

Academic stress, depression and academic performance among secondary students at Young  
Christian School, Najjanankumbi

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## Declaration

I Babirye Tracey declare that this research dissertation on Academic Stress, Depression and Academic Performance among Secondary Students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi is originally and personally written and compiled by me through the best of my ability and it has never been submitted before. It is a result of my research carried out using different sources like books, recent dissertations, and others.

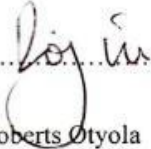
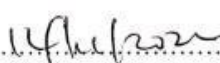
Signature.......... Date.....24<sup>th</sup>/01/2023.....

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### Approval

I certify that this research dissertation was under my supervision and is now ready to be submitted for examination with my approval as a university supervisor.

Signature.....  ..... Date.....  .....

Dr. Wandera Roberts Otyola

**Supervisor**

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to myself first for the much effort I exhibited secondly to my supervisor for the academic support plus my family for the economic support and care if it were not, you for sure I would not have made it on time may the good Lord reward you abundantly.

## **Acknowledgement**

For the time I have been at the school of psychology I cannot fail to be grateful with all my heart for the support I have received.

First of all, I express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Wandera Roberts Otyola plus all my lecturers for the valuable guidance and intellectual suggestions. Secondly, I thank my parents for the economic support and my siblings for the continuous support and care.

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed at assessing the relationship between relationship between Academic stress, Depression and Academic Performance among Secondary Students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi in Uganda. In unraveling this, it's crucial that we identify the impact of hold of Academic stress and Depression to students in this particular school. As previous research has shown and proved that there is a connection in how Academic stress lessens with Depression which inversely lowers the academic performance of students. The results indicated that there is no relationship between academic stress and depression, there is a negative relationship between academic stress and academic performance, there is a negative relationship between depression and academic performance. Therefore, the study concluded that academic stress does not affect depression but affects academic performance of students.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Background**

Many scholars in the development economics field have showed that the development of any nation or community depends largely on the quality of education of such a nation. It is generally believed that the basis for any true development must commence with the development of human resources (Akanle, 2007). Hence formal education remains the vehicle for social-economic development and social mobilization in any society. Academic performance is how well one does in school. Poor grades are considered bad academic performance and many athletes are forced to stop playing due to this. Therefore, academic performance of the students forms the study's dependent variable.

Students face many challenges which are psychologically intriguing. With rapid maturational changes, shifting societal demands, conflicting role demands, increasingly complex social relations, and new educational expectations (Wigfield Allan et al., 2006) which leads to high levels of stress. These intense changes have may led to both positive and negative outcomes. While most pass through this period without excessively high levels of "storm and stress," many individuals do experience difficulty. Therefore, high levels of stress on student have an impact on student academic performance. Academic stress is a pervasive issue across countries and is 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 (Leung et al., 2009).

Theoretically stress often leads to depression which impacts on academic performance of students which has been established to be negative. This is supported by the psychological Behavioral Learning Theory which believes that behavior is learned from either the environment,

the people in the individual's life, the media, or society as a whole. This means that with the poor environments surrounded by stress and depression, there is a possibility of poor academic performance among the students. Depression is linked to lower academic performance and it is proposed that academic performance is reduced in young people with high levels of depression as a function of increased test-specific worry that impinges on working memory central executive processes (Reddy et al., 2017).

In conclusion in order to have high academic performance, proper school or university policies should be put in place to ensure students be engaged and motivated to take part in academic activities hence will reduce stress and depression thus led to a high academic performance. In Uganda and Kenya indicate that a good study environment with less stress and depression leads to high academic performance of students (Glennerster et al., 2011).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The declining academic performance of the students has been noted with concern. To this end, the government has put up a series of strategies towards reversing the trend. Among these are improved teacher training, construction of classrooms and implementing the education standards agency procedures. Despite the several changes, the academic performance of the students has continued to decline. This is attributed to high levels of depression and stress among the students. If not tackled, this may lead to decline in more student performance, students dropping out of school and low performance of institutions of education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

To examine the relationship between Academic stress, depression and academic performance of secondary students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine whether academic stress and depression among secondary students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi is related
2. To examine whether academic stress and academic performance among secondary students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi is related
3. To examine whether depression and Academic performance among secondary students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi is related

### **Significance of the Study**

Findings of this study may provide deep understanding of the Academic stress, depression to improve academic performance to students both in private and public academic institutions in Uganda.

The findings may also help the planners in the academic sphere to implement, introduce and improve student mental health at school to enhance academic productivity thus led to improvement in academic performance for both individual and institutions of education.

The findings may be important for the academia in terms of developing new pedagogy that is aimed at enhancing academic performance among tertiary institutions and teaching institutions in Uganda.

Finally, the findings of the study may add knowledge and more understanding about Academic stress, depression affecting academic performance in private and public sector in Uganda.

## **Scope of the Study**

The sample scope focused on:

### **Geographical Scope**

The study was carried out at Najjanankumbi Young Christian School. The school is located at Plot 39 Entebbe Road. This school was selected as a case study because of the fact that her performance has been declining over the years amidst high prevalence of academic stress, depression cases and academic performance.

