

## **Academic Stress among Home Economics Students in Higher Education: A Case of Colleges of Education in Nigeria**

Ezenwanne, Dorothy Nkem

*Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe Anambra State Nigeria.*

---

**Abstract:** *The development in students of the attributes of productivity, creativity, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning is recognized internationally as a common goal of education systems. The field of Home Economics —is no exception to this trend as it is highly relevant to individual, family and societal development. However, academic stress among Home Economics students could threaten their achievement of the aforementioned goals. Hence, the purpose of this study was to determine the academic stressors experienced by the Home Economics students in Colleges of Education in Anambra State of Nigeria. The study, which was based on two research questions and two null hypotheses, adopted the descriptive survey design. Using proportionate random sampling technique, 180 Home Economics students enrolled for three-year Nigerian Certificate on Education (NCE) programme in two Colleges of Education in Anambra State of Nigeria, were used in the study. A researcher-developed questionnaire containing 35 items was used to collect data. Mean ratings and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while the Analysis of Variance was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. The findings of the study indicated that irrespective of the year of study, the Home Economics Students encountered physical-technical and socio-interpersonal stressors in their academic pursuits. These academic stressors were mostly related to course processes. These findings imply that the students encounter a lot of stress which could have adverse effects on their learning and acquisition of Home Economics skills. The situation may worsen if current physical-technical and socio-interpersonal stressors are not ameliorated. Some recommendations for improvement were given.*

**Keywords:** *Academic stress, home economics, academic processes, learning experiences, creativity.*

---

### **I. Introduction**

The development in students of the attributes of productivity, creativity, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning is recognized internationally as a common goal of education systems. The field of Home Economics — is no exception to this trend as it is highly relevant to individual, family and societal development. However, academic stress among Home Economics students could threaten their achievement of the aforementioned goals. Hence, in the research reported in this paper, the academic stress experienced by Home Economics students in Colleges of Education in Anambra State was investigated. Insights were provided into the concept and aims of Home Economics, the nature of stress and academic stress and some literature on academic stress in higher institutions around the globe. Findings revealed the various degrees of severity of academic stressors experienced by the students. This finding is extremely significant, as not much previous studies looked at the discipline of Home Economics in relation to academic stress.

### **Concept and Aims of Home Economics in Higher Education**

On the 21st of March 2014, World Home Economics Day 2014 was celebrated all over the world with the theme “Empowering Individuals, Families and Communities – Through Home Economics.” This theme reinforced the continuous status of Home Economics as a subject that has become very essential not only for the well-being of the individual but also for the society as a whole. This theme is in line with the definitions of Home Economics given over the years. For instance, Home economics has been seen as: that body of subject matter which has to do with the application of the natural and social sciences and arts to the problems of the home and the problems growing out of homes and their interrelationships. It is the field of knowledge and service primarily concerned with strengthening family life through: educating the individual for family living; improving the services and goods used by families; conducting research to discover the changing needs of individuals and families and the means of satisfying these needs; furthering community, national, and world conditions favourable to family living” (Quigley, 1974:9).

The definition is concordant with the views that the concepts of home and family are closely intertwined with Home Economics and they have an impact on the execution of the curricula at all levels of the education system. However, in recent times, the definition of home economics has been extended to reflect the demands of changing times. Hence, Home Economics is described as the study of laws, conditions, principles and ideals concerned with peoples immediate physical environment and their nature as a social being, and

specially the relation between those two factors (Azubuike, 2014). It is also seen as subject that provides practical insight into the society (Heinilä, 2013) encompassing (1) living skills; (2) exploratory home economics; (3) consumer homemaking I; (4) child care; (5) clothing and textiles; (6) consumer education; (7) family living and parenting; (8) family/individual health; (9) foods and nutrition (Tummala, 1995; Vincenti, 2009). McGregor (2010) states that the science of Home Economics focuses on promoting human good and mastering family life. It also tends to create tools and procedures for professionals and families who are working for a better society.

The aims of Home Economics today, in terms of students' learning experience, tend to emphasise the development of the subject and improve technological capabilities. Home Economics has thus become that field of study that prepares individual family members to maximize their society's productivity and help people adjust to change and change their future. It equips man with knowledge of how to adapt to his own environment by effectively making use of human and material resources. It is mostly concerned with using and managing human and material resources for the benefit of individuals, families and society. Home economics offers multi-disciplinary content and environment for students to apply and practice skills and knowledge from a variety of areas, in situations related to everyday life (McGregor, 2010). Although it is multi-disciplinary, it does not teach a skill for the sake of that skill, it teaches for application, it teaches for informed decision-making in endless scenarios, it teaches evaluative and critical thinking skills; it empowers individuals no matter what the context (International Federation for Home Economics, 2008; Pendegast, 2009).

