Causes of Undergraduate Stress in Enugu State, Nigeria: Students Viewpoint

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Abstract: **Stress can explain some suicides among youths and students of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. Recently there has been reports of youths and undergraduates of tertiary educational institutions succumbing to stress and committing suicides, not only in Nigeria but around the world.**

We therefore set out to determine the viewpoint of students on the causes of stress among youth and undergraduates.

In a qualitative study using facilitated focus group discussions we identified and listed the causes of stress among the students at the Federal College of Dental Technology & Therapy, Trans-Ekulu Enugu, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Ituku-Ozalla Campuses.

Financial difficulties, academic issues, emotional and relationship issues, conflicts with school authorities, family and parental issues, welfare, state of municipal amenities, security concerns and cybernetwork and social media related issues were the chief causes of stress among the students.

If stressed students are recognized early, they could be helped to make appropriate adjustments; specialized institutional units, friends and better parenting could be useful.

Key Words: **Stress, Causes of Undergraduate Stress, Youth and Undergraduate Suicides, Undergraduate Stress and Suicides, Youth Stress and Depression**

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that leaves the individual frustrated, angry, or nervous (MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia 1997 – 2022). It is the reaction of the body to a challenge or a demand and prepares the individual to take remedial action, i.e., to fight or to flee (Melissa Conrad Stoppler, 2020).

An individual's response to stressful situations depends on the individual's coping capacity. For individuals who cope well, acute stress, particularly in short bursts, goes away quickly and may have a positive effect, making such individuals produce excellent results (Shelton, 2014; MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia 1997 - 2022). Some types of stresses may be positive and have beneficial effects while others may be harmful. Shelton (2014) posits that stress is not necessarily

as bad as some researchers think. Beneficial stress helps one to think about deadlines, stimulates one's behaviour and helps one to manage evolving situations effectively, rapidly, and more productively. From this point of view, moderate levels of stress facilitate, and motivates adaptation. The stress that comes with examinations goes away immediately the examination is over. For instance, fear of failure, though stressful, may make student strive to do well. This extra effort produces excellent results. This type of stress enables one avoid danger or meet a deadline. Chronic stress lasts for a longer time, at times for weeks, months or years. This happens in persons with defective coping mechanisms. Individuals so affected manifest psycho-somatic disorders such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes mellitus, obesity, acne menstrual disorders, anxiety, and depression. Those who were already suffering from these health conditions can get worse. The psychological conditions such as major depressions, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and suicides could completely immobilize the individual.

External and internal factors cause stress. The external factors are related to the physical and social environment including job situation, relationships with others, the home, and all situations in which one faces challenges, difficulties, and expectations during daily life (Melissa Conrad Stoppler, 2020). Stress causes the release of powerful neurochemicals and hormones that prepare the individual for remediation action, either to flight or to flee. If the individual fails to act the stress response can create or worsen associated health problems. Stress helps the individual learn or grow.

Stress and stressors abound in every sphere of human activity. Modern living increases stress levels. Educational environment, particularly, tertiary educational environment, seems to be exceptionally stressful (K.J. Reddy, K.R. Menon, and A Thattil, 2018). This may explain the high prevalence of sequels of stress such as suicide attempts and suicide in these institutions. Internal factors that influence the body's ability to respond to and manage the external precipitants include nutritional status, emotional well-being, overall health and fitness, and the amount of sleep and rest the individual gets.

Worldwide and in Enugu, Nigeria, there are recent reports of an upsurge in suicides among young persons (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2017; Christopher, 2017; Jotirmoy et al, 2016; Schmidke, Bille-Braha and De Leo, 2016; Caul, 2018; and Alabi et al 2014), particularly among students of tertiary educational institutions. The World Health Organization estimates that in 2019 more than 700,000 deaths were due to suicides and that among individuals aged between 15 – 29 years suicide is the fourth leading cause of death (WHO, 2021). Affected students could be at any academic level and in any discipline. Although genetic and constitutional factors are known to play causal roles in the occurrence of depressions and suicide, the distribution of suicide among students of tertiary educational institutions suggests that the academic environment and other related issues play significant roles. Some of the environmental stressors may be generally applicable, while others are institution specific, while others still are discipline specific. These environmental factors play the role of precipitants. There is a need to determine what these factors are in institutions in Enugu, Nigeria, to target interventional action against them. This will reduce the risk of suicides in these institutions.

