

The Effects of Stress on Academic Performance of Senior High School Students in Ghana

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Abstract

This is a descriptive study carried out to assess the effect of Stress on academic performance among Senior High School (SHS) students in Ghana - a case of New Juaben municipality. The main objective of the study was to verify the effect of Stress on academic performance among Senior High Students in the municipality. The study population comprises the entire New Juaben SHS students' population. Primary and secondary sources of data were employed for this study. Stratified sampling technique was used to collect data from respondents. The sample size for the study was three hundred and fifty (350) that is, twenty-five (25) first year SHS students and twenty-five (25) final year students from Seven SHS schools in the municipality. The findings show that stress is associated with poor academic performance. 85% of the respondents indicated that Stress affects academic performance. Also, the sources of stress among SHS Students includes boyfriend and girlfriend relationship problems, social activities, course load, examination, lack/ inadequate family support and feeling homesick. Most of the students in this study were found using combination of coping strategies. This is similar to different studies which show students utilize a number of strategies to cope with stress. The study recommends that guidance and counseling services should be a part of the school's curricular.

Keywords: academic performance, academic stress, coping strategies, stressors

INTRODUCTION

Stress is known “to be the fuel that the body uses to meet the challenges of our fast-paced modern life; for others, it is the aversive by-product of such a life” (Altmaier, 1983). Stress is associated with major life events, daily life hassles, and changes in life. Stress is created by excessive environmental and internal demands that need constant effort and adjustment.

Academic stress can be conceptualized as a student's interactions between environmental stressors, the student's cognitive appraisal of and coping with the academic-related stressors, and psychological or physiological response to the stressors (Lee & Larson, 2000; Lou & Chi, 2000). Academic stress is a pervasive problem across countries, cultures, and ethnic groups, and must be viewed in its context (Wong, Wong, & Scott, 2006). Academic stress is particularly severe because students are expected to pursue academic success to achieve respect, family pride, and social mobility (Gow, Bella, Kember, & Hau, 1996), resulting in extremely high academic demands and extraordinary pressure on school-aged children and adolescents.

The education system and its high stakes testing (e.g., the West Africa Examination Council [WAEC]), may exacerbate the competitive academic climate and generate high levels of academic stress.

Many students undergo considerable stress due to the demands associated with change: leaving home, becoming independent decision makers, and competing against new standards (Altmaier, 1983). Some students can see these transitions as a positive experience that can be exciting, but some students seem to be threatened by this change. Senior high school is where many students experience a time of increased demands, expectations, and stress (Nelson, Dell 'Oliver, Koch, & Buckler, 2001).

The transition of moving to Senior high school and leaving home can be an added stressor for a student. There are many first-year students who deal with being homesick, whether it is mild and self-limiting or profound grief and anxiety. There is loss of control for students who are attending school and have to adapt to a different climate, new language, behavior, and social customs. The changes and transition are stressful for students because of this new environment.

Many people recognize that stress comes in the form of negative tension that is caused by someone or something. Those who recognize stress as negative tension fail to realize that stress can generate a positive reaction to a stimulus. The positive reaction of stress can drive individuals to achieve and to test their potential to its fullest.

It is therefore important to investigate the stress that SHS students experience because of the amount of stress that students encounter. SHS life can be quite stressful for anyone. Being a freshman can make it even more difficult to handle stress. It is important to look at the different factors of stress to help them cope effectively.

Statement of the problem

The Senior High School (SHS) level is a milestone in the academic life of any student. During this period, the student and his/her parents take the crucial decisions of future career selection. Adolescents of our schools face many problems peculiar to their age. They are also worried about their academic performance. Many students are under great parental pressure to score high marks. The exams preparation and in many cases, high parental expectations double their anxiety and stress. They cannot get admission in prestigious tertiary institutions without a superior academic record. So the students are generally under stress during the Senior High School years.

Consequently, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the causes of stress among the SHS students in the New Juaben municipality, what are the coping strategies adopted by the SHS students and lastly, how does stress affect the academic performance of SHS students in

the municipality leading to their failure or success in examinations. Thus, the fundamental question is how stressors among SHS students affect academic performance in the municipality.