Home Economics programmes at the tertiary levels are planned to provide comprehensive and multi-disciplinary training skills. This is demonstrated, for example, in many curricula today by the practical activities students undertake to acquire skills. Such skills that cannot always be learned in a theoretical context include the ability to plan, establish priorities in relation to resources available like time and money. Importantly, these skills also allow students to recognise the importance of families at the core of everything that is done. The researcher is of the opinion that infusing Home Economics in higher institutions will contribute to global stability, economic, political, social development, and in fact, the world order as all these depends to a large extent on how the smallest units of individual families are morally equipped with the wherewithal to deal with challenges in an effort to make the world a better place to live in. Home Economics education programmes offered in Colleges of Education, are therefore expected to equip the student-teacher with skills in originality in thinking, seeing things differently, creatively solving difficult problems, introducing new approaches and strategies, and catching attention and interest in firm career commitments such as setting up businesses, marketing services, or being productive employees of organizations..

Despite the growing importance of Home Economics education, several problems have persistently occupied a central place concerning students' academic processes and outcomes in the subject at the tertiary education level in Anambra State of Nigeria. The first of these problems is that many students are not regular at lectures. They do not complete assignments and research projects on time and their graduation rates are low (Arubayi, 2009). The facilities for learning and teaching activities are inadequate (Azubike, 2014). The worst of these problems is that students have continued to perform poorly in academics, creativity and entrepreneurship in the course (Chibuzor, 2014). These problems would certainly expose the students to stress and limit the contributions of graduates of Home Economics to national development. If students are not motivated, interested and perform poorly in Home Economics, there is a limit to which they would maximize the potentials of the course to solve life's problems.

### **Stress and Academic Stress**

Academic stress has been identified as one of the limiting factors in learning outcomes. Pandya, Deshpande and Karani (2012) describe stress as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. This definition makes an important distinction between the beneficial effect of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating, motivating) and work related stress, which is the natural but distressing reaction to demands or pressures that people perceive they cannot cope with at a given time. Other researchers (Al-Samadani & Al-Dharrab, 2013; Hamaideh, 2009; Pierceall & Kim, 2007) similarly define stress as the perception of discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfil these demands. In other words, Stress occurs when individual is confronted by a situation that he/she perceives as overwhelming and cannot cope with.

Whilst stress can be common globally and people experience it on a regular basis, stress on college campuses may be high, as reports suggest that the university environments are different from other settings, yet levels of stress are no less serious (Burks & Martin, 1983). Stress due to academic environments, requirements and processes are referred to academic stress. Dussellier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley, & Whalen (2005) describe academic stress as the situation in which the individual suffers from physical and psychological type tension resulted from academic factors that cannot be handled and exceeds human ability to cope with.

Nhundu (1999) found that academic institutions such as Colleges of Education consist of two major sub-systems that constantly interact with each other and with organisational manners in ways that can induce stress in students. The first subsystem is the physical–technical sub-system, which provides the context within which the students learn. This physical–technical sub-system has several sources of stress, which include academic load, facilities, and administrative issues. The social–interpersonal sub-system, which defines the social framework with which the focal person interacts with superiors, family, personal demands, subordinates and peers, is characterised by several potential sources of stress. It is also concerned with issues in the personal needs of the students such as academic growth and academic satisfaction. These issues in these subsystems have the potentials to generate academic stress among Home Economics students. Moreover, Modebelu and Anebi (2012) noted that there is current emphasis on strategic change in tertiary institutions' overall managerial and academic performance. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012) stated that the world is undergoing dramatic and unprecedented changes in this age of increasing globalization. The knowledge and information technology revolution, as well as many growing social and economic trends, have changed how people live, how organizations do their business, and how well countries perform in the global economy. Key requirements in the change process are the creation of a high-skilled workforce with the ability to access, adapt, apply, and create new knowledge and technologies. When students experience stress due to inability to meet with the requirements of the change process, the stressors might result in various outcomes that could mar academic performances needed for the achievement of the goals of institutions.

### **Empirical Studies on Academic Stress in Tertiary Institutions**

Academic stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money, poor relationships with other students or lecturers, family or problems at home, overcrowded lecture halls, semester system, and inadequate resources to perform academic work.