This study aims to identify the stressors operating in tertiary institutions in Enugu area from the students' viewpoint to recommend remediation and as prelude for later detailed studies.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a qualitative study using the Focus Group Discussion Strategy to collect data. The study was conducted in September 2019 in two tertiary educational institutions in Enugu State, each of which had experienced suicides by students in the past year. These were the Federal College of Dental Technology and Therapy, Trans-Ekulu, Enugu, and the University of Nigeria Nsukka and Ituku-Ozalla campuses. In each institution, the Faculties and Departments to which the students who committed suicide within the last one year belonged were purposively selected. These were the Departments of Dental Technology and Dental Therapy in the Federal College of Dental Technology and Therapy; the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the College of Medicine, in the University of Nigeria Ituku-Ozalla, and in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus the Faculties of Education, Pharmacy and Engineering.

Students Selection Criteria and Sampling Technique

Student who had spent a minimum of 3 – 4 years in the institution were eligible to participate. This limitation was because of the belief that such students would have maximally experienced whatever academic and environmental factors that are operational in each institution and can therefore discuss them confidently. In each Faculty 12 students were randomly selected. This number was to enable the inclusion of as many and variable shades of opinion and experience as possible without making the study too large. A numbered class list was obtained from each final year class representative of the selected faculties/departments. The numbers were written on identically cut paper, shuffled, and placed in a box. Out of this, 12 were drawn for each class without looking by a researcher who did not participate in writing the numbers and cutting the paper. The matching names and details were copied from the list. The selected students were approached and recruited for the study.

Settings for the Discussions

The settings for the discussions were chosen deliberately and made comfortable and conducive for holding the discussion without distractions and disturbances. As regards sitting arrangements the participants and the seats were arranged in a circle instead of the classroom fashion. This made for better and informal interactive setting.

Informed Consent and Discussion Procedure

In each setting, interaction started with confidence building measures, explanation of the purpose of the discussion, obtaining of the students consent to participate and be recorded in that order. Assurance of confidentiality and no limits were set as to what any person can say in relation to the subject of interest. To standardize the discussion in each setting, facilitators used structured, open-ended questions to stimulate and direct the discussions with the students. The students were asked to identify and discuss all the factors they knew that produce stress on students which they have observed during their stay and studies in their respective institutions; to discuss the effect of the stresses on the students; to discuss the underlying causes and to discuss what the students think could be done to prevent, control and eliminate the stressors.

Contribution of Researchers

The discussions with students of the Faculties of Education, Engineering and Pharmacy were facilitated by EIE and CJC, while the discussions in the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Federal College of Dental Technology and Therapy were facilitated by EIE, COE and UFE.

III. RESULTS

Table 1 gives the age/sex distribution of the discussants.

Table 1. Age/Sex Distribution of the Discussants			
Age Range (yrs.)	Male	Female	Total
21 – 25	18	21	39
26 – 30	8	12	20
30 – 35	6	6	12
>35	1	0	1
Total	33	39	72

Their mean age was 28.64±11.08 (Males 26.30±3.99; Females 26.0±3.55). The discussants were of age to make valid assessment of their situation and discuss same.

