

## STRES AKADEMIK DAN IDE BUNUH DIRI DI ANTARA MAHASISWA DI NEGARA KWARA

### ACADEMIC STRESS AND SUICIDAL IDEATION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN KWARA STATE

**Elizabeth O. Uyanne**

University of Ilorin, Ilorin,  
Kwara State, Nigeria

Corresponding author email;

uyanne.eo@unilorin.edu.ng

#### Abstrak

Stres akademik adalah produk dari kombinasi semua tuntutan terkait akademik yang melebihi sumber daya adaptif yang tersedia untuk mahasiswa di universitas. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui hubungan antara stres akademik dan ide bunuh diri di kalangan mahasiswa di Negara Bagian Kwara. Desain survei deskriptif dari tipe korelasional diadopsi untuk penelitian ini. Populasi penelitian ini adalah seluruh mahasiswa S1 di Negara Bagian Kwara. 200 Siswa dipilih secara acak untuk berpartisipasi dalam studi dari empat universitas. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa sifat stres akademik di antara mahasiswa sarjana di Ilorin adalah beban kerja akademik; kesulitan waktu antara belajar dan aktivitas sosial; berurusan dengan kursus yang sulit; batas waktu penyerahan tugas/proyek; merasa terancam oleh Grade Point Average di portal; kurangnya materi kursus yang relevan; kesulitan untuk menutupi garis besar kursus antara lain. Hasilnya akan mencerahkan mahasiswa untuk selalu menemukan keseimbangan antara waktu belajar dan kegiatan sosial yang secara akademis banyak menimbulkan stres.

#### Kata Kunci:

Stres Akademik  
Menekankan  
Pemikiran bunuh diri  
Sarjana

#### Keywords:

Academic Stress  
Stress  
Suicidal Ideation  
Undergraduates

#### Abstract

Academic stress is a product of a combination of all academic related demands that exceed the adaptive resources available to students in the university. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in Kwara State. Descriptive survey design of a correlational type was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all undergraduates' students in Kwara State. 200 Students were randomly selected to participate in the study from four universities. The finding reveal that the causes of academic stress among university undergraduates in Ilorin are academic workloads; difficulty of time between study and social activity; dealing with difficult course; submission deadlines of assignments/projects; feel threatened by Grade Point Average on portal; lack of relevant course materials; difficulty to cover the course outline among others. The result would illuminate University undergraduates to always find balance between study time and social activities which academically constitute so much stress.



© 2021 The Authors. Published by Institute for Research and Community Services Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangkaraya. This is Open Access article under the CC-BY-SA License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

#### Background to the Study

Stress is an unavoidable phenomenon as old as mankind; it forms part of human daily activities in a bit to meet the needs for human survival and progression. According to Oyerinde (2004) every human expresses stress in various degrees irrespective of age, occupation, social status, race, cultural background and a whole lot of others. Stress according to Robbins, Power and Burgress (2010) is a non-specific response of the human organism to any demand made upon it. Non-specific as implied in the definition connotes that the body react the same regardless of the causes. Zhou and Gong (2015) defined stress as an unpleasant experience that have negative effect on emotional and physical condition of a person practicing any profession or any sphere of one's life. Kolender, Ballard and Chandler (2009) opined that stress is the physiological

and psychological state of arousal caused by the perceived presence of challenging or threatening event. Greenberge and Baroon (2000) opined that stress is personal, physiological and emotional reaction against stimulus. It is the perception of discrepancy between environmental demand (stressor) such as academic environment and individual demand to fulfil these demands.

Academic and institutional stressors challenges an individual's adaptability and stimulates the body and mentality. Kadapath and Viyalaxmi (2012) posited that academic stress occurs when a student cannot manage the diverse demands of teaching and learning as well as other extracurricular activities in the university environment. Academic stress is a product of a combination of all academic related demands that exceed the adaptive resources available to an individual. Academic stress according to Krishan (2014) echoes



individual's perception of academic frustration, academic conflict and academic anxiety which are synonymous with the components of academic stress. Academic stress pervade the life of students and tend to impact adversely on their mental and physical health and their ability to perform schoolwork effectively.

