

Assessment of Stress Levels Among Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students In Relation To Gender at Moi University, Kenya

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Abstract: People and students alike often suffer a great deal of stress as a result of day to day life happenings and commitments like work place requirements, uncertainty of career choices and future prospects, family commitments, fear of academic failure among other factors. It is difficult to gauge stress because different people respond differently to different situations under different circumstances. It was against this background that the present study was envisaged. This study assessed the stress levels among undergraduates and postgraduates in relation to gender in Moi University. The study was conducted at Moi University, Main Campus Eldoret. The sample constituted students from school of education through simple random sampling techniques of fishers 'factor theory of one seventy participants. The data collected was coded and analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation while inferential statistics used was t-test. The analysis was done at .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the stress level among university students is the same regardless of level of education. It was also revealed that gender affects the level of stress among students. Lack of money for fees and upkeep was the major factor causing stress. From the findings it was recommended that a programme of stress preventive measures be put to improve the overall wellbeing of students in the long run because if one can predict stress it can be managed.

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I. Introduction

Stress is a physical, chemical infective agent aggressing toward an organism resulting in a response in an attempt to restore previous conditions. Post graduate students often suffer a great deal of stress as a result of work place requirements and family commitment. For post graduate students to cope with demands that tend to interfere with their studies, they should be acquainted with the impact these demands have on their studies for it leads to burn out (Wilding & George, 1984). This study aimed at assessing how stress from the family and one's work place impacts on post-graduate students compared to their counter parts who are undergraduates. Friedman (1991) observed that the more educated teachers are the more likely they are to succumb to burnout while Byrne (1991) reported that young post graduate students showed significantly higher level of emotional exhaustion than older post graduate students. This study was conducted in Moi University, Kesses and post graduate and undergraduates were the targeted group for the study. This study aimed at determining how students can always manage multitasking and still prosper in their undertakings especially in their education. Beehr (1998) believes in ways of managing stress at work place and other tasks.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to assess stress levels among students in Moi University, to shed more light on the level of stress among undergraduate and post graduate students, factors causing stress and the strategies used by postgraduate students to cope with stress. To attain this purpose the study was guided by the following objectives.

- 1) To investigate the levels of stress among students based on level of education at Moi University.
- 2) To investigate the relationship between gender and stress among students at Moi University.
- 3) To identify factors causing stress among post graduate students at Moi university.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

In this study two null hypothesis were tested.

H₀₁-There is no significance difference in stress levels between undergraduate and post graduate students in Moi University.

H₀₂-There is no significant difference in stress levels between male and female students at Moi University.

II. Material And Methods

The study was conducted at Moi University Uasin Gishu County and its Satellite Campuses. Main Campus is located thirty five kilometers South East of Eldoret town in Kenya in Kesses. The study employed causal comparative research design whose main purpose was to explore the link between variables without manipulating any variable. The population of the study comprised of 170 participants in which the fisher's factor was used because the school attracted many undergraduate and less post graduate students. The participants were selected using simple and stratified sampling methods. Masters of philosophy graduates students in this case were expected to be in their middle adulthood with similar life commitments and course work load. The undergraduate students were stratified according to their year of study and gender. From each year of study 25 students were randomly selected to participate in the study. A balanced design was adopted in this study and equal numbers of male and female were involved in the study. To make study realistic and tangible, students were identified randomly.

Post graduate students were selected through simple random sampling. The participants were asked to pick a paper from a container in which the papers had been written on, 'Yes' and 'No'. This exercise was carried out separately for female and male students. All those students who picked the 'Yes' paper made the study sample. A random sample procedure produced non-biased group of participants. This method was ideal because it produced participants that were not exactly the same, but had direct and similar reflections of the targeted population. The independent variables were level of education, gender. The dependent variable was stress and the instrument used was a questionnaire which was called 'reduced stress developed by Tim Handle (1998)'. The questionnaire contained 32, items with a reliability coefficient of .95. It contained closed ended questions which were to cater for the variables

III. Results

Demographic description of participants by level of education.