### **Contextual Scope**

Academic stress is a mental stress because of some anticipated frustration associated with parental pressure on high performances; tough class load; worry over grade competitions; sports etc. Depression is a common mental disorder affecting more than 264 million people worldwide. It is characterized by persistent sadness and a lack of interest or pleasure in previously rewarding or enjoyable activities. The term 'academic performance' has been described as the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment. It refers to how an individual is able to demonstrate his or her intellectual abilities.

### **Time Scope**

The field study was conducted in November which involved data collection and data analysis and shall end with the submission of the dissertation report with results and discussions from the study to Makerere University.

### Conceptual framework

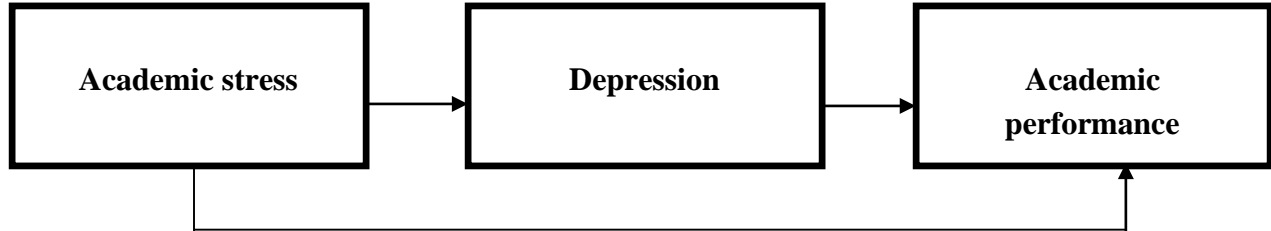


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing relationship between Academic stress, Depression and Academic performance

Academic stress is directly associated to depression thus high academic stress of students leads to depression. This means that students with or who are stressed, have high chances of developing depression while students who are not stressed or have minimal stress may not develop depression at school.

Depression is directly associated to academic performance and employees who are depressed have low academic performance. This means that students with who are depressed, have high chances of not performing well academically while students who are not depressed may perform well academically.

Academic stress is directly associate to academic performance thus good less academic stress leads to high academic performance. This means that students with less or no stress have high chances of performing well academically while students who are stressed may or are not likely to perform well academically.



## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter evaluates the various studies that have been conducted on the three variables that is to say: Academic stress, Depression and Academic performance thus evaluates the theoretical literature on the variables.

### Academic Stress

According to Anjali Rana et al., (2019), the most common cause of stress among students the poor organization of the students. The scholar states that many students tend to be disorganized. Deb et al., (2014) assumes that disorganization is a necessary but not sufficient condition for stress among the students and states that secondary school students are either too busy with their friends or studying for exams, and many of them do not have the time or the means to eat a well-balanced meal.

Grajek et al., (2022) who stated that students' diets consist of take-out, ramen noodles and candy bars. Many are not aware that sticking to a healthy diet can really aid in their stress levels. Peltzer, (2004) carried out a study using a sample of students from a South African University and established that the most important cause of stress among students is a lot of assignments. This implies that, the students need to finish three or four assignments and submit them at the same times.

Deb et al., (2014) who stated that the too much work is one of the leading causes of stress among students at secondary level. It may seem difficult to get away from a big work project, a crying baby or a growing credit card bill. But when the student gives self-permission to step away from it, the student should let self-have time to do something else, which can help the student have

a new perspective or practice techniques to feel less overwhelmed. It's important to not avoid stress (Huebner, Funk and Gilman, 2000), but even just 20-minutes to take care of the student self is helpful.

Turner & McCarthy, (2017) state that our brains are interconnected with our emotions and facial expressions. When people are stressed, they often hold a lot of the stress in their face. So, the scholars assert that laughs or smiles can help relieve some of that tension and improve the situation. Stress is more than a physical condition (Lupien & Lepage, 2001).

Cunningham, (2014) cite that meditation and mindful prayer help the mind and body to relax and focus. Mindfulness can help people see new perspectives, develop self-compassion and forgiveness. When practicing a form of mindfulness, people can release emotions that may have been causing the body physical stress.

## **Depression**

Depressive symptoms have been identified as a health problem among students in many countries (Allgöwer et al., 2001). (Burton et al., 2004) state that some children may be more at risk of depression because of their personality, particularly if they have a tendency to worry a lot, have low self-esteem, sensitive to personal criticism, or are self-critical and negative. Having a medical illness can trigger depression in two ways. According to a study by (Hayatbakhsh et al., 2007), there is a cause-and-effect link between drug abuse and depression. However, Bovasso, (2001) believes that drug abuse is a more likely factor to explain cases of depression among the students as compared to the other way round.

With regard to depression, the studies have showed that the environments in which the children grow, the low self-esteem and the use of drugs exacerbate the depression situation. The scholars have not however linked this with the risk factors leading to the stated factors and this

forms a basis for this study. Depressed teens often have difficulties that lead to social isolation. It's another depression cycle. A teen may withdraw and isolate him from friends and classmates, leading to loneliness, which may perpetuate the depression.

Depression in students is a growing health problem in the 21st century. In a review of antecedents leading to student depression, Malhotra & Sahoo, (2018) categorized them into biological factors, temperament, cognitive vulnerability, family factors, sociodemographic factors, academic factors, changing social milieu and school factors. There has been an increase in the number of students suffering from mental disorders like depression and anxiety attributed to academics, changes in human and body development and challenges of identity among young adults (Baba et al., 2013).