Objectives

The general objective of the study seeks to assess the effect of Stress on academic performance among Senior High students in the municipality.

The specific objectives are to:

1. determine the relationship between stress and academic performance among SHS students in the municipality
2. identify sources of stress among SHS students in the municipality
3. identify the features of students' coping strategies in response to academic stress among SHS students in the municipality.

Research questions

The following research questions have been formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between stress and academic performance among SHS students in the municipality?
2. What are the sources of stress among SHS students in the municipality?
3. What are the features of students' coping strategies in response to academic stress among SHS students in the municipality?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of stress and stress management is increasingly gaining recognition in literature and the globe. Oyerinde (2004) describes stress as the biological responses to events that threaten to overwhelm the individual capacity to cope satisfactorily in the environment. Melinda, Ellen, Jeanne and Robert (2008) defined stress as a powerful neurochemicals and hormones that prepare one for action to fight or flee if one does not take action, the stress responses can lead to health problems.

There are three health-related factors which contribute to the academic performance of students. These factors comprise of amount of exercise, sleeping habits and nutritional routines (Hammer et al., 2009) which have been found to contribute to how a student performs academically.

Among the stressors, test or exam anxiety is one of the main causes of academic stress and most students seem to be more emotionally vulnerable to examination (Fisher, 1994). Students have a fear of failure in relation to their grades and academic work. To fall short of their own or others' expectations in school, job, athletics, or any other activity, one risks both external and internal costs: threat to academic or career prospects, disapproval, rejection, humiliation, guilt and blow to the self-esteem (Schafer, 1996).

Many models have been developed to measure coping strategies. For example, the problem-focused and emotion-focused model (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

New Juaben municipality has seven (7) Senior High Schools in the municipal. The details of the secondary schools are as follows:

Table 1: Study Setting

NO	NAME OF SHS	POPULATION
1.	Pope Johns Senior High School	1,630
2.	Ghana Senior High School	1,465
3.	SDA Senior High School	712
4.	Koforidua Secondary and Technical school	1,958
5.	New Juaben Senior High School	1,526
6.	Oyoko Methodist Sec. School	1,738
7.	Oti Boateng Senior High School	1,265

Source: GES-New Juaben (Annual Report 2014)

Research design

The research design chosen for this work is the descriptive survey design. It is designed to provide further insight into the research problem by describing the relationship between the stress and the academic performance

Population

The study population comprises the entire New Juaben SHS students' population. The total population is ten thousand, two hundred and ninety-four (10,294) representing all the SHS student population.

Sample and sampling procedures

The sample size for the study was three hundred and fifty (350) i.e., twenty-five (25) first year SHS students and twenty-five (25) final year students. Hence, a total of fifty (50) students were sampled from each of the seven (7) SHS in the municipality. Stratified sampling technique was used to collect data from respondents. Also, the respondents were randomly selected using the random table.

Data collection method

The study employed both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected from the selected respondents within the sample frame in the research population.

For secondary data, annual reports, articles, and journals were used to collect information on the subject to obtain additional information in order to answer the questions set in the problem definition. The main research instruments that were used are questionnaires and interviews.

Data analysis

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in the data analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and excel were used for data entry and analysis of the data collected. Data collected were collated and analyzed using various quantitative statistical models such as tables, bar chart and pie chart to illustrate the results. The findings were critically examined to ensure consistency with the research objective and questions.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Background of respondents

Age of Respondents: A total number of three hundred and fifty (350) respondents were part of the research. From the table below, it could be seen that 14-17 age group had the highest representation of 57.7%. and the 18-21 age group had 42.3%. The distribution by age is shown below in table 4.1.1.

Table 2: Ages of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
14-17 years	202	57.7	57.7	57.7
18-21 years	148	42.3	42.3	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Gender of Respondents

Out of the three hundred and fifty (350) respondents, 56.3% of the respondents were female, and 43.7% of the respondents were male.

Form of the students

The findings show that out of the three hundred and fifty (350) respondents, 50% of the respondents were in Form One (1) and Final year respectively.

