

**STRESS, COPING STRATEGIES AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS
LEARNING, THE CASE OF KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Namaweje Christine solemnly declare to the best of my knowledge that this dissertation is my original work except otherwise acknowledged and has not been presented to any other institution of learning for the award of any academic qualification.

Signed

Date


.....
Namaweje Christine

20/09/2010
.....

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this work has been done under my supervision and have ~~approved~~ approved it for submission to board of examiners, ~~faculty~~ faculty of social sciences.

Signed


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Date


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Mr. Kayindu Vincent (supervisor)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my dear parents Mr. and Mrs. Mukwaya Fred, grandparents Mr. and Mrs. Tere Steven of Mityana town, to my brothers, sisters and relatives for the love and support given to me throughout my time of study at Kampala International University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor Mr. Kayindu Vincent for his professional guidance, encouragement and un wavering effort on which lies the success of this study. My God richly bless you.

I'm greatly indebted also to the entire academic staff of the department of guidance and counseling for the work well done in equipping me with the necessary skills and knowledge during my entire course of study. I will live to remember you each day of my life.

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I cannot forget all my friends and relatives particularly; Andrew, Joshua, Gerald, Mary, kayanja and Julius. You have been an invaluable source of inspiration and support during hard times.

Big thanks go to my respondents and all authors on whose work I have greatly relied to compile and write this research.

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Table 1- year of study of respondents

Table2- sex of respondents

Table 3- age of respondents

Table 4- marital status of respondents

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate stress, coping strategies and students' attitudes towards learning among university students. The objectives of the study were; to find out the relationship between stress and students' attitudes towards learning, to examine the relationship between stress and coping strategies among university students and to investigate the relationship between coping strategies and students' attitudes towards learning.

In order to achieve these objectives, the researcher used a sample of one hundred respondents who were randomly selected.

The findings of the study were; over 80% of the students, their attitudes towards learning were negatively affected by stress. Most students were in position to manage stress positively .therefore stress hard less effects towards students' attitudes towards learning. 83%of the students hard positive coping strategies hence having positive attitudes towards learning.

It finally recommended that; in order to help students not to get stressed, positively manage stress and to help them develop a positive attitudes towards learning, there is need to do the following: employ professional university counselors, lecturers should motivate learners student must be given courses of their choices, lecturers should use several teaching techniques, parents should provide social support to students among others.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Back ground

Scholl (2002), defined attitudes as mental predisposition to act that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. University students' attitudes towards learning vary. Some have positive and others have negative attitudes. University students with positive attitudes have better basic skills and perceive the learning environment as being supportive, which leads to better academic performance (Mitra & Steffensmier, 2000, Liu & Timmons, 1998).

According to Dalgety (1998). University teachers, if asked about the important students' characteristic associated with successful studies, they usually mention traits such as attitudes, motivation and genuine interest.

The implications of the negative attitude towards leaning held by university students are several. But the psychological related problems such as stress among others are far reaching in affecting students' lives and also their general academic performance. Stress is defined as a normal occurrence that often arises when you perceive a situation as threatening or when you are dealing with unusually lager number of very day responsibilities Jaffe Dumke, Huntman & Segal, (1996).

According to the National Mental Health Survey (2006), stress can cause physical, emotional and behavioral disorders which can affect one's health, vitality, peace of mind as well as personal and professional relationships. Stress can also contribute to potentially life-threatening diseases like high blood pressure and heart diseases. Work overloads among university students, that sometimes become unbearable can also predispose them to severe stress.

Ever since, university students have been faced with stress caused due to unusual number of every day responsibilities such as coursework,

tests, research works and others of which they were not used before in their lower levels of education. More so threatening situations such as missed exams, lost marks, late payments, increase in fees payments among others has always led them stress. Poor coping strategies such as alcoholism, strikes and demonstrations have led most of them to death, imprisonment and school dropout hence development of a negative attitude towards education leading to poor performance among university students.

Coping is defined as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. Social support is one important variable in coping with stress because it helps students experience less stress overall and also the negative effects of stress that occur. Contrarily to the above the use of caffeine and alcohol among university students to cope with stress may seem ineffective as it disturbs ones general sleep patterns among others. Jaffee & Hutman (1996)..