Amponsah and Owolabi (2011) cite several studies that point to the prevalence of academic stress among college students because college students are no strangers to varying degrees of stress in a typical semester. Such studies include that of Pierceall and Keim (2007) who report that 75% to 80% of college students are moderately stressed and 10% to 12% are severely stressed while Hudd et al. (2000) established that during a typical semester, high levels of stress have been reported for 52% of college students. Stress is part of a college student's existence and has a profound impact on their ability to cope with college life (Dusselier et al., 2005). In addition, college students have been shown to possess a unique set of stressors which can affect their daily experiences (Shaban, Khater & Akhu-Zaheya, 2012).

Agolla and Ongori (2009) investigated the stressors, symptoms and effects that are likely to be experienced by the undergraduate students in Universities in Bostwana. A total of 320 students participated in that study. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaire. It was found out that, academic work load, in adequate resources, low motivation, poor performance in academic, continuous poor performance in academic, overcrowded lecture halls, and uncertainty of getting job after graduating from the university lead to stress among students.

Rafidah, Azizah, Norzaidi, Chong and Salwani, (2009) examined the relationship between stress factors (health, social, and academic) and the level of perceived stress at three different periods of a semester (beginning, middle and end), and their impact on the academic performance of Pre-Diploma Science students at the University of Technology MARA (UiTM), Malaysia. The results indicate that on an overall the students experienced moderate level of stress and that none of the stress factors significantly affect the academic performance of students. There is a significant difference in the level of perceived stress between the beginning and middle of the semester but not significant between the middle and end of the semester. With regards to academic performance, there is no significant correlation in the level of perceived stress at both the beginning and middle of the semester. However, a significant correlation is found between the level of perceived stress at the end of the semester with academic performance.

Amponsah and Owolabi (2011) investigated the stress levels of fresh undergraduate students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The case study design was adopted and information was on perceived stress levels among newly admitted educational psychology students and the extent to which these could be linked to such background characteristics as age, gender and work experience or time spent awaiting university admission after graduation from high school. Findings indicated that 70% of the students had moderate level of perceived stress whilst 3.5% demonstrated high level of stress. Results also indicated that female fresh undergraduates had significantly higher perceived stress levels than their male counterparts. There was a significant difference between the mean perceived stress of fresh undergraduate students admitted within two years of their graduation from senior high school and those who waited longer before they were admitted.

Hamaideh (2010) aimed to identify gender differences in stress and reactions to stress among university students and examine the correlations between student stressors and study variables. The result indicated that the highest group of stressors experienced by students was self imposed stressors followed by pressure. Cognitive responses were found to be the highest responses to stressors experienced by students.

Thawabieh and Qaisy (2012) assessed the levels of stress experienced by university students. A quantitative approach has been undertaken to assess students' stress. The sample consisted of 471 students from Tafila Technical University. The results indicate that the students experienced a moderate level of stress and that female students had more stress than males. Their main findings were that the students experienced a moderate level of stress and that the main factors associated with stress were social. This could be caused by the fact that the students originated from a number of different cities and perhaps their new environment caused problems due to issues with communication.

Another recent study by Bataineh (2013) surveyed 300 students from the College of Education at King Saud University. It found that among their sources of stress were academic overload, low motivation and high family expectations. The majority of respondents experienced some moderate stress, which is to be expected in a university environment. Fear of failure has been identified as the major source of stress among undergraduate students.

According to Pandya et al. (2012), stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well-managed. Health and academic performance can be affected when stress is perceived negatively or becomes disproportionate (Campbell & Svenson, 1992). The occurrence of stress is extremely common among students, who "have to survive academically and to prepare themselves for further graduate or professional training" (Pandya et al., 2012, p 21). It is clear that there is intense pressure on students to earn good grades and achieve a degree, contributing to stress that may in turn result in them dropping out of university (Shields, 2001).

Stress associated with academic activities has been linked to various negative outcomes such as poor health (Rafidah et al, 2009), low self esteem and depression (Abousiere, 1994; Edwards, Burnard, Bennett & Hebden, 2010), and therefore poor academic performance (Pandya, et al, 2012). The motivation for this research is that, there have been reported cases of stress among students that has resulted in poor academic performance and poor health. Unfortunately, students' academic stress has not gained much attention since most institutions are preoccupied with the conventional work related stress as opposed to academic student stress (Agolla & Ongori, 2009). Previous research investigating student academic stress in the context of Home Economics is limited. This study enables comparisons to be made between students of different years. The current study recognises that academic stress is a serious issue that permeates college life and can have devastating effects. Identifying the severity of different types of stress within this particular group of students will help lecturers and administrators to deal with those stressors early, thus eliminating their negative consequences. This will help the management of the colleges to come up with the best strategies to enable the students to cope with these stressors while pursuing their academic career.