The Relationship Between Stress and Academic Performance Among Shs Students in the New Juaben Municipality

Effect of stress on Academic Performance

The result of the findings revealed that out of the three hundred and fifty (350) respondents, 85% of the respondents indicated that Stress affects Academic Performance. Whilst 15% stated that Stress does not affect Academic Performance. This shows a very high percentage believing Stress affects Academic Performance. This is in agreement to McCarty et al., (1999), who asserted that teachers have observed that some children appear to perform below their best in situations characterized by a high degree of stress.

When Stress is mostly experienced by the Students

The response of when Stress is mostly experienced by respondent. 42.3% of the respondents indicated that Stress is mostly experienced when there was examination, 39.4% stated that stress is mostly experienced due to the course load. Whilst 18.3% of the respondents asserted that the stress is mostly experienced due to feeling homesickness. This is in conformity with the assertion made by McCarty et al., (1999), that it is a common occurrence that a certain student gets so upset that he "falls to pieces" or "chokes up" during an examination and fails to live up to the promise shown in his class work.

Table 3: When Stress is mostly experienced

When Stress is Experienced	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Feeling homesick	64	18.3	18.3	18.3
Examination time	148	42.3	42.3	60.6
Course load	138	39.4	39.4	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Concentration in class when stressed

The research wants to find out whether students are able to concentrate in class when stressed. 61.1% of the respondents indicated that they are unable to concentrate in class when stressed. Whilst 38.9% of the respondents asserted that they were able to concentrate in class when stressed.

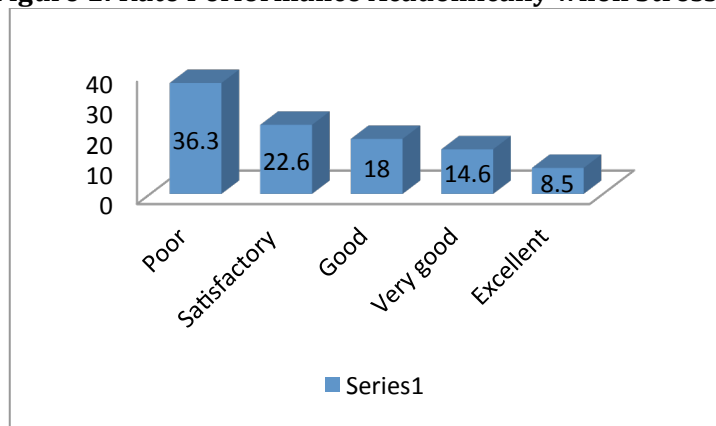
Able to learn when stressed

On the issue of students' ability to learn when stressed 97% of the respondents indicated that they are unable to learn when stressed. Whilst 3% of the respondents asserted that they were able to learn when stressed. This is in agreement with Schafer, (1996) claim that, too much stress can interfere with a student's preparation, concentration, and performance.

Rate of Academic Performance when stressed

With Reference to bar chart (figure 1) below, shows percentage of rate of performance academically when stressed. 36.3% of the respondents rated academic performance as poor when stressed, 22.6% rating academic performance as satisfactory when stressed. Also, 18% of the respondents rated academic performance as good when stressed. Again, 14.6% rated academic performance as very good when stressed and the least 8.5% rated performance academically as excellent when stressed. 63.7% of the respondents rated their academic performance above satisfactory. This is in conformity with Robert and White, (1989) who affirmed that positive reaction of stress can drive individuals to achieve and to test their potential to its fullest.

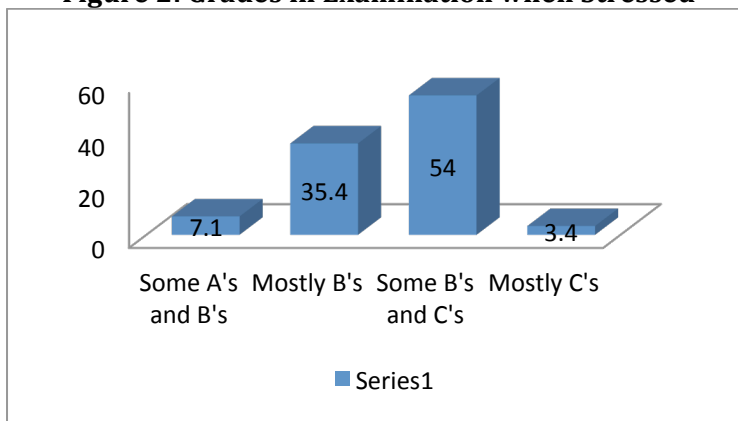
Figure 1: Rate Performance Academically when Stressed