Currently in almost all universities in Uganda, students are stressed up due to several factors such as examination stress, increased fees payments, imposed fines due to late payments, dodging of lecturers ,re-takes, missing results among others. Failure to cope effectively or the use of inappropriate coping mechanisms such as strikes and demonstrations plus alcoholism in most cases lead to death of students and development of a negative attitude towards learning.

In Uganda today, university students cannot spend a year without cases of strikes at least once or twice for example in October 2006-January 2007, Makerere university students striked to the extent that the university had to close for some months without students doing their exams and some innocent students were hurt and injured hence getting

stressed up and developing a negative attitude towards learning. All these cases in university students have attracted the researchers' attention.

According to the new vision of 24/08/2010, Makerere university lecturers organized a sit down strike demanding to be paid their money by National Insurance Corporation. The strike also affected students since they were not taught for several days yet had paid for the services. This must have indirectly stressed students.

Studies done before on attitudes towards learning have been so specific for example, student's attitudes towards distance learning, student's attitude towards use of internet learning. Few If any of the students have attempted to investigate the relationship between attitudes toward learning, stress and coping strategies among university students. Therefore, it's the gap left by the past researcher now the current study seeks to investigate.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Stress among university students is high and this has been attributed to failure to cope effectively or use of inappropriate coping mechanisms. There has been a decline in the students overall academic performance due to stress, negative attitude towards learning, lack of motivation, basic skills and genuine interests in their learning tasks. These factors could also the psychosocial wellbeing of the students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study sought to investigate the relationship between stress, coping strategies and the attitudes of students towards learning, taking a case study of Kampala International University.

OBJECTIVES

This study was carried out to;

To find out the relationship between stress and students attitude towards learning.

To examine the relationship between stress and coping strategies among university students.

To investigate the relationship between coping strategies and students attitudes towards learning among university students.

SCOPE

The study was conducted in Kampala International University, Makindye division Kampala district, because of accessibility to the researcher and above all it is an international university with a large number of students upopulation having different attitudes towards learning, vulnerable to stress and using different coping mechanisms. The study included both male and female respondents respectively aged 20 years and above.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study sought to enlighten university students about the Implications of their attitude towards learning and how they can influence their academic performance and lives in general. The study intended to empower the government in its efforts to help change the students' negative attitude towards learning. This is to be achieved by incorporating some of the empirical findings that were portrayed in this study into the government program.

The study may also benefit parents using these findings to their students at an early stage to develop a positive attitude towards learning.

The study may help both practicing psychologists and those still in making to base to these findings to effectively help students have a positive attitude towards learning.

This study may also be useful as general knowledge to scholars and potential future researchers who would wish to broaden more about this particular study or researching on related topics.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to attitudes towards learning, stress and coping strategies among students.

Related literature.

Attitudes towards learning and stress among university students.

According to Chua [2003] college students are faced with demands of different causes and a myriad of reading, projects and assessments. Students often find themselves drained of energy and stressed out before the semester ends. A commonly asked question, how can I stay motivated in my studies? The answer simply lies in developing a positive attitude towards learning.

Grigsby & Woods (1989) revealed that college students perceive learning as stressfully life and demanding. Students reported experiencing emotional and cognitive reaction to this stress especially due to external pressure and self imposed expectations. (McKean & Misra 2000) Often numerous stressors are ported during term- time including demands and social adjustments that may consequently influence student's attitudes towards learning negatively

According to the National Mental Health Association (2006) university student's positive attitude towards learning has deteriorated further because students report being overwhelmed and stressed than fifteen years ago.

Mitra & Steffensmier (2002) and Timmons (1998) found out that university students with basic skills in learning, perceive learning environment as being supportive for their learning tasks. In otherworld, stress free environment, lectures, administrative technical staff and class setting positively correlated with student's attitudes towards learning.

According to Collis (1996) university learning requires a great deal of personal sacrifice on the part of the students ,good study skills, discipline, learning experience and student's socio-cultural background among others are some of the essentials attitudes that influence student's perception and general attitudes towards learning.

Kuhnna & Silverman (2000) and pajarres (1992).A relatively consistent finding in the education literature has it that curriculum decisions, instruction learning is affected by the beliefs, attitudes, stress and values of lecturers in colleges.