## **II. Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this research was to identify the academic stressors experienced by Home Economics students in Colleges of Education in Anambra state of Nigeria. Specifically the major thrusts of this study include determining;

- the physical–technical related academic stressors experienced by students of Home Economics in Colleges of Education in Anambra State,
- the social–interpersonal academic stressors experienced by students of Home Economics in Colleges of Education, and
- whether the academic stress experienced by the students vary based on year/level of study.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this research work:

1. What are the physical–technical academic stressors experienced by students of Home Economics in Colleges of Education in Anambra State?
2. What social–interpersonal academic stressors were experienced by students of Home Economics in the Colleges of Education?

### **Hypotheses**

Two null hypotheses were tested in this study. These are:

- (1) The physical–technical stress experienced by Home Economics did not significantly differ based on level of study.

- (2) There is no significant difference in the Social–Interpersonal Academic Stress experienced by Home Economics students in their first, second and third years of in the Colleges of Education

**Method**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study is made up of 332 students enrolled in three-year National Certificate in Education (NCE) Home Economics Programme in the two Colleges of Education in Anambra State. The two Colleges of Education that made up the population of the study were Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe and Federal College of Education Technical, Umuze.

A proportionate sampling technique was used to select 180 students which made up 54.22% of the target population. This ensured proportional representation from each institution. This 54.22% is more than the minimum of 10% recommended by Agu (2009).

The instrument used for the collection of the data was a researcher-developed structured questionnaire titled Academic Stress among Home Economics Students Questionnaire (ASHESQ). The first section sought general information on institution and level (Year of Study) of the students. Section B of the inventory consisted of 35 stressors clustered under two factors; (1) physical-technical and (2) socio-interpersonal. There were 17 items on physical-technical stressors and 18 items on the socio-interpersonal stressors. Each of the stressors was stated on a 4-point scale of Severe Stress (4 points), Moderate Stress (3 points), Little Stress (2 points) and No Stress (1 point).

The instrument had a reasonable face and content validity and reliability coefficient of 0.74 using the test-retest method which was high enough to support the use of the ASHESQ in the research. Copies of the ASHESQ were administered on the sampled 180 Home Economics students in their respective institutions. In all, 177 (98.33%) useable and duly completed questionnaires were returned. The return rate was adjudged to be reasonably high.

The data were analysed using simple means and standard deviation to answer the research questions and one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis are summarized in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

**Table 1 Students’ Ratings of Physical–Technical Related Academic Stressors**

Item no	Items on physical-technical academic stressors	$\bar{X}$	SD	Stress Level
1	Class work overload by students	4.00	0.00	Severe Stress
13	Lack of coverage of course contents before examinations	4.00	0.00	Severe Stress
8	Shortage of course reference materials	4.00	0.00	Severe Stress
16	Unsatisfying learning experiences	3.92	1.06	Severe Stress
12	Assignment and project deadlines	3.88	1.04	Severe Stress
15	Clashes in course time-tables	3.78	1.12	Severe Stress
3	Absence of project supervisors and academic advisors for consultation during office hours	3.72	1.14	Severe Stress
5	Inapproachability of academic staff	3.71	1.16	Severe Stress
4	Unclear information on required credit units per semester	3.66	1.05	Severe Stress
14	Delays in releasing examination time-tables and results	3.65	1.09	Severe Stress
9	Poor classroom environment	3.61	1.11	Severe Stress
17	Limited time for practical activities	3.59	1.20	Severe Stress
6	Inadequate study equipment, work apparatus, and facilities for practical	3.54	1.18	Severe Stress
7	Financial issues (fees, dues)	3.27	1.32	Moderate Stress
11	Changes in examination time schedules	3.14	1.10	Moderate Stress
10	Traffic delays/transportation to and from the College	3.00	1.16	Moderate Stress
2	Lockers to keep belongings	1.14	1.04	No Stress

Table 1, summarizes the mean and standard deviation of responses to each questionnaire item of physical-technical stressors organised according to the severity of academic stress. Class work overload by students, lack of coverage of course contents before examinations and shortage of course reference materials were the most severe stressors. These were followed by unsatisfying learning experiences, assignment and project deadlines, and clashes in course time-tables. Others were absence of project supervisors and academic advisors during office hours; inapproachability of academic staff; unclear information on required credit units per semester and delays in releasing examination time-tables. Poor classroom environment, limited time for practical activities, inadequate study equipment, work apparatus, and facilities, and were also among the severe academic stressors experienced by the students. Moderate academic stressors were financial issues (fees, dues),

Changes in examination time schedules and traffic delays/transportation to and from the College in that order. The students did not experience any stress in terms of lockers to keep belongings.

