2004). It is anticipated that the experience of stress can be mitigated by the coping strategies adopted by students.

Aside all the variables discussed, the demographic variables of students can also play a role in their experience of stress. These demographic variables are gender, age and marital status. It is expected that the experience of stress would be different for students on the basis of their gender, age and marital status.

Conceptual Review

The key concepts in the study are reviewed in this section:

Concept of Stress

According to Yikealo and Tareke (2018), stress is frequently viewed as a psychological process that comprises a person's perception of and response to any dangerous circumstances. It is important to remember that stress may affect people in both good and bad ways. This suggests that stress may be a normal, adaptive response to a situation that people perceive as a danger and that aims to awaken and get them ready to execute some protective action.

Psychologists have suggested that, despite the fact that stress can make it harder for people to succeed on challenging tasks, mild stress spurs people to achieve their goals and fosters innovation (Auerbach & Gramling, 1998). The implication of this is that stress at its moderate level can be helpful in achieving excellence while stress at extreme levels may be detrimental to wellbeing of students when not properly managed (Coiro, Bettis & Compas, 2017).

According to a bio-psychosocial perspective, stress results from an organism's failure to correctly adapt to mental, emotional, or physical demands, whether they are actual or imagined (Al-Sowygh, 2013). Furthermore, according to Akhlaq, Amjad, Mehmood, Hassan, and Malik (2010), stress is seen as a psychophysiological process that develops from a person's interaction with their environment and disturbs their social, psychological, and physiological systems based on their particular characteristics and psychological processes. The unique traits of each person may include elements like sex, health, heredity, and socioeconomic level. Psychological processes include elements like attitudes, values, and different facets of personality (Gormathi, Ahmed & Sreedharan, 2013; William, Rebecca & Joseph, 2010).

Causes of Stress

Generally, difficult circumstances can result in beneficial results like increased motivation and task performance, but dangerous circumstances or discomfort can cause anxiety, depression, social dysfunction, and even suicidal intention (Rheinberg & Engeser, 2018; Tang, Byrne & Qin, 2018). Since each student reacts to pressures differently, not every student finds the same circumstances to be stressful. Some circumstances, nevertheless, are nearly always stressful. Stress for a student pursuing a degree is generally caused by academic failure, money problems, health problems, the death of a family member or friend, and other social concerns (Hung, 2011; Smith, Rosenberg, & Timothy Haight, 2014). Stressors are the things that make you stressed out, and they might have an effect on your physical or mental health. Some of the major causes of stress are addressed below:

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Coursework and exams

As a result of the increased burden brought on by college courses, students frequently feel overwhelmed (Smith, Rosenberg, & Timothy Haight, 2014). Students may be caught off guard by this discovery, which can lead to a great deal of stress and academic concern. Exam scores account for a significant portion of the grade in many college courses, which can make final weeks more stressful than usual. For students who have the feeling that their lives depend on their performance in examinations, the stress can be very high.

Financial issues

One significant challenge of most students is the financial burden they experience in college (Hung, 2011). For some students, they have no means of obtaining money except from their parents. This creates an incredibly stressful situation when their parents are not financially strong to provide their every need. Financial issues are therefore very significant source of stress for students.

New levels of independence

Students attending college for the first time are usually in a state where they are being independent for the first time in their lives (Broderick, 2020). This independence can come with a lot of stress. This is because students have the responsibility of balancing their new found freedom with the need to excel academically. Also, the task of managing life on a personal level for the first time can be so stressful such that students may not be able to deal with it.

New friends and relationships

According to Broderick (2020), students face huge task of adjusting to new friends and relationships away from the usual that they are comfortable

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with. Such tasks can be daunting and can make the lives of students stressful. Exposure to new friends and relationships may be even more stressful for students who are being in the city of the college for the very first time. Such students may feel isolated and may have difficulties making friends.

Many college students may not be used to living with roommates, especially if they do not know them well (Hung, 2011). The stress of college life might increase as a result of this circumstance. Additionally, college puts a lot of pressure on people to seek out new experiences and have a lot of fun alongside their academic work (Broderick, 2020). For new learners, peer pressure and social expectations can be unpleasant. Engaging in romantic relationships also adds to the stress that college students already feel because of the demands of romantic relationships.

Family issues at home

Some students may be in school but still have their minds focused on issues in the home. Some of these issues may be related to the health of family members, financial crisis and even the death of a family member. Such issues can put a lot of stress on students and make them have difficulties adjusting on campus (Pascoe, Hetrick & Parker, 2020).

Effects of Stress

According to Broderick (2020), individuals who are exposed to stressors (stimuli that cause stress) exhibit a range of physiological, emotional, behavioural, and cognitive responses. Thus, the effects of stress can be wide ranging covering a host of many issues.

Physical effects

The effects of chronic stress can be connected to the health of individuals either in terms of their physical or mental health. Relating to physical health, stress can lead to heart diseases while mentally, stress can lead to anxiety disorders and depression (Yikealo & Tareke, 2018). The medical effects of chronic stress can include hypertension, high cholesterol, ulcers, arthritis, and cardiac conditions, in addition to the psychological effects of fury, concern, nervous tension, melancholy, and boredom (Akhlaq et al., 2010; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2013; Ramos, 2011).

Students may feel stress in one way or another, according to research, therefore research on stress should focus on how it may influence students' life and the coping mechanisms they use (Ramos, 2011; Rourke, Hammond, Flynn & Boylan, 2010). As a result, other studies have linked stress to a variety of mental and physical problems experienced by tertiary students, including exhaustion, headaches, and depression (Abdullah & Dan, 2012; Dusselier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley, & Whalen, 2005; Soliman, 2014).

Broderick (2020) argued also that stress can lead to extreme levels of sweating. When under stress, the body produces a particular kind of perspiration. The body initially produced this offensive type of perspiration to warn people of danger and heighten vigilance. As the body gets ready to fight or run, the brain produces adrenaline, which is related to an elevated heart rate. In line with this, a stressful event may result in a surge of hormones that can momentarily raise blood pressure by forcing blood vessels to constrict and the heart to beat more quickly (Abdullah & Dan, 2012).

Academic effects

In relation to academic work, it has also been noted that excessive levels of stress among tertiary students might cause subpar academic performance and test malpractice (Rourke et al., 2010; Soliman, 2014). Broderick (2020) has been of the view that stress can affect students in terms of cognition. For instance, there can be loss of memory and loss of concentration. Because of this short-term and long-term learning can be impaired. The evidence points to the fact that stress when not managed can be detrimental to the lives of students.

Thomas and Borrayo (2016) evaluated the "impact of perceived stress and psychosocial factors on missed class and work in college students" (p. 149). Thomas and Borrayo discovered that students who are under higher stress tend to leave class more frequently and submit less work. Students who are dissatisfied with their academic performance or how their college experience is unfolding are more likely to drop out and are more likely to commit suicide (Drum, Brownson, Burton-Denmark & Smith, 2009). During their time in college, students could have more obligations. Academic tasks at college may be more challenging than they were in high school, and new students may also note that no one in charge is continually reminding them that their work is due or will be due soon.

High levels of stress, according to Soliman (2014), can also increase the likelihood of mistakes and improper behavior, such as lying, cheating, and neglect, in addition to causing anxiety and a lack of objectivity. This assumes that high levels of stress and how they are managed affect kids' academic performance (Dusselier et al., 2005; Gormathi, Ahmed & Sreedharan, 2013).

Therefore, excessive stress among students can lead to poor academic performance, school abandonment, addictions, and criminal activity.

Social effects

Stress can cause students to become impatient and irritated as they attempt to cope with it, which can result in needless arguments between partners in a relationship (Scott, 2020). When students quarrel, especially when they are battling with significant others, they frequently say things they do not mean out of emotion (Arslan, 2010). Romantic partners can fail to comprehend when it is explained that their spouse needs time to complete their homework, attend class, or study for exams. Conflicts may arise in the relationship, as a result, the college student may realize that while they are now excelling intellectually, they are falling behind romantically (Scott, 2020). Due to relationship stress, a student may neglect their studies in an effort to make up for relationship problems.

Emotional effects

Students who are subjected to a steady stream of demanding situations, commitments, and events may believe they are unable to change the situation (Broderick, 2020). This may result in a feeling of acquired helplessness. Students who are under constant stress may also suffer feelings of loneliness as well as animosity, rage, and frustration. When a stimulus sets off a person's fight-or-flight response, the person may start to see additional stimuli as possible stressors. People may strike out in annoyance or frustration to defend themselves. Long-term stress-related fatigue can have the same impact.

Further, the experience of stress can be seen to be connected to anxiety and depression. One of several anxiety disorders that can arise from ongoing

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stress is generalized anxiety disorder (American Psychological Association, 2019). This can be identified by outward bodily manifestations as trembling and tense muscles. Some students may also experience sleep disorders as a result of the experience of stress (Broderick, 2020). Depression can also be the end result of extreme and chronic stress.

Behavioural effects

Stress may affect how people behave, causing them to eat more or less, smoke more, drink more, or abuse drugs (Esia-Donkoh, Yelkpieri & Esia-Donkoh, 2011; Hung, 2011; Ramos, 2011). Particularly, eating disorders and stress are linked because stress hormones can momentarily suppress appetite (Broderick, 2020). In order to cope with the repercussions of ongoing stress, some students may also turn to alcohol or narcotics.

Overall, the negative consequences of stress have sparked interest in finding personal psychological resources that may function as protective factors against the stresses that are intrinsic to the university environment (Tavolacci et al., 2013). These tools would control how the stress response and prospective dangers interact, promoting more favorable psychological adjustment (Leiva-Bianchi et al., 2012).

Concept of Coping

There are many different ways to understand coping. The idea that coping may be either problem- or emotion-focused is one of the many approaches (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Monat & Lazarus, 1991). Both strategies have been shown in the research to be beneficial for particular stressful circumstances (Matheny & McCarthy, 2000). There are two types of personal coping mechanisms: problem-focused

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(actively addressing the danger) and emotion-focused (managing the stress and emotion around the threat).

Some researchers have made clear the times and periods when an approach is the most suitable coping strategy. For instance, problem-focused coping works best when the stressor is obvious and manageable, but emotion-focused coping is frequently utilized when the stressor is beyond the person's control and managing emotional outbursts is the best course of action (Matheny & McCarthy, 2000). Which coping mechanism to choose may also rely on a number of additional characteristics, such as the stressor's age and gender (Amponsah, 2019).

Lin and Chen (2010) provided a different conception of stress and held the opinion that coping mechanisms may be divided into four major groups. These are:

Active problem-focused coping: This is related to situations when people experience stress and deal with their issues by addressing the event that is the source of the issue and either helping themselves or looking for aid to eradicate the event. For instance, an individual may search for means of dealing with a specific problem.

Passive problem-focused coping: This emphasizes how people often behave evasively and procrastinate while under stress. Such strategies may involve procrastinate and the use of drugs to momentarily feel relief.

Active emotional-focused coping: According to this method, while under stress, people adopt an attitude of emotional adjustment first and may employ techniques like self-encouragement and positive thinking.

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Passive emotion-focused coping: This strategy is linked to adopting emotionally inactive behaviours and measures including self-controlling emotions and self-blame, placing blame on others and God, or giving up. Some people are prone to fury and angry outbursts.

It has been seen that students employ a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with difficult situations throughout the literature. When opposed to problem-focused coping, which often results in lesser discomfort, students have been observed to employ emotion-focused coping more frequently, which can lead to emotional tiredness (Jones & Johnson, 1997).

Since it entails making attempts to interact with, respond to, or alter the perceived stress, recognized social support may be considered as a problem-focused method of stress management, according to Chao (2012). Social support, such as asking for help from loved ones and friends, naturally aids people in managing stress, whereas unhealthy coping mechanisms might include focusing on and expressing feelings, acting out behaviors, and losing one's mind. According to Saklofske, Austin, Mastoras, Beaton, and Osborne (2012), some methods of stress management include relaxation, exercise, maintaining good health, and time management.

Empirical Review

In this section, some of the previous empirical studies relating to the study are reviewed. The review is done under sub-headings relating to the research questions of the study.

Common Stressors of Students

This section reviews a few of these studies. Shahmohammadi (2011) investigated Tehran students' stress levels and coping mechanisms. The survey

found that 26.1% of secondary students were in distress. Additionally, it was discovered that among students, the top 10 stresses were exams, the need to acquire too much material, the difficulty of comprehending what had already been learned, an excessive amount of homework, and a crowded academic schedule. The top 10 stressors were evaluated as creating moderate to severe stress, while the remaining top stressors were all connected to academic concerns. The results also demonstrated that while students had a propensity to distance themselves from their issues in life, they were able to handle challenging circumstances with maturity.

At two community colleges in southern Illinois, Pierceall and Keim (2007) intended to ascertain the level of stress experienced by their participants. 212 students registered for regular psychology classes were polled using the Perceived Stress Scale. 75% of the 212 students fell into the category of moderate stress, 12% into the category of severe stress, and 13% into the area of low stress. Student stress was higher among females than males. Traditional and nontraditional students did not differ in a statistically meaningful way. Talking to loved ones, participating in leisure pursuits, and exercising were the most often used stress-relieving activities. Using illicit substances, smoking, and drinking alcohol were less ideal coping mechanisms.

