An assessment of academic stress among undergraduate students: The case of University of Botswana

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This research finding is based on the responses obtained from the undergraduate students at a higher learning institution (University) in Botswana. This paper investigated the stressors, symptoms and effects that are likely to be experienced by the undergraduate students in higher institutions (Universities). Stressors related to time, academic pressure, and academic environments were explored. A total of 320 students participated in this study. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires that were randomly distributed to the students during lecture time. Data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics and Tables. The open ended question was thematically analysed and the result presented in Table 5. It was found out that, academic workload, inadequate resources, low motivation, poor performance in academic, continuous poor performance in academic, overcrowded lecture halls, and uncertainty of getting job after graduating from the university lead to stress among students. It is hoped that, these findings will help the individual students, lecturers, career and counselling centres, and the university administrators to put in place mechanisms that mitigate the effects of stress at the University. In addition, the finding will also spur a scholarly debate on academic stress among students in higher institutions. We therefore suggest that, other researchers should consider using triangulation method. The limitation of our study was the sample size and lack of geographical coverage since our study only concentrated on one university. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised and as such the researchers suggest replication of this study using larger samples from other parts of the world to validate our findings.

Key words: Students, higher institutions, university, stress, stressors.

INTRODUCTION

Stress has become an important topic in academic circle as well as in our society. Many scholars in the field of behavioural science have carried out extensive research on stress and its outcomes and concluded that the topic needed more attention (Rees and Redfern, 2000; Ellison, 2004; Ongori and Agolla, 2008; Agolla, 2009). Stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed (Smith, 2002; Tweed et al., 2004; Stevenson and Harper, 2006). Academic institutions have different work settings compared to non-academic and therefore one would expect the difference in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress in the two set up (Elfering et al., 2005; Chang and Lu, 2007). It is important to the society that students should learn and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will in turn make them contribute positively to the development of the general economy of any nation. However, the intricate academic environment sometimes poses great medical problems to the students' lives (Danna and Griffin, 1999; Dyck, 2001; Grawitch et al., 2007; Ongori, 2008) that tend to negate the positive gains that one would expect after completion of University. These scholars assertion needs attention if the needed stress management in university have to be effective.

It is important for the university to maintain well-balanced academic environment conducive for better learning, with the focus on the students' personal needs. Students' expectations vary with respect to personality

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and their backgrounds which influences on how one perceive the environment around him/her. Students at the university have different expectations, goals, and values that they want to fulfil at the university, which is only possible if the students' expectations, goals, and values are integrated with that of the university (Goodman, 1993).

Stress

Researchers (Vermunt and Steensman, 2005; Topper, 2007; Ussery, 2007; Malach-Pines and Keinan, 2007) have defined stress as the perception of discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfil these demands. While researcher (Campbell, 2006) defines stress as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them. Stress occurs when an individual is confronted by a situation that they perceive as overwhelming and cannot cope up with. Academic stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003), poor relationships with other students or lecturers, family or problems at home. Institutional (university) level stressors are overcrowded lecture halls, (Ongori, 2007; Awino and Agolla, 2008), semester system, and inadequate resources to perform academic work. Erkutlu and Chafra (2006) for instance opines that, when these events take place, an individual becomes disorganised, disoriented and therefore less able to cope up, thus resulting in stress related health problems. The pressure to perform well in the examination or test and time allocated makes academic environment very stressful (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2006; Polychronopoulou and Divaris, 2005; Misra and McKean, 2000). This is likely to affect the social relations both within the University and outside (Fairbrother and Warn, 2004) since there is conflict with the social aspect of one life. This not the only affect the social relations within or outside the University, but this goes to affect the individual person's life in terms of commitment to achieving the goals. Knowing the causes of students stress will make the University administrator know how to monitor and control the stress factors that are responsible for the students stress. scholars (Ornelas and Kleiner, 2003; Jaramillo et al., 2004; Verment and Steesma, 2005; Ongori, 2007; Topper, 2007; Ongori and Agolla, 2008; Agolla, 2009) for instance identified the symptoms and the causes of stress in work environments as sitting for a long period of time, poor work performance, poor interpersonal relationship, inadequate or lack of resources, inadequate time to perform particular assignments, poor working conditions, overcrowded work stations, excessive paperwork, and many others. Whereas these factors have been found to be responsible for stress, it is worth

noting that in order to minimise the stress among students, the University administrators must develop appropriate strategies that will enable them to detect in advance the symptoms and causes of the stress.

