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STRESS MANAGEMENT AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ONITSHA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined stress management and student's academic performance in secondary schools in Onitsha South Local Government Area. Academic performance was seen as a multidimensional construct made up of a learner's skills, attitudes, and behaviors that contribute to academic success in the classroom. It is a fundamental criterion by which all teaching-learning activities are measured, using some standards of excellence and the acquisition of specific grades in examinations to measure candidate's ability, mastery of the content, and skills in the classroom. According to statistics from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, it was discovered that the student's academic performance is declining year after year which was gathered that inadequate stress management could be the cause of this drop in academic performance. When students are stressed, they are less likely to give their all when it comes to schoolwork, and as a result, their outputs show up in their grades. Stress management is a set of predetermined actions aimed at lowering a person's stress level and they are seen in form guided imagery, effective time management, living a healthy lifestyle etc. The guided imagery technique is effective in reducing exam anxiety in school students. Also, Students' academic performance and achievements are aided by effective time management. Additionally, healthy students are more likely to succeed in school, and academic success aids children and youth in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to live healthy lives. More so, Academic performance and brain functions such as attention improved performance on standardized tests and overall grade point averages has been linked to healthier eating habits and memory have been linked to regular physical activity and higher levels of physical fitness and relaxation. The researcher therefore concludes that schools should employ the guided imagery of stress management in order to improve the academic performance of students. Also, students should learn how to manage their time very well by setting goals and priorities and being organized in their time management which will enhance their academic performance. Parents should make sure that they feed their children with good food to keep them healthy which will in turn improve their academic performance.

Keywords: Stress, Stress management, academic performance.

Introduction

The academic performance of students in any school is critical. This is important because it determines whether or not the school is academically growing. According to Nwokocha & Amadike (2005), a nation's educational quality is measured by its students' academic performance. Academic performance, according to Hijazi and Naqvi (2006), is a multidimensional construct made up of a learner's skills, attitudes, and behaviors that contribute to academic success in the classroom. Academic performance is a term used in school to describe how well a student performs

academically (Abraham 2018). It is a student's educational goal achieved over a period of time.

While stressing the importance of academic performance in the educational system, Aremu, Oluwole, and Fayowbo (2001) believed that academic performance is a fundamental criterion by which all teaching-learning activities are measured, using some standards of excellence and the acquisition of specific grades in examinations to measure candidate's ability, mastery of the content, and skills in the classroom. Academic performance refers to a student's current academic standing. This academic standing could be explained in terms of the grades earned in a single course or a series of courses (Adeyemi, 2011). Academic performance, on the other hand, is defined for the purposes of this study as the assessment of a student's performance across a variety of academic subjects.

Unfortunately, the quality of Nigeria's external examinations appears to be deteriorating as a result of this academic performance. According to data gathered from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, student academic performance is declining year after year.According to statistics, from 2016 to 2018, the percentage of students who received five credits or more in their West African Examination Council (WAEC) exams, including Mathematics and English, was as follows: Nigeria (52.3%), 2017 (56.53%), and 2018 (48.15%), and Anambra State (70.3%), 2017 (71.5%), and 2018 (51.40%). (National Bureau of Statistics 2019). According to Ogunsaju (2004), the academic standard in all Nigerian educational institutions has fallen significantly below societal expectations, indicating that the apparent low performances do not satisfy Nigeria's yearnings and aspirations. Inadequate stress management could be the cause of this drop in academic performance.Simply put, stress is the physical and mental reaction of humans to changes, events, and situations in their lives. When students are struggling to cope with challenges relating to exams, friends, relationships, the environment, and other situations, they can become stressed. Stress, according to Lehloo (2008), is the feeling of being put under physical, mental, or emotional strain as a result of real or imagined stimuli. It can also be defined as a state of tension experienced by people who are confronted with unusual demands, constraints, or opportunities. Anthenelli (2012) defined stress as a real or implied threat to an individual's psychological or physiological integrity. Students can be affected physically, psychologically, emotionally, socially, and academically by stress.

Stress causes irritability and bad temper in students, according to Centre (2010). Students who are stressed are easily irritated by minor details. Stress, in its own way, kills students' tolerance, making them prone to rage outbursts. The student tries to remain calm, but because they are worried and upset, they easily lose control. Stress that persists without relief can lead to distress, a negative stress reaction that has a negative impact on the student's health. Social stress can be caused by anything that disrupts or threatens their relationships with others. Low self-esteem, according to Nikitha, Jose, and Valsaraj (2014), is the cause of psychological issues like depression and suicide. Students' academic performance suffers as a result of their stress. A lack of concentration affects students. When students are stressed, they are less likely to give their all when it comes to schoolwork, and as a result, their outputs show up in their grades (Owusu, 2017).However, there are a

variety of stress management techniques that can assist students in coping with their studies.