Table 2 Lists the issues Causing Stress Among the Students

	Group	Specific Issues Mentioned
Table 2. List of issues Causing Stress among Students		
1	Financial Issues	1. Tuition & Sundry School Fees seen to be too high, hence students are not always able to pay fees timely. 2. Other Financial Demands on Students, for instance, staff force students to pay up to N1000.00 for laboratory practical materials per laboratory session despite paying up to N5000.00 for laboratory in their consolidated school fees. Parents, not knowing about these do not provide for them and feeding money therefore goes into paying for these. 3. Cost of Providing Information Technology thought to be exploitative because management force students to pay for School IT which management does not provide on their campus. 4. Economic Hardship faced by Parents and Sponsors, and Parental Poverty create a feeling of financial insecurity and stress. 5. The students may start part-time jobs to complement their upkeep or borrow from friends.
2	Academic Issues	1. Academic Calendar are poorly planned result in clashes in the lecture and examination timetables. Students run from one classroom to another or forced to choose one lecture or examination over another. In the case of the latter, failure and carryover of the course is the result. 2. Late release/publication of course outlines, lecture, and examination timetables, students therefore unable to plan their lives and programmes. 3. Lecturers not attending classes when scheduled. The lecturers reschedule the missed lectures and practical session, rushing through the full semester work only a few days before examinations, not minding odd and irregular days such as Saturdays and Sundays. Inadequate time for imbibing and consolidating knowledge before examination resulting in high failure rates. The greedy and unscrupulous lecturers thus create fertile conditions to further exploit anxious students. They then demand various sums of money or other gratifications for pass marks. 4. Lecturers Threatening Students with failure of the courses taught by those lecturers. 5. Sexual harassment and demands for money and or sex for marks. 6. Irrelevant Courses in the curriculum add unnecessary extra academic load. 7. Innate Inability to Cope with normal and routine academic work due to being underage, emotionally, and psychologically immature. 8. Persistent Poor Academic Performance. Aided by poor study amenities and environment, this leads to fear of examination, repeated failure of examinations, low self-esteem, depression, and suicide.
3	Emotional & Relationship issues	1. Being letdown, hurt or jilted by a lover may lead to emotional breakdown, depression, suicidal thoughts, and suicide. 2. Strong Rebukes by Parents, teachers, and peers.
4	Issues with School Authorities and Management	1. Management, which is not friendly to students, makes decisions on issues concerning the students, who are subsequently forced to comply, resulting in stress and restiveness. 2. Denial of rights and privileges – actual or perceived. 3. Premonition that Staff and Management will not do the "right" thing when issues arise, making students bottle u their grievances rather than complain and seek remediation. 4. Previous unfulfilled promises and reneging on agreements by management making students lack trust and lose confidence in management. Students have also accused the Students Union Government of compromising and selling out the students. 5. Unclear Lines of communication between students and management when personal issues arise. The students bottle up their complaints, delaying resolution. 6. Principal Officers not being always available to complain to when the need arise.
5	Family & Parenting Issues	1. Welfare situation of parents and family members such as sickness are physically, psychologically, and emotionally stressful and unsettling for students. 2. Broken homes without clear plans on how to take care of the children result in lack of adequate parental support and create insecurity. For upkeep needs the parents of children of such families refer the children from one parent to another resulting in frustrations and stress. 3. Parents/Sponsors unemployment and loss of jobs 4. Break in Communication from home for extended periods results in worry and increased sensitivity. 5. Sudden Death of parents/sponsors or relevant family members created insecurity. 6. Irresponsibility in one parent abandons the burden of parenting to one parent who is often unable to cope. 7. Generational Issues limiting understanding and communication with parents. Some children are unable to approach their parents to discuss their worries, challenges, and plans.
6	Issues Concerning Students Welfare & Municipal Amenities	1. Poor or unavailability of Recreation Amenities. 2. Cost of Feeding being too high 3. Inadequate, unsafe, and overcrowded hostel accommodation. 4. Poor Environmental Sanitation with leaking, overflowing and smelly sewers. 5. Poor lighting and blackouts in the hostels and classrooms creating insecurity. 6. Breeds irresponsible and socially unacceptable behaviors and creates low self-esteem.
7	General Security Issue	1. Confrontation with Senior Students and Lecturers. 2. Strange Elements residing alongside bona fide students in the hostels with connivance of highly placed institutional authorities. 3. Stories of Spiritual attacks, Actual Physical attacks, violence rapes and murders, particularly at night in the poorly lit classrooms and reading rooms and hostels.
8	Finding Meaning in Life	1. Inability of some students to find meaning in life leading to loss of interest in life, depressions, suicidal thoughts, and suicides. 2. Being unable to find answers to questions about life lure students into cultism, use of hard drugs with increased risk of intentional and unintentional overdose. 3. Adverse peer group influence
9	Issues with Time	Incompetence with time management due to being underage or immature causes inability to complete scheduled activities for