Researchers (Malach-Pines and Keinan, 2007; Ongori, 2007; Ongori and Agolla, 2008; Agolla, 2009) have long identified stress symptoms as lack of energy, taking over the counter medication, high blood pressure, feeling depresssed, increase in appetite, trouble concentrating, restlessness, tensions and anxiety among others. An individual experiencing one of these factors is likely to be a victim of stress. Although this may also depend on how the individual appraises the situation, and how resilient is the person. While the negative effects of stress on an individual may vary considerably from one student based on their previous encounter with situations and the resilient of the individual student. In their findings (Jaramillo et al., 2005; Stevenson and Harper, 2006) point out that, the perception of the individual determines whether or not the stressor has a detrimental effect; that is whether it causes physical or psychological symptoms of stress in the individual. Earlier study by Siegrist (1998) also indicated a close link between high amounts of occupational stress and ill heath. This means that deterioration in health of the individual is likely to affect the individual performance. In a higher learning institution such as University (Smith et al., 2000) where the demand placed on students is based on deadlines and pressure for excelling in tests or examination, students are likely to be the victims of stress.

Our argument is that, students stress has not gained much attention since most scholars were preoccupied with the conventional work related stress as opposed to academic students stress.

Institutions world wide have not taken serious steps to find out the health of students, this could be attributed to the fact that students who stay at the university is based on short period, and therefore their stress have little direct impact on the activities or operations of the institution. Another reason why little have been done on students stress could be due to the fact that students' presence in the institution have no direct relationship to the quality of education they get. We argue that, unless the university puts appropriate measures that take care of well being of the students, the student's health may compromise the quality of education they are supposed to get (Daniels and Harris, 2000; Smith et al., 2000; Finlayson, 2003). Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) and McCarty et al. (2007) have carried out extensive research on stress and found out that, stress is associated with how an individual appraises situations and the coping strategies adopted.

The motivation for this research is that, there have been reported cases of stress among students that has resulted in loss of lives. The causes for such actions are not known since the victims of stress are never present to tell their stories. Although the counselling centre within the University do keep records of students who seek help

Table 1. Gender distribution among the sampled population.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	male	120	37.5	37.5	37.5
	female	190	59.4	59.4	96.9
	missing	10	3.1	3.1	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

from them, but this alone has failed to help identify strongly the causes and coping mechanisms. Again, there have been cases of reported violence among some students, and reported cases of poor lectures attendance. The future of any nation lies heavily on the young people since they are the tomorrow's leaders; therefore, it is important to identify the causes, symptoms, and the consequences of stress on students. This will help the university administrators to come up with the best strategies to enable the students to cope up with these stressors while pursuing their academic careers. The negative effect of stress on students is likely to pose challenge to the individual students, their colleagues, and the institution as a whole (Siegrist, 1998; Cartwright and Boyes, 2000). The outcome associated with stress such as suicide, violence, and drug abuse among others have been witnessed in the institution often, and are worth paying attention to. Stress poses a great threat to quality of life for students (Danna and Griffin, 1999; Dyck, 2001). Students interact amongst themselves as well as with their lecturers, therefore unduly stressed and unhappy students will reflect this in the process of the engagement that may result in conflict (Ongori, 2007; Awino and Agolla, 2008). Finally, university have moral duty to protect academic environment by adopting measures that reduce students' exposure to situations where stress may become a problem.

Based on the review of the existing stress literature, we formulate the following three research questions which will guide this study as follows;

i.) What are the common symptoms of stress among the students while at the campus?
ii.) What are the most common stressors among the students?
iii.) To what extent do students experience stress while at the Campus?