Grades in Examination when Stressed

With Reference to Figure 2 below, shows the grades of respondents in Examination when Stressed. 54% of the respondents had B and C in Examination when stressed, 35.4% of the respondents who had mostly B in the Examination when stressed. Also, 7.1% of the respondents had "A" in Examination when Stressed. The least 3.4% of the respondents had mostly "C" in Examination when Stressed. This means the students performed above satisfactory even though they were stressed. Again, this is in conformity with Robert and White, (1989) assertion of positive stress.

Figure 2: Grades in Examination when Stressed



Performance of Students in class as compared to colleagues when stressed

Performance of students in class as compared to colleagues when stressed, 62.3% of the respondents' performance in class as compared to colleagues when stressed was little better, 23.4% of the respondents who performance in class as compared to colleagues when stressed was much better. Also, 11.4% of the respondents' performance in class as compared to colleagues when stressed was about the same. The least 2.9% of the respondents' performance in class as compared to colleagues when stressed was worse. This means 62.3% of the respondents performance in class was little better as compared to their colleagues. This is shown in table 4.2.3 below:

Table 4: Performance of Students in class as compared to colleagues when stressed

Performance in class as compared to colleagues	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Much worse	10	2.9	2.9	2.9
About the same	40	11.4	11.4	14.3
Little better	218	62.3	62.3	76.6
Much better	82	23.4	23.4	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

The Sources Of Stress Among Senior High School Students In The New Juaben Municipality

Type of food/Nutrition as a source of stress

Response from respondents on whether the type of food ate in school are a source of stress among Senior High students, 74.9% of the respondents indicated that the type of food ate at school is not a source of stress to them. Whilst 25.1% of the respondents asserted that the type of food ate at school is a source of stress to them. This shows that a few people are stressed depending on the type of food they eat. Trockel et al., (2000), asserted that type of food appears to predict high GPAs, and it seems to influence the recall ability and short-term spatial memory.

Change in Environment as a source of stress

On the issue of change in environment being a source of stress among Senior High students, 60% of the respondents indicated that the change in environment is not a source of stress to them. Whilst 40% of the respondents asserted that the change in environment is a source of stress to them. This is not in agreement with Altmaier, (1983), who propounded that many

students undergo considerable stress due to the demands associated with change that is, leaving home.

Table 5: Change in Environment as a source of stress

Change in Environment	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	140	40.0	40.0	40.0
No	210	60.0	60.0	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Not getting enough sleep as a source of stress

Response of whether not getting enough sleep is a source of stress among Senior High Students, 79.4% of the respondents indicated that not getting enough sleep is not a source of stress to them. Whilst 20.6% of the respondents asserted that not getting enough sleep is a source of stress to them.

Boyfriend and girlfriend relationship problem as a source of stress

Table 6, below shows response of whether boyfriend girlfriend problem is a source of stress among Senior High Students. 77.1% of the respondents indicated that boyfriend and girlfriend relationship is a source of stress to them. Whilst 22.9% of the respondents asserted that boyfriend and girlfriend problem is not a source of stress to them. This means that the school Authorities should find a way of addressing relationship problems with students, so that the relationship will not stress them.

Table 6: Boyfriend and girlfriend relationship problem as a source of stress

Boyfriend girlfriend problem	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	270	77.1	77.1	77.1
No	80	22.9	22.9	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Class attendance as a source of stress

Response of whether class attendance is a source of stress among Senior High Students, 67.1% of the respondents indicated that class attendance is not a source of stress to them. Whilst 32.9% of the respondents asserted that class attendance is a source of stress to them.