Stress management is a set of predetermined actions aimed at lowering a person's stress level (Maddock & Pariante 2001). According to Centre (2010), the first technique that can help with stress management is guided imagery, which is also a convenient and simple relaxation technique that can help one quickly and easily manage stress and reduce tension in the body. It's almost as simple as having a vivid daydream, and it entails imagining a scene in which one is at ease, free of all tension and anxiety. Time management is another effective antidote to stress. Effective time management allows students to complete more in less time, because their attention is focused and they're not wasting time on distractions (such as social media, for example. Efficient use of time also reduces stress, as students tick off items from their to-do list. Make a list of the tasks that need to be completed and prioritize them. Spend time on the most important tasks and responsibilities. The next stress-reduction strategy is to live a healthy lifestyle. Exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, and set aside time for rest and relaxation.

From the researcher's observations, Anambra State especially Onitsha South Local Government Area is a very busy place. The local way of life appears to be so bad that it affects almost every resident in the area, including students. The students appear stressed because they do not have time to study their books and they are not well guided in their studies. There is no opportunity to do exercise or eat nutritious foods, no time for rest and relaxation, which would have helped them perform better in school.

Although stress is an unpleasant condition that affects people's lives, when it is managed properly by students, their academic performance improves dramatically. Guided imagery is a technique that uses the imagination, emotions, and a variety of bodily senses to create a mental image (Naparstek, 1994).Guided imagery helps students to activate background knowledge, and to preview a text in preparation for reading. Students use words and images from the text to generate multisensory visualizations of text content, and in doing so they become prepared to use multisensory visualization to aid in their comprehension.Guided imagery uses the power of your mind to form relaxing, peaceful images that are a blend of your thoughts and senses. Research has shown that guided imagery can be a helpful technique for helping to reduce stress and anxiety. According to Sensil and Sasikala (2011), guided imagery is effective in reducing exam anxiety in school students.

Effective time management also aids in students' academic performance.Effective time management allows students to complete more in less time, because their attention is focused and they're not wasting time on distractions such as social media. Efficient use of time also reduces stress, as students tick off items from their to-do list. Every student need to manage their time effectively, which includes setting goals and priorities, using time management mechanisms, and being organized in their use of time. Self-motivation is the only way to manage time in this situation; performance, ability, and motivation are all necessary (Brigitte, Claessens, Eerde, and Rutte, 2005). Effective time management improves one's overall quality of life. This is

because time management can easily solve some of the most common problems, such as stress and a lack of time for personal interests.

Furthermore, healthy students are more likely to succeed in school, and academic success aids children and youth in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to live healthy lives (Florence, Asbridge and Veugelers 2008). According to Dowell et al (2001), physical activity has an impact on cognitive skills such as concentration and attention, and it also enhances classroom attitudes and behaviours, all of which are important components of improved academic performance. Also it has been observed that academic performance and brain functions such as attention improved performance on standardized tests and overall grade point averages has been linked to healthier eating habits and memory have been linked to regular physical activity and higher levels of physical fitness and relaxation.It is on this background of improving students' academic performance through stress management that this study sought to examine stress management and students' academic performance in Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Statement of Study

The issue of poor academic performance of students in secondary schools in Onitsha South has been of much concern to the government, parents, teachers and student themselves. From cursory look, the enormity and critical nature of these challenges are evident in the increasing poor performance of students in national examinations such as WAEC as earlier stated. Actually, numerous factors have been linked to the poor performance of students which stress is one of them. Stress has posed a lot challenge to the academic performance of students. It arises in form of worry and anxiety, low self-esteem, poor time management, lack of concentration, fear of failure, to its highest state of depression. All these problems contribute to the poor students' academic performance hence the need for stress management.It is on this note that this study sought to examine stress management and students' academic performance in Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the guided imagery and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area?

2. What is the relationship between the time management and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area?

3. What is the relationship between living a healthy lifestyle and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area?

Test of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance;

1. There is no significant statistical relationship between guided imagery and academic performance of students.
2. There is no significant statistical relationship between time management and academic performance of students.
3. There is no significant statistical relationship between living a healthy

lifestyle and academic performance of students.