William, Arnold & Mills (2005) reported that stress among college students arises from striking a balance between different academics, interpersonal, and professional demands and consequently this has negatively influenced the university student's attitudes towards learning. Chua (2000) just like motivation, a positive attitude toward learning is difficult to develop and maintain. However it's possible to a few students Who commit themselves to thinking and acting positively. For example, maintaining a quality of openness, would allow a student see things beyond his /her existing paradigms, inspires them to enjoy their learning and most important of all, empowers student to have control over their learning.

Twbes & Chem, (1996) revealed that stress among university students is on increase due to the transitional nature of college life. For example, some students have to adjust to being away from home for the first time, maintaining high level of academic achievement and adjust to a new-social environment. Such transitions among other factors posses a dig threat t to college students and consequently causing students to view learning with a negative attitude. And fresh-male students in this case have been reported to be the most prone group.

Teresa (1999) students reported daily more than life events and interpersonal sources of stress being the most frequent source of stress

Stress and coping strategies among university students

All stress is not bad. It is important to identify how you cope with stressful events and this will eventually determine the impact that these stressful experiences will have on your life. Milder (2000).

According to Wang & Yeh (2005) the main stressors among college students include: taking tests, the student's aspiration, learning tasks, teacher's aspirations and parent's aspirations. Students use problem focused coping strategies including optimistic actions and social support to deal with exam stress. But they also use emotional focused strategies including avoidance and emotional disturbances in case the perceived level of stress is high.

Contrary to the above, university student's academic stress and course grades and course grades are influenced by problem focused coping strategies and motivation. But not emotional focused coping.

Greater academic stress is accompanied with lower course grades. However, students who engage in problem focused coping are more likely to be motivated and also perform better than students who engage in emotional-focused coping strategies. [Struthers, Perry & Menec (2000)].

Jaffe, Damke, Hutman & Segal (1996) social support is one of the important variables in coping with stress because it helps students to experience less stress overall as well as the negative effects of stress occur.

MacArthur, John & Catherine (1999) they distinguished between the two general coping strategies used by university students. Problem solving coping strategies are efforts to do something active to alleviate stressful circumstances, well' as emotional -focused coping strategies involves efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events.

such as change I sleep habits, increased work load and new responsibilities.

According to the Ministry of Education Wellington New Zealand (2004) the support of parents and community, university curriculum and giving contractive feed back to students about the progress of their learning, motivates them and hence developing a positive attitude towards learning in general. Contrary teachers' high expectations impose great pressure to students that eventually cause stress.

Chua (2003) college students, who perceive learning positively, make right choices and they are motivated often. They tend to respond favorably to stressful learning experiences.

Lewis (2006) the problem of under achievement among university students does not primarily lie in their attitude but, the problem instead lies in the structure and culture of the university where the students developed their academic identities, attitudes disposition towards learning.

Despite there being a universal belief in the importance of learning, still different university students have different attitudes towards learning and different habits as well. That stem from their attitudes, sex, social class and life stage.[National Literacy Trust (1999)

Lewis (2006) college students attribute their positive attitudes towards learning and stress to teacher's personal character traits such as fairness, integrity, efforts, teaching competency and ideal treatment. Faire to meet the above, stress and other psychological related problems are inevitable.

Kortering& Braziel (1999) related dropping out of colleges primarily to student's negative attitude towards learning, stressful learning experiences, disciplinary policies and absence of support from teachers. This has negatively shaped student's general attitudes towards learning.

Stress and coping strategies among university students

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More so students commonly use problem focused coping to deal with potential controllable problems such as work and family related problems. Whereas stressors among university students that are perceived as certain kinds of psychological health problems, prompt more emotional focused coping strategies.

According to the National Mental Health Association, (2006), reported that university years are the best times of many young adults, but also they are undermined by stress, depression, anxiety and disorders. Coping with stress, in particular college students often indulge in substance abuse and to the extremes attempting suicide. And suicide cases were ranked second leading killer in college in 1998 as a result of stress.

Sardi Walla, (2000), urged that college students require proactive coping strategies. Proactive coping strategies consist of efforts undertaken in advance of a potentially stressful event to prevent it or to modify its form before it occurs. Aspin wall & Taylor, (1997, p.417), proactive coping can lead to reduction in occurrence of burnout, Strumpter, (2003).

Swendson, Fennen, Carney, Willard & Hromi (2000), educational environments in university can press an exorbitant strain on the students' psychological well being and often times' students resort to substance abuse as a means to escape stress related to performance expectations. Male students are reported to consume more alcohol for coping purposes than female students.