TABLE 1.1.
LEVEL OF EDUCATION

GENDER	UNDERGRADUATE	POSTGRADUATE	TOTAL
MALE	38	35	73
FEMALE	47	26	73
TOTAL	85	61	146

The researcher administered 170 questionnaires out of which 24 questionnaires were not completely filled. As shown in table 1.1. The undergraduate students are the largest group of the participants which can be explained by the fact that the enrolment of undergraduate students is high compared to postgraduate. The demographic description of the participants was also analyzed based on marital status and level of education

Demographic description of participants by marital status and level of education.

TABLE 1.2
LEVEL OF EDUCATION

MARITAL STATUS	UNDERGRADUATE	POSTGRADUATE	TOTAL
SINGLE	64	14	73
MARRIED	21	46	67
WIDOWED	0	1	1
TOTAL	85	61	146

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₀₁-There is no significance difference in stress levels between undergraduate and post graduate students in Moi University.

In testing the above null hypothesis, descriptive statistics were computed and the results are presented in table 1.3.

TABLE 1.3
LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND STRESS

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	N	MEAN	SD
UNDERGRADUATE	85	68.07	0.92
POSTGRADUATE	61	67.72	12.56
TOTAL	146	67.92	11.59

To test whether the mean scores of the two groups of the participants were statistically different; a t-test for independent samples was conducted. The result of the analysis showed that there was no statistical difference between the two mean scores, t-value = .18, P> .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated that: there is no significant difference in stress levels between undergraduate and post graduate students at Moi University was accepted. From this result, it was concluded that level of stress among university students is the same regardless of the level of education.

To test the second hypothesis which stated that, H₀: There is no significant difference in stress levels between male and female students at Moi University. The mean scores of the two categories of gender were computed and results summarized in table 1:4

TABLE 1.4
GENDER AND LEVEL OF STRESS

GENDER	N	MEAN	SD
MALE	73	70.18	11.12
FEMALE	73	65.67	11.69
TOTAL	146	67.92	11.59

To test if the difference in the two mean scores was statistically significant; a t-test for independent samples was conducted. The analysis showed that there was a statistically significant difference between two mean scores, t value = 2.39, P<.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated; there is no significant difference in stress levels between male and female students at Moi University was rejected.

To achieve the third objective about factors causing stress among post graduate students at Moi University. The participants were asked to list any three factors causing stress. The results are in table 1.5.

TABLE 1.5
FACTORS CAUSING STRESS AMONG STUDENTS.

FACTORS	COUNTS
• Lack of money for fees and upkeep	59
• Improper accommodation during school based	14
• Poor time management	12
• Registration process during first week of opening	12
• Commuting to college/distance from workplace	7
• Missing marks/delay of results	5
• Congestion in lecture halls	5
• Social/personal issues	5
• Thesis/proposal defense	4
• Poorly coordinated lectures	3
• Inadequate learning materials	3
• Threats from lectures	3
• Domestic problems at home	3
• Examination assignments	2
• Work load and tight programme	

It was revealed that lack of money for fees and upkeep was the major causes of stress among postgraduate students. Followed by improper accommodation, time management, workload and tight

programme was the least factor that causes stress. It was concluded that financial matters is the real cause of stress.

IV. Discussion

The study aimed at assessing stress level among students in MoiUniversity. The study revealed that both undergraduate and postgraduate had same stress level. The male had high level of stress compared to females. The singles were also stressed compared to their married counterparts. The major issues reported for causing was lack of money. Price (2005) said "it is alarming that a large majority of post graduate students who commit suicide have never come into contact with their campus counseling services". Their priority of life is money which overwhelms them to an extent of suicide. The counselors should have a way of their counseling skills to bring out contention to students.

V. Conclusion And Recommendation

From the study findings and discussions, the following conclusions were deduced. MoiUniversity students have stress and it requires monitoring. On gender it was established men experience high level of stress because they bottle up (Creswell, 1998). It was also revealed that lack of money was the source of stress for the postgraduate students. The following recommendations were made.

1. A programme to increase awareness of stress level throughout the University should be established.
2. A programme to help students identify the symptoms of stress in themselves should be put in place.
3. A program of stress preventive measures to improve the overall well-being of students in the long term. Such as the provision of sports facilities, flexible registration systems, health services and regular medical checkup.

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