METHODOLOGY

The participants were drawn from undergraduate students of the University of Botswana (N = 310); formerly self- administered questionnaires were given to a population of 500 undergraduate students, out of this, 310 questionnaires were duly completed and returned, giving 62% return rate. This return rate was considered sufficient for this type of survey (McCarty et al., 2007; Saunders and Thornhil, 2007). This sample population consisted of 190 female and 120 male students. Table 1 below shows the distribution by gender. The questionnaire was divided into 4-parts; demographic,

stress symptoms, academic stressors, and an open ended which thus read as "Name one major source of your academic stress. Demographic examined (age, gender, current academic level); Symptoms consisted of 6 items measured (0 = Often; 1 = Sometimes; 2 = Never); Academic stress comprised of 15 items measured on 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5(Strongly agree) to 1 (Strongly disagree). The last part of the questionnaire consisted of an open question where the participants were asked to name only one major source of their stress. The open ended question was thematically analysed as indicated in Table 5. The participants' distribution by gender and academic levels is presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Sampling

Sampling method applied in this study was a convenient random sampling. The participants were addressed before the questionnaires were administered during lecture time, and were informed of the purpose of the research and the importance of their participation in this noble project. They were given 30 min to complete the questionnaire. This time was found to be appropriate given that the questionnaire was only a page and a half. This procedure was also found to be appropriate since it is easier for the students to complete the questionnaire and return the same within the lecture time. The questionnaires were administered to the students of the faculty of business, and students from other faculties within the University who are taking business courses as electives and options in different levels of their academic programmes at the university.

Instruments

Self-administered measure was constructed A; Demographic examined (age, gender, current academic level); B; Symptoms consisted of 6 items measured (0 = Often; 1 = Sometimes; 2 = Never); C; based on 5 point Likert scale; and D; one open ended question. The instrument used was based on the one earlier used by McCarty et al. (2007) and Agolla (2009). To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, the reliability test was carried out and measured 0.81 Cronbach alpha for all the 25 items. To ensure the validity, the instrument piloted with one class consisting of 50 students. Their views and comments were factored in and the instrument was modified to suit the purpose of this study.

Data analysis

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0 was used to analyse the data. The 25 items in the instrument were loaded into SPSS V 15.0 for analysis using descriptive statistics and frequency Tables as shown in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. On the other hand, the open ended question was thematically analysed as presented in Table 5.

Table 2. Undergraduates' academic level distribution among the sampled participants.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	year 1	9	2.8	2.8	2.8
	year 2	181	56.6	56.6	59.4
	year 3	45	14.1	14.1	73.4
	year 4	74	23.1	23.1	96.6
	missing	11	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Symptoms of Stress among students N = 320

Symptoms of Stress	Often + Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
Experience, anxiety or nervous indigestion	88%	12%
People at home or school make me feel anxious	75%	25%
I eat, drink, or smoke in response to anxiety producing situations	32%	68%
I feel tense, experience pain in the neck or shoulders, and suffer from migraine headaches, or have difficulty in breathing	77%	23%
I can't stop thinking about my concerns at night or on weekends long enough to feel relaxed and refreshed the next day	85%	15%
I have trouble concentrating on what I'm doing, because I'm worrying about other things	88%	12%
I take over-the-counter medications or prescription drugs to relax	16%	84%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The aim of this study was to test the following research questions; what are the common symptoms of stress among the students while at the campus? To what extent do students experience stress? What are the most common stressors among the students? To what extent do students experience different stress based on their gender? The analysis of data was purely done quantitatively, and the drawbacks of this analysis are based on the fact that the questionnaires were administered during the lecture time. The analysis was done by calculating the percentage of respondents who gave a high rating symptoms and stressors questions. The result indicates that students do experience stress related symptoms as shown in Table 3 below. The compounded result of the responses indicates that (88%) students have experienced anxiety, or nervous or having indigestion problems more than once at the University. The finding is consistent to earlier studies (Cohen and Single, 2001; Ongori, 2007; Topper, 2007; Agolla, 2009). Our finding reflects that, most of the students are experiencing stress in their daily academic activities. Students (75%) pointed out that, people at home or campus makes them feel anxious about their daily lives. This finding is in agreement with the study of (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003) that identified conflicts at home and work environment as one source of individual stress. This indicates that students experience a lot of pressure from home or cam-pus which impact either negatively or positively on their daily lives. In response to eating, drinking or smoking, (68%) of the students indicated that they have never been engaged in such activities in response to anxiety producing situations. This finding is inconsistent with the earlier findings of the scholars (Cohen and Single, 2001; Stevenson and Harper, 2006; McCarty et al., 2007) which revealed that, people tend to resort to drinking as coping strategies whenever confronted with complex situations in their lives.

