Stress and Academic Performance among Secondary School Students

BY

Ssenyonjo Godfrey

15/U/12968/PS

A Research Dissertation Submitted to the School of Psychology in
Partial Fulfillment for the award of a Bachelor’s Degree of Industrial
and Organizational Psychology of Makerere University.

August, 2018
I Ssencyonjo Godfrey declare that this dissertation is my original work and it has never been submitted to any institution for any academic award.

Signature: .............................................  Date: 28.08.2013.

Ssencyonjo Godfrey

Registration Number: 15/U/12968/PS

Students Number: 215011389
Approval

This research dissertation has been submitted with approval of my supervisor.

Signature: 

Supervisor: Madam Sarah Gava

School of Psychology, Makerere University
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration ................................................................................................................. i
Approval .................................................................................................................... ii
List of abbreviations and acronyms ........................................................................... v
Abstract .................................................................................................................... vi

Chapter One .............................................................................................................. 1
Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1
1.0  Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
1.1  Background of the Study .................................................................................... 1
1.2  Statement of the Problem ................................................................................... 2
1.3  Purpose of the Study .......................................................................................... 3
1.4  Specific Objectives ............................................................................................ 3
1.5  Research Questions ............................................................................................ 3
1.6  Significance of the Study .................................................................................. 4
1.7  Scope of the study ............................................................................................. 4
1.7.1  Geographical Scope ...................................................................................... 4
1.7.2  Time scope ................................................................................................... 4
1.7.3  Conceptual scope ......................................................................................... 5
1.8  Conceptual Framework ....................................................................................... 6

Chapter Two ............................................................................................................. 7
2.0  Introduction ........................................................................................................ 7
2.1  Related Theories ............................................................................................... 7
2.3  Causes of stress among secondary school students ......................................... 10
2.4  Relationship between stress and academic performance of secondary school students ....11
2.5  Hypotheses ....................................................................................................... 13

Chapter Three ......................................................................................................... 14
Methodology ............................................................................................................. 14
3.0  Introduction ....................................................................................................... 14
3.1  Study Design ..................................................................................................... 14
3.2  Sample design .................................................................................................. 15
3.3  Instruments and measures ................................................................................. 16
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Management</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Findings</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive statistics (respondent’s demographic data)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferential statistics</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions, conclusions, and recommendations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings on the relationship between stress and Academic performance</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of further research</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: Research Questionnaire</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Generalized Anxiety Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCD</td>
<td>Obsessive Compulsive Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAD</td>
<td>Social Anxiety Disorder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between stress and academic performance among secondary school students. The study aimed to achieve the following objectives; To find out the nature of stress among secondary school students, to examine the causes of stress among secondary school students and to evaluate the relationship between stress and academic performance of secondary school students.

A correlation study design was used in the study to establish the relationship between stress and academic performance among secondary school students. The study used a sample of 50 respondents who were obtained using simple random sampling technique. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and later analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists version 20.

The findings show that there is a significant negative relationship between occupational stress and job performance since (p=.000< 0.01 at r=.586**) in conclusion, this implies that presence or increase in stress among students leads to an increase in academic performance among secondary school students.
Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study and the conceptual framework showing the relationships between the variables of this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Altmaier (1983), stress can fuel the body to meet the challenges of this fast moving life and it mostly results from extreme external and internal demands that need constant effort and adjustment.

Lee and Larson (2000) thus explained academic stress to be a resultant of “students’ interactions between environmental stressors, the student’s cognitive appraisal of and academic – related stressors, and psychological or physiological response to the stressors”.

Academic stress is a persistent problem globally due to the high expectations placed on students to pursue academic success in order to achieve respect, pride in the family and in the society (Gow et al, 1996).

The education system is also highly competitive where students are expected to score highly in the national and internal school examinations in order to progress to the next level. As such,
there is a lot of stress in the academic sector especially for the school-aged children and adolescents.

According to Nelson et al (2001), students in secondary schools even experience higher levels of stress due to the increased demands and expectations placed on them. They added that, at this stage, most of these students become ‘independent decision makers’ which is both scary and exciting to these students.