Depression and high levels of anxiety were reported among students with risk factors including symptoms compatible with COVID-19, social isolation and low quality of social relations (D'Hondt et al., 2020). Ramón-Arbués et al., (2020) reported a moderate level of depression and anxiety symptoms in student population which was associated with having problematic internet use behavior, smoking, insomnia and having a low self-esteem.

Pacheco et al., (2017) reported depression and anxiety which was connected to emotional support and academic overload among students. Moderate and severe depression was reported in a study by (Elsawy et al., 2020) among medical students in Alexandria with the predictors being gender, presence of mental illness, lack of social support and experiencing stressful events in student's life. Pacheco et al., (2017) reported depression and anxiety which was connected to emotional support and academic overload among students. Moderate and severe depression was reported in a study by Elsayy et al., (2020) among medical students in Alexandria with the

predictors being gender, presence of mental illness, lack of social support and experiencing stressful events in student's life.

### **Academic Performance**

A study on socio-economic status of the parents of students and concluded that the socio-economic background has a great impact on student's academic performance, main source of educational imbalance among students and student's academic success contingent very strongly on parent's socio-economic standard (Ali et al., 2013).

(Considine & Zappalà, 2016) in their study on the influence of social and economic disadvantage in the academic performance of school students noticed, where the parents or guardians have social, educational and economical advantage definitely strengthen the higher-level success in future. But it is also noted that these parents make available sufficient psychological and emotional shore up to their children by providing good educational and learning environment that produce confidence and the improvement of skills needed for success (Considine & Zappalà, 2002).

Kwesiga (2002) approved that performance of the students is also influenced by the school in which they studied but he also said that number of facilities a school offers usually determine the quality of the school, which in turn affect the performance and accomplishment of its students (Aspaas & Kwesiga, 2003).

Sentamu, (2003) argue that schools influence educational process in content organization, teacher and teaching learning and in the end evaluation of the all. All these educationists and researchers agreed with this principle that schools put strong effect on academic performance and educational attainment of students.

## **Academic Stress and Depression**

In a cross-sectional survey, a self-administered, pre-designed, pre-tested anonymous questionnaire including DASS 42 was used to collect information on basic socio-demographic (age, gender, semester) and personal characteristics (alcohol and tobacco use, academic performance). All students present on the day of survey were contacted and scores for each of the respondents were calculated as per the severity-rating index. Results: More than half of the respondents were affected by depression (51.3%), anxiety (66.9%) and stress (53%). Females reported higher score as compared to their male counterparts. Perception of self-assessment in academics was strongly associated with the higher score. Conclusions: A substantial proportion of medical undergraduate students was found to be depressed, anxious and stressed revealing a neglected area of the students' psychology requiring urgent attention. Student counselling services need to be made available and accessible to curb this morbidity (Iqbal et al., 2015).

A study estimated the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress symptoms among medical students who were enrolled in a public university in Upper Egypt. This cross-sectional study included 700 students. A self-administered, questionnaire for the socio-demographic characteristics, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21) and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) questionnaire were used for assessment. High frequencies of depression (65%), anxiety (73%) and stress (59.9%) were reported. Stress scores were significantly higher than depression and anxiety ( $P=0.001$ ). 55.7% were poor sleepers, females living in the University campus/students' residence facility, in the preclinical years and with lower academic achievement had higher scores. In multivariate analysis, stress scores were significantly associated with female sex, depression and anxiety scores. We conclude that depression, anxiety and stress symptoms are

common in medical students of Assiut University relative to other schools(Fawzy & Hamed, 2017).

There are a range of effective interventions that target stress, anxiety or depressed mood among nursing students. The quality of the studies reporting these interventions was found to be variable and generally samples were small with limited follow-up. Studies of mindfulness interventions comprised the largest sample sizes, displayed the highest levels of evidence, and transcended stress, anxiety and depressed mood. Future research would benefit from a coordinated approach to build the strength of the body of evidence(Aloufi et al., 2021).

Analysis showed among all students, 27.5% had moderate, and 9.7% had severe or extremely severe depression; 34% had moderate, and 29% had severe or extremely severe anxiety; and 18.6% had moderate and 5.1% had severe or extremely severe stress scores based on the DASS-21 inventory. Both depression and anxiety scores were significantly higher among older students (20 and above) and those born in rural areas. Whereas, higher stress scores were significantly higher among older students (20 and above), females, Malays and those whose family had either low or high incomes compared to those with middle incomes. Conclusions: The prevalence of anxiety is much higher than either depression or stress, with some differences in their correlates except for age. These differences need to be further explored for development of better intervention programs and appropriate support services targeting this group (Shamsuddin et al., 2013).

### **Depression and Academic Performance**

According to Sauer et al., (2001), recent events trigger depression in people who are already at risk because of past bad experiences or personal factors. In the case of students in school,

the scholar's recent events could have been the failure to achieve some set marks and failure to get recognized and these are important elements in (Burton et al., 2004)

(Wu et al., 2005), the depressed teen is often preoccupied with negative thoughts and feelings and finds it hard to put his full attention on schoolwork. In this respect, problems with concentration at school are one of the major complaints for teens experiencing depression. (Currie & Stabile, 2006) stated that when a teen is depressed, he has little energy to apply to activities that he perceives as being stressful or of low interest. A depressed teen may withdraw from typical activities and become resistant to teacher requests to participate in classroom activities.