**Table 2 Students' Ratings of Social–Interpersonal Academic Stressors**

Item no	Items on social–interpersonal academic stressors	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
19	Fear and anxiety about passing examinations	4.00	0.00	Severe Stress
27	Doing original assignments and projects without plagiarism	3.96	0.98	Severe Stress
30	Making out time to prepare for examinations	3.89	1.06	Severe Stress
25	Getting a very good cumulative average	3.79	1.14	Severe Stress
28	Frustrations due to failing courses	3.66	1.20	Severe stress
29	Meeting family expectation of academic success	3.56	1.07	Severe Stress
35	Balance between College academic and home demands	3.54	1.10	Severe Stress
26	Involvement in group academic activities	3.50	1.19	Severe Stress
22	Engaging in co-curricular activities (matriculation, convocation, orientation, students' union issues)	3.41	1.02	Moderate Stress
25	Uncertainty about future career after studies	3.25	1.15	Moderate Stress
24	Maintaining focus on academic vision	3.27	1.17	Moderate Stress
33	Competition with course mates over academic matters	2.48	1.24	Little stress
18	Conflict with lecturers	2.34	1.27	Little stress
32	Studying all the time thereby having little time for personal needs.	1.72	0.91	No stress
20	Interaction with course mates	1.68	0.96	No stress
34	Personal health problems that hinder academic work	1.24	0.88	No Stress
31	Marital demands that affect academic work	1.22	0.93	No stress
21	Sexual advances from lecturers for academic favours	1.03	0.97	No stress

Table 2 illustrates that the academic stress levels experienced by Home Economics students relative to social–interpersonal factors are in varying degrees of severity. The results reveal that the severest academic stress for students in this regard was fear and anxiety about passing examinations. This was followed by doing original assignments and projects without plagiarism, making out time to prepare for examinations, getting a very good cumulative average, meeting family expectation of academic success, frustrations over failed courses, balance between College academic and home demands, and involvement in group academic activities.

Engaging in co-curricular activities, uncertainty about the future and maintaining focus on academic vision were moderately experienced by the Home Economics students. The remaining seven items posed little or no stress to the students.

**Table 3 ANOVA Summary for the Physical–Technical Academic Stressors Encountered By Home Economic Students By Level Of Study.**

Source of Var.	SS	Df	Ms	F-cal	F-crit	P
Between group	2322.17	2	1161.08			
Within group	1019309.24	174	5758.81	0.20	3.00	<.05
Total	1021631.41	176				

Table 3 shows that F-cal is 0.20. With 2 and 174 degrees of freedom at .05 significant level, the F-crit is 3.00. The F-cal is less than the F-crit thus making the null hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference among physical–technical academic stressors experienced by Home Economics students in their first, second and third year levels of education in the Colleges of Education.

**Table 4 ANOVA Summary for the Social–Interpersonal Academic Stress Encountered By Home Economic Students By Year/Level Of Study.**

Source of Var.	SS	df	Ms	F-cal	F-crit	P
Between group	2832.55	2	1416.28			
Within group	1120825.55	174	643.83	2.19	3.00	.05
Total	1123658.1	176				

In table 4, with 2 and 176 degrees of freedom at .05 level of significance, the f-cal is 2.19 while the F-crit is 3.00. Since the F-cal is less than the f-critical, the test is not significant and the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the Social–Interpersonal Academic Stress experienced

by Home Economics students in their first, second and third year levels of education in the Colleges of Education.

### **III. Discussion of Findings**

It was found in the study that the Home Economics students experienced severe stress in 13 out of the 17 physical–technical related academic issues investigated. Prominent among these stressors were class work overload by students, lack of coverage of course contents before examinations and shortage of course reference materials. These three items obtained the maximum mean rating of 4.00 to indicate that all the students in the study experienced them severely. Other severe stressors experienced by the students were: unsatisfying learning experiences, deadlines for assignment, projects and quiz, and clashes in course time-tables.