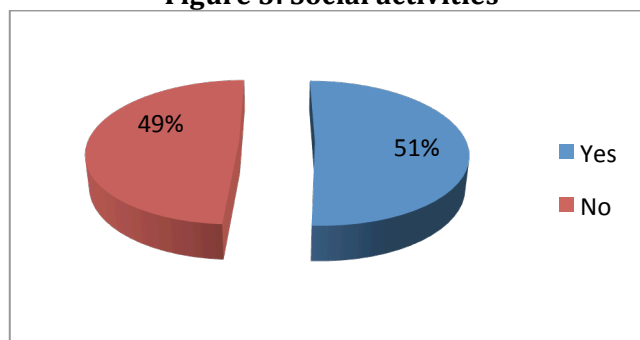
Problem with Dormitory mate as a source of stress

Response of whether problem with dormitory mate is a source of stress among Senior High Students, 70.6% of the respondents indicated that problem with dormitory mate is a source of stress to them. Whilst 29.4% of the respondents asserted that problem with dormitory mate is not a source of stress to them. Based on the review of literature, very little research has been conducted to ascertain whether problem with roommate is another factor contributing to stress and its effect on the academic performance among the students.

Social Activities as a source of stress

The pie chart (figure 3) below shows response of whether social activities are a source of stress among Senior High Students, 51% of the respondents indicated that social activities are a source of stress to them. Whilst 49% of the respondents asserted that social activities are not a source of stress to them. This means that the school authorities should ensure to reduce the social activities since it has effect on the students.

Figure 3: Social activities



Financial difficulties as a source of stress

The study shows response of whether financial difficulties as a source of stress among Senior High Students, 62% of the respondents indicated that financial difficulties are not a source of stress to them. Whilst 38% of the respondents asserted that financial difficulties are a source of stress to them. Parents should make it a point to provide the financial needs of their SHS students.

Course load as a source of stress

Response on whether course load is a source of stress among Senior High Students. 84.9% of the respondents indicated that course load is a source of stress to them. Whilst 15.1% of the respondents asserted that course load is not a source of stress to them. This means that the course load should be looked at by the authorities in Education. Academic stressors refer to any academic demands that cause a student to adjust his or her behavior (Thoits, 1995) and the course load is no exception.

Examination

Response on whether examination is a source of stress among Senior High Students, 75.7% of the respondents indicated that examination is a source of stress to them. Whilst 14.3% of the respondents asserted that examination is not a source of stress to them. This means that examination is a major source of stress to students. Consequently, school authorities must find ways of reducing the stress level of students.

Talking in class as a source of stress

Response on whether talking in class is a source of stress among Senior High Students, 55.7% of the respondents indicated that talking in class is not a source of stress to them. Whilst 44.3% of the respondents asserted that talking in class is source of stress to them. School authorities should devise means of ensuring that students contribute in class without being under stress.

Table 7: Talking in class as a source of stress

Talking in class	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	155	44.3	44.3	44.3
No	195	55.7	55.7	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Crowded classes as a source of stress

Response of respondents on whether crowded classes are a source of stress among Senior High Students, 62% of the respondents indicated that crowded classes are not a source of stress to them. Whilst 38% of the respondents asserted that crowded classes is a source of stress to them. However, the authorities should ensure that classes are not crowded to stress any student.

Lack/ Inadequate Family Support as a source of stress

Response on whether lack / inadequate family support is a source of stress among Senior High Students, 54.3% of the respondents indicated that lack/ inadequate family support is a source of stress to them. Whilst 45.7% of the respondents asserted that lack/ inadequate family support is not a source of stress to them. Majority of the respondents' source of stress was inadequate support from family. School authorities should inform parents through the PTA meetings.

Table 8: Lack/ Inadequate Family Support as a source of stress

Lack/ Inadequate Family Support	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	190	54.3	54.3	54.3
No	160	45.7	45.7	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Feeling homesick as a source of stress

Responses on whether feeling homesick is a source of stress among Senior High Students, 57.1% of the respondents indicated that feeling homesick is a source of stress to them. Whilst 42.9% of the respondents asserted that feeling homesick is not a source of stress to them. Homesickness is an unpleasant and stressful experience for students. For some students this is mild, but for others it can lead them to a state of grief, anxiety, and depression. Homesickness can debilitate a student, making it difficult for them to study or cope effectively with academic life (Fisher, 1994).