Lindert et al., (2013), Teenagers who are depressed often have great difficulty finishing their homework because they lack focus, energy and motivation. Most teenagers, of course, prefer to have no homework, but they do it because they know they have to. They're also aware that if they don't get it done, they may pay a price in the future. The depressed teen is stuck in an unpleasant here and now. He's not thinking about the future, and when he does, it's without much hope or interest. Many depressed teens have difficulty getting up in the morning and going to school. Because they are tired and have a hard time dealing with stressful events, they may try to avoid school (Lindert et al., 2013).

### **Academic Stress and Academic Performance**

Sejjombwe (2013) have reported that stress levels among students in Ugandan secondary schools in Uganda are alarming. The role of stress, depression amongst the students on the declining academic performance especially at O-Level had not received enough academic literature and this forms a basis for this study.

(Poldrack & Packard, 2003), students who stress out over scoring well on a test are quite possibly hurting their score. However, if a student experiences very little or no stress, it can have a negative impact on their performance levels also (Aro et al., 2001). Although an optimal level of stress can enhance learning ability, too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems and reduce self-esteem (Gillespie et al., 2013) and may affect the academic achievement of students.

Stress is more than a physical condition ((Lupien & Lepage, 2001)). The scholars state that stress affects the mind and ability of a person. When put under heavy stress, a person is not able to focus and concentrate on the task before them. In this respect, students who are under stress are more anxious and therefore less productive. If a student is unable to concentrate, they will not be able to give the task their full attention. Females living in the University campus/students' residence facility, in the preclinical years and with lower academic achievement had higher scores (Fawzy & Hamed, 2017).

Top three concerns were academic performance, pressure to succeed, and post-graduation plans. Demographically, the most stressed, anxious, and depressed students were transfers, upperclassmen, and those living off-campus (Beiter et al., 2015). A cross-sectional study was conducted at higher secondary schools in Tamil Nadu. 1120 adolescents were included in the study after screening by MINI-kid tool. Modified Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents was administered to all children. Results indicated that Adolescents who had academic stress were at 2.4 times (95% CI=0.9-2.4) ( $P < 0.001$ ) higher risk of depression than adolescents without academic stress (Jayanthi et al., 2015).



## **Conclusion**

This chapter presents some of the previous studies on topics that are related to the subject of study, from the Internet, libraries and theses for master's and Ph.D. researchers, to identify the methodology, findings, and recommendations.

## **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses was tested:

1. Academic stress and depression are not significantly related.
2. Academic stress and academic performance are not significantly related.
3. Depression and academic stress are not significantly related.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This chapter presents the methods to be employed in data collection and analysis. It describes the research design, the study population, sampling methods, sample size, data collection tools, data processing and analysis.

#### **Study Design**

The research was quantitative in nature, used a cross sectional and correlational research design to examine of the influence of Academic Stress, Depression and Academic Performance Among Secondary Students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi since the study required testing hypothesis and using a large sample size population.

#### **Study Population**

Respondents were selected from Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi in Uganda. The population of A Level students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi is approximately 130 and from this a sample size was selected.

#### **Sample Size**

The study was carried out from Young Christian school with a sample size was 80 (Basing on the need to minimize the margin of error at 5%). This sample involved both male and female students which was done to reduce all possible errors in the survey.

#### **Sampling Methods**

Simple random sampling was used to determine the selection of respondents at the school. This method was chosen because it is suitable for smaller samples and is unbiased.

## **Instruments / Measures**

Self-structured questionnaires were used to make sure items measure what is intended to be measured. A self-administered questionnaire was used comprising of open-ended questions in a biodata section. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, Section A: biography, Section B: academic stress will use the Perceptions of Academic Stress (PAS) scale which has 8 items and uses a 5 Likert scale, Section C: depression will use the PHQ 9 which has 9 items and uses a 4 Likert scale, Section D; academic performance scale with 8 items using a 5 Likert scale.

## **Procedures**

The researcher presented herself to the respondent; introduce herself assuring the respondent of guaranteed confidentiality about the data provided, present a letter from the university to (endorsed by the director of studies) to further prove the academic intent of the proposed study and then ask for the respondent's consent. In the event that the respondent accepted to be part of the sample, the researcher then presented the respondents with the questionnaires for filling. The researcher then held interviews with the school's top management about the aspects under study.

## **Quality Control**

Proper selection of subjects was done through choosing both females and males at different class levels across Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi with a sampling size 130 with equality which reduced on sampling errors in the study. Validity: The researcher used already constructed instruments and consulted his / her research supervisor to verify the tool to ensure their validity. A reliability analysis was done and Perception of academic stress had an alpha of 0.906,

Depression PHQ9 had an alpha of 0.905 and Academic performance scale had an alpha of 0.938 thus were considered reliable for this study.