Struther (2000) stated that a high level of academic stress among students is associated with lower course grades in examination and time pressure and demands imposed on them by the academic environment. Other sources of academic stress among students includes, excessive assignment, unhealthy competition among students, fear of failure, poor interpersonal relationships in class or with lecturers, overcrowded lecture halls, poor time management, financial matter, high expectation of parent from student among other. The effects of academic stress on students differ significantly across individuals depending on how the event is interpreted. The outcome is a specific sequence of things or patterns called appraisals. Stress if not properly managed, may lead to many negative situations including suicide attempt.

Suicide thought or ideation is common and many people experience them when they were young. Stress or experiencing depression, these situations are usually temporary and can be easily treated, but in some cases because of individual differences. It could lead to contemplating or even attempting suicide. Most people who experience suicidal ideation or thought according to Ajibade (2019) do not actually carry it through, however there are signs and symptoms that could indicate that an individual is experiencing suicidal thought or ideation. These signs may include feeling of hopelessness, intolerable emotional pain, having abdominal preoccupation with violence mood swing, increased isolation, and panic attacks.

Suicidal ideation according to Harris and Barraclough (1997) is a critical part of the suicidal process, it precedes suicide attempts and completed suicides. The thought of committing suicide is often fleeting a characteristics of time during which a person experiences increased periods of distress which could lead to thoughts of wanting to die or to kill one self (Paladino & Minton, 2008). Suicide process and ideation is complex according to Wu and Bond (2006) depression anxiety, hopelessness, substance use, family and relationship issues, sexual abuse, stressful life events, impaired coping abilities, low self-esteem, poor communication with family members, financial problems, poor academic achievement and poor peer relationships are some of the numerous risk and factors believed to predict suicidal ideation in young adults. Suicidal ideation and the actual suicide has become a global public health challenge that has claimed several valuable lives, irrespective of the several laudable measures and interventions put in place to stem the worrisome rise of the phenomenon in the society (Saheen & Jaham, 2017). Suicidal ideation is a critical precipitator of suicide in our society today especially among the undergraduates who are at the adolescent

period and early adulthood, A period described as a period of storm and stress.

The study of Olaseni (2018) on "Rumination and Academic Hardiness as Predictors of Suicidal Ideation among Nigeria Adolescents" founded out that rumination and academic hardiness were significant predictors of suicidal ideation among adolescents in Nigeria. Also the study of Ajidahun (2012) on the "Relationship between Depression and Suicidal Attempt among Adolescence in some Selected Secondary School in Lagos State Nigeria" found a significant relationship between depression and suicidal attempt among these secondary school students. Hence, this study therefore examined the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in Kwara state Nigeria.

### **Research Position**

Academic stress is a critical issue in the Nigerian university system. Students face lot of problems in school that culminate into stress; stress ranging from relationship issues, academic workload, uncondusive classroom, overcrowded classroom, inadequate school facilities, fear of low average grade point, and poor transport system among other might negatively affect the psychological well-being of students which may lead to suicidal ideation if nothing is done. Academic hardship has the potential of leading students to depression and if not manage properly lead to suicide attempt. In addition, Studies such as Olaseni (2018) and Ajidahun (2012) have worked on suicidal attempt and depression among adolescence; however to the best of the researchers' knowledge no studies investigated academic stress and suicidal ideation in the context of undergraduates in Ilorin, kwara State. Hence, the study investigated the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among undergraduate in Kwara State.

### **Research Objective**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in Kwara State. The study also investigated:

1. The causes of academic stress experienced by undergraduates in kwara State Nigeria.
2. The suicidal ideation disposition among undergraduates in Kwara State Nigeria.
3. If there is relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in Kwara state Nigeria.
4. If there is a difference in the sources of academic stress experienced by undergraduates in Kwara State Nigeria on the bases of Gender.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. What are the causes of academic stress experienced by undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. What are the suicidal ideation disposition among undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria?
3. Is there a relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria?
4. Is there a difference in the sources of academic stress experienced by undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria on the bases of Gender?

## Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study;

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in Kwara State Nigeria.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** there is no significant difference in the sources of academic stress experienced by undergraduates in kwara State, Nigeria based on gender.

## METHODOLOGY

*Tool and Materials:* This study adopted descriptive survey design of a correlational type; correlational design was adopted because it enable the researcher to compare two or more variables together.

The target population of the study comprised all undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State Nigeria. There are four universities in Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two universities and 100 students from each universities which bring the number of respondents to 200.

Researcher designed questionnaire entitled "Student's Academic Stress Scale and Suicidal Ideation Scale (SSASSIS)" was used for collecting data from the respondents. Crobach alpha was used to test the reliability with 0.79 coefficient value which makes the instrument reliable.