Elias, Ping, and Abdullah (2011) examined the academic success and stress levels of undergraduate students enrolling at a local university who came from varied disciplinary backgrounds. Cluster sampling was used to choose 376 undergraduate participants in total for the study. The Grade Point Average (GPA) for the previous semester was used to assess the academic performance of undergraduate students. The College Undergraduate Stress

Scale was used to measure the stress levels of the students (CUSS). Based on the year of study at the institution and the degree programs, the stress levels of undergraduate students were compared. Overall, according to the study's findings, stress levels among undergraduate students were moderate. The stress levels among the students were highest among the medical students. The results also revealed that first-year students had low levels of stress. The majority of stress factors were related to students' academic work. Additionally, it was shown that there is a small but significant negative correlation between undergraduate students' academic success and their degree of stress.

Zia-ur-Rehman and Sharif (2014) examined how pressures impacted Pakistani management science students' academic results. The study carefully examined the effects of four factors on academic performance: time management, financial demands, course load, and social support. A quantitative approach was adopted. The sample was made up of 155 students from three institutions in Islamabad, with a 94% response rate. The findings showed that two primary stresses, course load and social support, had an impact on management science students' academic performance.

In their study, Azila-Gbettor, Atatsi, Danku and Soglo (2015) examined the sources of stress among business students at Ho Polytechnic in Ghana and how it affected their academic performance. To perform the study, a cross-sectional research approach was used. A multistage sampling approach was used to sample 275 students in total. A questionnaire was used for data gathering. The most prevalent sources of stress were identified using descriptive statistics, such as mean scores and standard deviations. To evaluate

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the statistical significance of differences in stress levels by demographic factors, non-parametric inferential statistics were applied. Finally, the association between stress and academic achievement was calculated using Spearman's coefficient. The most prevalent stress for each type of stressors evaluated was discovered by the study, among other things. All demographic factors considered, including gender and age, revealed that the amount of stress was significant. Finally, there were no significant links between stress and academic achievement.

Furthermore, in order to develop appropriate and effective intervention options, Reddy, Menon, and Thattil (2018) investigated the causes and effects of academic stress. Participants were recruited for the study from the four study streams of business, management, humanities, and fundamental sciences based on their ratings on the Academic Stress Scale. The study employed a quantitative research technique. In five categories of stress causes, including personal inadequacy, fear of failure, interpersonal problems with instructors, teacher-pupil interactions, and inadequate study facilities, gender differences were discovered, according to the study. The research is significant because it will make it simpler for school psychologists and counselors to develop counseling modules and stress-reduction strategies for students.

In Ghana, Akpene (2014) looked at the connection between stress and coping mechanisms among supporting employees at the University of Ghana's central administration. Cross-sectional research was conducted using a quantitative technique. The sample size for the supporting personnel was 214 people. A structured questionnaire that was self-administered was used to collect the majority of the information. The t-test, means, and standard

deviation were used to examine the data. The results indicated that the majority of respondents perceived stress in a moderate way. The top three sources of stress were dealing with multiple urgent concerns at once, realizing that compensation is not based on performance, and not having enough personnel or equipment to respond to an emergency. The main coping strategies mentioned by the respondents were putting in more effort to make things work, praying or putting one's faith in God or their religion, as well as making a plan of action and following it through.

More recently, Amponsah (2019) looked into the topic of stress and coping mechanisms among University of Cape Coast first-year students. This study used a descriptive survey research approach. 300 first-year students were the subject of the study, and samples were taken using cluster, proportional, and basic random sampling techniques. The data was gathered using a modified version of the Students Stress Inventory and Stress Coping Style Inventory (SCSI). The independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were used as inferential statistics to evaluate the data, while means and standard deviation were utilized as descriptive statistics. The findings indicated that the students were under a great deal of stress. The study also revealed that financial, academic, and environmental stressors were the top causes of stress for students. To cope with challenging situations, the majority of students chose active problem-focused and active emotional-focused coping strategies. The Amponsah study also demonstrated that there were no statistically significant gender differences in stress and coping strategies. Additionally, neither the perception of stress nor the usage of coping techniques changed.

From the studies reviewed it is clear that students in different places experienced some levels of stress from variety of sources. Different stressors accounted for different levels of stress among students. These findings in the previous studies will serve as bases of comparison with the findings of the current study.

Adverse Effects of Stress on Academic Lives of Students

The extent to which stress affects students' academic lives has been examined in the literature. Simpson (2018) looked at the various types of stress that college students endure, as well as the psychological, physical, and social effects. During their academic careers in college, people might suffer from the problem of dealing with an excessive level of stress.

LeBlanc (2009) evaluated pertinent studies on how acute stresses affect people's and teams' clinical performance. LeBlanc searched the Sciences Citation Index, Medline, and Psychinfo databases for works published up to and including 2008. The search was limited to publications published in English in all industrialized countries. Secondary references were built upon primary sources. The results showed that high levels of stress can make it difficult to complete tasks that call for divided attention, working memory, memory recall, and decision-making. These effects appear to be influenced by factors such as the connection between a situation's demands and its resources, the interaction between the task and the stressor, and components such as coping strategies, locus of control, and social support networks.

Leijden (2012) examined academic performance-related stress among students. 73 students were randomly selected to participate in the study. Two criteria applied. A general knowledge test and a presentation were used in the

stress condition to modify the tension caused by academic achievement. People were required to complete a general knowledge exam in the control condition even though they were not informed about a presentation. Following the dinner, participants were asked to complete a survey that assessed their self-evaluation, gender, academic satisfaction, and food preference. It was discovered that stress did not result in more unhealthy eating. The connection between stress and food preference was unaffected by gender. Although stress had no effect on academic satisfaction, it did attenuate the association between stress and grade satisfaction, one facet of academic satisfaction.

In universities in Kwara State, Nigeria, Olape, Lasiele, Chiaka, and Abidoye (2017) also looked at the connection between stress levels and students' academic performance. A descriptive survey research approach was used for the investigation. 300 students were chosen for the research using proportional stratified random selection. Data were gathered using the "Students' Stress Level Questionnaire (SSLQ)" and the "Students' Academic Performance proforma (SAPP)". The instruments' dependability was assessed using a test-retest reliability approach after they had been verified by specialists in educational management and counselling. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions, while the Pearson product-moment correlation statistic was used to evaluate the study hypotheses. The findings revealed a strong link between students' stress levels and academic success. Significant correlations exist between the intensity of personal stress, interpersonal stress, environmental stress, achievement stress, and academic performance. Colleges were encouraged to offer stress management seminars and workshops in collaboration with the counseling and human development

department as a consequence. It was also suggested that university administrators provide a calm, stress-free environment for learning.

In order to suggest some coping methods, Kumar, Sharma, Gupta, Vaish, and Misra (2014) investigated circumstances that predisposed medical students to stress and its consequences on academic performance. Using a semi-structured Performa and stress scale, 114 medical undergrads from the sample were evaluated for the prevalent causes of stress and their degree of stress. The outcomes were compared and associated with a number of parameters, including attendance, demographics, average test scores, etc. For statistical correlation between various variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient was employed. Stress was discovered to be more advantageous for females than for males. When compared to male students, female medical students who had higher attendance and better daily performance experienced more stress. Therefore, it is important to recognize and take steps to reduce stress among medical students.

Edjah, Ankomah, Domey, and Laryea (2020) looked at the impact of stress on the social and academic life of university students in Ghana. The descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed. The study involved 500 average college students and used stratified and simple random (random numbers) selection methods. A questionnaire that includes both the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale and the Perceived Stress Scale was used to collect data for the study. Frequencies, percentages, averages, standard deviations, and structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS were used in the investigations. The bulk of the students were judged to be somewhat stressed. Academic pressures were the most important stressor, then institutional

stressors, then external stressors. The intellectual and social lives of students were significantly impacted positively by stress. It was determined that stress of some type is experienced by undergraduate students when they are pursuing their education. It was suggested that the institution keep educating students on stress management and coping strategies through its counseling and students' affairs departments in order to improve their academic performance.

Duncan-Williams (2015) also investigated the effects of academic pressure and success on the psychological well-being of remedial senior high school students, aged 18 to 25. The data came from 182 students at two remedial schools in Accra. Data were gathered using the Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLSI), the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-42), the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), and the ACSI. It was discovered that there was a link between psychological health and academic stress that was good. However, there was no correlation between academic success and psychological health. Gender, socioeconomic level, africultural coping, social support, and social standing did not act as moderators in the link between stress and psychological well-being. Finally, it was established that there were gender differences in the students' psychological wellbeing.

The goal of Joseph et al. (2020) was to identify the causes of academic stress and the different coping strategies used by the students. Data were gathered for the cross-sectional study using self-administered questionnaires. The majority of individuals reported feeling moderate academic stress. Most individuals' overall dealing with stress was determined to be ordinary. Additionally, it was shown that whereas active issue solving was clearly

superior in female students, passive emotions and passive problem solving were prevalent among male students. However, there were no significnatn differences in active emotional coping behavior across sexes. In terms of preferred sources of support, it was found that the majority of students preferred talking to their parents about personal issues before turning to peers. Finally, it was discovered that worrying about the future and having low self-esteem are independently linked to academic stress.

The studies reviewed have shown clearly that academic work of students can be impacted by stress. High levels of stress affect academic work negatively while low levels of stress could serve as a challenge to improve academic performance.

Adverse Effects of Stress on Personal-Social Lives of Students

The research on stress has looked at how stress affects students' personal and social life. For instance, in a problem-based learning curriculum, medical students' perceived stress, stressors, and coping mechanisms were examined by Bamuhair et al. in 2015. The cross-sectional study used a randomly chosen sample of medical students to collect its data. According to the survey, more than half of the respondents frequently felt stressed out and believed they were unable to handle stress. More specifically, the majority of participants considered studying to be stressful, and more than half reported having trouble sleeping. Additionally, just half of the respondents said they had high self-esteem. For particular stressors related to studying in general, worrying about the future, interpersonal conflict, and having poor self-esteem, perceived stress levels were statistically significantly high. The coping mechanisms that were used most frequently were self-blame and self-

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criticism, asking for aid and guidance from others, and turning to religion for solace. Finally, although female students use more coping mechanisms than male students, they were also more stressed.

The views of stress and coping strategies among medical students were investigated (Al-Dubai, Al-Naggar, Alshagga & Rampal, 2011). In their cross-sectional study, students from Malaysia's Management and Science University took part. According to the poll, the majority of respondents acknowledged feeling stressed, with financial difficulties and worries about the future acting as the main sources of this stress. Significant stress predictors were smoking, future anxieties, self-blame, a lack of emotional support, and a lack of acceptance. Finally, it was found that students used active coping, religious coping reframing, planning, and acceptance as their coping strategies for stress.

von Dawans, Trueg, Kirschbaum, Fischbacher, and Heinrichs (2018) employed a randomized, controlled two by two design to investigate how social and physical stress affected the conduct of healthy young men. Physical and social stress both significantly influenced various perceived increases in stress, but there was no evidence of an interaction effect, according to the researchers. Social anxiety controlled the subjective stress response but not the cortisol or heart rate responses. The findings showed that trust, trustworthiness, and sharing behaviors were influenced by the interaction between social and physical stress. Pro-social behavior was lowered by both social and physical stress on their own, while pro-sociality might be increased by combining the two stressor modalities.

August, Rook, and Newsom (2007) investigated whether adverse social interactions have a multiplicative effect on emotional discomfort. In-person interviews were conducted with 916 non-institutionalized elderly people who made up a representative sample. The results showed that first-order and second-order interaction terms exhibited linear patterns for loss events and functional degradation, whereas disruptive events revealed nonlinear patterns. According to the study, stressful life events and unpleasant social interactions both contribute to emotional discomfort, but the specifics of how they do so differ depending on the type and intensity of the stressor. Negative social interactions seemed to have more severe impacts when some stressors were present, but less severe effects when other stressors were present.

Pascoe, Hetrick and Parker (2019) conducted a review of the most current studies on the consequences of academic stress on mental health conditions such depression and anxiety, restlessness, and drug use. According to the research, secondary and postsecondary students are very concerned about stress connected to their academics. Children's capacity to learn, academic performance, attainment of education and employment, sleep quantity and quality, physical and mental health, and drug use outcomes are all negatively impacted by the ongoing stress connected with school.

Previous literature have shown that stress can affect the personal-social lives of students. In the studies reviewed, it was clear that the health as well as the interpersonal relationships of students can be affected by the experience of stress. It remains to be seen what will be found in the current study concerning the effects of stress on personal-social lives of students.

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Prevalent Coping Strategies Used by Students to Manage Stressful Situations

Students use a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with stress. The literature has been researching this subject. In their study, Freire, Ferradás, Regueiro, Rodrguez, Valle, and Nez (2020) looked at how college students cope with their experiences there. According to the study, there is a high prevalence of social approach coping techniques, a low prevalence of approach coping methods that are generalized, and a high prevalence of cognitive approach coping techniques. These findings imply that promoting adaptability in coping mechanisms might increase university students' self-efficacy in overcoming obstacles.

Okoro (2018) looked at the coping mechanisms students use in higher education. Demands related to schoolwork and academics were discovered in the survey to be the top stressor among the undergraduate sample. Procrastination, finding a balance between work and life, finances, and money issues were all shown to have significantly increased stress during the previous month. Active coping was the coping method that the study sample used the most. Denial was the least often employed tactic. Overall, it was more probable that female students were stressed than male students.