### **Data Management**

In section A: age was encoded as below 12 years, between 12 and 16 years, between 17 and 19 years and above 20 years being coded from 1 to 4 respectively. Gender was encoded as m= 1 and f= 2. Class of study was coded as 1 for S5 and 2 for S6; the responses of academic stress was measured on a 5-point scale. The responses of depression were measured on a 4-point scale, while responses of academic performance were measured on a 5-point scale.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher presented an introductory letter from the university to all the respondents assuring them of the academic purpose of this proposed project. The researcher assured the respondents of the fact that the information provided was to be treated with utmost confidentiality and this catalyzed the respondent's urge to provide all the required data. The study avoided asking touching (life pinning) questions so as to obtain unbiased responses. The interviewer also minimized presence in order to eliminate interviewer bias and also, the researcher assured the respondents that she bears all the responsibility over the data collected.

### **Data Analysis and Presentation**

The quantitative data was first coded in the coding process. A coding sheet was constructed. A number was then be assigned to each answer in the coding sheet. Then statistical packages like SPSS were used to analyze the relationships among the variables.

### **Anticipated Limitations of the Study**

The researcher faced challenges of non-response due to business confidentiality and some of the school heads failed to allocate sufficient time to the researcher. The researcher explained to every respondent the purpose of the study.

The researcher faced a problem of exaggeration or underplay of events by the respondents. However, this was solved by making check backs where necessary.

The respondents delay to give the required information. To solve this problem, the researcher exhibited patience and persistence in data collection hence was in position to obtain all the required information.

The research process faced a problem of finance constraints due to the fact that the process involves costs such as printing, internet and transport. With proper budgetary allocations however, the researcher was in position to minimize such costs.

## Chapter Four: Results and Interpretation

This chapter includes results and Interpretation of findings in line with the objectives and hypothesis. Data is presented inform of frequencies and percentages followed by correlations between the variables.

### Descriptive Data.

The background information or sample characteristic of the respondents were mainly on age, sex and class of respondent which are presented in the table below.

**Table 1: Age of respondent**

|                | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Below 12 years | 19        | 23.8        |
| 13-16 years    | 16        | 20.0        |
| 17-19 years    | 41        | 51.3        |
| 20 years above | 4         | 5.0         |
| Total          | 80        | 100.0       |

Table 1 presents the information of respondent's age. Results show that respondents between 17 to 19 years age group were the highest number of respondents (41) with 51.3% and was followed by below 12 years (19) with 23.5% followed by 13 to 16 years (16) with 20.3% and with the list as 20 years and above (4) with 5%. This means many respondents were 17 to 19 years and above for this study.

**Table 2: Sex of respondent**

|        | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--------|-----------|-------------|
| Male   | 20        | 25.0        |
| Female | 60        | 75.0        |
| Total  | 80        | 100.0       |

Table 2 presents the sex of respondents that took part in this research study. It shows that females (60) respondents who obtained a percentage 75% outnumbered the male respondents who were (20) respondents represented by a percentage of 25%. The research therefore concluded that females were slightly more involved in the study more than males.

**Table 3: Class of respondent**

|       | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------|-----------|-------------|
| S.1   | 28        | 35.0        |
| S.2   | 4         | 5.0         |
| S.3   | 11        | 13.8        |
| S.4   | 8         | 10.0        |
| S.5   | 20        | 25.0        |
| S.6   | 9         | 11.3        |
| Total | 80        | 100.0       |

Table 3 shows the class of the respondents whereby most of the respondents (28) with a percentage of (35%) were S1, followed by S5 (20) with 25%, S3 (11) with 13.4%, S6 with 11.3%, S4 with 10% and lastly S2 with 5%. More S1 students participated in the study.

## Inferential Statistics

**Table 4: Correlation between academic stress and depression**

|                 |                     | Academic Stress | Depression |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Academic Stress | Pearson Correlation | 1               | .565       |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                 | .202       |
|                 | N                   | 80              | 80         |
| Depression      | Pearson Correlation | .565            | 1          |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .202            |            |
|                 | N                   | 80              | 80         |

Hypothesis 1 stated that academic stress and depression are not significant related. The results in table 4 above show ( $r=-.565$  and  $p=.202$ ), since  $p$  value is greater than the level of significance of 0.05, we retain the null hypothesis and conclude that academic stress and depression are not significantly related. This means that academic stress does not influence or lead to depression of students.



**Table 5: Correlation between Academic stress and Academic performance**

|                      |                     | Academic Stress | Academic Performance |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Academic Stress      | Pearson Correlation | 1               | -.320**              |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                 | .000                 |
|                      | N                   | 80              | 80                   |
| Academic Performance | Pearson Correlation | -.320**         | 1                    |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000            |                      |
|                      | N                   | 80              | 80                   |

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

Hypothesis 2 stated that Depression and Academic performance are not significant related. The results in table 5 above show ( $r=-.320^{**}$  and  $p=.000$ ), since p value is less than the level of significance of 0.01, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that Depression and Academic performance are negatively significantly related. This means that increase in Depression lead to decrease in Academic performance of students while decrease in Depression lead to increase in Academic performance of students.

**Table 6: Correlation between Depression and Academic performance**

|                      |                     | Depression | Academic Performance |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Depression           | Pearson Correlation | 1          | -.467**              |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     |            | .000                 |
|                      | N                   | 80         | 80                   |
| Academic Performance | Pearson Correlation | -.467**    | 1                    |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000       |                      |
|                      | N                   | 80         | 80                   |

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

Hypothesis 3 stated that Academic stress and Academic performance are not significant related. The results in table 6 above show ( $r = -.467^{**}$  and  $p = .000$ ), since p value is less than the level of significance of 0.01, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that Academic stress and Academic performance are negatively significantly related. This means that increase in Academic stress led to decrease in Academic performance of students while decrease in Academic stress led to increase in Academic performance of students.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **Introduction**

Chapter 5 entails the discussion of the findings obtained from the data analyzed, presented and interpreted on chapter Four. This chapter is presented in three parts, the first part includes discussions of the findings, the second part includes discussions of the findings and the third part includes the recommendations and the final part includes suggestions for further research.