	Management	the day and semester, causing panic, loss of self-confidence and stress when examinations fall due.
10	Issues with Transportation	1. Unsafe transportation from hostel to places of learning using irregularly available rickety and poorly maintained public transport. 2. The students may become maimed or killed in accidents. 3. Risks of exposure to armed robbery attacks and kidnap for ransom. 4. Risk of contracting dangerous infections while sharing conveyance with patients with yet undiagnosed infections such as Lassa fever and Ebola.
11	Cybernetworks & Social Issues	1. Paradoxical role of social media noted 2. Monitored well, people in need of help have used social media to call attention of friends and family to their need for help and psychological support early enough to avert depression and suicide attempts. 3. Cyberbullying and threats could drive some to withdrawal, depression, and suicide.
12	Health Status Issues	1. Stigmatization when diagnosed of disease considered to be "bad", such as HIV. 2. Stigmatization by unwanted pregnancy authored by boyfriend or lecturer in a sex for marks arrangement creates so much shame that student, not even being able to face the parents, quietly commits suicide as the effortless way out.
13	Issues with Official Communication Avenues	1. At home, parents are too distant and busy to spend time to discuss children's challenges, fears, worries and stresses. 2. Department of Student Affairs and Academic Advising Schemes fail to provide dependable persons to talk to and receive advice and psychological support in confidence. 3. Students unable to carry the burden alone succumb to depression and suicidal tendencies.

The methodology does not allow for quantification and ranking of the various issues. The students demonstrated a clear understanding of the fact that ability to withstand, handle, or cope with stress varies from individual to another. While one individual may crumble under some stressful situation, another is gingered by the same situation to reach for the skies. This also occurs among students.

Financial issues are particularly perceived as being stressful. When parents and sponsors are facing economic hardship, unemployment, or loss of their job, meeting up with their children and wards need become extremely had and some have nowhere else to turn to. Inability to pay tuition and sundry fees in time result in turning away of students from practical sessions, classrooms, and examinations. For such students, the weeks and days leading to the examinations are the most stressful. Available parttime jobs include menial labour at construction sites. It is important to note that those who borrow from friends and are unable to repay at due time resort to lying to and evading the creditors, frequently missing lectures, continuous assessment tests and examinations, with failure as consequence. Unyielding pressure from the creditors lead to stress and depressions and have caused some to commit suicide.

Among the academic issues, threats of failure, fear of carrying over and repeating the courses taught by the dreaded lecturers do stress students significantly. As a student put it, "You will not know what you did to them, and they will be threatening that you will fail their course. At times they mean that, and students fail. There are students who consequently carryover courses for five years such that when their mates have graduated, they are still in school. Most of such students may dropout and some take their lives because of the shame to himself and the entire household." Students dread those they term "sadistic lectures" who delight in seeing students suffer and fail their courses, who in a class of two hundred students may return pass grades for only five students.

Demands for money, sexual harassment and sex for marks/grades are particularly demeaning and degrading for the students, especially the female students. As a young lady put it "old lecturers are harassing female students. If sex is not involved, they will not pass examination. At times they say sex or money. The amount will be difficult for the poor student to come by. That makes life difficult for the student. When she does not provide either of the requests, she already knows she has failed the course. The student may decide to take her life instead of going through those stresses. She may decide to give sex and she gets a terrible disease or pregnancy may occur with its attendant scandal and these may lead to her taking her life because of the stigma that follow." Worse still, the discussants feel that there are no safe, official, and confidential avenues to ventilate their experience and worries with their academics. They consequently bottle these up. The pent-up fear and anxiety results in depression and violence against others and self.

Persistent poor academic performance may result from an innate inability, though. The student may have employed mercenaries to sit and pass the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) based on which such a student secured admission, usually to study one of the high-profile professional courses. In the university, without such help, the student drops to what is normal for him/her, which by peer standards, is deficient performance and or failure. When expulsion for academic reasons stares such a student in the face, shame and anxiety concerning what people would think or say makes such students decide to commit suicide. Forced change of degree programme due to deficient performance and unacceptably low CGPA to continue in the preferred academic programme has similar effect.

Emotional and relationship issues were more relevant to the female than the male students. For instance, not having suitors or promising and stable relationships when friends and peers are getting married cause feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and depression.

The discussants were particularly irked by the unavailability of official avenues for ventilating their worries and experiences, particularly by the Student Affairs Department.

"They just don't care" said one student. While discussing the issue of molestation of students another student lamented, "we have a body, Student affairs. At times you complain of your difficulties, and they don't care. Even my Academic Adviser – the impression I got from him the first day I went to him was horrible. Since then, I have never gone to him, and this is my fourth year in …. You don't even know who to talk to. So, Student Affairs should also be serious in looking and taking care of what goes on around students and their difficulties."