Research Method

The research design is correlational research design. The population of the study are secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area. There are six public secondary schools with a total of 9,230 students. All the secondary schools were used for the study and simple random sampling were used to select 20 students from each of the schools thus the sample size for the study were 120 students. The instrument for the data collection were titled Stress Management and Students Academic Performance in Secondary Schools Questionnaire (SMSAPSSQ) structured questionnaire. The questionnaire has 15 items and was structured four Likert scale such as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Agree (DA).The questionnaire had an average reliability score of 0.82.The copies of the questionnaires collected was 100%. Mean score was used to analyse data from the questionnaire. The item mean scores below 2.5 was disagreed and item mean scores from 2.5 and above was agreed. Pearson product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between the guided imagery and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area?

Table 1: The relationship between the guided imagery and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area

S/N	Item Descriptions	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std Dev	Decision
1.	Decrease depression increases students' grade in examination	60(240)	35(105)	15(30)	10(10)	120(385)	3.21	.961	Agree
2	Decrease side effect of anxiety boosts students' scores in examination	63(252)	30(90)	17(34)	10(10)	120(386)	3.22	.980	Agree
3	Good performance comes with reduced stress in academic studies	55(220)	34(102)	19(38)	12(12)	120(372)	3.1	1.008	Agree
4	Enhance quality of life leads to success in school	60(240)	40(120)	12(24)	8(8)	120(392)	3.27	.896	Agree
5	Better academic performance comes from good study habit and relaxation	58(232)	36(108)	16(32)	10(10)	120(382)	3.18	.961	Agree
	Average mean score						3.18		

Table 1 showed the mean scores and the standard deviation of respondents on the relationship between the guided imagery and academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area. The results reveal that all the mean from the students were above 2.50 and agreed. Also, the average mean scores of the respondents were above 2.50. These results imply that decrease depression, decrease side effect of anxiety, reduced stress, enhanced quality of life and good

study habit and relaxation increases academic performance.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between the time management and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area?

Table 2.The relationship between time management and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area

S/N	Item Descriptions	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean (X)	Std Dev.	Decision
6	Creating a master schedule enhances high grade in school	62(248)	39(117)	10(20)	9(9)	120(394)	3.28	.909	Agree
7	Setting goals for each study session leads to success in school	55(220)	40(120)	15(30)	10(10)	120(380)	3.17	.947	Agree
8	Working on assignment on time improves students' grade in examination	50(200)	45(135)	20(40)	5(5)	120(380)	3.17	.853	Agree
9	Working on one thing at a time leads to success in school	40(160)	40(120)	25(50)	15(15)	120(345)	2.88	1.017	Agree
10	Eliminating distractions increases students' scores in school	56(224)	36(108)	18(36)	10(10)	120(375)	3.15	.967	Agree
	Average mean score						3.13		

Table 2 showed the mean scores and standard deviation of the relationship between time management and academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area. The results reveal that all the mean from the students were above 2.50 agreed. Also, the average mean scores of the respondents were above 2.50. These results imply that creating a master schedule, setting goals for each study session, working on assignments on time, working on one thing at a time and eliminating distractions increases academic performance.

AJEMATES

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between living a healthy lifestyle and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area?

Table 3. The relationship between Living a healthy lifestyle and academic performance of students in Onitsha South Local Government Area

S/N	Item descriptions	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Std Dev.	Decision
11	Measuring and watching weight improves students' grade in examination	35(140)	45(135)	20(40)	20(20)	120(335)	2.79	1.044	Agree
12	Limiting unhealthy foods and eating healthy meal enhances success in school	49(196)	30(90)	25(50)	16(16)	120(352)	2.93	1.075	Agree
13	Regular exercise and being physically active leads to better academic performance	70(280)	25(75)	15(30)	10(10)	120(395)	3.29	.982	Agree
14	Having enough good sleep increases students' grade in school	57(228)	40(120)	15(30)	8(8)	120(386)	3.22	.909	Agree
15	Academic performance comes from reduced sitting	51(204)	29(87)	22(44)	18(18)	120(353)	2.94	1.102	Agree
	Average mean						3.03		

Table 3 showed the mean scores and the standard deviation of the relationship between living a healthy lifestyle and academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area. The results reveal that all the mean from the students were above 2.50 agreed. Also, the average mean scores of the respondents were above 2.50. These results imply that measuring and watching weights, limiting unhealthy foods, regular exercise,

having enough good sleep and reduced sitting will improve academic performance of students.