A qualitative research was also carried out by Abouammoh, Irfan, and AlFaris (2020) in Riyadh, comprising four focus groups with final-year medical students and medical interns. The findings showed that medical students actively engaged in stress-coping by emphasizing the rewarding nature of the medical profession. Some participants found planning and time management to be difficult, while others thought it was a stress-coping

technique. Students studying medicine perceived tension as a common emotion. As avoidant stress-coping techniques, avoiding medical talks, developing relationships with the opposite sex, and smoking were all mentioned.

In an Irish research on stress and coping mechanisms among diploma nursing students, Evans and Kelly (2004) found that talking to family and friends, maintaining the illusion that one wants to continue, and attempting to avoid difficulties are the most often employed coping mechanisms. Researchers found a few common coping mechanisms in a study by Shaban, Khater, and Akhu-Zaheya (2012) on second-year undergraduate nursing students beginning their clinical practice at a Jordanian institution. They discovered that problem-solving behavior (e.g., "to adopt different strategies to solve problems"), maintaining optimism (e.g., "to keep an optimistic and positive attitude in dealing with everything in life"), using diversionary (transference) strategies (e.g., "to feast and take a long sleep"), and finally avoidance techniques (e.g., "to avoid difficulties during clinical practice") were the most frequently used coping mechanisms by the students. Shaban et al. discovered no statistically significant difference between male and female coping mechanisms in respect to demographic factors.

Wolf, Stidham, and Ross (2015) utilized the embedded mixed method to examine the stress predictors and coping mechanisms of US undergraduate nursing students at two Midwestern colleges. They discovered that these students employed "positive thinking" and "social support" as stress coping mechanisms. According to Wolf et al., students frequently participate in

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positive thinking, saying things like "remain focused," "attempt to adapt and not worry," and "know that they can do it and do it well."

In their study, Ribeiro et al. (2018) sought to review recent research on stress and quality of life among college students. On recent research that were published in peer-reviewed journals, a systematic review was done. The study found that stress frequently had a negative effect on one's quality of life and that traits like burnout and insomnia were also associated with a drop in that quality.

Elmer, Mepham, and Stadtfeld (2020) compared the social networks and mental health of adolescents before and after the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020 using longitudinal data collected from 2018. It was found that networks for group work and co-learning had diminished and that more students were working on their own. In addition, students' levels of stress, anxiety, loneliness, and depressive symptoms deteriorated when compared to assessments made before the crisis. From worries about skipping out on social events to worries about their future, health, family, and friends, stressors altered. Exploratory research revealed a relationship between poor mental health trajectories and COVID-19-specific fears, social exclusion, a lack of social interaction and emotional support, and physical isolation. When adjusting for various levels of social integration and pressures associated to the COVID-19, female students' mental health trajectories appeared to be poorer.

Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) investigated the sources of stress and coping strategies employed by distance education students at the University of Cape Coast's College of Distance Education. The study's major focus was on

seniors through the use of random selection. The information was gathered using questionnaires. The results of the survey indicated that "academic overload," "high frequency of tests," "financial problems," and "family/marriage issues" were the primary causes of stress among students. In addition, married students reported higher levels of stress than single students linked to "financial issues" and "family and marriage problems," according to the poll, which also found some statistically significant differences between married and single students. Students employed a variety of coping mechanisms, mostly self-distracting activities like watching television and listening to music, as well as prayer or meditation. Support from loved ones, friends, and professors on an emotional and practical level were other crucial stress coping techniques.

Tenkorang, Forde, and Nyarko-Sampson (2020) looked at the difficulties freshmen at the University of Cape Coast had adjusting and the coping mechanisms they employed. To conduct the study, a mixed model research approach was employed. Purposive and proportionate stratified random sampling methods were used to choose a sample of 355 students, 235 of whom were male and 120 of whom were female. The poll found that University of Cape Coast freshman had challenges transitioning, including issues with handling academic pressure and a lack of involvement in social activities. The majority of respondents employed Planful Problem Solving coping strategies, such as planning, concentrating, and taking action, to deal with issues.

Amponsah, Adasi, Mohammed, Ampadu, and Okrah (2020) investigated the pressures that University of Ghana teacher education students

often faced and the coping mechanisms used by the students. 270 third-year undergraduate students were chosen using the random sample approach throughout the 2018–19 academic year to complete a questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and open-ended items. According to the survey, the three main sources of stress for students pursuing teacher certification were "trying to achieve academic requirements," "inadequate supply of electricity and water un halls," and "changes in eating and sleeping habits." Numerous coping mechanisms, including self-distracting behaviors and praying or meditating, were used by research participants. In comparison to avoidance and maladaptive coping mechanisms, students utilized more adaptive coping techniques. It was discovered that resident students were under higher stress than non-resident students. Additionally, this study found that resident students were more pious and readily accepted assistance and counsel from professors or teaching assistants. In contrast to their non-resident colleagues, they were vehemently opposed to substance addiction, such as utilizing alcohol, nicotine, or drugs to feel better. However, a research conducted by Meda, Gueorguieva, Pittman, Rosen, Aslanzadeh, Tennen, and Pearlson (2017) found that binge drinking and drug usage were the two primary forms of self-medication or coping.

In a study, Davis (2017) looked at nontraditional female students' coping mechanisms at a public institution in Northern Indiana and a private university in Southwest Michigan. The survey Coping Scale for Adults was used to find out which coping mechanisms unconventional female students employ. The findings showed that striving for success is a common coping mechanism. Sometimes people utilize constructive coping mechanisms,

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healthy coping techniques, self-defeating habits, proactive self-care, and destructive coping mechanisms. Additionally, it was shown that younger students are somewhat more likely than older students to engage in self-defeating behaviors and constructive coping mechanisms. Proactive self-care is more frequently used by older students than by younger ones. Finally, marital status had no influence on coping mechanisms.

Abdullah (2017) investigated how university students in Tanzania and the United Arab Emirates coped. The Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) was used to evaluate the coping of 233 randomly chosen students from each of the two nations. The coping dimensions of the two groups were determined using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. The findings revealed notable coping variables within each sample. Additionally, there were significant disparities between the two populations in terms of age, gender, and marital status.

From the forgoing review, several coping strategies have been observed to be used by students in the studies reviewed. Some of these coping strategies are appropriate while others are not. Different students adopt different strategies in dealing with their experience of stress.

Differences in Experience of Stress on the bases of Demographic Characteristics (Gender, Age, Marital Status)

The experience of stress has been identified in the literature to be influenced by the demographic characteristics of students. Abasimi, Atindanbila, Gai, and Mahamah (2015) looked into the stress coping mechanisms used by nursing students in Tamale, Ghana's nursing training institutes. 273 State Registered Nursing, Community Health Nursing, and

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Midwifery students were included in the sample; they were chosen using a stratified random selection process. The data analysis employed independent sample t-tests and ANOVA. The main methods of coping that were shown to be effective were behavioral, spiritual, social, and avoidance. In terms of course type, there was a clear distinction between Community Health Nursing (CHN) students and Midwifery students in terms of behavioral coping strategies.

Abasimi et al. (2015) further noted that the other coping mechanisms—cognitive, spiritual, social, avoidance, and overall coping—showed no significant differences. Additionally, there were no significant differences between male and female students' levels of the various coping strategies and overall coping. Additionally, compared to respondents who were separated, divorced, or widowed, respondents who were single, married, or widowed reported employing considerably fewer behavioral, cognitive, social, and avoidance coping mechanisms. According to respondents' marital status, there were no significant differences in general coping methods, behavioral, cognitive, avoidance, or social coping strategies.

At the Eritrea Institute of Technology, (Mai-Nefhi College), Yikealo and Tareke (2018) looked on how College of Education (CoE) students coped with stress. 123 students were selected at random from the CoE for the descriptive study. The results of the study demonstrated that students utilized more healthy coping strategies for stress than unhealthy ones. An independent-sample t-test revealed no statistically significant relationship between gender and either positive or negative stress coping methods.

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Dada, Babatunde, and Adeleye (2019) looked at the causes of academic stress and coping methods among "Built Environment" undergraduate students at public higher education institutions (HEIs) in Nigeria. At Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria, 189 students completed questionnaires to provide primary data. The study found 27 factors contributing to students' academic stress. The results also revealed that, save from 5 out of the 27 identified causes of student academic stress, there was no statistically significant difference in opinions between male and female students. The study identified six of the 30 coping strategies employed by students to deal with their academic stress as being very significant. Additionally, the results revealed that, other from 11 out of 30 stated coping techniques, there was no statistically significant difference between the opinions of male and female students.

The stress levels and coping strategies of professional students majoring in engineering and physical education were examined by Kumar and Bhukar (2013). The Physical Education and Engineering Institute in India provided a sample of 60 students at random. According to the study, ladies in this job experienced much more stress than boys owing to all the stressors. Males in physical education had a better coping approach than both boys and girls in engineering, although boys in each sector had a stronger coping strategy than girls. As a result, it was shown that students in physical education have better coping methods than those in engineering. Additionally, female students were more likely than male students to suffer stress, according to Okoro's (2018) study.

Furthermore, Williams (2016) also looked into how mothers cope with stress, lack of social support, and other factors. This study was performed by a convenience sample of 173 moms. The findings indicated that single moms felt higher levels of stress than mothers who were not single, whereas mothers who were not single reported higher levels of social support. Measures of coping revealed no significant differences.

The role of gender and marital status as markers of these reasons was also examined by Ghafoor, Chaudhry, and Khan (2020) in their investigation of perceived causes of stress. At a public university in Pakistan, postgraduate students studying basic dental sciences were administered the modified Graduate Dental Stress Environment Questionnaire. 53 stress-related factors were assessed, and 15 (28.3%) were found to be slightly stressful, 33 (62.26%) to be extremely stressful, and 9.4% to be highly stressful. It was shown that there was a strong correlation between marital status and six stress-related characteristics. When single students reported higher levels of stress in four areas relating to future employment, academic commitments, and trust in their decision-making abilities, married students reported higher levels of stress while competing for research opportunities in their academic programs.

Additionally, Ermasova, Ermasova, and Rekhter (2020) examined how the marital status and gender of Russian students affected the stresses they experienced and the coping mechanisms they employed. Using data from the Stress and Coping Questionnaire, which was sent to 539 students, this study investigates whether gender and marital status have an effect on academic and interpersonal demands. In this study, it was shown that female students are more likely than male students to experience stress and that single students are

more vulnerable to the impacts of social and academic demands. Male students were more likely to smoke than female students, but they were also more likely to exercise as a stress reliever. Additionally, male students were more like to concur that seeking out a psychologist implies weakness than female students. Male students were more likely to state that they preferred talking to friends to a psychologist, while female students were more likely to think that support services were not prioritized on campus. Finally, unmarried students may be more prone than married students to turn to alcohol to assist them cope with stress since they are less likely to choose to confide in family during stressful moments.

Babicka-Wirkus, Wirkus, Stasiak, and Kozowski (2021) looked at the students' coping mechanisms for the COVID-19 pandemic-related stress. A sample of Polish students was employed to gather anonymous data using the Mini-COPE questionnaire. The data came from 577 students from 17 universities. The statistical analysis showed that during the coronavirus outbreak, Polish students most commonly used the coping strategies of acceptance, planning, and looking for emotional support. During the COVID-19 pandemic, choosing a certain stress management approach depended on factors including age, gender, and where you lived. The results also showed that the youngest students had the worst coping skills.

To investigate psychological unease among students at the school during the lockdown, Radwan, Radwan, Radwan, and Pandey (2021) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional research. A sample of 420 students from primary and secondary schools in the Gaza Strip of Palestine took part in the poll between June 10 and July 13, 2020. The information was gathered via

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an online survey that included questions about sociodemographics, informed consent, and a psychometric tool (DASS-21). The results revealed that moderate to severe levels of anxiety were experienced by the majority of students (89.1%) and those who were depressed (72.1%), although less than half of them (35.7%) also experienced moderate to severe levels of stress. The levels of stress, anxiety, and depression varied considerably by gender, age group, family size, and socioeconomic situation. The findings demonstrated that stress was negatively predicted by gender, age, and family economic status. The size of the family has a good impact on stress. It was discovered that family size positively connected with anxiety, but gender, age, and family economic status negatively correlated with anxiety. The degrees of melancholy, anxiety, and stress were positively connected to worries about how COVID-19 might affect the economy, education, and daily life, but the accessibility of social support was negatively correlated.

At Arsi University in Oromia, Ethiopia, undergraduate health science students were evaluated for perceived stress, depression, and related variables (Worku, Dirriba, Wordofa & Fetensa, 2020). The study used a cross-sectional institutional study design with undergraduate health science students. A self-administered questionnaire containing the PSS-14 item from the Perceived Stress Scale and the 21 questions from the Beck Depression Inventory was used to collect data. The average age of the research participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 30, was years. Among the research participants, subjective stress was currently present in 63.5% of cases. Age group, study year, academic strain, practical attachment, lack of dorm safety, and financial difficulties were shown to be significantly linked causes of reported stress.

Results also showed that there was a 4.4% prevalence of depression among students, with consideration of potential career paths being a major predictor.