Stress is commonly perceived negatively but other people argue that stress can motivate people to achieve and to test their potential to the fullest (Bekoe, 2015). thus this study will evaluate the impact of stress on the academic performance of secondary school students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Secondary school is a critical step in the academic life of any student since it is a major determinant in the academic path of the student especially when they get to specialize in a particular combination of subjects.

Secondary school also has many subjects the student has to do compared to primary level which increases the academic demands. Students in this stage also face many problems unique to their adolescent stages. The “exam preparations and high parental expectations” to excel and get admissions to prominent tertiary institutions on government sponsorship also doubles the anxiety and stress among these secondary school students and thus affects their academic performance.

It is therefore important to investigate the stress that secondary school students face because of the high amount of stress that students encounter which is therefore what motivated
the researcher to carry out this study to find out the relationship between stress and the academic performance of students in secondary schools.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study was to find out the impact of social, economic and genetic factors on students’ alcohol consumption decisions ranging from the age of 15 - 19 years.

1.4 Specific Objectives

The study was based on the following objectives:

i. To find out the nature of stress among secondary school students.

ii. To examine the causes of stress among secondary school students.

iii. To evaluate the relationship between stress and academic performance of secondary school students.

1.5 Research Questions

a) What is the nature of stress among secondary school students?

b) What are the causes of stress among secondary school students?

c) What is the relationship between stress and academic performance of secondary school students?
1.6 **Significance of the Study**

Through this research study, students will find ways of coping with stress at school so that it does not affect their academic performance.

Secondary school staff and parents will also find ways of helping students cope with stress at school so that it does not overwhelm them and affect their academic performance.

The findings of this research study will also be beneficial to other researchers in that they will find information that they can use as literature review in similar research subjects.

1.7 **Scope of the study**

The study was based on two scopes:

**1.7.1 Geographical Scope**

This research study considered selected students from Light College Kitebi secondary school in Kampala district. This geographical scope was chosen for this study since schools in Kampala district were more competitive and thus posed more stress on the students thus making it an appropriate geographical scope for this study.

**1.7.2 Time scope**

The study was conducted for a period of five months in which the researcher collected, analyzed and presented both the primary and secondary data in line with the subject under study.
1.7.3 Conceptual scope

The researcher evaluated both the independent (stress) and dependent (academic performance) variables for the study using both secondary and primary data in order to come up with a hypothesis and correlation between the variables under study.
From the conceptual framework above, it is clear that high academic expectation posed on the students due to the competitive academic environment causes academic stress on the students and students will respond to these internal and external stress stimuli in different ways and therefore the varying levels and effects of stress among students and thus their academic performance.

Students’ performance is also dependent on their instructors/teachers, proper nutrition, favorable learning environment and an appropriate rest/sleep.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed information previously published on the subject under study and as indicated by the citations showing the authors and the corresponding references.

2.1 Related Theories

According to Oyerinde (2004), stress is “the biological responses to events that threaten to overwhelm the individual capacity to cope satisfactorily in the environment”. It is therefore an internal response to an external stimuli and thus different people will handle stress differently.

Melinda et al (2008) also defined stress as “a powerful neural chemicals and hormones that prepare one for action to fight or flee and if one does not take action, the stress responses can lead to health problems”.

According to American Psychiatric Association (2000), stress disorders are grouped in seven types: generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder or social phobia (SAD), specific phobia or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and panic disorder. The most anxiety disorders that affect school adolescents include: generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder (SAD) and panic disorder are as described below;

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) or Chronic Neurosis
This one is the most common anxiety disorder that affects the majority of school adolescent and teens. Students with this type of disorder according to Leahy and Holland (2000) feel anxious, uncomfortable and worried from time to time when faced with certain situation example examination, or speaking at school events or meeting with teachers in the offices.

**Social Anxiety Disorder/Social phobia (SAD)**

This type is an unrealistic fear of a specific situation or activity or thing. Bernstein et al (1996) argued that the student with social phobia tends to have fear, look foolish, lack confidence of being criticized, afraid of making mistakes or responding with the wrong answers in the class, even if he/she has a good point to contribute. To make matters worse, students/ “Adolescents with social phobia may fall behind in the school and sometime avoids going to school or attending school or social events” (Bernstein et al, 1996) and often times this type of behavior will continue into adulthood and may inhibit interactions with others and interferes with normal development.