From Table 3, analysis of the distribution revealed significantly higher symptoms of the stress in students as indicated. While over the counter medication is the lowest among the students. Students also indicate that they often or sometimes feel tense, experience pain in the neck or shoulders, and suffer from migraine headaches, or have difficulty in breathing. This was indicated by (77%) of the students who responded to the symptoms of stress that they have experienced. This is consistent with the most findings on stress (McCarty et al., 2007; Ongori, 2007; Agolla, 2009). When asked to indicate whether they have stopped thinking of their concerns at night or weekends long enough to feel relaxed and refreshed the next day, (85%) of the students indicated that they often or sometimes do experience such symptoms. This finding

Table 4. Stressors in academic work of students. N=320

Variables	(SD +D) %	(Neutral) %	(SA+A) %
Continuous poor Performance	22	22	56
Unfair treatment by boyfriend/girlfriend	42	23	35
Workload	8	11	81
Inadequate resources to do assignments	12	22	66
Uncertainty about getting job after graduating	22	24	54
Competition with fellow students	36	37	27
Overcrowded lecture halls	25	23	55
High expectations from my parents	24	29	47
Not attending lectures	42	18	40
Conflict with my fellow students	56	24	20
Poor performances	16	18	66
Low motivation	15	17	68
Conflict with my lecturers	52	27	21

is consistent with earlier studies (Ongori, 2007; Topper, 2007; Agolla, 2009). Students (88%) do indicate that they have trouble concentrating on what they are doing, because they worry about other things. This is in line with the other studies (Elfering et al., 2005; Agolla, 2008) on stress which also identified trouble concentrating as a symptom. On the question of whether they are involved in taking over-the-counter medications or prescription drugs to relax, (84%) indicated that they have never been involved in taking over- the- counter medications or prescription drugs to relax. This is consistent with the finding by (Agolla, 2009). It also reveals that the students do not take to drugs or alcohol as coping strategies when stressed

However, the second part of the questionnaire was to elicit their responses with regard to what students consider sources of their stress while on campus. This result is presented in Table 4 as shown below. The result indicates that (56%) of the students view continuous poor performance as stressful. This finding is consistent with earlier studies (Dua, 1994; Fairbrother and Warn, 2003; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2006; Topper, 2007). Whether their relationships with fiancés or fiancées are causing stress, (42%) of the students disagreed, (35%) of the students agreed while (23%) of the students remained neutral on this statement. On the question regarding academic workload, (81%) of the students agreed with the statement that academic workload is stressful. This finding is consistent with earlier findings (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003; Polychronopoulou and Davaris, 2005; Stevenson and Harper, 2006; Ongori and Agolla, 2008; Agolla, 2009).

Inadequate resources to do assignments such computers and books were rated by (66%) of the students as stressful. The students also pointed out that their stress is exacerbated by the inadequate resources which could not meet their needs. This was consistent with the findings of (Murphy, 1996; Misra and McKean, 2000; Awino

and Agolla, 2008; Agolla, 2009). Uncertainty about getting job after graduating was rated by (54%) of the students who indicated that their prospects of getting a job after graduating is stressful. This finding is in line with that of (Kaczynski, 2004) that identified the causes of stress among people as uncertainty about the future. Competition with fellow students (37%) of the participants disagreed with the statement that it is causing stress, while 36% of the participants remained neutral. This is inconsistent with earlier studies (Ongori, 2007; Ongori and Agolla, 2008) that identified competition as a source of stress among employees in organisations. Students (55%) rated overcrowded lecture halls as stressful, since they have to take their lectures while standing outside or inside due to shortages of seats or accommodation. This finding is consistent with earlier studies (Ongori, 2007; Topper, 2007; McCarty et al., 2007; Awino and Agolla, 2008; Agolla, 2009) which revealed that overcrowded lecture halls are causing students a serious problem as some have to take their lectures while standing due to lack of seats or outside because there is no space inside the lecture halls.