IV. DISCUSSION

This simple study was purposed to identify and list as exhaustively as possible, all the factors that in the viewpoint of the students, cause stress among students in tertiary educational institutions in Enugu, Nigeria. The researchers did not intend to measure the stress levels among the students nor the relative prevalence of the numerous factors. In terms of the set objectives, therefore, the study revealed that, from the viewpoint of students, many stressors operate among the students of tertiary institutions and these factors may contribute to the prominent levels of suicide attempts and suicides among the students. The factors are not limited to academic issues but span through all facets of living. As the list shows (Table 2), the causes of stress range from financial issues, academic issues through emotional and relationship issues to environmental and infrastructural issues. Other researchers had worked on specific causes of stress in students with different objectives and using different methodologies, hence we cannot compare their results with ours. For instance, Reddy et al (2018), analysed the differences in dimensions of academic stress across different streams of students in a university. They specifically chose to study the contribution of personal inadequacy, fear of failure, interpersonal difficulties, teacher pupil relationships and inadequate study facilities to overall academic stress. Such a study could be a future use of the findings of our study, in which case researchers could take one or more of our individual findings for further exploration.

Financial Issues

Few students have enough financial resources to meet all their needs. This often reflects the economic status of their parents and sponsors, who may not have enough money to provide all the needs of their children and wards. Many find it more convenient to dole out the meagre pocket money, tuition, and other fees to their children in aliquots and it takes a while to be able to gather enough money for the next disbursement. At intervals, these students may be in absolute lack and this is stressful. This is worse for the students who are training themselves, and the system often has no inbuilt mechanisms to assist such students to get around their financial difficulties. Many students borrow money from other students and at times are not able to pay back on schedule. When this happens, it results in the feeling of shame, embarrassment, and low self-esteem. The student becomes depressed, humiliated, and stops mixing with others, and this often leads to total withdrawal, and suicide.

Financial difficulties are known to affect health and had been identified as common among college and university students. Up to a third of American College and University students face financial difficulties within the academic year (Trombitas K, 2012). Up to 74% start part time jobs therefore, to help ameliorate the effects of the financial difficulties. Financial stress need not be negative always. Financial stress could motivate affected students to learn frugality and to live within their means. It can also teach prioritization of needs, realizing that money is hard to come by. Parents should teach children to prioritize needs earlier in life to prepare them for the vicissitudes of life later.

Academic issues

Academic factors including the pressure to perform constitute major stresses on university students (Becky, 2015). When these pressures become overwhelming the results include distractions, depression, withdrawal, shame, suicide attempts and suicide in students who find no way of escape. Stressed students may bottle-up their experience hoping it will go away, but it does not. Stressed students should be encouraged to discuss their difficulties with parents, other family members, friends, academic advisers, University student well-being services or Dean, students' affairs (Smith, 2018).

Related to this, we believe that friends, companions, and family should learn to look out for each other. Students should be encouraged to talk to their friends when they notice tale-tale signs of depression, such as withdrawal and other behavioural signs. Recently, social media contacts have noticed unusual posts by friends who later took their lives. Early intervention when these are noticed could save lives.

Emotional and Relationship Issues

Although the primary objective of school is to receive education, it can also be a place to develop relationships with different people (Alyssa, 2020). As human beings have individual differences in every aspect of life, so do they react differently to emotional challenges, and university students are not different. A student hurt emotionally or let down by a lover or one with whom the student is in a relationship with, may manifest stress that could lead to depression. When a student is old enough to go to University, he or she is assumed to be mature enough to control and manage his or her emotions and his or her relationship issues. If this assumption holds, it is expected that when an unexpected behaviour of the other sex manifests he or she will not be overwhelmed. Unfortunately, physical, and physiological maturity do not equate to emotional and psychological maturity. There is a significant negative corelation between emotional maturity and stress (Masaud A, 2015). When emotional maturity increases, stress decreases; when emotional maturity decreases, stress increases. Emotional and psychological maturity are essential in relationships with other people, especially in the school or university environment and will help students cope with the regulations and burdens of tertiary education. Enforcing the age limit rules strictly will reduce the

risks of admitting emotionally and psychologically immature students and attenuate the associated consequences.

