

Assessing the Level of Stress Experiences among Students

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Abstract

The study aimed to assess the levels of stress experienced by the Isabela State University San Mateo students. Among the three (3) domain included in the study are Physical, Social and Social. The study used descriptive statistics particularly Mean, One-way Analysis of Variance, multiple regression and T-test. The results indicate that the students experienced a moderate level of stress. Moreover, the level of stress influenced by physical, social or academic factor increases the cumulative grade of student. Likewise, there is a significant difference between course and Social and Academic factors, year and Physical factor and gender do not have significant differences. The findings of this study will eventually contribute to the development of student services programs.

Keywords: Stress, Students, Assessment, College, Psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a remarkable issue among college students. In their attempt to be prompted to do more things just to keep pace and remain in circulation the more that their life can be very stressful. Among the first year students, transition from school environment to university environment has also a big difference that could affect their life. Students will face new methods of teaching, new styles, new environments; new academic environment and new type of relationships are only some factor that can be experienced among university students.

Hans Selye, known as the Father of Stress Research, defined stress as “the non-specific” result of any demand on the body, be it a mental or somatic demand for survival and the accomplishment of our aims.” Selye’s definition suggests the possibility of damaging the impact of unmanaged stress on the physical, psychological and academic well-being of college students.

American College Health Association (2006), students reported that stress is the top factor impeding academic performance. This suggests the significant impact of stress on the life of college students since they are bombarded with all academic pressures which include research works, case studies, thesis, and practice teachings and

outside job trainings. Consequently, inability to manage stress may result in poor academic performance or in a student’s withdrawal from their college or university.

Johnson (2009) affirmed that due to potential physical, psychological and academic consequences faculty and administrators of institution of higher education must become aware of the symptoms and origins of stress confronting their students enrolled in their college.

It is also noted that dropout rate is increasing due to stress reasons. According to US census figures, 6-in-10 high school seniors go on to college the following year, but only 29% of adults 25 and lower had at least a bachelor’s degree. Stress reaction includes variety of physical factor like headache and fast heartbeat (ehealth.com/library/stress/str_what.html 03.03.10). Earlier study by Siegrist (1998) also indicated a close link between high amounts of occupational stress and ill health. This means that deterioration in health of the individual is likely to affect the individual performance. Leal (2011) found that among the students of Isabela State University isolation/avoiding others is the effect of stress under social factor.

With the notable effects of stress to students, many scholars in the field of behavioral sciences have carried out extensive research on stress and its outcomes concluded that the topic needed more attention (Rees and Redferm, 200, Ellison, 2004; Ongori and Agolla 2008; Agolla, 2009).

Since in the study of Leal (2011) affirmed that all forms and sources of stress were being experienced among the graduating students of Isabela State University. It is important to measure the level of stress among ISU students considering the possibilities of being open to stresses which adversely affect their life positively or negatively. Therefore, it is the primary purpose of this study to assess the levels of stress among university students, to identify the stressors associated with cumulative average and find out the significant differences (≤ 0.05) in the stress level attributed to gender, course and student year level. Eventually the findings of this study help the university administrators to come up with the best strategies to enable the students to cope up with stressors. The fact that students at the university level have different expectations, goals and values that they want to fulfill in the university, which only possible if the students' expectations, goals, and values are integrated with that of the University (Goodman 1993). Finally, the university has moral duty to protect academic environment by adopting measures that reduce students' exposure to situation where stress may become a problem. The findings of this study will eventually contribute to the development of student services programs. Hence, this study was conducted.

Objective of the study

This study aimed to assess the stress level experienced by students of Isabela State University and the stressors associated with students' cumulative average. More precisely, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the stress level that the students have?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the stress level attributed to course, gender and year level?
3. What are the stressors associated with students' cumulative average?

The Importance of the Study

Stress is one of the serious issues that affect the student's life; its effects could be reflected in students' social, academic and mental health. Linn and Zeppa (1984) found that stress can lead to academic decline, poor relationships with peers and family members and overall dissatisfaction with life.

University has to assess its students stress in order to provide them with the suitable mental health care and the efficient methods to cope with stress. Therefore, the university shall provide student services programs as coping mechanism in dealing with stress.