In their study, Monteiro, Balogun and Oratile (2014) looked at how coping strategies among university students in Botswana were impacted by gender, age, and emotion regulation. In all, 64 males and 64 females, ages 18 to 29, completed the Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Scale and the Coping Strategy Inventory. The use of wishful thinking and problem-focused disengagement was more common among female students than male students, but there were no other significant differences in coping strategies between the sexes. Anger management, problem-solving, and cognitive restructuring were more likely to occur in older students. Additionally, problems with emotion regulation highly predicted coping strategies, involvement in problems and emotions, and disengagement from problems and emotions. It was significantly discovered that problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions, social support, problem avoiding, and wishful thinking coping mechanisms were all positively correlated with not accepting emotional reactions, which is akin to emotion suppression.

Overall, it has been found that demographic variables including gender, age, and marital status are connected to student stress levels and coping techniques. The current analysis focuses on these demographic parameters in connection to student stress and coping techniques.

Chapter Summary

The study-related literature was explored in this chapter. The review comprised the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, conceptual review, and empirical review. The primary subjects of the theoretical review

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were Selye's Theory of General Adaptation Syndrome and the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC). The conceptual review dealt with the concept of stress and that of coping. The empirical review dealt with common stressors of students, adverse effects of stress on academic lives of students, adverse effects of stress on personal-social lives of students, prevalent coping strategies used by students to manage stressful situations and differences in experience of stress on the bases of demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status). From the review, it was realized that stress can be very harmful to students. However, there are only a few studies which have focused on students in Colleges of Education.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate stress and coping strategies of students at the Accra College of Education. This chapter discusses the methods utilized to carry out the study. As a result, this chapter covers the research design, study area, population, sample and sampling procedures, data collection procedure, and data processing and analysis.

Research Approach

The quantitative approach was adopted for the study. Quantitative approach in research is the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data (Bhandari, 2020). It can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to wider populations. In the current study, the quantitative approach helped to gather data using questionnaire and objective techniques in arriving at conclusions concerning stress and coping strategies among students in Accra College of Education. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalising it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon. This made the quantitative approach was appropriate for the study.

Research Design

The descriptive survey design was used for the investigation. The focus of descriptive research is on observing and measuring without changing the variables. In this current study, the stress and coping strategies of students were observed and measured without altering or changing any of the variables. Additionally, it uses statistical methods to analyze data that are mostly

quantitative in character (numerical data) so that the researcher may deduce specific hidden meanings from them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). In this study, quantitative data on stress and coping strategies of students were obtained and the meanings deduced from the data.

Descriptive survey design can identify characteristics, trends and correlations. This is the reason the study's design was selected—to determine how students at the Accra College of Education feel stress, how it affects them, and how they cope. The descriptive survey approach was chosen for another reason: it helped provide a real image of the stress condition faced by students at the Accra College of Education.

According to Bhattacherjee (2012), descriptive survey research design has several advantages. First and foremost, surveys are a great way to gather a wide range of observable and unobservable data, including information on people's preferences, characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and factual knowledge. Second, survey research is the best method for gathering information on a group that is too big to examine in person. Finally, survey research is more time-, effort-, and cost-efficient than other research designs, such as the experimental research design.

Regardless of these advantages, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) argued that descriptive survey research design is disadvantageous especially in the sense that its degree of explanatory potential is limited or lost to the quest to get large data for generalizations. Thus, even though descriptive survey can give large amount of data, the data can lack depth or detailed explanations. This weakness did however not affect the study since the researcher ensured that the data collection instrument accurately measures every element that was

of importance in the study. Additionally, the researcher was interested in obtaining first-hand information from the actual people having the stress experience without any form of data manipulation.

Study Area

The Accra College of Education (AcCE) is where the study was carried out. AcCE originally known as Accra Training College, replaced the old 1909 Government Training College on November 15, 1962, however it was situated in a private facility in Accra New Town (Kokomlemle) It began as a day Teacher Training College with 19 students and an eight-person teaching staff (Accra College of Education, n.d.). This signaled a new turn in the government's teacher education agenda.

AcCE is dedicated to become Ghana's top center of excellence for high-quality teacher training. Through excellent instruction, research, and the use of contemporary technology, the institution aspires to train and orient competent, professional teachers of high caliber for Ghana's basic schools (Accra College of Education, 2020).

As a result of the Colleges of Education Act 2012 (Act 847) and their elevation to tertiary status, all Colleges now grant Bachelor's Degree in Basic Education. The college includes six academic departments and offers a general curriculum. Languages, math, ICT, science, education studies, social sciences, and vocational skills are among them. In the Accra College of Education, programmes run are 4-year degree programmes. Thus, there are students form levels 100 to 400. In terms of the administration of the college, there is a College Council after which there is a College Management. The College

Management comprises the principal, vice principal, college secretary, internal auditor, college finance officer and college librarian.

In recent times, the Guidance and Counselling Unit has organized programmes aimed at equipping students to deal with stress and improve their academic performance (Accra College of Education, 2022). Some of the common issues that have come out of these guidance programmes have been the issue of stress affecting students. It is on this basis that the study is conducted in the Accra College of Education.

Population

The population comprised all students of the Accra College of Education. The target population comprised all students (Level 100 to 400) of the Accra College of Education. The accessible population however comprised students in Level 100 to 300. This is because at the time of the data collection, level 400 students were on teaching practice and as such they were not resident on campus. The accessible population was 1035 students comprising 595 males and 440 females.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Out of the accessible population of 1035, a sample of 280 was chosen for the study using the sample size determination table developed by Gill, Johnson, and Clark (2010). The study employed a proportionate stratified sampling technique.

In using the stratified random sampling, the respondents were put into strata of gender (males and females). The stratification was based on proportions of each group within the main population. The stratified sampling aided in obtaining a sample that was representative of all sub-groups within a

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population. The sub-groups which were stratified in this study were males and females. Therefore, stratified sampling helped to ensure that males and females were sufficiently represented in the study. Since the study aimed at finding gender difference in stress and coping strategies, the use of stratified sampling was helpful in avoiding any sampling biases.

Thus, using the proportional stratified sampling method 161 males and 119 females formed the total sample of 280. The calculation is shown below:

n / N x S=s

where

n= population of specific group

N=Total population

S=Sample Size, s=sample for specific group (schools, gender).

For instance, in getting the sample for males: 595/ 1035 x 280=161.

The sample for the females was obtained as follows: 440/ 1035 x 280=119.

The breakdown of the population and the sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Population and Sample Distribution by Gender

Gender	Population	Sample
Male	595	161
Female	440	119
Total	**1035**	**280**

Source: School Records Office and Personal Calculation (2022)

After the stratification, the actual respondents were sampled using simple random sampling. The researcher obtained a list of the names of the students. The names were written on sheets of paper and put together in a box. Through the lottery method, the researcher picked out the number needed for

the research. Since the researcher had permission from the college authorities, they assisted the researcher in meeting the chosen students together at the assembly hall of the college and with their consent, questionnaire was administered to them.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were gathered for this investigation using questionnaires. Despite being aware of its limitations, the researcher believed that using a questionnaire was suitable because the participants could read and understand. The 280 units of questionnaire that were distributed had a 100% retrieval rate.

The use of the questionnaire was advantageous in this current study because it helped to gather the data in quick manner and was cheaper than other instruments for data collection. Also, the students were able to answer questions about their level of stress and their coping strategies anonymously. In this sense, the responses of the respondents could not be traced directly to them and this helped them respond honestly to the questionnaire.

The "Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLSI)" developed by Gadzella (1994) was adapted for the study. Since the instrument was an adapted instrument, the original developer validated it. Also, validity and reliability were established in this current study. As a result, the researcher did not conduct factor analysis of the instrument.

In adapting the SLSI, some of the main changes that were made included adding elements on personal-social lives to the instrument. For instance, statements like: "my general health and wellbeing is negatively affected" and "I get angry with people and have unnecessary conflicts with others" were not part of the original instrument. Also, statements like:

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"Attending lectures" was modified from "Attending classes" which was used in the original scale. These were some of the changes made in adapting the instrument.

The questionnaire was made up of five sections. Section A dealt with the demographic data of the respondents and was made up of four items. Section B focused on common stressors and was made up of 20 items while section C dealt with the impact of stress on academic life and was made up of seven items. Section D was made up of eight items and dealt with the impact of stress on the personal-social lives of students. Section E addressed the coping strategies adopted by students and was made up of 18 items.

Section B was on a four-point likert-type scale comprising: "Not stressful=0; Mildly stressful=1; Moderately stressful=2; and Severely stressful=3". Sections C and D were both on a four-point likert-type scale comprising: "Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Agree=3; and Strongly Agree=4". The final section was on a four-point likert-type scale made up of: "0 = Does not apply or Did not use, 1 = Used a little, 2 = Used a lot, and 3 = Used a great deal". Different scales were used because the final section was on coping strategies used by students and as such had to do with the rate at which coping strategies were used.

Validity of the Instrument

Validity basically refers to how an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Cohen et al., 2007). The appropriate safeguards were used in this study to guarantee validity, including face validity, external validity, internal validity, and content validity. External validity is concerned with the extent to which the results may be extrapolated to a larger population,

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instances, or situations, whereas face validity is primarily focused on whether a test superficially seems to assess what it is intended to measure. Internal validity is to show that the facts can genuinely support the explanation that a piece of study offers for a certain occurrence, problem, or set of data. This essentially implies that a certain research's findings must appropriately explain the phenomena being studied (Cohen et al., 2007). The researcher made sure the instrument included the "correct" items to elicit the desired responses in order to cope with internal validity. This was achieved through examination of the instrument by the supervisor.

Experts in this field of research, including my supervisor, evaluated the validity of the questionnaire to make sure it measured the variables it was meant to measure (content validity). This formed part of the process of validating the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure high internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher ensured that the participants understood every item in the questionnaire where they found difficulty to understand. Again, the research gave participants ample time and space to complete the questionnaire so that they do not complete the questionnaire in haste. The instrument was also pilot-tested using 50 students of the SDA College of Education in Koforidua. The use of 50 students for the pilot test represented 17% of the sample for the study. This was justified because it is documented by some researchers that generally, 10–20% of the main sample size is a reasonable number for conducting a pilot study (Baker 1994; Hazzi & Maldaon, 2015). In this sense, the use of 50 students was appropriate.

The SDA College of Education was used for the pilot study because of similarity of characteristics with the main study area. Both were colleges of education and so the experiences of the students were similar. Also, the SDA College of Education was the closest in terms of proximity to the study area (Accra College of Education). Aside these, the choice of SDA College of Education was based on the assumption that pilot study allows gathering preliminary knowledge about the studied phenomenon in a location similar to the location of main study setting (Mutz & Müller, 2016).

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used to measure the level of reliability of the instrument. The overall reliability coefficient obtained was 0.81. In terms of the various sections, Section B had a coefficient of 0.83, Section C had a coefficient of 0.78, Section D had a coefficient of 0.79 and Section E had a coefficient of 0.82. these are shown in Appendix B. Reliability co-efficients of 0.7 and above are usually considered satisfactory in research (Cortina, 1993; Menčík, 2016). On this basis, it was clear that the instrument was reliable.

Data Collection Procedure

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. In this regard, the data was collected on the variables of the study (stress and coping strategies) from the respondents using questionnaire. This ensured that large amount of quantitative data was obtained from the respondents.

The University of Cape Coast's Institutional Review Board gave ethical approval. After this, the researcher collected an introductory letter from the Department of Guidance and Counseling, University of Cape Coast. The researcher asked the Accra College of Education's principal for permission to

conduct the study there. Along with explaining the objective of the data to the participants and assuring them of their identity and confidentiality, a note was also attached to the questionnaire. This letter sought informed consent.

In collecting the data, the purpose of the study was explained to the sampled participants. After this, they were given the chance to ask any questions they may have. Completed questionnaires were retrieved from the participants the moment the questionnaires were completed. On average, it took 20 to 30 minutes to complete answering of the questionnaire. Data were collected in person in a period of two weeks. A 100% return rate was realized.

Ethical Considerations

The study's respondents received assurances that ethical aspects including permission, autonomy, anonymity, and secrecy had been taken into account. As was already stated, the respondents' permission was requested. This helped to ensure that there was voluntary participation in the study. In establishing participant autonomy, the respondents were given the freedom to decide the extent of their participation in the study. They were not compelled to answer the questionnaires in any pre-determined manner.

In order to protect their confidentiality, the responders' names were also not necessary. It was not necessary to provide any more information that would reveal the respondents' identities. Additionally, the data supplied by the respondents was utilized for the study's stated academic goals. Once more, the researcher made sure that any data supplied by the respondents was kept secret and confidential. The researcher also ensured that plagiarism was avoided in the study. Information used was properly cited and referenced using the 7th edition of the APA style of referencing.

Data Analysis

The data was coded and entered into the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) software version 21. The demographic data were analysed using frequencies and percentages. Data for research question one was analysed using mean and standard deviation. In the same vein, data for research question two was analysed using mean and standard deviation. The third research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the fourth research question was answered using mean and standard deviation.

Hypothesis one was tested using independent samples t-test. This was appropriate because male and female students were compared in terms of their stress levels. Hypothesis two was also tested using independent samples t-test. This was suitable because male and female students were compared in terms of their coping strategies.

Hypothesis three was tested using One-Way ANOVA. Hypothesis four was also tested using One-Way ANOVA. The age groups compared were more than two groups and as such One-Way ANOVA was suitable in testing both hypotheses.

Further, hypothesis five was tested using independent samples t-test. Similarly, hypothesis six was tested using independent samples t-test. In both cases, married and single students were compared. Since the groups were two, independent samples t-test was appropriate in testing the two hypotheses.