*Method of Implementation:* Table frequency count and percentage was used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Descriptive statistic of Mean was used to give answers to the research questions and while the hypotheses were tested using

Pearson Product Moment correlation and independent t-test statistical tool at 0.05 alpha level.

The researcher visited the selected institutions and got consent of the respondent by advising that participation was voluntary. The researcher immediately collected back the copies of the questionnaire after the sampled respondents have responded to the items in the questionnaire to foster a higher return rate.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion contain at least three things, namely: (1) description, (2) interpretation (explanation/explanation) of the results of service activities and (3) discussion (comparison) of results compared with the results of previous service activities. If the results and discussion sub-sections are very long, sub-sections can be made with Arabic numeral numbering. The description of the results can be in the form of tables and figures with sequential numbers (Tables use Roman numeral order and are placed at the top, while Figures use Arabic numeral sequences and are placed at the bottom). Loaded tables do not use vertical lines. The font size in the table can be reduced to 8 pt font.

**Table 1:** Demographic Data of the Participants

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	97	48.5
Female	103	51.5
Total	200	100.0
<b>Acadeic Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
100Level	22	11.0
200Level	42	21.0
300Level	58	29.0
400Level	78	39.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the respondents on the basis of gender and academic level. Out of 200 (100.0%) that participated in the study, 97 (48.5%) of them were males while 103 (51.5%) were females. Also, 22 (11.0%) of the respondents were in 100Level; 42 (21.0%) were in 200Level; 58 (29.0%) were in 300Level while 78 (39.0%) were in 400Level.

## Answering Research Questions

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions

**Research Question One:** *What are the causes of academic stress experienced by undergraduates in Kwara State?*

Cut-off score of 2.50 was used as the baseline for determining participants' responses since the questionnaire items were structured in a four-response-type. Therefore, items found with mean

scores equal or above 2.50 were affirmed while items with mean scores below 2.50 were disaffirmed. The participants' responses are presented in Table 2;

**Table 2:** Causes of Academic Stress Experienced by Undergraduates in Kwara State

S/N	Academic Stress	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1	I feel burdened by academic workloads	3.69	1.28	Affirmed
2	I find difficult to juggle time between study and social activity	3.64	1.38	Affirmed
3	I feel stressed dealing with difficult course	3.12	1.41	Affirmed
4	I feel stressed to sit for examination	3.07	1.73	Affirmed
5	I feel stressed due to submission deadlines of assignments/projects	2.95	2.03	Affirmed
6	I feel threatened by my Grade Point Average on my portal	2.91	1.54	Affirmed
7	My academic pursuit is challenged by lack of relevant course materials	2.87	1.44	Affirmed
8	The examination time table makes it difficult for me to cover the course outline	2.84	2.13	Affirmed
9	I feel nervous delivering the class presentation	2.78	2.08	Affirmed
10	Overcrowded classroom interferes with my ability to concentrate during lectures	2.77	1.67	Affirmed
11	The semester system makes me nervous during examinations	2.73	2.19	Affirmed
12	I find it hard to access available forms of academic support system for students	2.71	1.83	Affirmed
13	I feel discouraged by unhealthy competition among students	2.69	1.91	Affirmed
14	I have a financial problem because of the expenses of the university	2.65	2.18	Affirmed
15	I feel difficult in handling my academic problem	2.62	2.27	Affirmed
16	I lose interest towards courses	2.43	1.89	Disaffirmed
17	I feel challenged by poor study habits	2.38	2.34	Disaffirmed
18	I come late to class sometimes due to lack of inadequate means of transportation to the school	2.37	2.22	Disaffirmed
19	I find it hard to manage my time effectively	2.31	2.07	Disaffirmed
20	I find it hard to cope with my studies after long hours of browsing the internet	2.29	1.69	Disaffirmed

As shown in Table 2, it was affirmed that the students feel burdened by academic workloads; find it difficult to juggle time between study and social activity; feel stressed dealing with difficult course; feel stressed to sit for examination; feel stressed due to submission deadlines of assignments/projects; feel threatened by my Grade Point Average on portal; academic pursuit is challenged by lack of relevant course materials; examination time table makes it difficult for me to cover the course outline; feel nervous delivering the class presentation; overcrowded classroom interferes with my ability to concentrate during lectures; feel nervous delivering the class presentation; overcrowded classroom interferes with my ability to concentrate during lectures; semester system makes me nervous during examinations; find it hard to access available forms of academic support system for students; feel discouraged by unhealthy competition among students;

have a financial problem because of the expenses of the university; and feel difficult in handling my academic problem while other nature of academic stress were disaffirmed.