### **Academic Stress**

According to Anjali Rana et al., (2019), the most common cause of stress among students the poor organization of the students. The scholar states that many students tend to be disorganized. Deb et al., (2014) assumes that disorganization is a necessary but not sufficient condition for stress among the students and states that secondary school students are either too busy with their friends or studying for exams, and many of them do not have the time or the means to eat a well-balanced meal.

Grajek et al., (2022) who stated that students' diets consist of take-out, ramen noodles and candy bars. Many are not aware that sticking to a healthy diet can really aid in their stress levels. Peltzer, (2004) carried out a study using a sample of students from a South African University and established that the most important cause of stress among students is a lot of assignments. This implies that, the students need to finish three or four assignments and submit them at the same times.

Deb et al., (2014) who stated that the too much work is one of the leading causes of stress among students at secondary level. It may seem difficult to get away from a big work project, a crying baby or a growing credit card bill. But when the student gives self-permission to step away

from it, the student should let self-have time to do something else, which can help the student have a new perspective or practice techniques to feel less overwhelmed. It's important to not avoid stress (Huebner, Funk and Gilman, 2000), but even just 20-minutes to take care of the student self is helpful.

Turner & McCarthy, (2017) state that our brains are interconnected with our emotions and facial expressions. When people are stressed, they often hold a lot of the stress in their face. So, the scholars assert that laughs or smiles can help relieve some of that tension and improve the situation. Stress is more than a physical condition (Lupien & Lepage, 2001).

Cunningham, (2014) cite that meditation and mindful prayer help the mind and body to relax and focus. Mindfulness can help people see new perspectives, develop self-compassion and forgiveness. When practicing a form of mindfulness, people can release emotions that may have been causing the body physical stress.

## **Depression**

Depressive symptoms have been identified as a health problem among students in many countries (Allgöwer et al., 2001). Burton et al., (2004) state that some children may be more at risk of depression because of their personality, particularly if they have a tendency to worry a lot, have low self-esteem, sensitive to personal criticism, or are self-critical and negative. Having a medical illness can trigger depression in two ways. According to a study by Hayatbakhsh et al., (2007), there is a cause-and-effect link between drug abuse and depression. However, Bovasso, (2001) believes that drug abuse is a more likely factor to explain cases of depression among the students as compared to the other way round.

With regard to depression, the studies have showed that the environments in which the children grow, the low self-esteem and the use of drugs exacerbate the depression situation. The

scholars have not however linked this with the risk factors leading to the stated factors and this forms a basis for this study. Depressed teens often have difficulties that lead to social isolation. It's another depression cycle. A teen may withdraw and isolate him from friends and classmates, leading to loneliness, which may perpetuate the depression.

Depression in students is a growing health problem in the 21st century. In a review of antecedents leading to student depression, Malhotra & Sahoo, (2018) categorized them into biological factors, temperament, cognitive vulnerability, family factors, sociodemographic factors, academic factors, changing social milieu and school factors. There has been an increase in the number of students suffering from mental disorders like depression and anxiety attributed to academics, changes in human and body development and challenges of identity among young adults (Baba et al., 2013).

Depression and high levels of anxiety were reported among students with risk factors including symptoms compatible with COVID-19, social isolation and low quality of social relations (D'Hondt et al., 2020). Ramón-Arbués et al., (2020) reported a moderate level of depression and anxiety symptoms in student population which was associated with having problematic internet use behavior, smoking, insomnia and having a low self-esteem.

Pacheco et al., (2017) reported depression and anxiety which was connected to emotional support and academic overload among students. Moderate and severe depression was reported in a study by Elsayy et al., (2020) among medical students in Alexandria with the predictors being gender, presence of mental illness, lack of social support and experiencing stressful events in student's life. Pacheco et al., (2017) reported depression and anxiety which was connected to emotional support and academic overload among students. Moderate and severe depression was reported in a study by Elsayy et al., (2020) among medical students in Alexandria with the

predictors being gender, presence of mental illness, lack of social support and experiencing stressful events in student's life.

### **Academic Performance**

A study on socio-economic status of the parents of students and concluded that the socio-economic background has a great impact on student's academic performance, main source of educational imbalance among students and student's academic success contingent very strongly on parent's socio-economic standard (Ali et al., 2013).

Considine & Zappalà, (2016) in their study on the influence of social and economic disadvantage in the academic performance of school students noticed, where the parents or guardians have social, educational and economical advantage definitely strengthen the higher-level success in future. But it is also noted that these parents make available sufficient psychological and emotional shore up to their children by providing good educational and learning environment that produce confidence and the improvement of skills needed for success (Considine & Zappalà, 2002).

Kwesiga (2002) approved that performance of the students is also influenced by the school in which they studied but he also said that number of facilities a school offers usually determine the quality of the school, which in turn affect the performance and accomplishment of its students (Aspaas & Kwesiga, 2003).