Issues with School Authority and Management

Students keep demanding to have more say on all issues concerning their education and life in the school. The fact remains that in a tertiary institution, there must be authority and management as well as students and these two must interface. These interactions are usually crisis-ridden with students coming out of each crisis often worse off. Management, making and implementing policies unmindful of the stresses and ordeals the students are experiencing increase the stresses (Ezepue 2015). Our focus groups complained lamented being forced to comply with decisions made without students' input. To the students, this amounts to denial of their rights. Students will bottle up their complaints for a while but when this becomes unbearable may declare a conflict. It had been opined that University Managers are trained to care and show concern for happenings in the University environment (Ezepue, 2015). The same author observed that students pursue their rights, irrespective of the cost to them overall. In Universities, Student Union Government (SUG) has the mandate to negotiate and bargain for the students' collective welfare and rights, as opposed to individual students "battling" against University Management. Management should, therefore, exploit this established avenue. Management should consider beforehand and engage with the students while making policies, and not force students to comply with mandates that they did not contribute to making. In addition to this, there should be standing arrangements and lines of communication between the students and the management, to enable students make complaints about personal issues. Through the Department of Students Affairs students can get the help they need, and the management could also be fully involved in making life easier for the students. This will bridge the gap between the authorities and the students, eliminating friction in the system (Ezepue, 2015). This calls for appropriate and effective communication between the students and the authorities. When the students' needs are met through effective communication, stress, depression, and the consequent challenges are reduced.

Family and Parental Issues

It is obvious from the interaction with students that family background, parental and parenting issues could produce great stress on students. The home environment of each child is an important determinant of what the child will become in the future. A transactional model of development posits a reciprocal interaction between child and parent factors in the development of temperament (Pesonen A, 2018). The home environment provides learning facilities, support, and encouragement the child needs, when appropriate, so that the child's life, academic life, and performance will not be negatively impacted. A structurally disorganized home could result from factors such as the death of either parent, divorce, separation, desertion, and childbearing outside wedlock. Family and or bi-parental support cannot be provided for a

child raised in such a family. Such a child may not find it easy to cope emotionally, psychologically, and physically, and becomes depressed because of lack of support or supplies from the parents. However, although the progress of some children stops because of these parental factors, there are children from similar family backgrounds or structures who still become successful in life. This shows that it is a matter of adjustment. Well-adjusted children may overcome the stresses of the home /family environment and do well in life (Vandervalk I et al, 2007). Parental poverty is very stressing to children Ahmed Z. S, 2005). It makes children insecure and unstable. Unguarded such children easily fall into bad company, cultism, child trafficking, kidnapping, drug peddling, and other crimes. Some fortunate ones may run into well-meaning people or wealthy individuals who will help provide the psychological support and other needs lacking in the child's home. Such children subsequently become successful while others, lacking such help, may end up in prison or death. Training in steadfastness in all things, making do with whatever is available or whatever parents could afford, training in prioritization of needs right from the homes may ameliorate this. Students may also engage in suitable paid part-time jobs to help sustain them while in school.

Issues of Students Welfare and Municipal Amenities

This study identified inadequate and absence of students' welfare and municipal amenities as being sources of stress on the students. The rights of individuals to quality environment and responsibility of management or authority to maintain and protect the quality of the environment had been discussed by an earlier author (Mbalisi, 2016). Unhealthy environment could be frustrating to students and lead to reactional depression. Related to the issues of welfare and municipal amenities is the issue of infrastructure. It has been emphasised that the lack of appropriate infrastructure can lead to serious disruptive behaviours among students, resulting in maladjusted behaviour (Ogbonnaya, 2016). Similarly, secret cult activities in schools were enhanced by lack of school facilities. To solve the problem of poor infrastructure in schools, students form associations, interest groups and at the same time cult groups; students in search of assistance get involved with these groups, some of which are criminal gangs, which exhibit destructive behaviours such as truancy, fighting, stubbornness, stealing, beating younger ones, etc. These inordinate activities increase anxiety levels and feelings of insecurity within the school community. Even students not involved directly in these could become stressed.

General Security Issues

On the issue of general security risks posed to internal security in our tertiary institutions by strange elements, the study did not find much unusual. The universities being public places, strangers may have genuine business to do there. Contractors come seeking contracts, merchants come in hawking their wares, prospective students come in to find out want they need to do to gain admission. These are daytime activities and by night only bona fide students should be seen

in the halls of residence and reading rooms and staff in the staff quarters. The revelation by this study of alien elements who are not students nor have anything to do with the university residing officially in the halls of residence is very alarming and could create anxiety and stress with a feeling of insecurity among the students-whether males or females. The school authority should expel these alien elements from the halls of residence, find out and discipline the staff who colluded to bring these aliens into the halls of residence, and take steps to prevent re-invasion by these aliens.