Test of Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant statistical relationship between guided imagery and academic performance of students.

Table 4: Pearson product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis on the guided imagery and student's academic performance

Correlations

		Guided Imagery	Academic Performance
Guided Imagery	Pearson Correlation	1	.666**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	120	120
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.666**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	
	N	120	120

Table 4 showed the Pearson's product-moment correlational analysis on the guided imagery and student's academic performance. The result on the table shows that the Pearson correlation is 0.041 at 0.05 alpha significant level. More so, the r-value which is .666 shows that there is a relationship that exists between the two variables. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a significant statistical relationship between the guided imagery and academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area.

- **Hypothesis 2:**There is no significant statistical relationship between time management and academic performance of students.

Table 5: Pearson product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis on the time management and student's academic performance

Correlations

		Time management	Academic performance
Time management	Pearson Correlation	1	.866**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	120	120
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.866**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	

	N	120	120

Table5 showed the Pearson's product-moment correlational analysis on the time management and student's academic performance. The result on the table shows that the Pearson correlation is 0.001 at 0.05 alpha significant level. More so, the r-value which is .866 shows that there is a relationship that exists between the two variables. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a significant statistical relationship between the time management and academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area.

- **Hypothesis 3:**There is no significant statistical relationship between living a healthy lifestyle and academic performance of students.

Table 6: Pearson product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis on living a healthy lifestyle and student's academic performance

Correlations

		healthy lifestyle	Academic Performance
healthy lifestyle	Pearson Correlation	1	.777**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.045
	N	120	120
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.777**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	
	N	120	120

Table 4 showed the Pearson's product-moment correlational analysis on living a healthy lifestyle and student's academic performance. The result on the table shows that the Pearson correlation is 0.045 at 0.05 alpha significant level. Moreso, the r-value which is .777 shows that there is a relationship that exists between the two variables. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a significant statistical relationship between living a healthy lifestyle and academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

From the data generated in response to research question one, stress management of guided imagery and student's academic performance are: decrease depression, decrease side effect of anxiety, reduced stress, enhanced quality of life and good study habit and relaxation. According to Centre (2010), the first technique that can help with stress management is guided imagery, which is also a convenient and simple relaxation technique that can help one quickly and easily manage stress and reduce tension in the body. The test of hypothesis one showed that there is a significant relationship between the guided imagery and student's academic performance in Onitsha South Local Government Area. This decision was made because the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. From the data generated in response to research question two, stress management of time management and student's academic performance are: creating a master schedule, setting goals for each study session, working on assignments on time, working on one thing at a time and eliminating distractions. Brigitte, et al (2005) observed that every student need to manage their time effectively, which includes

setting goals and priorities, using time management mechanisms, and being organized in their use of time. The test of hypothesis two showed that there is a significant relationship between time management and student's academic performance in Onitsha South Local Government Area. This decision was made because the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted.

From the data generated in response to research question three, stress management of living a healthy lifestyle and student's academic performance are: measuring and watching weights, limiting unhealthy foods, regular exercise, having enough good sleep and reduced sitting. This finding is in consonance with the study of Florence et al (2008) who discovered that healthy students are more likely to succeed in school, and that academic success aids children and youth in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to live healthy lives. This also agreed with findings of Dowell et al (2001), that physical activity has an impact on cognitive skills such as concentration and attention, and it also enhances classroom attitudes and behaviours, all of which are important components of improved academic performance. The test of hypothesis three showed that there is a significant relationship between the stress management of healthy lifestyle and student's academic performance in Onitsha South Local Government Area. This decision was made because the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that schools should employ the guided imagery of stress management in order to improve the academic performance of students. Also, students should learn how to manage their time very well by setting goals and priorities and being organized in their time management which will enhance their academic performance. Parents should make sure that they feed their children with good food to keep them healthy which will in turn improve their academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1) School administrators should employ the help of guidance and counselors who will properly counsel the students on how best the guided imagery of stress management can help decrease the side effect of anxiety and reduce tension in the body.
2) School administrators should create time for recreation and relaxation center in the school so that the students can exercise themselves during break time.
3) Students should manage their time effectively by setting goals and priorities and working on one thing at a time.
4) Students should work on their assignments on time and eliminate all distractions.
5) Parents should limit giving their children unhealthy foods in order to keep them healthy as healthy students perform better than unhealthy students.
6) Parents should also encourage their children to have enough good sleep regularly for improved academic performance.

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