A close look at these six physical-technical stressors reveals that they bother largely on course processes. The result that academic (course) processes is a catalyst for stress is consistent with previous research undertaken by Agolla and Ongori (2009), Bataineh (2013) and Radcliff and Lester (2003). This finding is in line with the situation in Jeddah where Alawad and Slamah (2014) found that among other things, academic overload, project deadlines, absence of faculty in office hours and searching for course references presented severe stress to Interior Design and Furniture students. Findings also agree Thawabieh and Qaisy (2012) on the academic stressors among students.

Not surprisingly, much of the severely experienced academic stressors relative to physical-technical issues are related to course processes in terms of what students learn and how they learn it. The reason for the severe stress experienced due to these course processes is that courses form the basis for the academic activities in higher institutions. No institution or student can fulfill the academic requirements without the predetermined courses. Each course has a minimum requirement of credit hours and students have to meet the minimum requirement through class work, completion of assignments and projects and complying with the minimum attendance requirements.

In addition to course processes, absence and inapproachability of lecturers during office hours presented severe stress to the Home Economics students. Absence of faculty during office hours can create stress because the students may need further support from their tutors. Where the lecturers are not always available and approachable, their academic support and guidance to students would be inadequate and this might contribute to lack of understanding of academic processes and requirements. Perhaps, one of the reasons why the students experienced severe stress due to unclear information on required credit units per semester and delays in releasing examination time-tables and results is because the lecturers who should clarify the information and release timetables or results on time were not always available and approachable.

Further, poor classroom environment, limited time for practical activities and inadequate facilities for practical works, were also among the severe academic stressors to the Home Economic students. This finding may be because many Colleges of Education in Nigeria lack adequate facilities for both lecture and practical work. For instance, many students take their lectures while standing due to lack of classroom space and the lecturers do not use micro-phones in teaching. Home Economics is a practical-oriented course yet that facilities for practical work are lacking. These no doubt caused severe stress to the students. This finding is consistent with earlier studies (Agolla & Ongori, 2009; Misra, McKean, West & Russo, 2000) which revealed that poor classroom environment and inadequate facilities are causing students a serious problem.

Findings also indicated that the Home Economics students experienced moderate stress regarding financial issues, changes in examination time schedules and traffic delays/transportation to and from the College in that order. This implies that even though these issues were stressful to the Home Economics students, the students did not consider finance and transportation as stressful as the course related issues were. This finding disagrees with Agolla and Ongori (2009), Boggs (2001) and Busari (2012) who found that financial issues and delays in transportation caused severe stress to students in higher institutions. This disagreement could be due to location differences because these studies were carried out outside Nigeria where the present study was carried out. Despite the fact that these issues presented moderate stress to the students, it is crucial to acknowledge and deal with the issues before they become severely stressful in academic society, threatening students' love of learning and willingness to study.

However, no significant difference was found between the respondents in their perceptions of academic stressors based on their levels/years of study which disproved the first hypothesis of this study. This indicates that whether in the first, second or third year of studies, the Home Economics students generally experienced these stressors. These academic stressors were not dependent on students' year of study.

Socio-personal factors were also investigated through the questionnaire and the severest sources of stress were found to be fear and anxiety about passing examinations, doing original assignments and projects without plagiarism, making out time to prepare for examinations, getting a very good cumulative average, and continuous poor performance. These factors, just like the physical-technical factors observed in research one were course-related. This result is in agreement with that of Al-Samadani & Al-Dharrab (2013) and Bataineh

(2013) in that student in higher institutions were severally stressed by fear of examinations and getting good grades. In a related study, Rehhwan, Sami, Karim, Chan & Zaleha (2009) found that time management is a crucial factor in the management of stress and can create a vicious circle where anxiety leads to lack of concentration, which then causes more panic. In addition, meeting family expectation of academic success and balance between college and home demands severally stressed the students. Indeed, as Agolla and Ongori (2009) pointed out, fear of not meeting family expectations, poor performance and continuous poor performance in tests or examinations can frustrate students and may even leave some students with no options but to experience depersonalization and sometimes to withdraw from the campus. Similarly, Rafidah, et al (2009) found that University students in Malaysia experienced high stress due to fear of academic failures and lack of time management skills.

Also, in line with the present findings, Nandamuri and Ch (2014) found that students in India experienced stressors due to team work. This issue of team work is similar to the group work in this study because the students were often mixed in formal teams for the sake of group assignments and presentations. Definitely, since these formal groupings were not done on the basis of habits, preferences, and the individual likes and dislikes, it presented a severe stressor in academics among Home Economics students in this study. Other socio-personal issues such as engaging in co-curricular activities (matriculation, convocation, orientation, and students' union issues), uncertainty about future career after studies and maintaining focus on academic vision moderately stressed the students. This is understandable, given that some students do not bother themselves with co-curricular activities, future careers and academic vision. However, since these issues presented moderate stressors to the students, they need to be tackled before the students become severally stressed from them.

