

# Major stressors among um students essay



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BUSTER**

Stress refers to that quality of experienced, produced through a person-environment transaction that, through either over arousal or under arousal, results in psychological or physiological distressed. (Aldwin 2007) Stress is inevitable feature of work and personal life. It is neither inherently bad nor destructive. It can be a factor in a variety of physical and emotional illnesses, which could be treated. Many stress symptoms are mild and can be managed by over the counter medications.

However, because of the many complicated aspects of the modern living, some people find it hard to cope with stressful demands of society, thus making them psychologically, emotionally, physically, and socially affected. Many people all over the world develop emotional and physical problems as a result of stress. These difficulties may be temporary or enduring and may be caused by factors at work or out of the workplace. No one is immune to stress for it affects employees at all levels or organization. However, when it is too severe or long lasting, it can negatively affect both the workers and the employer (Newstrom and Davis, 1997).

Stress permeates almost every aspect of society and has now become a normal experience for most Americans. Although stress was called the “The epidemic of the 80’s” by Time magazine, stress levels in America since then have continued to rise (America’s No. 1 Health Problem, 2009). A 2007 national survey conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA) found that one-third of all Americans live with extreme levels of stress and that about half of Americans (48 percent) believed that their stress levels had increased in the five years prior to the study (Stress, 2007).

Physical and psychological symptoms of stress were also found to be increasing in participants. According to Russ Newman, APA executive director for professional practice, in reference to the 2007 national survey: “We know that stress is a fact of life and some stress can have a positive impact; however, the high stress levels that many Americans report experiencing can have long-term health consequences, ranging from fatigue to obesity and heart disease” (Stress, 2007). There are many known negative implications of stressful life circumstances on personal health.

Temporary stress can cause elevated blood pressure, headaches, stomach aches, sleeping problems, and chest pains. Stress also has been shown to inhibit the immune system, leading to more colds and sickness in times of stress. Further, chronic stress can severely impact both mental and physical health. It can decrease the likelihood of individuals to practice healthy habits (including eating a nutritious diet, obtaining adequate sleep, avoiding smoking and drinking in excess, and fostering positive relationships).

Distress, a form of stress that negatively impacts the body, is associated with many serious and deadly health risks including various cancers, cirrhosis of the liver, heart disease, lung problems, and in some instances, suicide (Chakraborty, 2005). In universities, colleges and schools, most students experience the difficulties of balancing time with the many subject matters requiring reports, term papers, exams and quizzes as well as the continuing demand for extra-curricular activities (Matela & Santos, 1999). Students concentrate on these things while at the same time encounter different predicaments.

These problems may be financially, emotionally or physically. All students have to face the demands of attaining academic standards. Proof of ability is usually tested by written examination, papers or assessment in an oral examination (Ayson, 2000). These things altogether give the student a stressful life. In the University of Mindanao, many students are so much affected by stress. Although students have different courses, they encounter almost all the same problems and all of them experience different stress levels. Yet, there are speculations and perceptions that there are groups which are more prone to stress.

**Significance of the Study** The results of this study are important to the academic and non-academic performance of University of Mindanao students. **Conceptual Framework Academic and Non-Academic Performance of UM Students Major Stressors: Money, Professors, Subjects, Relationships, Family** **Definition of Terms** Money. College is expensive. While some students enjoy financial help from their parents and others qualify for sufficient financial aid to pay for their college experience, many others struggle to balance a low-paying job with their already significant obligations.

Students who make too little money to pay for their tuition, book costs and other living expenses, or those who make just enough, suffer from stress due to the financial problems they face. **Subjects.** Consistently poor academic performance leads to the threat of failure and expulsion, a large contribution to student stress levels. One of the side effects of this kind of stress is depression, which can lead to absenteeism or feelings of hopelessness that interfere with effective study habits and then further weaken academic achievement. **Relationship.**

Most adolescents are urgent to develop a relationship with the opposite sex. As there are no absolute ways for making friends with the opposite sex, many of them usually do not know what to do when in face of the opposite sex. Besides, adolescents often suffer stress induced by “ a sense of insecurity” when they are dating someone. They are worried that they may lose their dates and their parents or friends may have negative views of their dates. Therefore, developing a heterosexual relationship is a challenge and also a stressor for adolescents (Wang and Ko, 1999).