**Panic Disorder**

This is marked by periodic attack with no apparent reason and can last for 15-30 minutes, but residual effects can persist longer if the counseling interventions are not taken immediately.

According to Leahy and Holland (2000), panic attack is the most turmoil that many school students face before or after a test or an examination, which results to increased heart beats, chest pain, trembling and shaking, respiration increases, and sometimes feeling like one is going crazy; dizziness and hot and cold flashes are also common symptoms.
However, some psychologists argue that panic attacks are as a cause of biological abnormalities because these disorders like many others run in families and other side claimed that, panic attack like many other emotional states comes from an interaction of mind and body (Leahy and Holland, 2000).

From the above information, it is clear that school adolescents who suffer from anxiety have difficulties in school function as it tends to lower their confidence and academic performance. But due to the limited information on stress and academic performance among secondary school students in Uganda, the researcher was motivated to carry out this study.

2.2 Nature of stress among secondary school students

According to Rathus (2000, pp565), “stress is the demand made on an organism to adapt, to cope, or to adjust”, and he added that “some stress is healthful and necessary to keep us alert and occupied”. Hans Selye (1980) referred to such healthful stress as eustress, whereas stress that leads to negative consequences is known as distress.

Repetti (1993) noted that intense or prolonged stress can however overwhelm one’s capacity to adjust and therefore impair our ability to experience pleasure, and also ends up harming the body.

MacGeorge, Samter and Gillikan (2005) argued that “academic stress is the product of a combination of academic related demands that exceed the adaptive resources available to an individual”. For instance, in a secondary school setting where students are expected to do so many subjects especially in the ordinary level, a student may fail to cope efficiently with the
demands placed on them therefore resulting in serious psycho-social-emotional health consequences on the student which will affect their academic performance as well.

Essel and Owusu (2017) also noted that stress may be in the form of anxiety, burnout, fear, worry or distress. He added that on a short term however, stress may feel exciting and can improve one’s attitude and performance by motivating them for a short while.

2.3 Causes of stress among secondary school students

Fisher (1994) asserted that there are various factors that may contribute to stress among students in secondary schools in varying degrees and proportions but generally among the stressors students suffer from the most are tests or exams. He added that students have a fear of failure in relation to their grades and academic work since they are afraid of falling short of their own or other’s expectations in school, job, athletics or any other activity which may threaten their own academic or career prospects, disapproval, rejection, humiliation, guilt and blow to the self – esteem.

According to Chiang (1995), the academic workload imposed on students is one of the major sources of high school students’ stress. He also added that school is one of the main sources of stress among adolescents and such stress comes from too much homework, unsatisfactory academic performance, preparation for tests, lack of interest in a particular subject, and teacher’s punishment.
Tiwari and Balani (2013) also added that the working hours, workload, lack of resources to carry out their job, and the low level of reward are most frequently identified as stressors among secondary school students.

Similarly, Phinney and Haas (2003) also stressed out sources of stress more specifically as a unique set of stressful encounters among student which includes: difficult financial challenges, domestic responsibilities, responsibilities related to holding a job while in school, and a heavy academic load.

Essel and Owusu (2017) also noted that stress upon students may result due to having relationships while still in school, change in living environment either at school or at home, change in sleeping habits, new responsibilities such as having a job while at school may be due to financial difficulties and poor eating habits.

It is also evident that students normally encounter high level of stress when they receive lower grades because some students link their grades with their future.

From the above findings, it is clear that stress results from both external and internal stimuli upon the students and how individual students handle these stressors which is therefore why students fare differently at school.

2.4 Relationship between stress and academic performance of secondary school students

According to Gustafson (2017), “stress is the body’s natural response to challenges and when a student experiences high levels of stress or chronic stress, regardless of her age or grade, it can interfere with her ability to learn, memorize, and earn good grades -- as well as lead
to poor physical, emotional and mental health. By learning about common stressors, a parent can help to mitigate negative or chronic stress in a child’s life.

Hammer et al (2009) also noted that there are basically three health-related factors which contribute to the academic performance of students and they mostly include the amount of exercise the students get, their sleeping habits and nutritional routines. Few students however are privileged to enjoy all these three necessities for academic performance and hence for this reason, stress factors and academic performance varies greatly among students.