Students (47%) rated high expectations from parents, relatives and friends stressful, while (29%) of the students remained neutral in this statement, and (24%) of the students completely disagreed. This finding is consistent to earlier findings (Polychronopoulou and Divaris, 2005; Ongori, 2007; Topper, 2007; Agolla, 2009) that identified the expectation from parents, friends or relatives as one of the causes of the stress to an individual. On the question of whether not attending lectures will stress them, (42%) of the students disagreed, (40% of the students agreed and (18%) remained neutral with statement. 56% of the students indicated that conflict with fellow students is not likely to stress them, while (24%) of the students remained neutral and only (20%) of the students agreed with the statement. Poor performances was by (66%) of the students who pointed out that it is

Table 5. Name one major source of your stress--------------------------No. 320

Items	No.	Percentage
Academic overload e.g. assignments, semester, tests	155	48.4%
Academic Performance	45	14.0%
Fear of failure	30	9.3%
Inadequate resources e.g. Computers, Books, Lecturers	24	7.5%
Financial	17	5.3%
Overcrowded lecture halls	15	4.6%
Relationship with girl / boyfriend	14	4.3%
Family / Academic life	10	3.1%
Fear of getting job	10	3.1%

likely to stress them, while (18%) of the students remained neutral and (16%) of the students disagreed that poor performance as a source of stress. Low or lack of motivation among the students has been rated by (68%) of the respondents who stated that is stressful. This is consistent with most of the stress studies (Kaczynski, 2004; McCarty et al., 2007). Conflict with Lecturers was not seen as creating stress among students. This was indicated by (52%) of the students who disagreed that conflict with their Lecturers is likely to cause them stress. This is inconsistent to studies on stress (Goodman, 1993; Murphy and Archer, 1996; LeRoy, 1988; Ongori, 2007; Topper, 2007; Ongori, 2008; Agolla, 2009). This indicates that there is cordial relationship between students and their lecturers which is good for learning environment.

In order to find out the major causes of students stress, the students were restricted to one open ended question that required them to list only one major source of stress responsible for their academic stress. The result of the open ended question is presented in Table 5. Thematic analysis (Table 5) reveals that students' stressors are academic workload, academic performance, fear of failing, (Awino and Agolla, 2008), inadequate resources, financial problems, overcrowded lecture halls, poor relationship with girlfriend / boyfriend, family / academic life conflicts and fear of getting job after completing studies. Students indicated that academic workload is due to (Misra and McKean, 2000) short semester coupled with too many assignments, tests and preparation for the final semester examination. They cited too much work to be accomplished within short time that leaves them with no time to enjoy their social life. This is consistent with other studies (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003; Ongori, 2007; McCarty, Zhao and Garland, 2007; Agolla, 2009).

Academic performance and fear of failing are other stresssors that are of concern to the students' health life. This is consistent to earlier studies (Polychronopoulou and Divaris, 2005; Topper, 2007; Trares and Kohler, 2007) that identified fear of failing or poor performance as stressful. Continuous poor academic performance and expectation from family or friends have been cited as some of the problems that they face in their daily acade-

mic life at the campus. On the other hand students also indicated inadequate resources and financial matters as stressors. This is finding is consistent with earlier studies (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003; Ornelas and Kleiner, 2003). Inadequate resources such as computers, overcrowded lecture halls, lecturers, and text books were mentioned since their availability or in availability leads to success or failure in academic pursuits. Whereas other students indicated that they are affected by their relationship with their spouses. These findings are consistent with the earlier findings of scholars (Misra and McKean, 2000; Polychronopoulou and Divaris, 2005; Awino and Agolla, 2008) who identified academic stressors among undergraduate dental students as too much amount of class work and lack of time to do assignment.

Conclusions and Implications

From the foregoing findings, the results clearly show that students are stressed. The symptoms identified are anxiety, nervousness, indigestion, endless worries, tense, pain in the neck or shoulders and people at home or school. While these symptoms do not tell the cases that have already lost control, it is important to note that they are hampering students' ways of academic life. Stress has been associated with the outcomes such as suicides, violent behaviour, or even social withdrawals and the need to address issues should be seen as urgent. This is consistent with the spate of violence amongst the university students. University of Botswana has been experiencing cases of violence amongst the students' community at a rate that could be termed as alarming. Academic year never passes without reported case of murder taking place in the campus. Students are the future leaders of tomorrow and anything that interferes with their well being should be termed as denying the society their future leaders. These outcomes can be divided into physical violence and psychological abuse among the students (Johns and Menzel, 1999). Psycho- logical pressure to perform well in tests, examinations, expectations from peers, friends, family members and attending of lectures were among the common sources of the students stress while at the campus.