Stress coping strategies among university students differ. For example, some either use active coping strategies or avoidant coping strategies. Active coping strategies are either behavioral or psychological responses designed to change the nature of the stressor itself or how one thinks about it. Whereas avoidant coping strategies involve engaging in activities

like alcohol use or mental states such as withdrawal, that keeps them from directly addressing stressful events, Macarthur, John & Catherine (1999).

Mehar, (1998), & Pedron, Waxman & Hung (1999), found out that university students especially those from low income families are more resilient, well adjusted, cope better with stressful situations, possess high self esteem, have high motivation to study hard, perceive the learning environment positively, have high ambitions to attend college and they rarely drop out of college.

Dynarski, (2001), increased cases of students dropping out of college have been attributed to stress. Suggestions therefore, have been put forward to help students effectively cope. Including intervention of teachers to know students better to enhance relationships and communications, providing individual assistance both academic and behavioral and focusing on helping students address personal and family issues through counseling and having access to social services, may be paramount in helping the students cope effectively with stress and enhancing their general academic performance.

According to Degenhardt & Hall, (2001), sustained periods of heavy alcohol intake by university students in order to cope with stress, serves to increase the psychological symptoms rather than reducing them regardless of the motivation for initiating the consumption.

The number one complaint of college students today is the high level of stress in their lives. Stress affects not only the students' health and well being, but also the quality of relationships and academic performance. The experienced stress is attributed to adjustments to college life. For example, transitions like handling an increased academic load, changing in living arrangements that is, living on their own for the first time,

leaving friends and family, meeting new people, dating, getting along with roommates, coping with peer pressures and negotiating more freedom and independence.

This stage of transition therefore, can be very challenging, prompting students to resort to alcohol intake and drug use as a measure to cope with stress that consequently has caused negative impact on the students' overall performance and also has severely affected their personal relationships. Rockhurst University (2005).

Jaffe, Dumke & Sagal (1996), suggested that work overload, that sometimes becomes unbearable predisposes university students to severe stress. The best way therefore to cope with stresses is to do one task at a time starting with the most urgent ones and once accomplished, choose the next one.

Sue & Sue (1999) stated that college students are unfamiliar with the very notion of stress coping services. Further, researchers have revealed that cultural stigma attached to emotional expression of stress, may account for the trend. Whitely & Gin (1990).

According to Niller, Verhegge, & Punarlegu (2000), university students especially athletes who complain of psychological difficulties such as anxiety, depression and stress were much more likely to abuse alcohol and also engage in risk-taking behaviors than those students who don't experience psychological difficulties.

Unmanageable alcohol consumption and drug use among university students to cope with stress predicts poor college performance. Gardill & Mahoney (2002). Alcohol use may also lead to headaches, swellings, decreased coping mechanism and also add to depression. National Health Ministries USA (2004).

Alcohol consumption popular with university students to escape stress predisposes them to sexual promiscuity, decrease in academic performance, suspensions or expulsions, possible arrest and physical disabilities or death. Camatta& Nagoshi (1995). In addition, college students take alcohol to reduce psychological symptoms of stress. Novak, Burgess, Dark& Brown (2003).

Yeh & Wang (2001), college students' stress coping sources includes specific people such as counselors, family members, and friends among others. Although going to counselors to cope with stress may be perceived as shameful and embarrassing to students from a cultural perspective. Homma& True (1997).

Hirsch & Ellis (1996) reported that yawning for high grades not the only source of stress among university students. Their potential source may include; excessive home work, unclear assignments and un comfortable class rooms. Therefore, talking to family members, friends and college counselors can effectively help students cope with stress. National Health Ministries,(2004).

Attitudes towards learning and coping strategies among college students

According to Chua(2003), coping with attitude towards learning among university students, calls for students to find time to reflect upon what education means, what makes an educated person and what one expects to get out of the time spent at the university. Answer to the above, would determine the students' approach to learn general as they try to cope positively with their negative attitudes towards learning.

Students' perceived level of teachers' empathy for their efforts invested in learning may help college students cope and change their negative attitudes towards learning. Berg (2004). In addition, if university teachers are asked, what are the most important students' characters

associated with the successful studies and also helpful in changing the students' negative attitude towards learning? They usually mention traits such as motivation, attitudes and genuine interests. Dalgety et al (2003) & Convigton (2000).

