

## **Influence of Academic Stress as a Form of Intrapersonal Conflict on Students Academic Achievement in Public Universities in Kenya**

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**Abstract:** Provision of higher education to persons who are qualified is a priority to the success of the Government's overall development strategy. Academic achievement plays a key role in assuring quality education. Students who have difficulty in resolving academic stress as an intrapersonal conflict experienced while on campus may display a drop in their academic performance. University students while on campus experience academic stress aspects related with their usual ways of modeling and wanting to stay relevant to the demands of others and the environment resulting into undesirable outcomes which influence academic achievement to a large extent. The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of academic stress as an intrapersonal conflict on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya. The specific objective was to determine influence of academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya. Social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura and developmental task theory by Robert Havighurst were used to guide the researcher. An ex post facto research design and survey method research was adapted. Simple random, stratified random, and purposive sampling techniques were used to select those cases that are typical and useful in this research from the respective universities. Cochran's sample size formula was used to calculate the sample size of the third year university students. Questionnaire, in-depth Interview schedules, and a Focus Group Discussion were data collection instruments. The collected data was processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Tests for model fitness and a Binary logistic Regression model). The findings of this study indicated that academic stress has a negative influence on university students' academic achievement. In the fore going findings reached, the recommendation was that the University Management Board of Public Kenyan Universities in collaboration with Deans of faculties or schools, Chairpersons of academic Departments (CoD's), student welfare and Guidance and counseling services to address academic stress as an intrapersonal conflict.

**Keywords:** Academic achievement, intrapersonal conflicts, students, academic stress

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### **I. Introduction**

Conflicts can occur within a single individual who struggles with a personal conflict, for instance, students may experience high levels of stress that can affect their health and academic performance due to the continually changing nature of the university environment (Hamaideh, 2014). Stress refers to physical, mental, and emotional strain or tensions on a person. Feelings of stress in humans result from interactions between persons and their environment that are perceived as exceeding their adaptive capacities and threatening their wellbeing. The element of perception indicates that human stress responses reflect differences in personality and physical health (Hamaideh, 2014). Overall daily hassles were reported more often than major life events, with intrapersonal causes of stress being the most frequently reported sources. The dynamic relationship between the person and environment in stress perception and reaction is especially magnified in college students, for instance, the continuous evaluation that a college student is subjected to such as weekly tests and papers. The pressure to earn good grades and to earn a degree is very high, excessive homework, unclear assignments, and uncomfortable classrooms. In addition, relations with faculty members and time pressures may also be sources of stress, and the accelerated growth in undergraduate programs has also resulted in academic stress associated with the uncertainty of students' career choice and future prospects (Quyen, 2015). With regard to whether they are studying the right degree, choosing a degree and a career path is not as easy as it seems but it is important to get right is another source of academic stress. Students who end up choosing a degree which doesn't really suit them, there is a risk that they will end up dropping out, underperforming, or simply unhappy (Zain, 2018). In addition, a variety of external factors may contribute to the stress experienced at university. These may include,

financial insecurity, lack of previous tertiary education, external activities such as part time work and social support (Sangita, Thebe, Limbu, 2013).

Lothian (2013) highlighted that university students are probably under stress these days than at any other time in history. Higher education is supposed to give students skills and confidence but lots of students end up feeling anxious. Young people are tripped up by the milestones of education that act as barometers for their abilities and skills. Universities are often portrayed as institutions for social mobility that is gateways to social status, cultural sophistication and professional jobs. This is because the nature of the work may not have changed that much but the path to getting a job certainly has. At the university students gain critical thinking skills, socialize and most transformative of all become independent learners such that at the end of their degrees students have become educated thus can analyze and pick things apart. Although students tend to know more about the world but very little about themselves, thus too much exposure to the system beam of scrutiny leaves many students unsure of whether they are capable of opening doors for themselves (Lothian (2013). According to a study conducted at Victoria University in 2003 that investigated students and the factors that influence academic performance, stress has the potential to significantly interfere with the academic performance of any university student. (Flint & Carter, 2015). For instance, a situation where a student has to prepare and get the best qualifications at the university and this puts immense pressure on a student yet he or she has to do whatever it takes to succeed. However, students react to college or university in a variety of ways. The students' ability to cope with these stressful events and the way in which they are able to adapt to the stressful situation is really vital for academic achievement.