Essel and Owusu (2017) argued that stress affecting students academically leads them to have bad performance in school work. Students experience a lack of concentration. Stress in college students can affect the ability to concentrate, and there have been studies conducted that prove that stress interferes with a student's ability to concentrate. Stress in students is not something we can take likely. Ironically stress improves concentration for a short term because when students are little stressed up they then to focus to try to get the issue in question which stresses them away but these concentrations doesn't last for long since they will have more school work or others assignments to do which demand long-term concentrations rather than the short term.

Haines, Norris and Kashy (1996) further asserted that “students who experience mental and physical health problems are then at greater risk for poor academic performance”, thus increasing academic stress and perpetuating a cycle of stress and poor academic performance and frustrations among the students.

Altamaier (1983, p.52) also noted that “stress is marked by overly high performance standards, with high levels of worry, self-criticism of attention while preparing for or taking
exams”. With a negative attitude towards examinations, students often face high levels of stress which also thus results in poor academic performance.

2.5 Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following hypothesis:
“Stress at school affects the academic performance of secondary school students negatively”.
Chapter Three

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

A research methodology according to Howell (2013) is the general approach that shows the way in which research is to be carried out by showing methods of data collection. This chapter presented the methodology for the research study and included the study design, sample design chosen, instruments and measures, procedure, data management and data analysis.

3.1 Study Design

Creswell (2012) stated that a study design is “the framework to be used to obtain answers to the research questions for a particular study”. For this research study, the researcher used a descriptive research design. “Descriptive research is a procedure for organizing and summarizing data in order to communicate and describe important characteristics of the data and it determines and reports the way things are” (Gay, 1996).

According to Gay (1996), a descriptive survey method is useful for investigating a variety of educational problems including assessment of attitudes, opinions, demographic information, conditions and procedures and thus helps in producing a good amount of responses from a wide range of people.

The researcher also considered qualitative and quantitative research approaches in order to achieve the objectives of this research study.
3.2 Sample design

Since the exact population for the research was unknown, the researcher used the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) formula and table for determining sample size of an infinite population (more than 50,000) which was used to arrive at a representative number of respondents when population estimate was known (Godden, 2004) as shown below;

\[
 n = \frac{Z^2 \times p (1 - p)}{M^2}
\]

*Where:*

\[n\] = Sample Size for infinite population

\[Z\] = Z value (e.g. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

\[P\] = population proportion (expressed as decimal) (assumed to be 0.5 (50%))

\[M\] = Margin of Error at 5% (0.05)

**Table 1; Sample size for this study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SAMPLE SIZE (n)</th>
<th>SAMPLING METHOD AND REASON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Simple Random Sampling (Wide population)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Purposive sampling (Knowledgeable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Simple Random Sampling (Wide population)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Instruments and measures

The researcher used mostly questionnaires and focus group discussions for collection of primary data for this study.

**Questionnaire**: This was self – administered and both open ended and close ended questions which were basing on a 5 – point Likert Scale following the research questions in order to collect primary data for this study.

**Focus Group Discussions**: These included dialogues between the researcher and one or more of the respondents on the research questions.

3.4 Procedure

After the research proposal for the study had been approved by the research supervisor, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the school of psychology – Makerere University introducing him to the study population for primary data collection and clearly explaining the academic nature of this research study. An assurance of confidentiality of the information was also extended to the participants in this study such that all the data given was used for study purposes only.

3.5 Data Management

Collected primary data was sorted by grouping together similar responses and also dropping irrelevant data not necessary for this study.
3.6 Data analysis

Collected primary data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 20 (SPSS V.20) in order to come up with frequency tables, charts and graphs presenting primary data collected for this study. The data was then discussed and explained clearly under each corresponding table and final primary findings were compared both quantitatively and qualitatively with the secondary information in the summary of the research study. The conclusion of the findings then disclaimed the stated hypothesis or supported it.
Chapter Four

Presentation of Findings

Introduction

This chapter consists of the results of the study findings which are presented in two sections. Section 1 presents the descriptive statistics which include; education, age and gender of respondents while section 2 presents the inferential statistics which examined the correlations between Stress and academic performance among Secondary School students. The following objectives guided the study:

1. To find out the nature of stress among secondary school students.

2. To examine the causes of stress among secondary school students.

3. To evaluate the relationship between stress and academic performance of secondary school students.

Descriptive statistics (respondent’s demographic data)

In this section demographic data results are in the tables below.