Chapter Summary

For the investigation, a descriptive survey approach was chosen. The Accra College of Education served as the study's location. For the study, a proportionate stratified sampling method was applied using a sample of 280

students. Data were gathered using customized questionnaires, and one-way ANOVA, independent samples t-test, and means and standard deviations were used for analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate stress and coping strategies of students at the Accra College of Education. The study's results and discussion are found in this chapter.

Demographic Characteristics

In this section, the respondents' demographic characteristics are laid out. They cover the respondents' age, gender, education level, and marital status. Table 2 displays them.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	161	57.5
Female	119	42.5
Age		
20 years and below	66	23.6
21-25 years	166	59.3
26 years and above	48	17.1
Marital Status		
Married	67	23.9
Single	213	76.1

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It is shown in the table that 161 (57.5%) of the respondents were males while 119

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(42.5%) were females. This means that there were more males involved in the study compared to females. Regarding age, it can be seen that 166 respondents corresponding to 59.3% were within the ages of 21 to 25 years. The rest of the respondents were either aged 20 years and below (66, 23.6%) or 26 years and above (48, 17.1%). As a result, it is clear that most of the respondents in the study were between the ages of 21 to 25 years.

Finally, Table 2 shows that 76.1% of the respondents were single while 23.9% were married. Thus, there were more single respondents than married in the study. These demographic characteristics are relevant in the current study since they can affect the stress experience of students.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the most common stressors of the students of Accra College of Education?

This research question was meant to find out the common stressors experienced by the students in the study. The data was on a scale of: "Not stressful=0; Mildly stressful=1; Moderately stressful=2; and Severely stressful=3". The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Cut-off points were set for the mean scores. Mean scores of above 2.0 connoted high level of stress while mean scores between 1.0 and 2.0 signified moderate level of stress. Mean scores below 1.0 indicated low level of stress. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Analysis of Common Stressors of Respondents

Statement	Mean	*SD*	Rank
Attending lectures	1.24	.43	16th
Studying for tests and exams	2.60	.68	1st
Meeting deadlines for academic assessment	1.95	.57	10th
Handling the academic workload (heavy credit hours)	2.01	.57	6th
Writing quizzes and examinations	2.38	.59	2nd
Achieving my academic goals	1.92	.57	13th
Lack of clarity about assessment task requirements	2.07	.60	5th
Understanding academic material	1.93	.49	12th
Supporting myself financially	2.27	.61	4th
Paying fees	2.38	.59	2nd
Lack of recreational activities on campus	1.94	.52	11th
Poor living conditions	1.98	.46	7th
Adjusting to the campus environment	1.96	.49	9th
Inadequate infrastructure on campus	1.97	.55	8th
Trying to make friends on campus	1.24	.64	15th
My relationship with my tutors	1.23	.68	17th
Getting along with fellow students	1.03	.66	19th
Opposite sex relationship	1.04	.58	18th
Getting along with roommate(s)	1.45	.65	14th
Maintaining friendships	.99	.65	20th

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 3 shows the common stressors of the respondents. From the table, studying for tests and examinations (*M*=2.60, *SD*=.68), writing quizzes and examinations (*M*=2.38, *SD*=.59), paying fees (*M*=2.38, *SD*=.59), supporting themselves financially (*M*=2.27, *SD*=.61), lack of clarity about assessment (*M*=2.07, *SD*=.60), and heavy academic workload (*M*=2.01, *SD*=.57) posed high level of stress to the respondents.

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Several other stressors posed moderate level of stress. These included poor living conditions (M=1.98, SD=.46), inadequate infrastructure in the college (M=1.97, SD=.55) and adjusting to the campus environment (M=1.96, SD=.49). However, only maintaining friendships was indicated by the respondents to pose low level of stress (M=.99, SD=.65).

From the results, it is clear that the common stressors posing high level stress to the students included studying and writing tests and examinations, dealing with heavy academic workload and unclear assessments, and difficulty paying fees and supporting themselves financially. In essence, the topmost stressors were either academic-related or finance-related.

Research Question 2: What is the perceived impact of stress on the academic lives of students of Accra College of Education?

This research question sought to find out the adverse effects of stress on the academic lives of the respondents. The data was on a scale of: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Agree=3; and Strongly Agree=4. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Mean scores of 2.5 and above were deemed to be high implying that respondents agreed to the said statement. Thus, the respondents perceived the impact to be high.

However, mean scores below 2.5 were deemed to be low which implied that the respondents disagreed to the specific statements. Thus, the respondents perceived the impact to be low. The results are shown in Table 4.

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Table 4: Mean Analysis of Perceived Impact of Stress on Academic Life

Statement	Mean	SD
I have divided attention when studying	2.38	.63
I have difficulty in concentrating in class and in personal studies	2.86	.61
My time spent in studying is reduced	2.10	.58
I am unable to attend lectures because of the stress experience	1.84	.52
I struggle to understand what is taught	2.66	.65
I am unable to prepare well before exams	2.77	.66
My academic performance is down because I am unable to study well	2.89	.77
Mean of Means/Average of Standard Deviations	2.50	.62

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 4 shows the different ways in which respondents perceived stress to affect their academic lives. The respondents indicated that their academic performance was down because they were not able to study well (M=2.89, SD=.77). The respondents also struggled to concentrate in class and during their personal studies (M=2.86, SD=.61). The respondents further expressed that they struggled to understand what was taught in class (M=2.66, SD=.65). Due to all of these, it was not surprising that the respondents were unable to prepare well before examinations (M=2.77, SD=.66).

From the results in Table 4, it is clear that respondents perceived their academic performance to have been affected by stress since they could not study well. They had struggles with both personal study and class study and also did not understand what was taught in class. Stress also affected the students in such a way that they were unable to prepare well before

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examinations. The mean of means of 2.50 confirmed that the respondents perceived the impact of stress on their academic work to be high.

Research Question 3: What is the perceived impact of stress on the personal-social lives of students of Accra College of Education?

This research question sought to find out the adverse effects of stress on the academic lives of the respondents. The data was on a scale of: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Agree=3; and Strongly Agree=4. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Mean scores of 2.5 and above were deemed to be high implying that the respondents perceived the impact to be high. However, mean scores below 2.5 were deemed to be low which implied that the respondents perceived the impact to be low. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Mean Analysis of How Stress affects Personal-Social Lives of Respondents

Statement	Mean	SD
I worry about my life in general	3.07	.60
I worry about my future	3.09	.65
I withdraw and I'm not able to relate well with others	2.00	.55
I am uncomfortable with myself and others	1.99	.39
My sleep quality is negatively affected	2.67	.67
My eating habit is negatively affected	2.55	.59
I get angry with people and have unnecessary conflicts with others	1.90	.54
My general health and wellbeing is negatively affected	2.85	.67
Mean of Means/Average of Standard Deviation	2.52	.58

Source: Field Survey (2022)

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Table 5 shows the perceived impact of stress on the personal-social lives of respondents in the study. From the results, the respondents indicated that stress makes them worry about their future (M=3.09, SD=.65) and their life in general (M=3.07, SD=.60). Aside these, the respondents were of the view that their general health and wellbeing were negatively affected by the stress they experienced (M=2.85, SD=.67). Stress also affected sleep quality (M=2.67, SD=.67) and eating habits (M=2.55, SD=.59) of the respondents negatively.

From the results, it is evident that the respondents perceived stress to affect their personal-social lives in terms of making them worry about their future and their lives in general. Also, the health, wellbeing, sleep quality and eating habits of respondents were perceived to have been impacted by stress. The mean of means score was 2.52 and this was above 2.50 implying that the respondents perceived the impact of stress on their personal-social lives to be high.

Research Question 4: What are the most prevalent coping strategies that students of Accra College of Education employ in managing their stressful situations?

This research question aimed at finding out most prevalent coping strategies that students of Accra College of Education employ in managing their stressful situations. The data was on a scale of: 0 = does not apply or did not use; 1 = used a little; 2 = used a lot; and 3 = used a great deal. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Mean scores of above 2.0 indicate that the coping mechanism was used often while mean scores between 1.0 and 2.0 indicate that the coping mechanism was used a little. Mean scores

below 1.0 however indicate that the coping mechanism was rarely used. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Mean Analysis of Prevalent Coping Strategies of Respondents

Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
I sleep and take enough rest	1.89	.47	10th
I take myself from the stressful situation	2.04	.55	6th
I chat with friends	2.57	.60	1st
I watch movies and entertaining comedies	2.12	.56	5th
I pray, read religious scripts and listen to spiritual songs	2.33	.55	3rd
I share my problem with parents, friends, and teachers	1.31	.57	13th
I learn how to manage time properly	2.18	.62	4th
I make myself busy with academic activities	2.04	.45	7th
I do regular exercise	1.97	.49	9th
I contact professionals like psychologists or counsellors	1.78	.57	11th
I overeat	.87	.73	15th
I get irritable and yell at others	.68	.67	16th
I take alcohol to deal with stress	.40	.59	17th
I smoke cigarette to deal with stress	.27	.44	18th
I attend a social event (dance, party, movie) to reduce stress	.96	.48	14th
I leave matters in God's hands	2.34	.59	2nd
I try to do or think of some things that will make me feel happier, and allow myself to relax.	2.03	.71	8th
I passively let nature take its course.	1.66	.75	12th

Source: Field Survey (2022)

It is shown in Table 6 that the coping mechanisms which were used a lot or often by the respondents included chatting with friends (*M*=2.57, *SD*=.60), leaving matters in God's hands (*M*=2.34, *SD*=.59), and praying,

reading religious scripts and listening to spiritual songs (*M*=2.56, *SD*=.65). Aside these mechanisms, the respondents indicated that they learnt how to manage time properly (*M*=2.18, *SD*=.62) and at the same time watched movies and entertaining comedies (*M*=2.12, *SD*=.56).

There were also coping mechanisms which were used a little by the respondents. These included doing regular exercises (*M*=1.97, *SD*=.49), sleeping and taking enough rest (*M*=1.89, *SD*=.47), and speaking to professionals like psychologists and counsellors (*M*=1.78, *SD*=.57). Quite apart from these, some coping mechanisms were rarely used by the respondents. These included getting irritable and yelling at others (*M*=.68, *SD*=.67), taking alcohol (*M*=.40, *SD*=.59) and smoking cigarette to deal with stress (*M*=.27, *SD*=.44).

From the results in Table 6, it can be seen that the respondents adopted more positive and religious coping mechanisms in dealing with stress. However, negative and self-destructing coping mechanisms were rarely adopted.

Hypotheses Testing

The results of the hypotheses which were tested are presented in this section.

Hypothesis One

H_0: There is no statistically significant gender difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education.

H_1: There is a statistically significant gender difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education.

This hypothesis sought to find out the significant difference between male and female students in terms of their stressful experiences. The data were

analysed using an independent samples t-test with a significance level of 0.05. The Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was assessed. Table 7 summarizes the results.

Table 7: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

	F	Sig
Equal variances assumed	0.577	.170
Equal variances not assumed		

Source: Field Survey (2022)

It can be observed in Table 7 that the significant value of .170 is greater than .05 the significant level. The result indicates that equality of variances can be assumed.

The results of the independent t-test are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Results of t-Test Comparing Male and Female Students' Stress Experience

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	161	36.55	2.45	278	1.686	.093
Female	119	36.02	2.79			

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 7 displays the outcomes of the Independent samples t-test. Table 8 shows that there is no significant difference in the level of stress experienced by male and female students [t (278) = 1.686, p>.05]. The average score for males was 36.55, while the average for females was 36.02. These mean ratings varied somewhat, but there was no statistically significant difference between them. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of how stressed out they are, was maintained.

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Hypothesis Two

H0: There is no statistically significant gender difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education.

H1: There is a statistically significant gender difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education.

This hypothesis sought to determine whether there were any notable differences in coping mechanisms between male and female students. A 0.05 significance level Independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data. Table 8 displays the outcomes of the Levene's test for homogeneity of variance.

Table 8: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

	F	Sig
Equal variances assumed	0.098	.754
Equal variances not assumed		

Source: Field Survey (2022)

It can be seen in Table 8 that the significant value of .754 is greater than .05 the significant level. This result implies that equality of variances can be assumed. The results of the independent t-test are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Results of t-Test Comparing Male and Female Students' Coping Strategies

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	161	29.71	2.29	278	2.487*	.013
Female	119	29.03	2.23			

Source: Field Survey (2022)   *Significant, p<.05

Table 9 displays the outcomes of the independent samples t-test. Table 9 demonstrates that there is a significant difference in coping mechanisms between male and female students [t (278) = 2.487, p.05]. The mean score for

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men was 29.71, while the mean score for women was 29.03. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no statistically significant difference in the coping mechanisms of male and female students, was rejected. This implies that male and female students differed significantly in their coping strategies. Male students (M=29.71) utilised more coping strategies than female students (M=29.03).

Hypothesis Three

H_0: There is no significant difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of age.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of age.

The hypothesis sought to find out if there is significant difference in the stressful experiences of students on the basis of age. One-Way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The results of the Levene's test for homogeneity are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Test of Homogeneity of Variances (Stress)

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
5.280	2	277	.161

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 10 demonstrates that the .161 significant threshold is higher than .05. Accordingly, it is possible to assume that variances are homogeneous. The results of the ANOVA test are shown in Tables 11, 12, 13 and 14.