Although some stress is necessary for personal growth to occur, the amount of academic stress can overwhelm a student and affect the ability to cope. Symptoms commonly reported by campus psychiatrists portray a general picture of school related stress for example, the inability to do academic work and the fear of failure. There are many signs of educational stress which includes feeling depressed or anxious or over exhausted. Occasionally the concentration diminishes and sense of inability to cope creeps in. In addition, a person can experience unpleasant feelings and a sense of apprehension. The individual's ability to effectively cope with stressful events and situations may be influenced by the amount of stress experienced (Khan, Ahmed & Nawaz, 2011). In the majority of universities both international, in Africa and Kenya, peer pressure may lead some students to acquire new unacceptable behaviors, hence, they are likely to engage in socially destructive activities in their social environment which may include; illicit sex, alcohol and drug abuse and other irresponsible actions (Larimer, Kilmer, & Lee, 2005). The influence of these behaviours lead to many different kinds of mental problems which may have a very heavy toll on the students' academic performance.

Academic stress potentials in the universities are varied and hence, there is need for all groups within the system to recognize these potentials and deliberately make concerted efforts to curtail the negative consequences of these form of intrapersonal conflict. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the resultant influence of academic stress as a form of intrapersonal conflict on the attainment of the goal of university education. Conflict resolution hence, should involve the reduction, elimination or termination of academic stress aspects highlighted in previous studies. Among the few studies conducted on academic stress and academic achievement, particularly in Africa and Kenya, indicated that indeed it has an influence on the general health, academic and co-curricular performance of university students. Basing on the above scenarios from universities the researcher was motivated to conduct a study on the influence of academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya.

## **II. Research Methodology**

The **purpose** of the study was to assess the influence of academic stress as an intrapersonal conflict on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya. The specific **objective** of the study was to determine influence of academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya. **Research Hypothesis** - There is no significant influence of academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya. This study adopted **ex post facto research design** (Kerlinger, 2000). The design was found appropriate because it allowed the researcher to investigate the possibility of causal relationship between variables. **Survey method research** one of the basic descriptive research method was applied by the researcher when administering in-depth interview schedules and Focused Group Discussions to collect information from participants (Jackson, 2009). In this study, academic stress was the independent variable and students' academic achievement was the dependent variable. The **target population** for this research was university students from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST) and Kisii University.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) counties namely; Kakamega, Siaya, and Kisii in Western Kenya. Sample size is an important concept in statistics and refers to the number of individual pieces of data collected in a survey. Statistics sample size is important in determining the accuracy and reliability of research findings hence, according to James. C. Bartlett, et al (2001), Cochran's sample size

formula for continuous data was used to calculate the sample size of the students' research population. The sample population of students for this study was obtained using Cochran (1963) formula.

$$n = \frac{2^2 p q}{d^2}$$

Using this formula, (n) is the desired sample size of the study. (2) is the standard normal deviate. (p) is the proportionate of the user in the target population estimated that will be used, (d) is the degree of accuracy allowed. The study would use 96% (0.96) confidence level for students' sample which corresponds to the standard normal deviate (z) of 4.96. (P) is unknown and therefore set at worst case value of 50% (0.5) and d is 7% (0.07). Formula for sample size according to Cochran;

Sample size =  $\frac{(2 - \text{Score})^2 \times \text{Standard Deviation} \times (1 - \text{Standard Deviation})}{(\text{Margin of Error})^2}$

Assuming we use a 96% confidence level, 0.5 standard deviation, and a margin of error (confidence interval) of +/- 5%.

$$N_0 = \frac{2^2 p q}{e^2} \div \{(4.96)^2 \times (0.5)\}$$


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$$\frac{(0.07)^2}{3.8416 \times 0.25}$$


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$$\frac{0.0049}{0.4604} = 496 \text{ Respondents}$$

This formula was used to select four hundred and ninety six (496) third years from a total of four thousand, four hundred and eight (4,408) university third year students. Students in their third year of study were considered for the study because they have matured through the system, therefore, could provide objective assessment of the influence of selected academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya. The researcher then applied stratified random sampling technique to divide the population in stratas on the basis of gender and from each of these strata she drew a random sample size. Simple random sampling technique was used to select thirty six (36) student leaders, eighteen (18) Chairpersons of Academic Departments in the respective universities. Purposive sampling technique was used to select (3) Deans of Students, three (3) Student Counselors. Last but not least simple random sampling was applied to in selecting three public universities.