Grabinger(1996), Hipson, Simms& Knezek(2002),suggested that coping with negative attitudes toward learning among university students, requires teachers at all levels to develop classroom environment that encourage active learning and higher level of thinking skills such as reflecting problem solving, flexible thinking and creativity.

Coping positively with the negative attitudes towards learning among college students is a function of assessing one's performance and making right choices. This will enable the students respond favorably to any obstacle in their learning experiences. Chua (2003).

According to Karen (1999) cautioned teachers if they are to help students to cope with negative attitudes towards learning, they must eliminate or minimize any negative condition surrounding this subject, things that frighten or stress learners, could cause avoidant behaviors, fear, humiliation and boredom. Alternatively, teachers should break down the course into smaller units for mastery; make the first experience as positive as possible, safe, successful and interesting. Again teachers should positively contact students' mistaken beliefs and also their negative learners with enthusiastic learners to help them cope positively. Chua (2003) suggested that ascribing meaning to education in college for example, studying solely for the purpose of getting a degree, to advance one's job or career prospects, to prove one's capacity through academic grades and satisfying curiosity as well as to learn new things serves as advising force/motivation learning, increase commitment even in face of obstacles consequently helping the students cope favorably with attitudes towards learning.

Beig (2004), positive choices made before entering the University, for Example, studying subjects in secondary schools to fulfill university admission requirements and taking extra secondary school courses, could help college students with negative attitude towards learning.

Hannington (1998) suggested that college students with negative attitudes towards learning could effectively learn through cooperative learning, an in structural approach, which students work together in groups towards learning goals. Cooperative learning first as positive interdependence where by students works and learns together in a small group of setting. It also provides unique experiences for students of varying learning modalities. For example, those who learn best through social or group settings. It also enhances students' enthusiasm of learning and the determination to achieve academic success. Lain&Repmay (1995).

Berg (2004), persistence behavior is paramount in helping college students to cope with their negative attitude towards learning. For example, a student who is willing to continue with studying even after failing an exam, persist when faced with a character of persistence can easily cope with college learning experience.

Bank & King(1998), Marina(2001) & Mith(2002), the integration of technology for example web- based learning resources, have positively changed and greatly helped college students with negative attitude towards learning to life. In structural technology is bridging this accessibility gap by permitting the walls and opening doors for as many students as to participate in learning. Hanna (1999).

According to Hoffmann (2002), education opportunities are now accessible to college students who in the past lacked opportunities due to such restraints as money, time, family and geography. Therefore, the latest technology has influenced the way students make choices on when to learn, how to learn and where to learn from. Ling, Small, Wood, Toomey, Patrick &Bernard (2001).

Constantine & Gainer (2002), they suggested that religion and spirituality may be important coping mechanisms o college students with negative attitudes towards learning.

Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand (2004), suggested that for college a student to cope positively with their learning attitudes is the role of the university curriculum that could encourage positive attitudes. Towards all areas of learning, providing challenging learning activities which are relevant to students' experiences and appropriate to their level of achievement. More so, the university should also give students on going feedback about their learning process. This serves as a motivator to students and hence helping them cope positively with college learning experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the procedures, methods and tools used to gather information. This chapter indicated where the study was conducted, who the respondents were, how they were selected, the method used in data collection and analysis.

Study design

The study was qualitative and quantitative in nature. The study analyzed the relationship between stress, coping strategies and students' attitudes towards education. The population composed of both male and female students who had knowledge about the relationship between the variables.

Sample selection

The study included male and female university students aged 20 years and above. A total of 100 respondents participated in the study.

Random sampling was used to select the respondents.

Research Instruments

A self administered questionnaire with both open and close ended questions was used for data collection. As indicated by the questionnaires, respondents were instructed to circle and feel in the blank spaces. This was used to enable the respondents use their knowledge to provide a wide range of data since they would not shy away to reveal certain information of biographical nature and other sensitive issues. Oral interview was convenient and could be used for mainly the literate people both the normal and the handicapped. Using of the already researched information helped the researcher to know or get more information about the problem under study and to discover areas not exploited upon which the research was based.

Procedures and administration of the questionnaires.

The researcher secured an introductory letter from the department of guidance, Kampala International University. This help in seeking permission from relevant authorities to administer the questionnaires to respondents. Respondents will be assured that the information given will be kept confidential and used only for research for research purposes.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed manually from the questionnaires delivered back from the respondents and the information collected from oral interviews.