Our study also found out that, the major causes of stress among students are academic workload, inadequate resources, low motivation, and poor performance in academic work, continuous performance in academic work, overcrowded lecture halls, and uncertainty of getting jobs after graduation from the university. This finding is quite consistent with earlier studies (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2006). The university management need to address the above issues raised by the students in order to manage the academic environment conducive for learning. With the semesterisation of the academic programmes, students are required to accomplish many modules within short period of time which is coupled with continuous assessment test (CAT), assignments, attend lectures, and present term papers beside other extra curriculum activities. These present students with a lot of pressure, coupled with the pressure of preparing and passing of the examination. Indeed poor performance and continuous poor performance in tests or examinations can frustrate students and may even (Smith, 2002; Tweed et al., 2004; Stevenson and Harper, 2006) leave other students with no options but to experience depersonalisation and sometimes to withdraw from the campus (Ongori, 2007). This can lead other students to vent anger at their colleagues or even on girl/ boy friends. The situation gets exacerbated, when students try their best, but cannot improve on their previous or current performance coupled with the expectations from parents, family, relatives and friends. The outcomes of these may result in violent behaviours, depersonalisation, lack of motivation, and displaced aggression. Whenever there is violent behaviour against a fellow student, it creates ripple effect amongst other students and this impact negatively on academic atmosphere (Danna and Griffin, 1999; Dyck, 2001; Grawitch et al., 2007) which is not conducive for learning environment.

Therefore, based on foregoing findings, this study suggests that there should be a variety of changes such as elimination of non core subjects to reduce work load on students. Some students were so specific and did mention subjects such as politics of gender, and general education courses (GECs) as heaping too much work load on them, while in real sense these subjects mean absolutely nothing (Awino and Agolla, 2008) to their careers. University should employ more qualified lecturers to alleviate the staff shortage that always lead to overcrowded lecture halls. Since most lecturers encourage students to make use of internet facilities to carryout their research, it is important that there should be adequate computer stations to accommodate students to avoid failure to submit their assignments in time. University should also consider offering services such time management to help students manage their time wisely since this will help them to balance family / academic life. Effective time management seem to lower academic stress (Misra and McKean, 2000). While financial management will help them (students) to prioritise when making purchases or spending their finances on other

services, the students should be encouraged to make use of the career counselling services at the University in order to help them with courses which they find more difficult. University should conduct stress reduction sessions to the students, and lecturers too should be encouraged to advise their students where necessary.

However, academic work is never without stressful activities. The study reveal that some of the stressors perceived by 310 students are quite inherent in nature in that, they are common to academic life of the students, the University should address potential sources of stress effectively to promote health being of the students. It is also important that university management minimise the impact of the negative consequences associated with the academic pressure. Inadequate resources such as books, computers to do assignments, and overcrowded lecture halls are potential sources of personal conflicts among the students which often lead to bitter exchanges or worst still to physical fights. Many scholars (LeRoy, 1988; Goodman, 1993; Murphy and Archer, 1996; Ongori, 2008) have found out that conflict in any organisation often leads to stress. It creates hostile learning environment for the students which may prove harmful to their well being.

Limitations and directions for future research

This study has several limitations; generalisation of this study is questionable. The sample of the study was too small since only students who were taking business related courses were sampled for the study. This research is also limited by methodology used; replication of this study using triangulation method could be carried out in future. The authors also recommend study involving inter disciplines in order to find out how different programmes are perceived by students in terms of their stress levels. Therefore, the researchers recommend specifically that, future research should use larger sample size from other institutions to validate these findings. The findings will help the individual students, scholars, lecturers, career and counselling centres, and the University administrators in putting into place mechanisms that moderate the effects of stress at the University. The finding also will spur scholarly debate on academic stress among students in higher institutions. Specifically future studies can be carried out using longitudinal method to find out how students experience stress, effect, and coping methods they adopt while at the university.

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