Table 1: showing age of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-13 Years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16 Years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-19 Years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above shows that the respondents of age between 14-16 years constituted the highest percentage of 48.0% and the respondents of 11-13 years had the lowest percentage of 18.0%. This is could be because respondents between the age of 14-16 years had a lot more interest in my research topic and were well vast with the issues being researched at hand.
Table 2: showing the education level of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1-S2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3-S4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5-S6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 above shows that majority of the respondents were in S3-S4 with the highest percentage of (44.0%) while respondents in S1-S2 constituted the lowest percentage of (22.0%). This could be because S3-S4 respondents had more knowledge about my topic of study.

Table 3: showing gender of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 above shows that majority of respondents were males with the highest percentage of 64.0% while females constituted the lowest percentage of 36.0%. This could be because males dominate the highest number of students who participated in the research.
Inferential statistics

This section presents the correlation between stress and academic performance. This was determined using Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient.

Table 4; showing Pearson’s product moment correlation between stress and academic performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Academic performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.586**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 above shows (r=586**, p=0.000, <0.01). Therefore, since the level of significance at 0.000 is smaller in magnitude than the level of significance at 0.01, we therefore conclude that there is a significant positive relationship between stress and Academic performance. This means that when students are subjected to stress while at school this increases and improves on their academic performance thus producing good grades and better results.
Chapter Five

Discussions, conclusions, and recommendations

Introduction

This chapter discusses literature that is in or not in line with the research findings. It also discusses the relationship between stress and Academic performance among secondary school students. The chapter also provides conclusions, recommendations and the areas for further study.

Findings on the relationship between stress and Academic performance

Findings of the study indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between stress and Academic performance among secondary school students. This implied that when reasonable amount of stress is present among students, their level of academic performance will be high. This could probably be because, when some students are put under stress they are pushed even harder to work better in their academics hence performing well at school in their academics.

The study findings are in line with Rathus (2000, pp565), who stated that “stress is the demand made on an organism to adapt, to cope, or to adjust”, and he added that “some stress is healthful and necessary to keep us alert and occupied”. Hans Selye (1980) referred to such healthful stress as eustress, therefore eustress can lead to high and good academic performance among students.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Essel and Owusu (2017) who also noted that stress may be in the form of anxiety, burnout, fear, worry or distress. He added that on a short
term however, stress may feel exciting and can improve one’s attitude and performance by motivating them for a short while.

The study findings are in agreement with Mimura et al (2003) who in his study discovered that underlying factors such as organizational culture, role and responsibility as being responsible for stress and their effects on performance of individuals. In his regression test he discovered that stress has a positive effect on performance meaning that performance increase with the increase in stress.

The findings are consistent with Essel and Owusu (2017) who argued that ironically stress improves concentration for a short term because when students are little stressed up they then to focus to try to get the issue in question which stresses them away but these concentrations don’t last for long since they will have more school work or others assignments to do which demand long-term concentrations rather than the short term.

The study findings are in agreement with the studies carried out in Pakistan that illustrated and confirmed positive relationships between stress and performance of individuals as well as organizations. These studies put on a view that if individuals are multi-talented, and have passion to achieve their goal then this stress element could have a better impact on their performance (Munir, 2011).

On the other hand, the study findings are contradictory with some researchers as they seem to find stress having a negative impact on academic performance such as;
The study finding are not in agreement with Gustafson (2017), who stated that “stress is the body’s natural response to challenges and when a student experiences high levels of stress or chronic stress, regardless of her age or grade, it can interfere with her ability to learn, memorize, and earn good grades as well as lead to poor physical, emotional and mental health.

Furthermore, the findings are not in agreement with Essel and Owusu (2017) who argued that stress affecting students academically leads them to have bad performance in school work. Students experience a lack of concentration. Stress in college students can affect the ability to concentrate, and there have been studies conducted that prove that stress interferes with a student's ability to concentrate Haines.

The findings are also not in agreement with Norris and Kashy (1996) who further asserted that “students who experience mental and physical health problems are then at greater risk for poor academic performance”, thus increasing academic stress and perpetuating a cycle of stress and poor academic performance and frustrations among the students.