Data for the study was collected using a university students' **questionnaire**. They contained closed and open-ended items. It targeted academic stress and students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya. The questionnaire for students was divided into two parts; Part A captured general information about the respondents. Part B section one, solicited information on the influence of academic stress on academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya. The statements were anchored on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Undecided (U), 4= Agree (A) and 5= Strongly Agree (SA) and respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed to the statements. An **in-depth Interview Schedule** was used to enable the researcher extract very sensitive information related to academic stress as an intrapersonal conflict faced by university students and also clarify and elaborate the purpose of the research. It was used to supplement on what could have been left out on using the university students' questionnaire. It was administered to Deans of Students, Students Counselors, and Chairperson of Academic Department. **Focus Group Discussion** was used to gather thirty three university student leaders to discuss academic stress as a form of intrapersonal conflict experienced that result from university environment and how it affects academic achievement. It was used to explore the range of options or views on the topic of this research so that it provides an insight into how the group thinks about related issues, the range of opinion, ideas, inconsistencies, and variations that exist among university students in terms of their experiences and practices (Stewart, 2015).

Data collected was processed, coded, and analyzed to facilitate addressing research and testing the null hypothesis. Data was analyzed to help the researcher interpret data for the purpose of providing meaningful insights about the problem being examined ((Marczyk, Dematteo & Festinger, 2005). Descriptive statistics, that is frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and variance of respondents' scores to all the statements in each of the sections of the questionnaire and interview schedule were computed to allow the researcher describe the data and examine relationships between variables. Inferential statistics were used to enable the researcher examine causal relationships and even go beyond the parameters of present study sample and draw conclusions about the population from which the sample was drawn. Tests of model fitness and regression analysis was used to estimate the relationships among variables. The statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for windows was used to aid in the data analysis (Ruane, 2006). All data was analyzed at a level of significance of 95% or  $\alpha = 0.05$  and the degrees of freedom depending on the particular case determined.

### III. Results

#### *Descriptive analysis for Influence of Academic Stress on Students' Academic Achievement in Public Universities in Western Kenya*

The researcher sought to find out the level of academic stress among University Students and the responses were as shown in **Table 1**

**Table 1** Summary of Descriptive Statistics Scores

Average Level of Academic Stress	Mean	%Mean	SE	SD	Skewness	SE
	2.7642	59%	.03336	.69826	1.101	.117

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

Table 1 indicates that the average level of academic stress among the students was at 59%, a mean of 2.7642, Standard Error Mean .03336, Standard Deviation .69826, Skewness 1.101, and Standard Error .117 as revealed, implying that there were students who were stressed up during their academics thus likely to influence their academic performance. These are students who may not have learned to cope with academic stress such that they are overwhelmed to the extend it influences their academic performance negatively.

#### *Inferential Analysis, for Influence of Academic Stress on Students' Academic Achievement in Public Universities in Western Kenya*

In order to effectively address this **study objective**, to determine influence of academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya, the average level of academic stress was analyzed using **tests for model fitness**. To compute a binary logistic regression on a non-binary dependent variable, a value is picked in the range, then the above and below of that value is considered as the dependent (Ballardw, 2019). Thus academic achievement was reduced into two categories; below 60% and at least 60% and above categories and subjected to tests for model fitness. These included, Homer-lemeshow tests, Omnibus Test of model coefficients, Chi- square test, and Cox and Snell R Square and Nagelkerke were used to correlate the outcome variable (academic performance) with all possible continuous and categorical explanatory variables respectively with the view of determining which interactions to pursue in the regression model. According to Chi-square test and omnibus Tests of model coefficients, Chi-square for all; Step, Block, and Model  $p = 0.006 < 0.05$ , was significant thus implied that academic stress was a good predictor of academic performance hence pursuing it further using regression analysis was inevitable.