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Table 11: Descriptive Results for Different Age Groups (Stress)

Age (in years)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
20 and below	66	38.17	2.43
21-25	166	35.79	2.19
26 years and above	48	35.63	3.02
Total	280	36.32	2.61

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 11 displays the means and standard deviations for the various age groups. The mean score for participants 20 years of age and younger was 34.17, while the mean score for individuals 21 to 25 years of age was 35.79, while the standard deviation was 2.19. With a mean of 35.63 and a standard deviation of 3.02, the last group (those aged 26 and beyond) performed the best. It is obvious from the mean scores that there are disparities between the various age groups. Students who were 20 years old or younger in particular had higher mean scores, showing that they felt greater stress than students in other age groups.

Table 12 shows the results of the ANOVA test used to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the age groups.

Table 12: ANOVA Results Comparing Stress Experience on the Basis of Age

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	295.034	2	147.517	25.506*	.000
Within Groups	1602.037	277	5.784		
Total	1897.071	279			

Source: Field Survey (2022)   *Significant, $p<.05$

Table 12 makes it clear that students' experiences with stress varies significantly depending on their ages [F (2, 277) = 5.784, p.05]. The 0.000 probability value (p-value) is below the.05 level of significance. The mean scores of the three separate age groups therefore implied that there was a statistically significant difference between them. The null hypothesis, which stated there was no statistically significant difference in students' stress levels based on their ages, was rejected. A post-hoc analysis was required when a significant difference was discovered in order to ascertain which of the three mean values was responsible for the discrepancy in the ANOVA results.

Tukey's Post-Hoc test was used in doing the post-hoc analysis. This helped to establish which groups differ from each other. The results of the post-hoc analysis are presented in Table 13 and 14.

Table 13: Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Stress
Tukey HSD

(I) A2	(J) A2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
20 years and below	21-25 years	2.37751*	.34996	.000	1.5529	3.2021
	26 years and above	2.54167*	.45620	.000	1.4667	3.6167
21-25 Years	20 years and below	-2.37751*	.34996	.000	-3.2021	-1.5529
	26 years and above	.16416	.39412	.909	-.7645	1.0929
26 years and above	20 years and below	-2.54167*	.45620	.000	-3.6167	-1.4667
	21-25 years	-.16416	.39412	.909	-1.0929	.7645

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.
Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 13 shows the results of the post-hoc test. It is shown that significant difference exists between respondents in the 20 years and below

group and those aged 21 to 25 years (p=.000). Also, the mean score of the respondents in the 20 years and below group differed significantly from those who were 26 years and above (p=.000). These were the main groups with differences.

The homogenous subsets of the Tukey test are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Homogenous Subsets (Stress and Age)

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
Age	N	1	2
26 Years and above	48	35.6250	
21-25 Years	166	35.7892	
20 Years and below	66		38.1667
Sig.		.912	1.000

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

Source: Field Survey (2022)

It is shown in Table 14 that respondents who were aged 20 years and below had the highest mean score of 38.17. This means that they experienced high level of stress compared to the respondents in the other age groups. However, the respondents who were within the ages of 26 years and above experienced the lowest amount of stress. Therefore, it can be seen from the results that younger students experienced more stress than older students.

Hypothesis Four

H$_0$: There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of age.

H$_1$: There is a significant difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of age.

The hypothesis sought to identify the significant difference in the coping strategies of students on the basis of age. One-Way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis. The results of the Levene's test for homogeneity are also shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Test of Homogeneity of Variances (Coping Strategies)

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
6.876	2	277	.178

Source: Field Survey (2022)

It is shown in Table 9 that the significant level of .178 is greater than .05. This means that homogeneity of variances can be assumed. Therefore, it is assumed appropriate to carry out One-Way ANOVA.

The descriptive results for the different age groups are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Descriptive Results for Different Age Groups (Coping strategies)

Age (in years)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
20 and below	66	31.39	1.45
21-25	166	28.57	2.18
26 and below	48	29.69	1.84
Total	280	29.43	2.28

Source: Field Survey (2022)

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Table 16 displays the means and standard deviations for the various age groups. Specifically, 20 years old and younger participants had a mean score of 31.39 and a standard deviation of 1.45. Additionally, individuals aged 21 to 25 had a mean score of 28.57 and a standard deviation of 2.18. The mean score for the last group (those aged 26 and beyond) was 29.69, with a 1.84 standard deviation. It is clear from the mean scores that there are disparities between the various age groups. Students under the age of 20 specifically used more coping mechanisms than the other student groups.

Table 17 shows the results of the ANOVA test.

Table 17: ANOVA Results Comparing Coping Strategies on the Basis of Age

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	381.584	2	190.792	49.169*	.000
Within Groups	1074.841	277	3.880		
Total	1456.425	279			

Source: Field Survey (2022)   *Significant, p<.05

According to Table 17, there is a statistically significant difference in students' coping mechanisms based on their ages [F (2, 277) = 49.169, p<.05]. The p-value of 0.000, which is less than the .05 significant level, confirms that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the three different age groups. Thus, the null hypothesis that stated there were no statistically significant differences in students' coping strategies according to their ages was refuted.

Since a significant difference was found, Tukey post-hoc analysis was carried out in order to determine the specific groups among the different age groups. The results of the post-hoc analysis are presented in Table 18 and 19.

Table 18: Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Coping Strategies
Tukey HSD

(I) A2	(J) A2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
20 years and below	21-25 years	2.82767*	.28665	.000	2.1522	3.5031
	26 years and above	1.70644*	.37367	.000	.8259	2.5870
21-25 years	20 years and below	-2.82767*	.28665	.000	-3.5031	-2.1522
	26 years and above	-1.12123*	.32282	.002	-1.8819	-.3605
26 years and above	20 years and below	-1.70644*	.37367	.000	-2.5870	-.8259
	21-25 years	1.12123*	.32282	.002	.3605	1.8819

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.
Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 18 shows the results of the post-hoc test. It is shown that significant difference exists between respondents in the 20 years and below group and those aged 21 to 25 years (p=.000). Similarly, the mean score of the respondents in the 20 years and below group differed significantly from those who were 26 years and above (p=.000). Further, the mean score of the respondents in the 21 to 26 years group differed significantly from the respondents in the 26 years and above group (.002). Therefore, it is clear that all the groups significantly differed from each other.

The homogeneous subsets results from the Tukey test are shown in Table 19.

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Table 19: Homogeneous Subsets (Coping Strategies and Age)

Age	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
21-25 Years	166	28.5663		
26 Years and above	48		29.6875	
20 Years and below	66			31.3939
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

Source: Field Survey (2022)

From the results in Table 19, it is clear that all the groups significantly differed from each other. In terms of the specifics, respondents who were younger (20 years and below) recorded the highest mean score (31.39). This means that they utilised more coping strategies compared to the other age groups.

Hypothesis Five

H_0: There is no significant difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

This hypothesis sought to find out the significant difference in the stressful experiences of students on the basis of marital status. The data were analysed using an independent samples t-test with a significance level of 0.05. The Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was assessed. Table 20 summarizes the findings.

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Table 20: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

	F	Sig
Equal variances assumed	2.087	.150
Equal variances not assumed		

Source: Field Survey (2022)

It can be observed in Table 20 that the significant value of .150 is greater than .05 the significant level indicating that equality of variances can be assumed. Therefore, independent samples t-test was carried out. The results of the independent samples t-test are presented in Table 21.

Table 21: Difference in Stress Experiences on the basis of Marital Status

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Single	213	36.62	2.56	278	3.423*	.001
Married	67	35.39	2.57			

Source: Field Survey (2022)   *Significant, p<.05

The results of the independent samples t-test are shown in Table 21. It is shown that there is a significant difference between single and married students in terms of the experience of stress [t (278) = 3.423, p<.05]. The students who were single were shown to have more stress experience (M=36.62) compared to married students (M=35.39). The null hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant difference in the experience of stress on the basis of marital status is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis Six

H_0: There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

This hypothesis sought to find out the significant difference in the coping strategies of students on the basis of marital status. The data were analysed using an independent samples t-test with a significance level of 0.05. The Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was assessed and the results are shown in Table 22.

Table 22: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (Marital Status)

	F	Sig
Equal variances assumed	0.351	.554
Equal variances not assumed		

Source: Field Survey (2022)

It can be observed in Table 22 that the significant value of .554 is greater than .05 the significant level. In this sense, equality of variances can be assumed.

The results of the independent t-test are presented in Table 23.

Table 23: Difference in Coping Strategies on the basis of Marital Status

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Single	213	29.81	2.22	278	5.225*	.000
Married	67	28.21	2.06			

Source: Field Survey (2022)   *Significant, p<.05

From Table 23, it is shown that there is a significant difference in the coping strategies of single and married students [t (278) = 5.225, p<.05]. Single students had a mean score of 29.81 while married students had a mean score of 28.21. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the coping strategies of students on the basis of marital status is

rejected. Based on their mean scores, it can be said that single students employed more coping strategies than married students.

Discussion

Common Stressors of Students

The study revealed that the common stressors to the respondents included studying and writing tests and examinations, dealing with heavy academic workload and unclear assessments, difficulty paying fees and supporting themselves financially. It is clear that the topmost stressors were either academic-related or finance-related. The results obtained are all realistic and understandable for varied reasons.

For instance, in Colleges of Education, students mostly feel the stress of studying and preparing to write tests and examinations probably because of the "general" nature of their examinations. Colleges of Education do not conduct their own examinations. Examinations are conducted by their overseeing universities and the pressure of writing quizzes and examinations which are general and not conducted by their own tutors and colleges can sometimes increase the stress on students.

Also, the changes in the system and structure of Colleges of Education have put a lot of academic workload on students. Some colleges begin lectures as early as 6:30 am and end at 8:30pm. The heavy academic load coupled with the other supported teaching activities that the students go through make the Colleges of Education stressful for students. In addition, the burden of school fees payment and other financial responsibilities are very stressful for Colleges of Education students. Students are not permitted to write examinations or take part in some activities without paying their full fees. This brings a lot of stress

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to the students. The Teacher trainees Allowances which government provide for Colleges of Education students to ease their financial burdens are paid inconsistently. All of these add to the stress experienced by the students.

These findings corroborate those made by Shahmohammadi (2011) in Tehran, who found that the top causes of stress for students were tests, the amount of material they had to learn, their difficulty comprehending what they had learned, excessive amount of homework, and a jam-packed academic schedule. It was determined that these stressors posed moderate to severe stress. The study's results also corroborate those of Elias, Ping, and Abdullah (2011), who found that undergraduate students generally reported moderate levels of stress, which was mostly brought on by academic issues.

The results of the current study also agree with Zia-ur-Rehman and Sharif (2014), who found that the primary sources of stress in Pakistan were financial strains, course loads, time management, and social support. Furthermore, Reddy, Menon, and Thattil (2018) discovered that students' personal inadequacies, fear of failure, interpersonal issues with professors, and limited study facilities were major stressors. According to Amponsah (2019), first-year undergraduate students in Ghana experience high degree of stress, with financial and academic pressures being the most prominent antecedents.

In relation to the theories reviewed, it can be said that the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC) (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) has been confirmed. According to the theory, the way students appraise events in connection to their resources and strengths determines their experience of stress. In this regard, different situations are likely to bring different levels of stress. As a result, stress can come from

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different sources. In the current study, different stressors were identified as been responsible for the levels of stress experienced.

From the results discussed, it is the view of the researcher that students in different contexts experienced some levels of stress from variety of sources. This means that different stressors accounted for different levels of stress among students. The common stressors were mainly related to academic workload, examination issues and financial issues.

Perceived Impact of Stress on Academic Lives of Students

The study revealed that respondents' perceptions were that stress affected the academic performance of students since they could not study well. They had struggles with both personal study and class study and also did not understand what was taught in class. Stress also affected the students in such a way that they were unable to prepare well before examinations. These were the main ways in which stress affected the academic lives of students.

Having identified earlier in the study that most of the stressors were academic-related, it is very obvious why the academic work of students would suffer because of stress. The academic workload together with the pressure of writing examinations can make students unable to study and fully prepare for examinations. Also, when people are stressed, they are likely to have trouble concentrating and ultimately have difficulty understanding what is taught in classrooms. All of these can make students perform poorly in examinations.

The present study's findings are in line with Simpson (2018), who discovered that college students' difficulties managing excessive stress might have a detrimental effect on their academic performance. The outcomes also corroborate LeBlanc's (2009) findings that high levels of stress might affect a

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person's capacity for divided attention, working memory, retrieval of information from memory, and decision-making. These effects appear to be influenced by factors such as the connection between a situation's demands and its resources, the interaction between the task and the stressor, and components such as coping strategies, locus of control, and social support networks. A student's academic performance will deteriorate if they believe that their workload is too stressful.

The results of this study further corroborate Olape, Lasiele, Chiaka, and Abidoye's (2017) conclusions that there is a significantly correlation between students' levels of stress and their academic performance in Kwara State, Nigerian. According to Edjah, Ankomah, Domey, and Laryea (2020), academic pressures were the most prevalent in Ghana and had a significantly positive influence on students' academic and social lives. The finding of Edjah et al. was contradictory to almost all the previous findings discussed. The contradiction could probably be because the stress levels of the respondents in the study of Edjah et al. was not high, and as such, did not affect the respondents negatively.

From the discussion, it is clear that stress can affect academic work negatively because it can bring struggles during personal study and examinations. However, if stress is not high then academic work may not be affected negatively. Thus, high levels of stress affect academic work negatively while low levels of stress could serve as a challenge to improve academic performance.