Also the findings are contradicting with Altamaier (1983, p.52) who also noted that “stress is marked by overly high performance standards, with high levels of worry, self-criticism of attention while preparing for or taking exams”. With a negative attitude towards examinations, students often face high levels of stress which also thus results in poor academic performance.

Conclusion.
In conclusion, the results discussed above showed a positive connection between stress and academic performance among secondary school students. The study has shown that stress positively influences academic performance. According to various research study findings stress
being present in the academic setting of students influences and drives them to perform better and hence producing better grades at school.

**Recommendations**

According to the findings obtained, the following recommendations are suggested.

The management/directorate of these secondary school should design academic development programs that foster good performance and motivation among students to perform well in both academics and other fields such as academic tours, holiday breaks to relax students’ brains creation on interphases between academics such as sports activities to reduce on stress levels of students.

The school management is encouraged to provide and construct different facilities such as sports fields, libraries, swimming pools for students to use so as to overcome their stress levels hence improving their concentration abilities in school academics and also management should provide flexible organizational climate and environment that is favorable to all students.

To maintain high performance among students it’s important for the management of the secondary schools to involve students in decision making practices as this will enable the management to be able to know how to help their students who are dealing with stress. this will create a student- staff network that can be able to overcome academic related stress.

**Areas of further research.**

Further research should carry out qualitative research on stress and Academic performance.

The relationship between stress and Academic performance should be studied in larger samples in order to generalize conclusions on the relationship between the two variables in the
study. Thus future researchers may focus on the limitations in the school setting that lead to increased stress among students on their academic performance improving the generality of the results.

Further studies could explore additional variables and in addition, future studies could also look at how these variables affect other organizational outcomes, such as turnover intentions, absenteeism and organizational commitment among teachers and students.
References


APPENDIX A: Research Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Ssenyonjo Godfrey, a student of Makerere University pursuing a Bachelor of Arts (Social Sciences). I kindly request you to provide the required information that will enable me complete my study on “Stress and Academic Performance among Secondary School Students”. I promise that the information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality for academic purposes.

SECTION: A (BIO DATA)

Please tick the appropriate alternative

1. Gender
   a. Male □     b. Female □

2. Age group in years
   a) 11-13 years □     b) 14-16 years □     c) 17-19 years □

3. Education level
   a) S1-S2 □     b) S3-S4 □     c) S5-S6 □
**SECTION B: STRESS**

You are kindly requested to choose your best alternative from the following objectives provided to you, simply tick the best alternative for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am very dissatisfied with my academic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel that there is too much school work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel there is too much homework.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Future education and employment bring me a lot of academic pressure.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My parents care about my academic grades too much which brings me a lot of pressure.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I feel a lot of pressure in my daily studying.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I feel that there are too many tests /exams in the school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Academic grade is very important to my future and even can determine my whole life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I feel that I have disappointed my parents when my test/exam results are poor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I feel that I have disappointed my teacher when my test/exam results are not ideal.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>There is too much competition among classmates which brings me a lot of academic pressure.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I always lack confidence with my academic scores.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>It is very difficult for me to concentrate.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I feel stressed when I do not live up to my own standards.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>When I fail to live up to my own expectations, I feel I am not good enough.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I usually cannot sleep because of worry when I cannot meet the goals I set for myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You are kindly requested to choose your best alternative from the following objectives provided to you, simply tick the best alternative for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**SECTION C: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

You are kindly requested to choose your best alternative from the following objectives provided to you, simply tick the best alternative for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Academic Self Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can perform well in exams.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I can understand most ideas in the texts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can keep up to date with my course work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I can overcome most of the challenges in homework.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am confident that I can succeed academically in college.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Achievement Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I have high goals and expectations for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I enjoy situations in which I can find out how capable I am.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I will put forth the necessary effort to reach my goal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I desire to perform better in college than others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I always want to be the best I can.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Academic Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I participate actively in most class learning experiences (i.e. presentations, discussions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I often discuss ideas from class with a faculty member.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I often ask for feedback on my work from the instructor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I work with a faculty member on research projects outside of class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I often discuss ideas from class with other students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thanks for your cooperation...