**To test the  $H_0$** , which stated that there is no significant influence of academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya as indicated a **binary logistic regression analysis** was used to model the mean for academic stress against academic achievement to determine the influence of academic stress on academic achievement while controlling students and university characteristics. **Table 2** indicating variables in the equation reveals that academic stress was found to have a negative influence on the academic achievement as indicated by the regression coefficient,  $B = -0.009$ , though the influence was not significant at 5% level of significance as indicated by  $p = 0.857 > 0.05$ . An increase in academic stress among students was associated with a decreased likelihood of exhibiting an improvement in academic performance among the students as indicated by Odds Ratio [Exp (B)] =  $0.991 < 1$  (success). Given that Odds Ratio [Exp (B)] is less than 1, then academic stress and academic achievement negatively correlated. Therefore, basing on the basic and inferential statistics, and thematic analysis, at  $p$  – value 0.857 whose significant level is above the cut-off value (significant level) of 0.05, there was no sufficient evidence to fail to reject the hypothesis that there is nosignificant influence of academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya.

This is a clear indication that high academic stress among some students might have led to poor academic performance in public universities in Western Kenya. This implied that academic stress used in this study were all having a significant negative influence on academic performance of students in public universities in Western Kenya. Academic stress consequence factors were; university students being emotionally drained by university, competition with fellow students, not sure whether they are studying the right degree, the need to do well in academics, worry over academic performance, having restless sleep, experiencing effects of alcohol and drug abuse, juggling study, personal life and making new friends, deferment of studies and studies having been put on hold for an extended period of time.

**Table 2** Variables in the Equation

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Academic Stress	-.009	.053	.032	1	.857	.991
Constant	-.196	1.574	.016	1	.901	.822
Variable entered on step 1: Academic Stress						

#### IV. Discussion And Conclusion

The study investigated the influence of academic stress and academic achievement among students in public universities in Western Kenya, thus the findings are as discussed in reference to previous researches. Sangita (2018) argued that young people are tripped up by the mile stones of education that act as barometers for our abilities and skills. This argument concurs with Harvighurst (1991) developmental task theory which postulates that any person who has not learned and mastered a task is maladjusted and suffers social disapproval which can be a source of frustration which may have an impact on a person's goals. His findings are in agreement with those of this study with respect to H<sub>01</sub> where academic stress has a negative influence on academic performance of students in public universities in Kenya with regard to being emotionally drained by university, 19.6% and 15.8% university students agreed and strongly agreed that the university has drained them emotionally. Generally in Kenya the system of education increases feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty about students' potential. No doubt, the university unlocks many closed doors, however, too much exposure to the system beam of scrutiny leaves many students unsure of whether they are capable of opening doors for themselves. In an interview, a CoD reported:

*When first years report, they change from their initial degree program to a less technical degree or from a less technical degree to a more technical degree. This is common with students admitted into engineering sciences, applied science courses and education. (Interview held in May, 4<sup>th</sup>, at K University, 2018).*

This assertion indicates that some of the students were enrolled for degree programmes they did not like or due to pressure from family opted for others. But a significant proportion of respondents, 29.5% and 24.2% felt that the university does not drain them emotionally. Most of these students are definitely aware of the quizzes, tests, assignments which are held throughout the semester and this assists in reduction of stress levels. In addition, such university students know that final exams are the most important stage where they can make up their grades.

This result does not agree with Cohen (2018) study on academic demands and test anxiety. Results revealed that this may be the most common long term cause of stress for college students. When students don't get the results they think they should get or feel pressured to get certain academic results, this can cause a lot of stress. Her observations are similar with those of this study with respect to H<sub>01</sub> where competition with other fellow students make some students feel tense for a prolonged period of time as the score indicates 16.4% agreed, 8.7% strongly agreed. Some students argued that for the first time while in the university they score lower grades on a test. Consequently, test anxiety is experienced with increased intensity. This is a situation where a student has to prepare and get the best qualifications at the university and this puts immense pressure on a student yet he or she has to do whatever it takes to succeed. 35.8% and 30.6% of third year university students were not tensed to have a competition with fellow students. Most of these students get to relax and focus on classwork hence, excel in academic work since they are often satisfied by others who prefer to accommodate. In an FGD, a student leader argued:

*The first learners happen to outdo learners who take longer to cover the work load. Therefore, some students compare themselves to what is happening, the ill-prepared student experiences a lot of emotional stress and worry to achieve in their academics (FGD held in May, 7<sup>th</sup>, at University Y, 2018).*

The result also is consistent with Zain (2018) argument that choosing a degree and a career path is not as easy as it seems but it is important to get right. Students who end up choosing a degree which doesn't really suit them, there is a risk that they will end up dropping out, underperforming or simply unhappy. According to