Students' Coping Strategies In Response To Academic Stress Among Shs Students In The New Juaben Municipality

Get relieved by studying or substitute activities to cope with stress

On the issue of coping strategies, 56% of the respondents stated that they never got relieved by studying or indulging in substitute activities to cope with stress, and 44% of the respondents indicated they occasionally got relieved by studying or indulging in substitute activities to cope with stress.

Talk/ Share Personal worry with people to cope with stress

The response on coping strategies, 45.4% of the respondents stated that they occasionally talk/ share personal worry with people to cope with stress, 30.9% of the respondents indicated they often talk /share personal worry with people to cope with stress. Also, 16.6% of the respondents indicated they never talk/ share personal worry with people to cope with stress. The least 7.1% of the respondents indicated they always talk/ share personal worry with people to cope with stress. This shows that only a few of the respondents share their personal worry with people.

Trying to look on the bright side of things to cope with stress

Table 9 shows the response on coping strategies, 40.3% of the respondents stated that they occasionally try to look on the bright side of things to cope with stress, 26.6% of the respondents indicated they often try to look on the bright side of things to cope with stress. Also, 17.7% of the respondents indicated they never try to look on the bright side of things to cope with stress. The least 15.4% of the respondents indicated they always try to look on the bright side of things to cope with stress. This means that the few which is 40.3% is encouraged to look at the bright side of things as a means of coping with stress.

Table 9: Trying to look on the bright side of things to cope with stress

Trying to look on the bright side of things	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	62	17.7	17.7	17.7
Occasionally	141	40.3	40.3	58.0
Often	93	26.6	26.6	84.6
Always	54	15.4	15.4	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Change mind, and focus on more important things to cope with stress

The response on coping strategies, 51.7% of the respondents stated that they always change their mind, and focus on more important things to cope with stress, 23.7% of the respondents indicated they often change mind, and focus on more important things to cope with stress. Also, 22.3% of the respondents indicated they occasionally change mind, and focus on more important things to cope with stress. The least 2.3% of the respondents indicated they never change mind, and focus on more important things to cope with stress.

Table 10: Change mind, and focus on more important things to cope with stress

Change mind, and focus on more important things	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	8	2.3	2.3	2.3
Occasionally	78	22.3	22.3	24.6
Often	83	23.7	23.7	48.3
Always	181	51.7	51.7	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Do not take problem too serious as a coping strategy

The response on coping strategies, 46.6% of the respondents stated that they always do not take problem too serious to cope with stress, 21.1% of the respondents indicated they often do not take problem too serious to cope with stress. Also, 18.6% of the respondents indicated they occasionally do not take problem too serious to cope with stress. The least 13.7% of the respondents indicated they never take problem too serious to cope with stress.

Come up with different solutions to problem to cope with stress

Response on coping strategies, 55.7% of the respondents stated that they always come up with different solutions to problem to cope with stress, 15.7% of the respondents indicated they often come up with different solutions to problem to cope with stress. Also, 25.7% of the respondents indicated they occasionally come up with different solutions to problem to cope with stress. The least 2.9% of the respondents indicated they never come up with different solutions to problem to cope with stress. This means that majority of the respondents come up with different solutions to problems to cope with stress.

Table 11: Come up with different solutions to problem

Come up with different solutions to problem	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	10	2.9	2.9	2.9
Occasionally	90	25.7	25.7	28.6
Often	55	15.7	15.7	44.3
Always	195	55.7	55.7	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Seeking suggestions from relative's /friends/ peers to cope with stress

Table 12, below shows the response on coping strategies on the issue of seeking suggestions from relatives/friends/peers, 52% of the respondents stated that they often seek suggestions from relatives/ friends/ peers to cope with stress, 37.7% of the respondents indicated they always seek suggestions from relatives/ friends /peers to cope with stress. Also, 6.9% of the respondents indicated they occasionally seek suggestions from relatives /friends /peers to cope with stress. The least 3.4% of the respondents indicated they never seek suggestions from relatives/ friends/ peers to cope with stress. This means that majority of the respondents cope with stress by seeking suggestions from relatives/friend.