**Research Question Two:** What are the suicidal ideation disposition among undergraduates in Kwara State?

A cut-off score of 2.50 was used as the baseline for determining participants' responses since the questionnaire items were structured in a four-response-type. Therefore, items found with mean scores equal or above 2.50 were affirmed while items with mean scores below 2.50 were disaffirmed. The statistics of the participants' responses are presented in Table 3;

**Table 3:** Common Suicidal Ideation Disposition among Undergraduate in Kwara State

S/N	Suicidal Ideation	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1	I have been thinking of ways to kill myself.	1.26	1.68	Disaffirmed
2	I have told someone I want to kill myself.	1.31	1.52	Disaffirmed
3	I believe my life will end in suicide.	1.12	2.25	Disaffirmed
4	I have made attempts to kill myself.	1.29	1.84	Disaffirmed
5	I feel life just isn't worth living.	2.19	1.69	Disaffirmed
6	Life is so bad I feel like giving up.	1.67	2.27	Disaffirmed
7	I just wish my life would end.	1.39	1.66	Disaffirmed
8	It would be better for everyone involved if I were to die.	1.72	1.47	Disaffirmed
9	I feel there is no solution to my problems other than taking my own life.	2.08	2.18	Disaffirmed
10	I have come close to taking my own life	2.34	2.45	Disaffirmed

As revealed in Table 3, the mean scores of all the items are below 2.50. Thus, university undergraduates do not dispose to suicidal ideation

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among university undergraduates in Kwara State.

**Testing the Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

**Table 4:** Relationship between Academic Stress and Suicidal Ideation among university Undergraduates in Kwara State.

Variables	N	Mean	S.D.	Df	r-value	Sig	Decision
Academic Stress	200	19.62	2.31	198	0.391	.092	Not Rejected
Suicidal Ideation	200	19.37	1.96				

\*significant P>0.05

As revealed in Table 4, the calculated r-value (0.391) was obtained with a p-value (0.092) when computed at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value (0.092) is greater than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis one is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between academic stress and

suicidal ideation among undergraduate students in Kwara State (t (198) = 0.391; p>0.05).

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the causes of academic stress experienced by undergraduate in Kwara State based on gender.

**Table 5:** t-test Statistics Showing the Difference in the causes of academic stress experienced by Undergraduate in Kwara State Based on Gender

Gender	No	Mean	S. D.	Df	t-value	Sig	Remark
Male	97	11.426	2.125	198	1.417	0.091	Not Rejected
Female	103	12.183	2.422				

\*Insignificance at p>0.05

Table 5 shows that the t-value 1.417 is obtained with a p-value of 0.091 when computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of 0.091 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis two is not rejected. Therefore, there is no statistically significant

difference in the causes of academic stress experienced by undergraduate students in Kwara State based on gender (t{198} = 1.417, p>0.05).

**Summary of Finding**

Findings obtained from this study were summarized in the following:

The nature of academic stress among university undergraduates in Ilorin were academic workloads; difficulty of time between study and social activity; dealing with difficult course; submission deadlines of assignments/projects; feel threatened by Grade Point Average on portal; lack of relevant course materials; difficulty to cover the course outline among others.

University Undergraduates do not dispose suicidal ideation

There was no significant relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in Kwara State ( $t(198) = 0.391$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

There was no statistically significant difference in the types of academic stress experienced by university undergraduate in Kwara State based on gender ( $t(198) = 1.417$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

### Discussion

The study investigated the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among university undergraduates in Kwara state Nigeria. The result of the study revealed that university undergraduates feel burdened by academic workload, juggling between study and social activities as well as dealing with difficult courses. It also reveals that a number of other challenge that undergraduates encounters in the course of their study. These findings are correlated by the study of Ballard and Chandler (2009) whose study revealed that stress is the psychological and physiological state of arousal caused by the perceived presence of a challenging or threatening event.