Harvighurst (1991) selection of an occupation is another developmental task expected of late adolescent and young adulthood. This idea is similar to the results in regard to not being sure whether they are studying the right degree. 8.9% agreed and 12.3% strongly agreed with respect to H<sub>O1</sub>. Some university students miss lectures or find themselves absent minded while in the lecture hall. If this is their usual experience, then they are not in the right place. Nothing makes sense for such students, thus, they are forced to do anything academic at the university. In addition, he or she may want to reconsider his or her course. On the other hand, 53.4% strongly disagreed and 20.1% disagreed since they were confident that they are studying the right degree. When they reported in first year, the students were sure their career aspect isn't affected and most of such university students are assured of job security.

According to Lothian (2013) another instance is where parents put pressure on a student to do what they want and not what the student wants to do. They know what's best for their daughter or son and want him or her to follow in the career path that they have chosen for them. This explanation is in agreement with the findings of this study as regards the need to do well or self-expectations with respect to H<sub>O1</sub> where 28.1% agreed and 56.8% strongly agreed. This therefore, means that high academic expectations favour students' selection of deep learning more than strategic approaches. In situations or instances of parental expectations are supposed to work or be applied, the problem is that students become so laid back or mixed up that their education takes a back seat such that they don't care. In an FGD, a student leader argued:

*Some students experience stress of having higher expectations with regard to passing highly in exams, yet they don't aggressively pursue their studies while at university to realize their academic ambitions (In an FGD held in May 7<sup>th</sup>, at University X, 2018)*

This assertion indicates that students with high esteem set their goal and work towards realizing them. But this could be the reverse for low esteem students.

Brogard (2015) argues that common causes of academic stress is anxiety, particularly, achievement anxiety. These observations support those of this study as presented by H<sub>O1</sub> where it was also found that university students 16.4% and 14.2% strongly agreed they become anxious about their academic performance at university. That the influence is more pronounced during exam periods in the university. The pressure to excel in academic makes them to attempt dangerous acts such as forgery of exam cards, academic transcripts and even staff signatures, and some university students even sneak unauthorized materials in the exam room. Others fail to sit for end of semester exams due to fear of failure as a result of unpreparedness. 9.1% and 9.8% did not experience anxiety about how they perform academically at university, an indication that they had not developed an academic stress due to the fact that they are able to identify their academic requirements, ideal academic performance, and set reasonable academic goals. In an interview, a Chairperson of Academic Department argued:

*During examination period some students go against exam rules and regulations due to the influence of academic stress, hence, engage in prohibited acts related to exams (Interview held in May 10<sup>th</sup>, at University Y, 2018).*

Brogard (2015) indicated that sleep depression alone is enough to make the emotional brain behave as if an extreme danger were present. Obtaining healthy sleep is important for both physical and mental health. It can also improve productivity and overall quality of life. Bandura (1986) discussed some of the effects of stress and anxiety on behavior hence, restless sleep is one of them. These results are in agreement with those of the study conducted with respect to H<sub>O1</sub> where it was depicted by some university students. 16.4%, and 14.2% accepted that during sleep they seem restless and most of the time feel fatigued. Sleep loss therefore, interferes with academics, extracurricular and vocational choices. This is because poor sleep quality leads to lower abilities in cognition. Likewise, 32% and 29% claimed that their sleep was not restless while at the university. This implies most of the students get enough sleep thus they are able to work at an optimum level academically. Enough sleep enables some third year university students live a healthy lifestyle and function well and think properly. It helps therefore, with memory consolidation, learning, decision making, and critical thinking.

The findings indicate that university students experience academic stress with regard to alcohol and drug abuse and most of them find it difficult to cope with its adverse effects on their health thus feel disoriented frequently. Larimer, Kilmer and Zee (2005) noted that it's no longer a secret that drugs of addiction are now more available to youths than before and university students are not an exception. These substances cause different kind of mental problems which have a very heavy toll on the students' academic performance. This is in support of H<sub>O1</sub> where 6.8% and 13.7% findings indicated that addicted students experience difficulty concentrating, focusing, frequently appear distracted and recalling known details. This is manifested through

indiscipline, absenteeism, and poor academic performance. Some suffer from chronic illnesses requiring hospitalization. Students who do not abuse alcohol and drugs at all, and this includes also responsible users. In most cases these are students who participate in extracurricular activities such as pro - social activities, team sports, and performing arts college attendance thus have reduced involvement of risk taking behaviors hence, better academic performance.