Also, competition with course mates and conflict with lecturers were of little stress to the students. This indicates that perhaps, the students considered competition with other students as a normal academic requirement and were not stressed by them. It could also be that the spirit of competition among the students was low. Another explanation could be that since the students considered most of the lecturers as inaccessible as observed from responses to research question one, the students avoided anything that could cause conflict with the lecturers. Hence conflict with lecturers presented little stress to the students.

Finally, it was found that there were no significant differences at 0.05 significant level among the socio-personal stressors of the Home Economics students due to level or year of study. This finding is not surprising, given the fact that these Home Economics students were still in the Colleges and were exposed to the same environment and expectations. Academic stress levels did not vary due to the academic year. The possible explanation for this is that even the Home Economics students at the 100 level (Year One) did not experience significantly more personal-social stress than those in 200 and 300 levels even though this 100 level is considered their transition period from school to College life. In essence, the personal-social stressors have to do with the institutional environments. Hence, irrespective of year of study, the students were still stressed by academic performance, and family expectations among others.

#### **IV. Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study has identified various important academic stress experienced by Home Economics students Colleges of Education in Anambra State of Nigeria in their order of severity. The main finding of this research is that course-related factors were the most prevalent causes of stress amongst the students. The students also experienced more severe physical-technical than Social-Interpersonal related stress. It should be highlighted that students in different levels/years of study experienced similar severity of these stressors. The findings provide evidence that academic stress is a common problem for Home Economics students irrespective of year of study. The strength of evidence is enhanced by the fact that reliable patterns of findings have previously been established in other disciplines.

The findings of this study should be taken into consideration when designing out intervention programmes for Home Economics students experiencing academic stress. It is therefore important for the relevant policy makers and the management of the institutions to consistently ensure that courses are well-structured to limit course overload and improve course coverage. Possibly alternative forms of assessment could be considered and might help to balance the workload more evenly throughout the years. The Colleges should also put mechanisms in place to avoid time-table clashes, ensure lecturers' regular attendance and approachability to the students as well as provide adequate facilities and learning experiences to the students in all the years of study. The institutions should also organize suitable activities or programs for the students such as organizing talks on academic time management, fear and anxiety management, study skills and probably topics on managing stress. These programs should be organized continuously, not only during the orientation week.

The lecturers should be encouraged to prudently offer academic advising to the students to help them understand their career options, credit unit requirements, how to write original works without plagiarism and



sources for course reference materials. These actions would go a long way in reducing the severity of academic stress among the Home Economics students, and helping them to turn academic stress to academic success.