This study will provide stakeholders with scientific information related to stress level in order to help students to avoid stress from the beginning.

Methodology

Respondents will be coming from a population of 2nd, 3rd and 4th year (ISU-San Mateo campus) students. There were 213 respondents involved in this study. The study used 35 items questionnaire to gather information regarding levels of stress, these items assess three (3) main domains; physical factor (11) items, social factor (9) items and academic factor (15 items).

The questionnaire was adapted from the study of Thwabich and Qaisy (2012). The questionnaire also included course, gender and student year level.

Statistical Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics, Weighted Mean, One-way Analysis of Variance, multiple regression and T-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Stress Means and Qualitative Description

Stress Source	Mean	Qualitative Description
Physical Factor	2.26	Rarely
Social Factor	3.27	Sometimes
Academic Factor	2.72	Sometimes

The results indicate that the stress levels experienced by students are sometimes experienced. It is also found out that the mean for stress associated with social factors was 3.27, academic factors was 2.72 and for the physical factors was 2.26. This findings support the research of Thawabieh et al (2012). Although the respondents sometimes considered the factors associated with stress it does not mean that the factors associated with stress is not alarming considering that stress can lead to academic decline, poor relationships with peers and family members and overall dissatisfaction with life (Linn and Zeppa (1984).

Table 2. Means and Qualitative Description for the Physical Factor

Physical Factor	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. I suffer from a daily headache	2.63	Sometimes
2. I suffer from neck pain	2.67	Sometimes
3. I can't sleep	2.66	Sometimes
4. I can't breath	1.97	Rarely
5. I suffer from hearth problems	1.60	Rarely
6. I don't like food	1.94	Rarely
7. I suffer from back pain	2.37	Rarely
8. I feel tired	2.98	Sometimes
9. I can't stretch my legs and hands	1.94	Rarely
10. I suffer from blood pressure	1.62	Rarely
11. I feel sometimes low or high temperature	2.52	Sometimes

The analysis of the physical factor showed that the highest items caused stress number 8,2 and 3. These items reflect symptoms like I feel tired, suffer from neck pain and can't sleep. This result goes with the findings of ehealth (2010) that common reactions of stress include variety of physical symptoms.

Table 3. Means and Qualitative Description for the Social Factor

Social Factor	Mean	Qualitative Description
12. My family have a good relations	4.43	Frequent
13. My social life become limited	3.44	Sometimes
14. I enjoy meeting people	4.04	Frequent
15. I spend a budget for the entertainment and recreation	3.05	Sometimes
16. I have good relationships with other relatives and friends	4.00	Frequent
17. I always have conflict with others	2.57	Sometimes
18. I insisted on my opinion	3.14	Sometimes
19. I don't like dealing with others	2.35	Rarely
20. I deal with others nervously when they try to provocative to me	2.44	Rarely

As shown in the table items numbers 12 (my family have a good relations), 14 (I enjoy meeting people) and 16 (I have good relationships with other relatives and friends) are the main items causing stress regarding social factor. This means that so far our students have good relations with their family, people other relatives and friends. However, the mere fact that the mean score for items 14 and 16 are not far from item 12, this means that other people, relatives and friends may influence their social life positively or negatively. This further means that their outlet when encounter stress is not the student services provided by the university. As cited by Polychronopoulon et.al. (2005) university administrator knows how to monitor and control stress among students and tune its activity to student services program of the university.

Table 4. Means and Qualitative Description for the Academic Factor

Physical Factor	Mean	Qualitative Description
21. I lack self confidence	3.04	Sometimes
22. I have a financial problems because of the expenses of the university	3.69	Frequent
23. I act with hostility when I exposed to harassment and ridicule from students and teachers	2.55	Sometimes
24. I find difficult to the reach practical solutions to my academic problems	2.77	Sometimes
25. I am worried about my academic progress	2.81	Sometimes
26. I feel depressed because of my low cumulative average	2.83	Sometimes
27. I feel disturbed when I asked about my academic achievement	2.68	Sometimes
28. My course duties accumulate and I can't complete it	2.60	Sometimes
29. Sometimes I think of leaving the University	2.44	Rarely
30. I feel helpless in dealing with academic problems that I've been having	2.48	Rarely
31. I feel stress and mental fatigue from the large number of homework	2.77	Sometimes
32. I avoid setting for examination	2.53	Sometimes
33. I miss attending lectures	2.69	Sometimes
34. I feel frustrated by the lack of institutional care of students	2.72	Sometimes
55. I do not enjoy the University activities	2.16	Rarely