Sentamu, (2003) argue that schools influence educational process in content organization, teacher and teaching learning and in the end evaluation of the all. All these educationists and researchers agreed with this principle that schools put strong effect on academic performance and educational attainment of students.

## **Academic Stress and Depression**

Findings suggest that there is no relationship between academic stress and depression. This means that academic stress does not lead or influence depression of students.

Results are in disagreement with Iqbal et al., (2015) who in a cross-sectional survey, a self-administered, pre-designed, pre-tested anonymous questionnaire including DASS 42 found more than half of the respondents were affected by depression (51.3%), anxiety (66.9%) and stress (53%). Females reported higher score as compared to their male counterparts. Perception of self-assessment in academics was strongly associated with the higher score. Conclusions: A substantial proportion of medical undergraduate students was found to be depressed, anxious and stressed revealing a neglected area of the students' psychology requiring urgent attention. Student counselling services need to be made available and accessible to curb this morbidity (Iqbal et al., 2015).

Results are contradicting with Fawzy & Hamed, (2017) who estimated the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress symptoms among medical students who were enrolled in a public university in Upper Egypt had a high frequency of depression (65%), anxiety (73%) and stress (59.9%) were reported. Stress scores were significantly higher than depression and anxiety ( $P=0.001$ ). 55.7% were poor sleepers, females living in the University campus/students' residence facility, in the preclinical years and with lower academic achievement had higher scores. In multivariate analysis, stress scores were significantly associated with female sex, depression and anxiety scores. We conclude that depression, anxiety and stress symptoms are common in medical students of Assiut University relative to other schools (Fawzy & Hamed, 2017).

Results are contradicting with Aloufi et al., (2021) who found the relationship between stress and depression among students. The range of effective interventions that target stress, anxiety or depressed mood among nursing students was found to be variable and generally samples were small with limited follow-up. Studies of mindfulness interventions comprised the largest sample sizes, displayed the highest levels of evidence, and transcended stress, anxiety and depressed mood. Future research would benefit from a coordinated approach to build the strength of the body of evidence (Aloufi et al., 2021).

Results are not in agreement with Shamsuddin et al., (2013) whose analysis showed among all students, 27.5% had moderate, and 9.7% had severe or extremely severe depression; 34% had moderate, and 29% had severe or extremely severe anxiety; and 18.6% had moderate and 5.1% had severe or extremely severe stress scores based on the DASS-21 inventory. Both depression and anxiety scores were significantly higher among older students (20 and above) and those born in rural areas. Whereas, higher stress scores were significantly higher among older students (20 and above), females, Malays and those whose family had either low or high incomes compared to those with middle incomes. Conclusions: The prevalence of anxiety is much higher than either depression or stress, with some differences in their correlates except for age. These differences need to be further explored for development of better intervention programs and appropriate support services targeting this group (Shamsuddin et al., 2013).

### **Academic Stress and Academic Performance**

Findings suggest that there is a negative relationship between academic stress and academic performance. This means that increase in academic stress lead to decrease in Academic performance of students while decrease in Depression lead to increase in Academic performance of students.



Results are in agreement with Sejjombwe (2013) who reported that stress levels among students in Ugandan secondary schools in Uganda are alarming. The role of stress, depression amongst the students on the declining academic performance especially at O-Level had not received enough academic literature and this forms a basis for this study.

Results are in agreement with Poldrack & Packard, (2003), students who stress out over scoring well on a test are quite possibly hurting their score. However, if a student experiences very little or no stress, it can have a negative impact on their performance levels also (Aro et al., 2001) whose argument is in line with the results. Although an optimal level of stress can enhance learning ability, too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems and reduce self-esteem (Gillespie et al., 2013) and may affect the academic achievement of students which is in line with the results.

Results are in agreement with Lupien & Lepage, (2001) who suggested that Stress is more than a physical condition. The scholars state that stress affects the mind and ability of a person. When put under heavy stress, a person is not able to focus and concentrate on the task before them. In this respect, students who are under stress are more anxious and therefore less productive. If a student is unable to concentrate, they will not be able to give the task their full attention. Females living in the University campus/students' residence facility, in the preclinical years and with lower academic achievement had higher scores (Fawzy & Hamed, 2017) which is in line with the results.

Results are in agreement with Beiter et al., (2015) who studied the top three concerns were academic performance, pressure to succeed, and post-graduation plans. Demographically, the most stressed, anxious, and depressed students were transfers, upperclassmen, and those living off-campus (Beiter et al., 2015). A cross-sectional study was conducted at higher secondary schools in Tamil Nadu. 1120 adolescents were included in the study after screening by MINI-kid tool.

Modified Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents was administered to all children. Results indicated that Adolescents who had academic stress were at 2.4 times (95% CI=0.9-2.4) ( $P < 0.001$ ) higher risk of depression than adolescents without academic stress (Jayanthi et al., 2015).

### **Depression and Academic Performance**

Findings suggest that there is a negative relationship between depression and academic performance. This means that increase in Depression lead to decrease in Academic performance of students while decrease in Depression lead to increase in Academic performance of students.