The respondents were asked how old they were and table below shows the findings.

Table 3: Age of the respondents.

Age	Frequency	Percentages
19-25	75	75
26-30	17	17
30-Above	8	8
Total	100	100

From the above, most of the respondents 75% were between (19-25) years, 17% were between (26-30) years and 8% were (30-above years

The respondents were asked about their marital status and table below show the results

Table 4: Marital status of the respondents

Marital status	Frequency	percentages
Single	94	94
Married	05	05
Divorced	01	01
Total	100	100

Results above show the majority (94%) of the respondents were singles. 05% were married and 1% was divorced.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS ON EACH OF THE OBJECTIVES.

According to the findings, most students were faced with stress as a problem at least every semester and presented the following case that leads them to stress. Exam stress, last documents, missed exams, heavy course works, tests, research work and many other threatening situations that lead them to stressful life.

The relationship between stress and coping strategies

According to the data presented by the respondents, it clearly reported that though students get stressed up due to some cases like exam stress, disappointments from lovers, missed exams, late payments among others, most students are able to cope up with stress positively using several coping mechanisms such as talking with friends and family members about the problem, try to do things they typically enjoy, seek for advice from counselors, try to live a better life according to their religious beliefs, ask others for help, get involved in pleasant activities among many other ways of stress management. For example one female student reported that she got the boy friend cheating on her and surely she failed the exams of that very semester

However some few University students cope negatively with stress and they use poor stress management techniques such as blaming others for their own problems, think a lot about the problem, get worried a lot isolate themselves, hate jokes and funs, cry more often than usual, Among much other stress management techniques that makes them remain stressed up.

The table showing the relationship between stresses and coping strategies.

Level of coping	Percentages
High level	80
Medium	15
Low	5
Total	100

Results above show the majority (80%) of the respondents had a high level of coping, 15% had a medium level of coping to stress and 5% had a very low level of coping, That meant that most students at KIU could

positively manage their stressful situation and there coping to stress is not a problem to consider among KIU student.

The relationship between stress and students' attitude towards learning.

Though University student are faced with stressful situations, most of them over 85% are in position to cope positively using several coping strategies such as sharing the problem with friends and family members, learning from the problem, seeking advice from professional counselors, trying to live a better life according to religious beliefs, trying to do things that one skills like basket making and exercising, listening to music among many others.

However, stress has got a great impact to students' attitudes towards learning among University student. It has got both Negative and positive attitudes as reported by students. Majority of them reported that stress contributes more Negatively to their attitudes towards learning in the following ways students get more over whelmed and stressed in University life than fifteen years ago, teachers' personal traits such as unfairness lack of teachers' competency, poor treatment, and others. Stressful learning experience, disciplinary policies, absence of support from teachers and parents, demands of different courses, lot of research, assessments, maintaining high level of academic performance, among many others.

All those have negatively shaped the students' negative attitudes towards learning.

Other students on the other hand reported that stressful situations instead helps them to develop a positive situations instead helps them to develop a positive attitude towards learning since it helps them to do a lot of revision and practice so as to avoid getting retakes at the end of the

semester hence passing well and developing a positive attitude towards learning.

More still students reported that stressful situation in University education such as research and projects, helped them to get know better the meaning of education since it sharpens their minds and makes them feel complete intellectuals since at the end of the course are ranked and graded as grandaunts, doctors, professor among others. All those ranks granted to them at the end of the course motivate them to learn more even in stressful situation hence developing a positive attitude towards learning.

A table showing relationship between stress and students' attitudes towards learning.

Attitudes	Percentages
Positive attitude	20%
Negative attitude	80%
Total	100

Results above showed that the majority of the respondents (80%) developed a negative attitude towards learning due to stress and the minority (20%) developed a positive attitude to learning due to stress.

The relationship between coping strategies and students' attitudes towards learning among university students.

According to the findings, positive coping strategies that University students apply in stressful situations such as, visiting friends, sharing the problem with family members, making funs and likes, visiting professional counselors, learning new skills, basing on religious teachings among many others all together act as a motivator many others all together act as a motivator to students. This helps them to know the meaning to education since they are encouraged to learn by counselors that education is their models of which successes through

education. All those help students to develop a positive attitude towards learning among University students.