Regarding the academic factors it is found that items 22 (I have a financial problems because of the expenses of the University), 21 (I lack self confidence) and 26 (I feel depressed because of my low cumulative average) are the main items causing academic stress. This findings agreed with the study of Leal (2011) that the frequently cause student stress is attributed with budgeting school allowance. This further supports the study of Fairbrother et.al. (2003) where the identified stressors were many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money.

Results for Question (2)

Table 5. Stress Level of Students according to Course

Course	PF Ave1	SF Ave	AF Ave
BSIT	2.28	3.15	2.55
BTTE	2.19	3.52	3.16
BSIE	2.33	3.27	2.60
BSE	2.35	3.42	3.01
p-value	0.691	0.002432	3.27E-11

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In table 5 it indicates whether the stress level has significant differences ($\alpha \leq .05$) when attributed to course. Among the factors mean only social factor and academic factor has significant difference. Under social factor it was found out that BTTE appear to be frequently stressed.

Table 6. Stress Level of Students according to Gender

Gender	PF Ave1	SF Ave	AF Ave
Male	2.197	3.288	2.748
Female	2.322	3.182	2.610
p-value	0.130	0.220	0.077

As presented in the table stress level has no significant differences ($\alpha \leq .05$) when attributed to gender.

Table 7. Stress Level of Students according to Year

Year	PF Ave1	SF Ave	AF Ave
Second Year	2.16	3.33	2.77
Third Year	2.30	3.17	2.65
Fourth Year	2.51	3.21	2.70
p-value	0.00	0.20	0.36
	S	ns	ns

Table 7 shows whether the level of stress has significant differences ($\alpha \leq .05$) in the stress level

attributed to year level. In the year level only physical factor has significant difference with the level of stress.

Results Question (3)

Table 8. Multiple Regression coefficient of the Different Stressors

Coefficients(a)		Unstandardize	Sig.
Mode		d Coefficients	
1			
	B		
	(Constant)	3.041763	1.95E-28
1	PF Ave1	-0.08287	0.16019
	SF Ave	-0.14191	0.01309
	AF Ave	0.05102	0.42869
A	Dependent Variable: AVERAGE		
Mode			
1	$\hat{y} = -0.083*PF - 0.142*SF + 0.051*AF + 3.042$		

The model is significant at ≤ 0.005 however only 2.3% of the total variation can be explained. The negative signs means there is an inverse relationship between physical factor and academic factor and cumulative average. Positive means there is a direct relationship with stressors and cumulative average. In the model, it shows that the given factors of stress are not only the factor that affects the cumulative average of the students.

Conclusions

From the foregoing findings, the results clearly sometimes experienced in terms of social, academic and physical stress level. It is also concluded that;

1. The level of stress influenced by physical, social or academic factor increases the cumulative grade of student.
2. There are other stressors that influence the cumulative average of students.
3. There is a significant difference between course and Social and Academic factors, year and Physical factor and gender do not have significant differences attributed to gender.
4. That the university activities have great influence in the life of its students.

Recommendations

1. Due to potential physical, psychological and academic consequences faculty and administrators must become aware of the stress experiences confronting their students enrolled in their college.
2. The University Administration shall consider hiring licensed Guidance Counselor and strengthened the Guidance Program considering the psychological effects of stress.
3. The administration shall consider sending faculty members to seminars and training on Stress Management among college students considering the academic effects of stress.
4. Creation of adequate counseling resources and clinical advice. The university programs should be focused on how to provide the knowledge and resources for students healthfully cope with stress and to therefore reduce the potential negative implications of stress on physical, social and academic life.
5. Further studies are necessary to improve about the specific factors of students reports as sources or outlets of stress. Other study should be conducted to gather information about how student programs can be developed to alleviate or cope up with specific causes or effects of stress.

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