### References

- [1]. Abouserie, R. (1994). Sources and levels of stress in relation to locus of control and self esteem in university students. *Educational Psychology*, 14(3), 323-330.
- [2]. Agu, N. (2009). *Basic statistics for education and the behavioural sciences*. Awka: Valoux Prints.
- [3]. Agolla, J. E & Ongori, H. (2009). An assessment of academic stress among undergraduate students: The case of University of Botswana. *Educational Research and Review*, 4(2), 063-070.
- [4]. Alawad, A. & Slamah, A. (2014). The prevalence of stress among interior design and furniture students in Interior Design and Furniture students. *European Scientific Journal* 10, 60-72
- [5]. Al-Samadani K. & Al-Dharrab A. (2013). The perception of stress among clinical dental students. *World Journal of Dentistry*, 4(1), 24-28.
- [6]. Amponsah, M. & Owolabi, H. O. (2011). Perceived stress levels of fresh university students in Ghana: A case study. *Journal of Educational Research*, 1(2), 153-169
- [7]. Arubayi, D. O. (2009). Home Economics students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with learning experiences in clothing and textiles in tertiary institutions. *Studies in Home Consumer Science*, 3(2), 87-90
- [8]. Azubuike, O. (2014). Societal and gender issues in the study of home economics education in nigerian tertiary institutions. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 2(10), 38-47
- [9]. Bataineh, M. (2013). Academic stress among undergraduate student: the case of education faculty at King Saud University. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, 2(1),82-88.
- [10]. Burks, N., Martin, B. (1983). Everyday problems and life-change events. Ongoing versus acute sources of stress. *Journal of Human Stress*, 11, 27-35.
- [11]. Campbell, R. & Svenson, L. (1992). Perceived level of stress among university undergraduate students in Edmonton, Canada. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 75(2), 552-554.
- [12]. Chibuzor, A. N. (2014). Enhancing creativity in entrepreneurship through Home Economics Education in Nigeria. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4(6), 104-107
- [13]. Dussellier, L., Dunn, B., Wang, Y., Shelley, M., Whalen, M. (2005). Personal, health, academic, and environmental predictors of stress for residence hall students. *Journal of American College Students Health*, 54, 78-84.
- [14]. Edwards, D., Burnard, P., Bennett, K. & Hebden, U. (2010) A longitudinal study of stress and self-esteem in student nurses. *Nurse Education Today*, 30,78-84.
- [15]. Hamaideh, S. H. (2009). Stressors and reactions to stressors among university students. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 57(1), 69-80.
- [16]. Hamaideh, S. H. (2010). Gender differences in stressors and reactions to stressors among Jordanian university students. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 58(1), 26-33.
- [17]. Heinilä, H. (2012) Enriching home economics philosophy with phenomenological insights: aesthetic experiences, bodily being, and enfolded everyday life. *Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM*, 19(1), 1-12
- [18]. Hudd, S., Dumlao, J., Erdmann-Sager, D., Murray, D., Phan, E., Soukas, N., Yokozuka, N. (2000). Stress at college: Effects on health habits, health status and self-esteem. *College Student Journal*, 34, 217-227
- [19]. International Federation for Home Economics. (2008). IFHE position statement – Home economics in the 21st century. Bonn, Germany: IFHE.
- [20]. McGregor, S. L. T. (2010). Locating the human condition concept within home economics. [McGregor Monograph Series, No. 201002]. Retrieved from <http://www.consultmcgregor.com/documents/publications/human-condition-mono-graph-2010.pdf>
- [21]. Misra, R., McKean, M., West, S. & Russo, T. (2000). Academic stress of college students: Comparison of student and faculty perception. *College Student Journal*, 34(2), 236-245.
- [22]. Modebelu, M.N. & Anebi, J. (2012). Strategic planning procedure: An imperative for effective management of higher education in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 15-20
- [23]. Nandamuri, P & Ch, G. (2014). Sources of academic stress – A study on management students. Retrieved from [www.4pdf.com](http://www.4pdf.com)
- [24]. Nhundu, T.J (1999). Determinants and prevalence of occupational stress among Zimbabwean School Administrators. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 37, (3) 256-272.
- [25]. Pandya, B. U., Deshpande, R. C. & Karani, A. (2012). A study on impact of academic stress on MBA students of Gujarat Technological University. *Researcher's World - Journal of Arts, Science and Commerce*, 3(3),20-28.
- [26]. Pendergast, D. (2009). Generational theory and home economics. Future proofing the profession. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 37(3), 505-522
- [27]. Pierceall, E. A., Kim, M. C. (2007). Stress and coping strategies among community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 31(9), 703-712.
- [28]. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. OECD (2010). *Learning our lessons: Review of quality teaching in higher education*. OECD Publishing
- [29]. Quigley, E E (1974) *Introduction to Home Economics*, 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, New York.
- [30]. Radcliff, C. & Lester, H.(2003). Undergraduate medical education. Perceived stress during undergraduate medical training: A qualitative study. *Medical Education*, 37(1), 32-38.
- [31]. Rafidah, K., Azizah, A., Norzaidi, M., Chong, S. & Salwani, M. (2009). The impact of perceived stress and stress factors on academic performance of pre-diploma science students: A Malaysian study *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 2(1), 13-26.
- [32]. Redhwan, A. A., Sami, A. R., Karim, A. J., Chan, R. & Zaleha, M. I. (2009). Stress and coping strategies among management and science university students: A qualitative study. *International Medical Journal*, 8(2), 11-16.
- [33]. Shaban, I., Khater, W. & Akhu-Zaheya, L. (2012). Undergraduate nursing students' stress sources and coping behaviours during their initial period of clinical training: A Jordanian perspective. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 12(4), 204-209.
- [34]. Shields, N. (2001) Stress, active coping and academic performance among persisting and non-persisting college students. *Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research*, 6(2), 65-81.
- [35]. Thawabieh, A. & Qaisy, L. (2012). Assessing stress among university students. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(2),110-116.

- [36]. Tummala, K. (1995). Relevance of Home Economics knowledge base for social work practice in Botswana. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 10 (1),53-64
- [37]. Vincenti, V. (2009). Exploring fundamental concepts for home economics and family and consumer sciences practice using A Philosophy of Home Economics by Fusa Sekiguchi. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 38(1), 56-62.