The finding of this study reveals that university students do not dispose suicidal ideation. Suicidal ideation connotes thoughts and idea of committing suicide or to terminate one's life without the suicidal acts. This findings is different from that of Saheen & Jaham (2017) which opines that there is traces of suicidal ideation on almost every one however support from family and friends would be of immense help.

The findings of the study also revealed that there is no significant relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation of university undergraduates in Kwara state. This findings negates the finding of Gvion and Apter (2012) who submitted that students could end up having thoughts and ideas about committing suicide or a desire to terminate one's life without the actual suicide when academic stress becomes unbearable. Also contrary to this findings are the studies of Shaheen and Jahan (2017) and Baberjee and Chatterjee (2016) which revealed that a positive significant correlation exist between academic stress and suicidal ideation.

Lastly, the study revealed no significant difference in the academic stress experienced by university undergraduates in Kwara State based on gender. This findings corroborates the findings of Bhosale (2014) and Omoniyi and Ogunanmi (2012) who also found no significant difference between male and female on academic stress. However, contrary to this findings are the studies of Jogaratnam and Buchanan (2004), Sopian

and Abdullahi (2009) and Misra and Castillo (2004) which revealed that male and female members differ in their perception and reaction to stress.

### Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate academic stress and suicidal ideation among university undergraduates in Kwara state Nigeria. The findings reveal that university undergraduates experience a number of forms of academic stress as a result of work overload and a number of school related challenges. However, these academic stress and other situations does not make them to feel like committing suicide or dispensing any forms of suicidal ideation. Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were put forward:

University undergraduates should always find balance between study time and social activities which academically constitute so much stress for them

There should be counseling programs on management of academic stress and coping strategies.

University administration should always ensure that examination time table is always favorable to the students by giving reasonable space between one exam and the next.

Lecturers should always cover the course outline long before the examination period so that undergraduates would be able to adequately prepare across the course contents and reduce academic stress.

### References

- Ajidahun BO (2012). Depression and Suicidal Attitude among Adolescents in some Selected Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 23-31.
- Banerjee, N., Chatterjee, I. (2012). Academic Stress, Suicidal Ideation & Mental Well Being among 1st Semester & 3rd Semester Medical, Engineering & General Stream Students. *Researchers World*, 73-80.
- Bhosale, B. O. (2014). A Study of Academic Stress and Gender Difference, *India Streams Research Journal*, 4(6), 1-4
- Greenberg, J. and R. Baron, (2000). *Behavior In Organizations: Under- Standing and Managing the Human Side of Work*", Allen and Bacon. London
- Gvion, Y., & Apter, A. (2017). Suicide and suicidal behavior. *Public health reviews*, 3.4(2)
- Harris, E. C, & Barraclough, B. (1997). Suicide as an outcome for mental disorders: A meta analysis. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 170, 205-228.
- Jogaratnam, G. & Buchanan, P. (2004). Balancing the Demands of School and Work: Stress and Employed Hospitality Students. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 16(4), 237-245.
- Krishan, (2014). Academic Stress among Adolescent in Relation to Intelligence and Demographic Factors", *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 123-129

- Kadapatti, M.G., & Vijayalaxmi, A.H.M. (2012). Stressors of Academic Stress- A Study on PFE University Students. *Indian Journal of Scientific Research*, 3(1), 171-175.
- Misra, R. & Castillo, L.G. (2004). Academic Stress among College Students: Comparison of American and International Students", *International Journal of Stress Management*, 11 (2), 132-148
- Omoniyi, M.B.I. & Ogunsanmi, J.O. (2012). Stress among Academic Staff in South West Nigeria, *The African Symposium*, 12(1), 126-132
- Olaseni JT (2018) Rumination and Academic Hardiness as Predictors of Suicidal Ideation among Nigerian Adolescents. *Abnorm Behav Psychol* 4(1), 133-137
- Oyerinde, O.O. (2004). *Stress: Problems in Health Education*", Nigeria: Codat Publications
- Paladino, D., & Barrio Minton, C. A. (2008). Comprehensive college student suicide assessment: Application of the BASIC ID. *Journal of American College Health*, 56, 643-650.
- Shaheen, H., & Jahan, M. (2017). Student Stress and Suicidal Ideation: The Role of Social Support from Family, Friends, and Significant Others. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 6(9), 21-32.
- Wu, W. C., & Bond, M. H. (2006). National differences in predictors of suicide among young and elderly citizens: Linking societal predictors to psychological factors. *Archives of Suicide Research*