It was theorized that students adjustment indicates bidirectional association between intrapersonal and academic achievement. A student living on his or her own for the first time means that he or she will gain independence and take charge of the many choices and decisions that his or her parents or teachers made for him or her in the past while this new found freedom can be exciting, it may also feel overwhelming and less predictable than what a student is accustomed to (Ganai & Mir, 2018). 21% agreed and 14.8% strongly agreed that they find it a challenge juggling study, personal life, and making new friends and this causes their concentration to diminish. Similarly to H<sub>01</sub> where some university students stated that it is always a challenge to balance between co-curricular activities and academics. That balancing between nonacademic roles in the university and classwork is not an easy task. Such students compensate for the time that has been spent participating in other activities. On so many occasions some Kenyan university Students are forced to trans-night revising their notes and even updating what they had not finished during the semester. It is even worse for student leaders who have to balance between leadership and academics. Majority of the respondents, 30.6% and 24.4% did not find it challenging juggling studies, personal life and making new friends and their concentration in academics. The findings are true for Harvighurst (1991) mentioned in his theory that students who successfully transit through university life successfully have the ability to make good personal and interpersonal decisions relating to social, academic and career development.

Tchen, Gibbons (2001) research revealed that students with financial difficulties experience greater academic stress levels during their education. Studies confirmed this by noting that students who lived away from home and were financially independent of their parents or guardians suffered increased levels of depression and poor academic performance due to not having regular funding at university. His explanation concurs with responses given in H<sub>01</sub> where 8.4% and 13.5% accepted that they have deferred their studies for they couldn't support themselves financially and pay fees. Deferment is normally experienced during the exam period due to financial problems because a student has not been able to sit for exams. Also, lack of financial assistance leads to disruption in attending to academic programmes. In addition, deferring studies leads to delayed graduation of the student hence causing self-hazed or regrets in the period when the student is out of the university. Most of the third year university students, 48.9% and 23.5% had not deferred their studies at any point in time, since they have been assured by parents or guardians, well-wishers, and Education Support Organizations, of financial assistance. In an interview, a Dean of Students argued:

*At times a small percentage of students defer for various reasons however, most of them are from poor economic backgrounds and face financial challenges which make it difficult for them to clear fees (Interview held in May, 10<sup>th</sup>, at University Y, 2018)*

Major conflicts such as strikes, demonstrations, fracas, may arise from intrapersonal conflicts thus making the situation worse and this is attributed to ineffective conflict management strategies. Major conflicts usually result into activities such as disruption of university program, boycott of lectures, and closing down of the affected institutions (Estree & Sharpiro, 2015). Students experiencing conflicts within themselves project on other people for instance, fellow students, lecturers, Non-teaching staff, and administration (Harvighurst, 1991). These findings are similar to those indicated in H<sub>01</sub> with regard to the responses given by most university students, 21% agreed and 25.1% strongly agreed. They claimed that the closing down of the institution is usually as a result of students strike (2017-2018) Academic Year, and lecturers strike (2016- 2017), (2017-2018) Academic Years. Most students who take part are those who are stressed and resort to abusing drugs which make them become rowdy while on campus. Most of the scenarios include interrupting academic programs and even challenging others for a physical fight when apprehended. 19.4% and 20.1% of university students never had learning process on hold for extended period of time at some point due to closing down of institutions. This refers to those students' who happen to be in session during the trimester programme that's between May and August intake when majority of students are not on campus.

## **V. Conclusion**

In relation to the objective, to determine influence of academic stress on students' academic achievement in public universities in Western Kenya, the study concluded that academic stress had a significant negative influence on academic achievement of university students. The findings indicate that high academic stress among university students led to poor academic performance in public universities in Western Kenya. On three aspects majority of university students' academic achievement was influenced negatively, the need to do

well, being anxious about how they will perform academically at college and studies being on hold for an extended period due to closure of universities. Moreover, almost every other aspect not mentioned in the conclusion, a significant proportion of university students' academic achievement was influenced negatively by academic stress. However, the findings show that on almost all statements, a few students perceive academic stress is part of campus life and are encouraged towards change and growth thus better academic performance.

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