Table 12: Seek suggestions from relatives /friends/ peers

Seeking suggestions from relatives friends peers	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	12	3.4	3.4	3.4
Occasionally	24	6.9	6.9	10.3
Often	182	52.0	52.0	62.3
Always	132	37.7	37.7	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Use Experience of other people to cope with stress

Respondents were asked the rate of using experience of other people as coping strategies, 43.1% of the respondents stated that they occasionally use experience of other people to cope with stress, 39.4% of the respondents indicated they always use experience of other people to cope with stress. Also, 30% of the respondents indicated they often use experience of other people to cope with stress. Lastly, 14% of the respondents indicated they never use experience of other people to cope with stress. This means that majority occasionally but not always use experience of other people in order to cope with stress.

Use hobbies or recreational activities as a coping strategy

Response on coping strategies, 40.3% of the respondents stated that they often use hobbies or recreational activities to cope with stress, 37.1% of the respondents indicated they occasionally use hobbies or recreational activities to cope with stress. Also, 17.1% of the respondents indicated they always use hobbies or recreational activities to cope with stress. The least 5.4% of the respondents indicated they never use hobbies or recreational activities to cope with stress. This means that 40.3% of the respondents often use hobbies or recreational activities as a coping strategy.

Accepting the reality as a coping strategy

Table 13, shows the responses on coping strategies. 35.7% of the respondents stated that they often accept the reality to cope with stress, 33.1% of the respondents indicated they occasionally accept the reality to cope with stress. Also, 20.3% of the respondents indicated they never accept the reality to cope with stress and 10.9% of the respondents indicated they always accept the reality to cope with stress. The implication is that majority often accept the reality to cope with stress.

Table 13: Accept the reality as a coping strategy

Accept the reality	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	71	20.3	20.3	20.3
Occasionally	116	33.1	33.1	53.4
Often	125	35.7	35.7	89.1
Always	38	10.9	10.9	100.0
Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2014

Self-Control

Response on coping strategies, 36% of the respondents stated that they never use self-control to cope with stress, 27.4% of the respondents indicated they often use self-control to cope with stress. Also, 19.4% of the respondents indicated they occasionally use self-control to cope with stress and 17.1% of the respondents indicated they always use self-control to cope with stress.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research aimed at establishing relationship between stress and academic performance among SHS students in the New Juaben municipality. The results show that stress is associated with poor academic performance. 85% of the respondents indicated that Stress affects Academic Performance. Also, 97% of the respondents indicated that they are unable to learn when stressed. Moreover, 54% of the respondents had some B's and C's in Examination when

stressed. To solve the problem of poor academic performance, the students need to identify the sources of stress and develop a coping strategy to improve the poor performance.

Secondly, the research aimed at establishing the sources of stress among SHS students in the New Juaben municipality. 84.9% of the respondents indicated that course load is source of stress to them. 77.1% of the respondents indicated that boyfriend and girlfriend relationship problem is a source of stress to them. 75.7% of the respondents indicated that examination is a source of stress to them. 57.1% of the respondents indicated that feeling homesick is a source of stress to them. 54.3% of the respondents indicated that lack or inadequate family support is a source of stress to them. 51% of the respondents indicated that social activities are source of stress to them.

Lastly, research aimed at establishing the students' coping strategies in response to academic stress among SHS students in the New Juaben municipality. These were the dominant coping strategies used always by SHS students to tackle their stress. 55.7% of the respondents stated that they always come up with different solutions to problem to cope with stress. 51.7% of the respondents stated that they always change their mind on issues, and focus on important things in life for them to cope with stress. 46.6% of the respondents stated that they always do not take problem too serious to cope with stress. 39.4% of the respondents indicated they always use experience of other people to cope with stress. Finally, 37.7% of the respondents indicated they always seek suggestions from relatives or friends or peers to cope with stress. Most of the students in this study were found using combination of coping strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students would be able to manage stress at school when the following recommendations are considered.

Schools should provide an opportunity for each individual to learn and grow at his/her own pace.

Parents should ensure that the home provides children sufficient emotional support and encouragement for their learning.

School atmosphere should be supportive for the emotional development and mental health of children.

Teachers should be approachable and they ought to give emotional support to students in hours of crises.

Child centered and life centered curricula should be implemented in schools for promoting children's interest in learning.

Guidance and Counseling services should be a part of the school system. Schools can make use of the help of professional counselors and psychologists.

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