Negative coping strategies that students apply in stressful situations according to findings such as over thinking about the problem, alcoholism, crying more often than usual, isolation, blaming others for one's problem, among others all greatly contribute to students Negative attitude towards learning since they spend much time crying instead of poor performance hence developing a negative attitude towards learning.

A table showing the relationship between coping strategies and students' attitudes towards learning.

Coping strategies	Attitudes towards learning	percentages
Positive	Positive	83
Negative	Negative	17
Total		100

83% of the respondents cope positively and have got a positive Attitude towards learning, 17% cope negatively and have got a negative attitude towards learning.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the discussion of the findings basing on the set objectives of the study.

The findings are discussed in three major themes namely:- a relationship attitudes towards learning and stree among university students, stress and coping strategies among university students and lastly attitudes towards learning and coping strategies among university students.

Discussions

Bio-data

Majority of the respondents were in year three followed by year two and an equal number of respondents in year one and four.

From a total of hundred respondents interviewed, the majority were females followed by males.

A big number of respondents were between (19-25) years, followed by those between (26-30) years and lastly were 30 years and above.

Attitudes towards learning and stress among university students.

The alternative hypothesis was retained; there is a significant relationship between attitudes towards learning and stress among university students according to findings.

This is in line with the national mental healthy associated (2006), which found out that university student positive attitudes towards learning, has deteriorated further because students report being more overwhelmed and stressed than fifteen years ago.

The study again is in agreement with Lewis (2006) who says that, college students attribute their negative attitudes towards learning and stress to teachers personal character traits such as fairness, integrity, efforts, teaching competency and ideal treatment. Failures to meet the above, stress among other psychological problems are inevitable.

The findings further correlate with Kortring and Brazeil (1999), they found that out dropping out of colleges is primarily due to students negative attitudes towards learning, stressful learning experiences, disciplinary policies and absence of support from teachers. This has negatively shaped the students general attitudes towards learning.

The results are in agreement with Chua (2003) who found out that college students are faced with demands of different sources and a myriad of reading, projects and assessments. Students often find themselves drained of energy and stressed out before the semester ends. A commonly asked question "How can I stay motivated in my studies?" The answer simply lies in developing positive attitudes towards learning.

The results agreed with Towber and Cohen (1996), findings that the transitional nature of college life and maintaining high level of academic performance creates a big threat to them and consequently cause students to learn with a negative attitude.

Stress and coping strategies among university students;

The alternative hypothesis was regained and stated that there is a significant relationship between stress and coping strategies among university students.

The results correlate with Rock Hurst university findings (2005), that the number one complain of college students today is the high level of stress

in their lives. Stress affects not only the students' life and well being, but also the quality of their relationship with academic performance.

The study is in line with sue and sue (1999) that says that college students are unfamiliar with the very notion of stress coping services. Whitely and Gun (1990) supported that actual stigma attached to emotional expression, may account for the trend.

The findings further agreed with Jaffe, Dumke and Segal (1996), the social support is one important variable in coping with stress because it helps students to experience less stress overall as well as negative effects of stress that occur.

The results contrasted with Macarthur, John and Catherine (1999), they distinguished between the two general stress coping strategies used by university students. Problem solving strategies are efforts to do something active to alleviate stressful circumstance, while as emotional focused coping strategies involves efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potential stressful events.

Attitudes towards learning and coping strategies among university students.

The alternative hypothesis was retained and stated that there is a significant relationship between attitudes towards learning and coping strategies among university students.

The findings are in agreement with Chua (2003) who says, coping with negative attitudes towards learning among college students, calls for students to find time to reflect upon what an education means, what makes an educated person and what one expects to get out of the time spent at the university. The answer to the above, would determine the

approach to learn in general as they try to cope with negative attitudes towards learning.

The results also are in line with the ministry of education, New Zealand (2004) findings that, for college students to cope positively with their learning attitudes is the role of university curriculum that should encourage positive attitudes towards all areas of learning, providing challenging learning activities that are relevant to student's experiences and appropriate to their levels of achievement.

The studies again correlate with Houghton (1998) who suggested that college students with negative attitude towards learning could cope effectively through cooperative learning, an institutional approach where students work together in groups towards learning goals.

Cooperative learning fosters positive interdependence whereby students work and learn together in small group setting.