Family. Families with constant conflicts are characterized by a lack of parent-child communication and in-depth understanding of each other’s expectations (Liu and Chen 1997). Review of Related Literature Although the majority of discussion about the effect of stress on health has been focused on older populations, younger generations are already demonstrating risks for future health problems associated with stress. Many recent studies have addressed this concern through research into youth stress specifically.

A recent study performed by Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behaviour at UCLA investigated the likelihood of current stress among youth impacting adult health. Blood samples from the 69 teenage participants revealed that higher levels of stress are associated with higher levels of inflammation, indicating a greater risk for heart disease in adulthood (Wheeler, n. d. ). Even more unsettling was that the physiological impacts of these stress levels were already showing.

The causes and implications of these stress levels require more investigation, as most previous research conducted on the correlation

between high stress levels and health problems has been focused on adulthood. Lack of sufficient research into the effect of stress on younger generations could prompt a failure to prevent even more serious future health risks than currently exhibited by older generations. Many studies have attempted to determine the major sources of stress among college students.

The 1999 Student Stress Survey identified daily struggles, as opposed to major occurrences in life, as accounting for greater stress among students. It also found some of the more prevalent stressors to be changes in sleeping or eating patterns, increased workloads, vacations, and new responsibilities (Ross, Niebling, & Heckart, 1999). Further studies noted correlations between stress and personal behaviours. Students who were more stressed were found to have lower self-esteem and less awareness of their health (Hudd, Dumlao, & Erdmann-Sager, 2000).

There was also a correlation between stress and time management, with increased management skills leading to decreased stress levels (Misra & McKean, 2000). In another study, first-year undergraduate students at a university showed improvement in academic, social, and personal adjustment as stress levels decreased over a ten-week period (Friedlander, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007). Previous researchers have investigated the effect of particular stressors on specific healthy behaviours.

Healthy behaviours can be defined as those actions taken to avoid disease and illness and to maintain or prompt good health (Farlex, 2009). Increased stress has been identified as a predictor of unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking, drinking, eating poorly, infrequent exercising, and obtaining

inadequate amounts of sleep (Von Ah, Ebert, & Ngamvitroj, 2004). Kandiah, Yale, & Jones (2006), when researching the eating habits of female undergraduate students, found that 81 percent of students' appetites changed when they were stressed.

Only 33 percent of all the students reported eating healthily when stressed, while the rest ate more sweet and fast foods. Ginsberg (2006) found a similarly unhealthy relationship between stress and sleeping habits, reported in the study "Academic Worry as a Predictor of Sleep Disturbance in College Students." In this study, students were assessed on the Academic Stress Scale, the Sleep Disturbance Ascribed to Worry Scale, and on usual lengths of sleep periods.

The Academic Stress Scale was developed by the degree of participant stress in response to physical, psychological, and psychosocial factors, while the Sleep Disturbance Ascribed to Worry Scale is an efficient method of identifying the extent of sleep disturbance based on participant rankings of five items pertaining to worry and sleeping patterns. Based on these scales, the participants in the study exhibited a negative relationship between academic stress and length of sleep (Ginsberg, 2006). Long term, these unhealthy habits can be extremely dangerous.

Despite the above literature on stress and its correlating health risks, little work has been focused on determining how stressful students find sources of stress to be and how all these sources of stress correlate to a variety of unhealthy habits. Hudd et al. (2000) found "more stressed" students to be more likely to exercise infrequently and to eat junk food, while "less

stressed” students were more likely to have healthy habits, such as eating nutritious foods. More research is required in order to develop adequate programs to decrease stress levels on college campuses. This study was designed to address this issue.