It is the duty of the university authority to device means of detecting these aliens and uphold good and tight security around the student's hostel and all areas and roads leading to the classrooms for the protection and wellbeing of staff and students of the institution. Security is an assurance of the provision of protection from sources of danger, violence, and fear: a requirement for the development of an individual's full potentials (Alemika, 2019). Security means more than the absence of conflict, and achieving lasting peace requires a broader vision encompassing areas such as education, health, democracy, human rights, and environment safety (Annan, 2000). Human security is a product of interactions of these interrelated factors which mutually reinforce each other. School authorities should appropriate these concepts and do all possible to ensure adequate security in the institutions. Besides, fencing the compound, repairing breaches on the walls, lighting of the streets and classrooms at night and clearing the bushes along the roads, which will make lurking miscreants visible from a distance will also enhance security. Lastly investing in close circuit television monitoring of the risky areas and roads would help convey a feeling of adequate security to the students and staff of the institutions. In the hostels, the use of technology such as fingerprints and facial recognition applications to let residents in and out of the hostels will also help.

Finding Meaning in Life

The focus groups revealed that some of their peers who are stressed, depressed, and have suicidal tendencies find little or no meaning in life because of the kind of exposure they had. Such students lacked proper guidance from infancy as they grew. Such guidance would prevent aimless roaming about and enable the child to find meaning in life quite early. When a child listens to people, especially parents, who communicate useful ideas, he may come to value life. Contrariwise, parents could at times bring confusion into the life of the child who is trying to find meaning in life. When a child is living a life dictated by others, it becomes hard to find the purpose of its own life (Gomez, 2012). For instance, parents may want a child to become a doctor, lawyer, engineer, or any of the high-profile professions, yet the child has a powerful desire to do something else, say go into acting or music. Such children may ignore their own desires and inclinations and follow the parents' dictates, living their lives for someone else, and this brings regrets in the end. To help the child find meaning in life, knowing that everyone is unique, certain dictates of

others must be ignored, fear of the unknown, fear of failing or fear of not being in control notwithstanding. Strong and happy people with meaningful lives tend to be adventurers and it is fulfilling to live one's purpose every single day, following one's intuition.

For students to find meaning in life communication is important. However, parents and school administrators should be mindful of what they communicate to children and students. Communication is effective to the extent that both the sender and the receiver have a high agreement in their understanding of transmitted messages (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). The school administrators must remember that effective communication involves transmitting understanding as well as messages, and the messages should be in simple understandable language to make the required impact on the student in question.

Incompetence in Time Management

It is not surprising that our discussants identified incompetence in time management as a cause of stress among students of tertiary institutions. In the primary and secondary schools, someone more mature and experienced planned and helped the students manage time. In the university, it is assumed that the student being now mature, can manage his/her time, knowing the value of doing the right things at the right time. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, not all undergraduates are mature enough to do this. Even established graduates have challenges with time management and special training is often required to help people manage time efficiently and effectively. Keeping and maintaining a diary is a way of being on top of one's appointments and undergraduates may be encouraged to use this tool. With a diary one would know when one has become overbooked and prioritize what to do and decide what to say no to. Managing time well will enable the student to conquer fear, have self-confidence and subdue unhealthy and unfavourable peer groups influences and be ready for examinations whenever these are scheduled. Stress will be reduced, consequently.

Transportation Issues

The discussants recognised transportation challenges as a major source of stress among students. Other researchers had also found that transportation is a major problem facing students who need to attend classes at specific times, particularly, when the school is located some distance away from their homes (Mugoro, 2014). Students and individuals who live at some distance from their place of study, work or business zones respectively need efficient and effective transport to move quickly and safely from hostel and residences to place of study or work location (Akpoghomeh, 2012). For students, the provision of school buses make life easier in these circumstances.