The findings are also in agreement with Constantine and Gainer Lewis (2002) they suggested that religion and spirituality, may be an important coping mechanism for college students with negative attitudes towards learning.

CONCLUSION

The finding sought to investigate the significant relationship between various variables and these included:- students attitudes towards learning, stress and coping strategies among university students. Results however, have revealed that attitudes towards learning and stress are significantly related; stress and coping are also related. Plus attitudes towards learning and coping strategies are significantly related.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line to improve university students' attitudes towards learning, the researcher made the following recommendations aimed at mapping workable solutions.

To improve student's attitudes towards learning, there is need to employ professional counselors who will help stressed up student's to cope positively hence improving and gaining students' positive attitude towards learning. Since counselors can provide students with stress management skills like sharing the problem with trusted people, enjoying jokes and funs, learning new skills and others. All those above will help a stressed student not to over think about the problem and instead resort/concentrate to learning.

University lecturers should be in position to motivate learners to learn. This can be done through giving positive comments/ encouraging statements such as good, well tried, among others instead of criticizing them all the time and calling students by their disabilities such as "you the one with a big nose". "The lame please give us the answer" and others all those gutting statements chase students from class leading to poor performance at the end of the semester hence students developing a negative attitude towards learning.

More so the university administrators should give students courses of their first choices since are the ones that suit their intellectual abilities and interests rather than imposing courses that are against their will

Lecturers should apply several teaching methods so as to help all categories of students in class such as the slow learners, disabled, gifted, normal learners among others.

This can be through giving special attentions to students with disabilities to learn, through group work and others. For example group work helps

students to socialize and to share experiences and approaches to questions hence coming up with a correct solution.

All those above can motivate weak students and the ones with low interest in education to develop a positive attitude towards learning and maintaining the ones with a positive attitude.

In response to help stressed students to cope positively the researcher made the following recommendation.

There is need for the parents, friends and religious leaders to provide social support to stressed students. The support makes students feel at home even if one is in hurting situation. He feels the problem is shared and less heavy than before hence keeping students mind free and giving them a chance to concentrate on learning.

The university should employ a professional counsel to whom students will approach in herd situations to be helped to minimize the level of stress and helping them cope positively.

The university teachers, administrates and others should avoid imposing stressful situations to students such as giving heavy punishments, putting heavy fines to students who have paid late, making students miss their results and many others. If all stressful situations are minimized, students will be free from stress hence a coping positively and developing a positive attitude towards learning.

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APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

The information given is strictly for study proposes and will be treated with maximum confidence. Respondents name will no be required. However you are required to complete the questionnaires as accurately as possible. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated. Please circle the appropriate answer for section A and fill the gaps for section B.

SECTION A

Background information of the respondent

1. Year of study

- (a) I (b) II (c) III (d) IV

2. Sex

- (a) Female (b) Male

3. Age

- (a) 19-25 (b) 25-30 (c) 30-above

4. Marital status

- (a) Single (b) Married (c) divorced

SECTION B

1) At the university, what cases that cause stressful life?

- I.
II.
III.

2) How does stressful life affect your attitude towards learning?

a) Positively

- I.
- II.
- III.

b) Negative

- I.
- II.
- III.

3) What things have helped you to improve your academic performance?

- I.
- II.
- III.

(4) What things motivate you to learn?

- I.
- II.

(5) What things make you feel stressed at university?

- I.
- II.

6) What stressful cases that contribute to your under achievement?

- I.
- II.
- III.

(7) During this semester, how best have you managed stress?

- I.
- II.

APPENDIX II
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH EXAMINERS'S REPORT

Names of candidate:..... Mamaweji Christine
 Registration No: BGC/11982/6104
 Department:..... Guidance and Counselling
 Programme:..... BGC
 Topic:..... Stress, Coping strategies and students' attitude towards learning, the case of Kampala International University

1. background to the study and methodology	11 -	15%	—
2. analysis of Data/Thesis	22 -	30%	—
3. Use of Relevant sources of the These	13 -	20%	—
4. Conclusion	20 -	25%	—
5. Preparation of Thesis e.g. Grammar, Foot notes	06 -	10%	—

Signed:..... 

Marks:..... 72 %

INTERNAL EXAMINER

DATE:..... 11/10/2010

Signed:.....

Marks:.....

INTERNAL EXAMINER

DATE:.....

END