In relation to the theory discussed, it is evident that the General Adaptation Syndrome theory has been confirmed. The theory proposes that

when stress is experienced for a prolonged period students' mental resources can be affected (Higuera, 2018). Therefore, academic work can be affected negatively from the experience of stress.

It is the opinion of the researcher that stress when experienced for a prolonged period at high levels can have negative consequences for academic work. As a result, students would have to make use of every resource at their disposal in order to overcome stress. Authorities of Colleges of Education would also have to pay much attention to the stress experience of their students to avoid decline in academic work.

Perceived Impact of Stress on Personal-Social Lives of Students

Regarding the personal-social lives of students, the study revealed that the respondents perceived that stress can affect their personal-social lives in terms of making them worry about their future and their lives in general. Also, the health, wellbeing, sleep quality and eating habits of respondents were all affected negatively by stress. These were the main ways that stress affected the personal-social lives of students.

In Colleges of Education, the academic struggles and stress together with the stresses experienced put students in a general state of worry and anxiety, particularly about their lives and what lies ahead. Also, constant worries and stress can also make people struggle with their sleep and their diet. Some students may sleep less because of stress while others may oversleep because of stress. The same can be said of dietary habits. These factors give probable explanations of the findings of the study.

The findings of the current study confirm the findings of Bamuhair et al. (2015) that more than half of the respondents in their study often felt

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stressed and could not cope with stress. Specifically, majority of their participants found studying stressful while more than half of the participants were not sleeping well. In the same vein, the findings are in line with Al-Dubai, Al-Naggar, Alshagga and Rampal (2011) in Malaysia that majority of the respondents felt stress with the most common stressors being worries of the future and financial difficulties and these stressors affected their personal-social lives. Specifically, the students in the study of Al-Dubai et al. constantly worried about their future and their sleep and eating habits became affected negatively.

Further, the findings of the current study are in line with the findings of August, Rook and Newsom (2007) that stress negatively affected the lives of students by bringing several emotional and social challenges. This means that students had more social and emotional problems because of the stress they experienced. Pascoe, Hetrick and Parker (2019) revealed after a systematic review of literature that stress had a negative impact on students' sleep quality and quantity, physical health, mental health and substance use outcomes.

It is clear that all the results discussed are similar. The similarity shows clearly that the personal-social lives of students were affected by the level of stress they experienced. From this conclusion, it is the view of the researcher that stress not only affects students academically but in their interactions with others. This means that if students become overly stressed, they are likely to struggle in their interpersonal relations on campus.

In connection to the General Adaptation Syndrome theory, some of the effects of prolonged experience of stress can be seen in the social and

emotional lives of students (Higuera, 2018). This gives the indication that the theory reviewed in the study has been confirmed.

Prevalent Coping Strategies Used by Students to Manage Stressful Situations

The results of the study showed that chatting with friends, leaving matters in God's hands, and praying, reading religious scripts and listening to spiritual songs were the coping strategies used the most by students. Aside these, the respondents indicated that they learnt how to manage time properly and also watched movies and entertaining comedies. These coping strategies were used often. There were also coping mechanisms which were used a little by the respondents. These included doing regular exercises, sleeping and taking enough rest, and speaking to professionals like psychologists and counsellors. Getting irritable and yelling at others, taking alcohol and smoking cigarette to deal with stress were however rarely used.

The findings show that the respondents used more optimistic and religious coping mechanisms to manage their stress. Negative and self-destructive coping strategies, however, were rarely used. The findings of this study are in line with Okoro (2018), who found that students most frequently utilized active coping strategies while denial was less frequently used. This indicates that students used healthy coping mechanisms while studying Okoro. In light of this, Tenkorang, Forde, and Nyarko-Sampson's (2020) study discovered that the majority of respondents used Planful Problem Solving procedures, which included organizing, focusing, and acting to address problems.

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In a similar vein, the findings of the current study are in line with that of Freire et al. (2020) that most students used social coping and cognitive coping approaches. Abouammoh, Irfan and AlFaris (2020) also revealed that in Riyadh, students use active stress-coping strategy. Time management and planning were two of the active coping techniques. Additionally, Evans and Kelly (2004) found that in Ireland, talking to family members and peers, maintaining the illusion that one wants to continue, and attempting to avoid difficulty are the most often employed coping mechanisms. The present investigation supported these.

Furthermore, the results of Shaban, Khater, and Akhu-Zaheya (2012) that problem-solving behaviour and maintaining optimism were the students' most frequent coping mechanisms used by students while avoidance techniques were the least utilized coping mechanisms. In the same vein, the results supported those of Wolf, Stidham, and Ross (2015) that students frequently were focused and addressed their issues when they were stressed.

This study also found that students used more religious coping mechanisms. This is in line with the findings of Kwaah and Essilfie (2017), who discovered that students used a range of coping techniques to deal with stress, including self-distracting activities like watching television and listening to music as well as praying or meditating. Other essential stress coping techniques in the study of Kwaah and Essilfie were the emotional and practical assistance of relatives, friends, and teachers.

From the results discussed, all the findings can be summarized in line with the findings of Al-Dubai, Al-Naggar, Alshagga and Rampal (2011) in Malaysia that students used active coping, religious coping and reframing,

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planning. These findings have appeared in different studies in different contexts.

The researcher is of the view that regardless of the context, students showed preference for religious coping along with active coping strategies. This meant that students believed that even though they could address their own issues, they sometimes had to rely on their personal religious beliefs. The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC) (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) noted that when people are faced with challenges, they appraise the situation and employ different coping mechanisms to address the challenges.

Gender and Stress Experience

The study found no significant difference between male and female students' levels of stress. Men did suffer somewhat more stress than women, but the differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of how stressed out they are, was maintained. The conclusion is that there were no significant differences between male and female students' levels of stress.

The results on gender difference in the experience of stress confirm the findings of Leijden (2012) that gender had no effect on how stress affected students. The finding of Leijden means that male and female students had similar levels of stress. In a similar vein, Dada, Babatunde and Adeleye (2019) revealed that in Nigeria, there was no statistically significant difference in the stress experience of male and female students. A similar finding was realized

in the study of Duncan-Williams (2015) that male and female students had similar stress experiences.

A number of research have found gender differences in stress, in contradiction to these results. For example, Bamuhair et al. (2015) found that female students had higher levels of stress than male students. In the same vein, Okoro (2018) discovered that female students were more likely than male students to be stressed. Female students had greater stress than male students, according to Pierceall and Keim (2007).

From the discussion, it can be seen that there are inconsistencies regarding the gender difference in stress levels. Some studies like the current study found that male and female students did not differ significantly in their experience of stress while other studies found that male and female students differed significantly in their experience of stress.

It is the opinion of the researcher therefore that conclusive statements about stress levels of male and female students should only be made contextually. This is because in some contexts, males and females may have similar stress levels while in some contexts, males and females may have different stress levels.

Gender and Coping Strategies

The study's findings demonstrated a significant difference in coping mechanisms between male and female students. The average score for men was 29.71, while the average for women was 29.03. It was implied that male students used more coping mechanisms than female students. This refuted the null hypothesis, which held that there was no statistically significant difference in the coping strategies used by male and female students. Male and

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female students utilized significantly different coping strategies as a consequence, with male students adopting more coping strategies than female students.

The findings of the current study support the finding of Kumar and Bhukar (2013) that India male students utilised more coping strategies as compared to female students. They concluded from the finding that there was a significant difference in the coping strategies of male and female students. Similarly, the findings are in line with that of Joseph et al. (2020) which revealed that significant differences existed in the coping strategies of male and female students. Specifically, it was revealed in the study of Joseph et al. that passive emotional and passive problem solving approaches were common among male students while active problem solving approach was significantly better among females.

Additionally, the results supported those of Pierceall and Keim (2007), who found that female students had higher levels of stress than male students and, as a result, tended to engage in more activities including chatting with friends and family, engaging in leisure pursuits, and exercising. According to Bamuhair et al. (2015), female students use more coping mechanisms than male students due to their higher levels of stress.

Contrary to the findings of the current study, Abasimi, Atindanbila, Gai, and Mahamah (2015) found no significant differences in levels of the various coping strategies and overall coping among male and female students. Furthermore, students at the Eritrea Institute of Technology, Mainefhi did not exhibit any statistically significant differences in coping strategies based on gender, according to Yikealo and Tareke's (2018) research.

From the discussion, it is clear that the results on gender differences in the coping strategies of students are inconsistent. In some studies, gender differences were found while in other studies, gender differences were not found. It is the opinion of the researcher that more research is needed on coping strategies of students. This can help solidify or confirm the existing views on coping strategies of students.

Age and Stress Experience

According to the study, there is a significant difference in how much stress students face depending on their ages. The null hypothesis, which stated there was no statistically significant difference in students' stress levels based on their ages, was rejected. The post-hoc analysis showed that respondents under the age of 20 had the highest mean score of 38.17. In comparison to responders in the other age groups, this indicates that they underwent significant levels of stress. However, the respondents who were within the ages of 26 years and above experienced the lowest amount of stress. Therefore, it can be seen from the results that younger students experienced more stress than older students.

The results are consistent with the findings of Azila-Gbettor, Atatsi, Danku and Soglo (2015) that the level of stress of students significantly differed on the basis of their age. In a similar vein, the findings support the findings of Radwan, Radwan, Radwan and Pandey (2021) that stress levels differed significantly on the basis of age. Worku, Dirriba, Wordofa and Fetensa (2020) added that age was significantly associated with level of perceived stress.

The evidence from the finding of the current study and that of the other studies discussed show that students of different ages experience different levels of stress. In the view of the researcher, it is not surprising for people of different ages to have different stress experiences. This is because there are challenges which may common for a particular age group but not common for another age group. On the basis of this, it did not come as surprise that most studies including the current study found age difference to exist in the experience of stress.

Age and Coping Strategies

The study also discovered a statistically significant difference in students' coping mechanisms according to their ages. The null hypothesis, according to which there is no statistically significant difference between students' coping mechanisms based on their ages, was therefore disproved. The post-hoc analysis showed that there were significant differences between all the groups. In terms of the specifics, respondents who were younger (20 years and below) recorded the highest mean score (31.39). This means that they utilised more coping strategies compared to the other age groups. This was not surprising since the same age group was found to experience more stress.

The results of the current study are consistent with those of Babicka-Wirkus, Wirkus, Stasiak, and Kozowski (2021), who found that students' decision to choose a certain coping mechanism for stress was impacted by their age. Particularly, younger kids lacked the most coping mechanisms. Additionally, Monteiro, Balogun, and Oratile (2014) found that students' coping mechanisms varied depending on their age. In particular, Monteiro et

al. found that older students were more likely than younger students to engage coping mechanisms such as problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, and emotional expression.

Additionally, Davis (2017) revealed that age difference is observed in the coping strategies of students. Davis indicated further that students of different ages adopted different coping strategies. This was similar to the finding of Abdullah (2017) that students varied in their coping mechanisms on the basis of their ages.

The similarities observed in the findings discussed give the indication that age was a factor in the coping strategies of students. Thus, students of different ages are likely to have different coping strategies in dealing with the experience of stress. The researcher is of the view that since students of different ages experience different levels of stress, it is no surprise that age was also a factor in the coping strategies adopted by the students. Essentially, older and younger students would not manage stress in the same or similar way.

Marital Status and Stress Experience

The study discovered a significant difference between single and married students in terms of their experiences with stress based on their marital status. Specifically, the students who were single were shown to have more stress experience as compared to married students. This finding could probably so because married people have some form of support system (spouses) who provide support to deal with issues before they become overly stressful. Single students lack the support of spouses and aside may face most struggles alone.

The results of the current study are consistent with those of Kwaah and Essilfie (2017), who found that married and single students differed from one another in terms of how stressed they felt. Particularly, Kwaah and Essilfie discovered that married students had higher levels of stress than single students due to "financial concerns" and "family and marriage problems." The present study discovered a significant difference between single and married students, however single students in the study reported feeling higher stress. The differences could be because Kwaah and Essilfie measured stress in terms of family, marriage and financial problems and that accounted for married students being more stressed than single students.

The findings of the current study also support those of Ghafoor, Chaudhry, and Khan (2020), who discovered that single students were more stressed in four areas related to future careers, academic responsibilities, and confidence in their ability to make decisions, whereas married students were more stressed when competing for research experience in their learning programmes. According to Ermasova, Ermasova, and Rekhter (2020), single students are more affected by interpersonal and academic stresses than married students. This has been confirmed in the current study. It is evident therefore that students with different marital status would experience different levels of stress.

Being married or single can determine how much challenges that students face. This probably explains why there was a difference in the stress experience of the students on the basis of their marital status. It is therefore the opinion of the researcher that students who are married and those who are not

should not be treated in the same way because of the inherent differences in the stressors they are exposed to.

Marital Status and Coping Strategies

Finally, the study revealed that there was a significant difference in the coping strategies of single and married students. Single students had a mean score of 29.81 while married students had a mean score of 28.21 showing that single students employed more coping strategies than married students. This was in line with the earlier finding that single students experienced more stress. In experience more stress, it is only logical that they seek out more coping strategies.

The findings confirm the findings of Abdullah (2017) that coping strategies differed among students on the basis of their marital status. Because single students have a different set of support systems available to them as compared to married students, it does not come as a surprise that they would have different coping strategies. Also, Abasimi, Atindanbila, Gai, and Mahamah (2015) revealed that the coping methods of students differed significantly among single and married students. Ermasova et al. (2020) added that coping strategies of single and married students were different.