The larger the institution the greater the transportation challenge. We recognise three distinct types of transportation challenges. The first concerns students who live off-campus

and must contend with the city traffic to move from their various residences (even when these are university-run, so-called off-campus hostels) into the university campus for their academic activities. The second transportation challenge is like the first and occurs in multi-campus institutions where students may have academic activities on different campuses situated at various parts of the city. In these instances, the city traffic affects movement even when a school bus is provided. This is worse when the students must arrange and or use public transport for the needful shuttling from campus to campus. The consequences remain lateness to and missing academic activities in addition to the other dangers revealed by the discussants. Among our discussants, this scenario is observed among students of the Faculty of Medical Sciences who shuttle daily between the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital old site in Enugu Urban and the new site at Ituku-Ozalla, almost thirty kilometres away. When school buses are not provided for this category of need, students are forced to use commercial buses which exposes them to dangers, including robbery attacks, contagious and infectious diseases in addition to delays on the roads leading to lateness to lectures and other school activities. This stresses students, particularly, when such delays lead to missing lectures and academic activities, threatening the attainment of the mandatory 75% attendance that is a prerequisite for sitting examinations.

The third is the problem of large campuses with academic activities taking place in different lecture halls and laboratories located at various parts of the campus significantly distant from each other. Many students crisscross the campus several times each day. Lecture timetabling does not always allow for the time needed by the students to move from one venue to the other with the same consequent lateness to lectures and missing of academic activities. This situation is prevalent at the Nsukka campus of the University of Nigeria. Subsidized intra campus shuttle services that move at regular intervals between the different academic areas and halls /residence will help alleviate this. Times of departures from whichever venue and time of arrivals should be synchronized with the lecture timetable for this scheme to be effective. Such attention to students' transportation challenges would eliminate much of the stress students are exposed to.

Cyber Network and other Social Media Issues

Cyber Networking and the use of social media recently came into being after the introduction of GSM, the Global System for Mobile Communications. In addition to institutional exploitation associated with internet services provision the discussants identified cyberbullying and threats as contributing to stress among students. Lack of regulation of social media makes this worse. The solution still rests with digital technology. The vendors can develop digital software/robots that can monitor posts in the system, pulldown offensive ones, stopping them from causing harm, while still maintaining confidentiality as no human being can interfere with this system.

Another issue with social media is the distances it creates between individuals geographically in proximity. Consequently, children, young people, adults, couples, families may be in close physical proximity, yet distant because of their engagement in independent social media activities (Umeano, 2019); Support from family members is therefore lost for students under stress.

The fourth issue with social media is its time consuming and addictive nature. Time for useful academic activity is lost to social media activities. The result is inadequate sleep and inadequate preparation for examinations, resulting in fear, panic, and stress as examination dates approach. Failure results in depression and suicide.

Health Status

Our discussants recognised the depressing effect of certain health conditions such as contracting HIV or other infectious diseases, and unwanted pregnancies. Unwanted pregnancy had always been associated with truncated education, poverty for the young mother, shame, and social stigma. Stigma and discrimination exist at diverse levels and constitute barriers to the full involvement of people living with HIV and AIDS (Rotimi and Gordon, 2012) in communal life. People living with HIV and other key affected populations are shunned by families, peers, and the wider community, while others face poor treatment in educational and work settings leading to psychological damage.

The fear of stigma causes denial, secrecy, depression, and shame. Students of higher institutions face similar consequences as the public. Some students, without proper care or counselling may decide that suicide is the easier way out. Students should be counselled on these health issues not only during orientation but throughout their stay in the institution. To be aware that such issues occur, management of institutions should develop and establish systems to help and support students faced with such conditions.

Lack of Avenues to Ventilate Students Feelings and Experiences

Of all the views of the discussants on stresses and stressors in tertiary educational institutions, one of the most disturbing is their feeling that no one, not their parents, not the government, nor the authorities of the institution, cares.

Support from the institutions' authorities will help to remove an array of obstacles to student success and other functions on campus. Problems of students could never be resolved by working with one university office alone, but there should be an interconnection of efforts of all offices responsible for students' welfare to minimize problems in the students' environment.

V. CONCLUSION

The study identified the factors that stress students of tertiary institutions in this locality. These issues range from financial difficulties, academic and parental challenges through brushes

with school authorities to personal and individual constitutional issues. It is possible to identify stressed students early and help them overcome the stressors thereby preventing depression, which may lead to suicide attempts and suicides. This could be facilitated by specialized institutional units, friends and peers watching out for ominous signs in one another and more attentive parenting.

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