Results are in agreement with Sauer et al., (2001), recent events trigger depression in people who are already at risk because of past bad experiences or personal factors. In the case of students in school, the scholar's recent events could have been the failure to achieve some set marks and failure to get recognized and these are important elements in (Burton et al., 2004)

Results are in agreement with Wu et al., (2005), the depressed teen is often preoccupied with negative thoughts and feelings and finds it hard to put his full attention on schoolwork. In this respect, problems with concentration at school are one of the major complaints for teens experiencing depression. Results are also in agreement Currie & Stabile, (2006) stated that when a teen is depressed, he has little energy to apply to activities that he perceives as being stressful or of low interest. A depressed teen may withdraw from typical activities and become resistant to teacher requests to participate in classroom activities.

Results are in agreement with Lindert et al., (2013), Teenagers who are depressed often have great difficulty finishing their homework because they lack focus, energy and motivation. Most teenagers, of course, prefer to have no homework, but they do it because they know they

have to. They're also aware that if they don't get it done, they may pay a price in the future. The depressed teen is stuck in an unpleasant here and now. He's not thinking about the future, and when he does, it's without much hope or interest. Many depressed teens have difficulty getting up in the morning and going to school. Because they are tired and have a hard time dealing with stressful events, they may try to avoid school (Lindert et al., 2013).

## **Conclusion**

The study aimed at examining the relationship between academic stress, depression and academic performance among students at young Christian school, Najjanankumbi in Uganda. This is because

Academic stress does not lead to depression of students thus students who have academic stress have less or no chances of having depression.

Academic stress led to decrease in Academic performance of students while decrease in Depression lead to increase in Academic performance of students.

Depression led to decrease in Academic performance of students while decrease in Depression lead to increase in Academic performance of students.

## **Recommendations**

According to the study, this research recommends the following:

School teachers should ensure a good study environment for students which will reduce academic stress and Depression thus enable academic performance of students which in turn lead to high performance of both students and institution.

Academic institutions should provide some physical and recreational activities like sports and enough rest time for students so to reduce stress of their students which motivate students to stay engaged on academic activities and improve on Academic performance.

**Suggestions for Further Research.**

The study ignored a number of factors that attribute to academic performance for students thus future researchers should carry out a wide coverage to acquire more information about these factors all over the country. The need to involve sports and recreational activities to improve on academic performance and results should also be studied further.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Questionnaire

#### Introduction

Dear respondent, this questionnaire seeks to obtain data about Academic Stress, Depression and Academic Performance Among A level Students at Young Christian School, Najjanankumbi. The study is purely for research purposes and your responses was treated with confidentiality. I kindly request you to spare some time and respond as honestly as possible.

#### Section A: Personal Data

1. Age group in years

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a). Below 12 years  b). 13- 16 years  c). 17 – 19 years  d) 20 and above

2. Sex of respondent

a). Male

b). Female

3. Level of Education

a). S.5

b). S.6

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## Section B: Academic stress

Perceptions of Academic Stress (PAS) scale.

Please rate your perception about the following statements in contributing to academic stresses

|                   |          |          |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3        | 4     | 5              |

| No | Item  |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1  | Am confident that I was a successful student                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2  | Am confident that I was a successful in my future career          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3  | I can make academic decisions easily                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4  | The time allocated to classes and academic work is enough         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5  | I have enough time to relax after work                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6  | My teachers are critical of my academic performance               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7  | I fear failing courses this year                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8  | I think that my worry about examinations is weakness of character | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9  | Teachers have unrealistic expectations of me                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | The size of the curriculum (workload) is excessive                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11 | I believe that the amount of work assignment is too much          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12 | Am unable to catch up if getting behind the work                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13 | The unrealistic expectations of my parents stress me out          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14 | competition with my peers for grades is quite intense             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15 | The examination questions are usually difficult                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16 | Examination time is short to complete the answers                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17 | Examination times are very stressful to me out                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18 | Even if I pass my exams, am worried about getting a job           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19 | My teachers are critical of my academic performance               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Section C: Depression: Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ 9)

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems.

Circle where appropriate.

|            |              |                         |                  |
|------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
| 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3                |

| No | Items  | Responses |   |   |   |
|----|--|-----------|---|---|---|
|    |  | 0         | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1  | Little interest or pleasure in doing things  |           |   |   |   |
| 2  | Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless   |           |   |   |   |
| 3  | Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much  |           |   |   |   |
| 4  | Feeling tired or having little energy  |           |   |   |   |
| 5  | Poor appetite or overeating  |           |   |   |   |
| 6  | Feeling bad about yourself - or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down  |           |   |   |   |
| 7  | Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television  |           |   |   |   |
| 8  | Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite - being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual |           |   |   |   |
| 9  | Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way  |           |   |   |   |

### Section D: Academic Performance Scale

Instructions: Please answer each question using the 5-point scale to answer each question so that it accurately reflects what you do or have done as a student. Be as honest as possible because the information can be utilized to discover areas of strength.

|                |       |         |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
| 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 |

| No | Items  | Response |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|----------|---|---|---|---|
| 1  | I made myself ready in all my subjects.  | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2  | I pay attention and listen during every discussion.                                      | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3  | I want to get good grades in every subject.  | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4  | I actively participate in every discussion.  | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5  | I start papers and projects as soon as they are assigned.                                | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6  | I enjoy homework and activities because they help me improve my skills in every subject. | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7  | I exert more effort when I do difficult assignments.                                     | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8  | Solving problems is a useful hobby for me.   | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thank you very much for your cooperation.