Williams (2016) found that there was no significant difference in the coping techniques of single and married students, which runs counter to the findings of the current study. Additionally, Davis (2017) discovered that students' coping mechanisms are unrelated to their marital status. The discrepancy between the results of the current research and those of these previous studies may be due to differences in how coping was assessed.

From the forgoing discussion, the researcher is of the view that marital status is of important consideration when examining the coping strategies of students. The implication is that married students may need different form of assistance compared to those who are not married in managing the experience of stress.

Chapter Summary

The results and analysis of the study were the main topics of this chapter. Six hypotheses and four research topics were addressed in total. The survey discovered that academic and financial concerns were the students' main sources of stress. It was shown that stress has a negative impact on the students' academic and personal-social life. The majority of the students used active, optimistic, and religiously oriented coping mechanisms. There were no gender-related differences in the students' experiences of stress, but there were in their coping mechanisms. Additionally, there were age-related differences in the students' coping mechanisms and stress levels. Finally, differences in students' experiences with stress and coping mechanisms based on their marital status were noted.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The study's summary, conclusions and recommendations are presented in this chapter. This chapter also offers suggestions for further research and implications for counselling.

Summary of Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate stress and coping strategies of students at the Accra College of Education. The study specifically aimed to test six hypotheses and provide answers to four research questions.

Research Questions

The research questions answered were:

1. What are the most common stressors of the students of Accra College of Education?

2. What effect does stress seem to have on students' academic lives at Accra College of Education?

3. What is the perceived impact of stress on the personal-social lives of students of Accra College of Education?

4. What are the most prevalent coping strategies that students of Accra College of Education employ in managing their stressful situations?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

$H_0 1$: There is no statistically significant gender difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education.

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H_11: There is a statistically significant gender difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education.

H_02: There is no statistically significant gender difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education.

H_12: There is a statistically significant gender difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education.

H_03: There is no statistically significant difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of age.

H_13: There is a statistically significant difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of age.

H_04: There is no statistically significant difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of age.

H_14: There is a statistically significant difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of age.

H_05: There is no statistically significant difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

$H_1 5$: There is a statistically significant difference in the stressful experiences of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

$H_0 6$: There is no statistically significant difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

$H_1 6$: There is a statistically significant difference in the coping strategies of students in the Accra College of Education on the basis of marital status.

Literature relating to the study were reviewed. The review covered the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, conceptual review and empirical review. The theoretical review focused on Selye's Theory of General Adaptation Syndrome and Transactional theory of stress and coping (TTSC). The conceptual review dealt with the concept of stress and that of coping. The empirical review dealt with common stressors of students, adverse effects of stress on academic lives of students, adverse effects of stress on personal-social lives of students, prevalent coping strategies used by students to manage stressful situations and differences in experience of stress on the bases of demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status).

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in the Accra College of Education. A sample of 280 students was used via proportional stratified sampling procedure for the study. Data were collected using adapted questionnaires and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

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Major Findings

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. The study revealed that the common stressors posing high level stress to the respondents included studying and writing tests and examinations, dealing with heavy academic workload and unclear assessments, and difficulty paying fees and supporting themselves financially. It is clear that the topmost stressors were either academic-related or finance-related.

2. The study revealed that respondents perceived that stress affected the academic performance of students since they could not study well. They had struggles with both personal study and class study and also did not understand what was taught in class. Stress also affected the students in such a way that they were unable to prepare well before examinations.

3. In terms of the personal-social lives of students, the study revealed that respondents perceived that stress affected their personal-social lives by making them worry about their future and their lives in general. Also, the health, wellbeing, sleep quality and eating habits of respondents were all affected negatively by stress.

4. Chatting with friends, leaving matters in God's hands, and praying, reading religious scripts and listening to spiritual songs were identified to be the coping strategies used the most by students. Aside these, the respondents indicated that they learnt how to manage time properly and also watched movies and entertaining comedies. These coping strategies were used often. The rest are doing regular exercises,

sleeping and taking enough rest, and speaking to professionals like psychologists and counsellors. Getting irritable and yelling at others, taking alcohol and smoking cigarette to deal with stress were however rarely used.

5. The level of stress experienced by male and female students did not differ significantly. The inference is that there were no significant differences in the levels of stress experienced by male and female students.

6. In terms of coping mechanisms, there was a sizable disparity between the genders of the students. The average score for men was 29.71, while the average for women was 29.03. It was implied that male students used more coping mechanisms than female students did.

7. There was a significant difference in the level of stress that students experienced according to their ages. The post-hoc test revealed that respondents who were aged 20 years and below had the highest mean score of 38.17. This means that they experienced high level of stress compared to the respondents in the other age groups. However, the respondents who were within the ages of 26 years and above experienced the lowest amount of stress. Therefore, it was realised younger students experienced more stress than older students.

8. Based on their ages, there was a statistically significant difference in the coping mechanisms used by the students. The null hypothesis, according to which there is no statistically significant difference between students' coping mechanisms based on their ages, was therefore disproved. The post-hoc analysis showed that there were

significant differences between all the groups. In terms of the specifics, respondents who were younger (20 years and below) recorded the highest mean score (31.39). This means that they utilised more coping strategies compared to the other age groups.

9. There was a significant difference between single and married students in terms of their experiences with stress based on their marital status. Particularly, it was shown that unmarried students had higher stress than married students.

10. Last but not least, the study found that single and married students' coping mechanisms differed significantly. Students who were single used more coping mechanisms than students who were married, as seen by their mean score of 29.81 compared to 28.21 for married students.

Conclusions

Some conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study. In the first place, it was concluded that students experience high level of stress mostly coming from taking tests and examinations, amount of academic work to be done and financial distress. In relation to the broader conversation, academic and financial concerns are common and predominant issues in recent times for most students.

Secondly, it can be concluded that stress experienced by students of Accra College of Education can affect their general academic work especially in their personal studies and preparation for examination. Not only are the students affected academically, but their health and wellbeing are also affected negatively by stress. For students in different contexts, stress can be

detrimental to their academics and health as demonstrated in the existing literature on stress. The implication is that generally, the conclusions arrived at in the current study have confirmed most of what is known in the literature. For example, studies of Olape et al. (2017) in Nigeria and Edjah et al. (2020) in Ghana were all confirmed.

Further, it is concluded that more positive and religious coping approaches were adopted by students of the Accra College of Education in dealing with stress. The Ghanaian population is a highly religious and as such this conclusion ties in well with the trend of the Ghanaian society. Regardless, the conclusion of this study has confirmed what is known both in real life and in the literature.

Students' experiences with stress and coping mechanisms are significantly influenced by their gender, age, and marital status. Demographic traits must thus be researched and taken into account in relation to the stress levels and coping mechanisms of students at colleges of education. These findings have supported the literature's views on demographic factors, stress, and coping mechanisms.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. Authorities of Accra College of Education should structure their academic calendar and timetable in a flexible manner to make it easier for students to navigate the academic schedules. This is because the study found academic workload to be a stressor for students.

2. The study found that financial stressors were common for students. Therefore, it is recommended that authorities of Accra College of

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Education could provide a financial support scheme to aid students who have financial struggles to be able to deal with their financial challenges.

3. Authorities of Accra College of Education could organise stress management seminars for students on the importance of dealing or coping with stress so that their academic performance is not affected negatively. This is because the study found that stress could negatively affect academic work of students.

4. Authorities of Accra College of Education could collaborate with the health unit of the college to organise outreach programmes on how stress affects the health and wellbeing of students with the aim of helping students manage their experience of stress. This is important because the study found that stress could negatively affect the health and wellbeing of students.

5. Since the study found that the burden of paying fees and being financially stable presented significant stress to the respondents, it is recommended that parents and guardians should support their children financially to ease the stress situation on students. This can be done by college authorities organising programmes for parents where the parents would be encouraged and entreated to pay fees and provide financial support to their children.

Implications for Counselling

The study found that preparation for examination was a common stressor for students. The Counselling Unit of the Accra College of Education could have examination preparation guidance programmes for students mostly

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before examinations. This can help students overcome stress related to examinations.

Counsellors in colleges of education could focus their attention on addressing stress needs of students. This could be done through the organisation of guidance programmes and one-to-one counselling sessions for students. In the literature, it is documented that provision of counselling is a major way of addressing stress needs of students (Chao, 2012). This supports the implication of the findings for counselling.

Further, counsellors in colleges of education can make stress assessment a concrete part of their work. Thus, they can assess the level of stress of students and provide remedial help to those who are experiencing high levels of stress. In addressing stress, assessment of stress levels and the kinds of stressors are deemed to be important (Saklofske et al., 2012). The assessment will provide the needed direction in terms of how students going through stress can be assisted.

Suggestions for Further Research

The following suggestions are made for future and further research:

1. Since the current study focused on Accra College of Education, future researchers can extend the focus of the study to other colleges of education to help enhance the likelihood of generalizing the findings.

2. Future researchers can examine specific therapeutic approaches that counsellors can use to effectively assist students in coping with stress. This would help make recommendations on specific interventions for students struggling with stress.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of stress on students and their coping strategies in Accra College of Education. Your participation in this study is very important since the results of the study would help to provide assistance to students in dealing with stress. Any information you provide will be kept confidential. Please feel free to participate in the study.

Thank you. Please respond by ticking [√] and writing where necessary.

Section A – Background / Demographic Information

Direction: Kindly provide the required information or put a tick **(√)** in the appropriate column to indicate your response to each of the items in this section.

1. Gender: Male   [   ]   Female   [   ]

2. Age: 20 years and below [   ]   21-25 years [   ] 26 years and above   [   ]

3. Level: 100 [   ]   200 [   ]   300 [   ]   400 [   ]

4. Marital Status: Married [   ]   Single [   ]

Section B: Common Stressors

Please indicate how stressful the following situations are for you. Please use the scale below:

Not stressful=0; Mildly stressful=1; Moderately stressful=2; Severely stressful=3

Statement	0	1	2	3
1. Attending lectures				
2. Studying for tests and exams				
3. Meeting deadlines for academic assessment				
4. Handling the academic workload (heavy credit hours)				
5. Writing quizzes and examinations				
6. Achieving my academic goals				
7. Lack of clarity about assessment task requirements				
8. Understanding academic material				
9. Supporting myself financially				
10. Paying fees				
11. Lack of recreational activities on campus				
12. Poor living conditions				
13. Adjusting to the campus environment				
14. Inadequate infrastructure on campus				
15. Trying to make friends on campus				
16. My relationship with my tutors				
17. Getting along with fellow students				
18. Opposite sex relationship				
19. Getting along with roommate(s)				
20. Maintaining friendships				

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Section C: Impact of Stress on Academic Life

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on how stress affects your academic life using the scale:

Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Agree=3; Strongly Agree=4

Statement	1	3	3	4
1. Divided attention when studying				
2. Concentrating in class and during my personal studies is hard				
3. Reduces the time I spend in studying				
4. I am not able to attend lectures because of the stress experience				
5. I struggle to understand what is taught				
6. I am unable to prepare well before exams				
7. My academic performance is down because I am not able to study well				

Section D: Impact of Stress on Personal-Social Lives of Students

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on the impact of stress on your personal-social life using the scale:

Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Agree=3; Strongly Agree=4

Statement	1	3	3	4
1. I worry about my life in general				
2. I worry about my future				
3. I withdraw and I'm not able to relate well with others				
4. I am uncomfortable with myself and others				

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5. My sleep quality is negatively affected				
6. My eating habit is negatively affected				
7. I get angry with people and have unnecessary conflicts with others				
8. My general health and wellbeing is negatively affected				

Section E: Coping Strategies Adopted By Students

Please indicate the extent to which you use any of these when dealing with stress.

Use the scale: 0 = does not apply or did not use, 1 = used a little, 2 = used a lot, 3 = used a great deal.

Statement	0	1	2	3
1. I sleep and take enough rest				
2. I take myself from the stressful situation				
3. I chat with friends				
4. I watch movies and entertaining comedies				
5. I pray, read religious scripts and listen to spiritual songs				
6. I share my problem with parents, friends, and teachers				
7. I learn how to manage time properly				
8. I make myself busy with academic activities				

9. I do regular exercise				
10. I contact professionals like psychologists or counselors				
11. I overeat				
12. I get irritable and yell at others				
13. I take alcohol to deal with stress				
14. I smoke cigarette to deal with stress				
15. I attend a social event (dance, party, movie) to reduce stress				
16. I leave matters in God's hands				
17. I try to do or think of some things that will make me feel happier, and allow myself to relax.				
18. I passively let nature take its course.				

APPENDIX B

RELIABILITY OUTPUT

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.810	53

APPENDIX C

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref: CES/ERB/edu/v7-22/

Your Ref: ....

Date: 26 September 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Chairman, CES-ERB
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The bearer, Eulalia Aba Dickson, Reg. No ED/GEP/18/0002 is M.Phil. / Ph.D. student in the Department of Guidance and Counselling in the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. He / She wishes to undertake a research study on the topic:

Stress and Coping Strategies of Students in the Accra College of Education, Ghana

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies (CES) has assessed his/her proposal and confirm that the proposal satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval to commence his/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give him/her the necessary assistance to facilitate the conduct of the said research.

Thank you.
Yours faithfully,

Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
(Secretary, CES-ERB)

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