PERCEIVED STRESS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WESTERN REGION, GHANA

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ABSTRACT

This study finds out the profile and the relationship between Senior High School Students' perceived stress and academic performance. A total of 120 Senior High School Students randomly selected from four Senior High Schools in the Western Region of Ghana participated in the study. The instruments used for the research were the Students-Life Stress Inventory (SSI) by Gadzella (1991) and Mathematics Achievement Test adopted from the West African Examination Council (W.A.E.C). Data gathered from these instruments were analyzed using Percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Results showed that, majority of the students experienced moderate stress levels and that, none of the students experienced high stress levels. The study also indicated that, there is no significant correlation between the level of perceived stress and academic performance of the students. The results further showed that, schools in the urban areas performed better on the achievement test compared to schools in the rural areas. The research has provided insights for stakeholders in education to provide the necessary structures to help students manage stress in order to improve their academic performance.

Keywords: *Academic Performance, Senior High School Students, Stress.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The government of Ghana is much concerned with the global agenda of achieving education for all. The academic performance of students has become a great concern to stakeholders of education. This has led the government to formulate and implement policies to improve academic performance. In Ghana, the abolition of tuition fees and the introduction of the Capitation Grant Initiative in 2005 resulted in a massive increase in enrolment (18%) in public basic schools (MOESS, 2006). Many factors including persistent reforms of education, socio-economic status, poor infrastructure, inadequate teachers among others have been attributed to the low level of academic achievement in Ghana. The Ministry of Education reports showed that over 20% of children leave school before the completion of the basic cycle, due to factors including the low quality public education (MOESS, 2006). A teacher who does not have both the academic and the professional teacher qualification would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching, and learning of his/her subject (Agyeman 1993). Great strides have been taken by successive governments towards the improvement of the school system yet it continues to experience poor performance.

  Stress has also been found to be a major contributing factor to academic performance. Kaplan & Sadock, (2000), stated that, although an optimal level of stress can enhance learning ability, Niemi & Vainiomaki, 1999; argued that, too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems and may affect the academic achievement of students (Elliot et al., 2005; Hofer, 2007; Robbins et al., 2006; Trautwein et al., 2006; Was et al., 2006). There have been numerous studies on stress and its impact on psychological and physical health for several decades by psychologists. Lazarus defined stress as a state of psychological arousal that results when external demands tax or exceed a person's adaptive abilities (Lazarus, 1966). This shows that stress has discernable impact on students' academic achievement.

 The educational system in Ghana over the years has gone through several reforms. The implementation of the reform programs introduced by the Government in 1987 reduced the number of years spent at the basic level from ten years to nine years. As part of the reforms, the Senior High School lasts for a period of three years. The Government in 2007 extended the years for Senior High School education to four years and was again changed by the Government in 2009 to three years. All these reforms were geared towards higher academic achievement.

 The curriculum has been enriched and expanded in order to ensure quality performance, yet the Ghanaian education system is experiencing low academic performance. Considering these and other factors, it is important to consider perceived stress and academic performance of students in Senior High Schools.

1.2 *Objectives of the Study*

   Based on the nature of the problem, the paper seeks to find out:
   1. The profile of Senior High School Student's Perceived Stress
   2. The Academic Performance of Senior High School Students
   3. The Academic Performance of Senior High Schools
   4. The Relationship between Perceived Stress and Academic Performance

1.3 *Research Hypothesis*

   The following hypothesis was tested in the study:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between Senior High School Students' Perceived Stress, and Academic Performance.

H_1: There is significant relationship between Senior High School Students' Perceived Stress and Academic Performance

1.4 *Research Questions*

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Profile of Senior High School Students' Perceived Stress?

2. What is the Academic Performance of the Senior High School Students'?

3. What is the Academic Performance of Senior High Schools?

   The findings of the study would provide essential information for students, parents, tutors, and other researchers on stress, and academic performance and will help students to cope effectively with stress, identify their strength and weakness in order to achieve academic excellence. The study will further help curriculum developers to develop constructive programs to improve academic performance. It will also help professionals like school counselors to develop strategies to ameliorate stress and help students to understand themselves. It will provide information to government to develop the rural schools in order to do well in academics. Finally the study will serve as a source of reference material to students and other researchers who may undertake similar research work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

 In psychology, stress is the demand made on an organism to adapt, to cope, or to adjust (Rathus 2000, pg 565). Some stress is healthful and necessary to keep us alert and occupied. Stress researcher Hans Selye (1980) referred to such healthful stress as eustress, whereas stress that leads to negative consequences is known as distress. But intense or prolonged stress can overtax our capacity to adjust, dampen our moods, impair our ability to experience pleasure, and harm the body (Repetti, 1993). Stress can also be defined as an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their well-being.

 Academic stress is the product of a combination of academic related demands that exceed the adaptive resources available to an individual. If a student is unable to cope effectively with academic stress, then serious psycho-social-emotional health consequences may result (Arthur, 1998; MacGeorge, Samter, & Gillikan, 2005). Students who experience mental and physical health problems are then at greater risk for poor academic performance, thus increasing academic stress and perpetuating a cycle of stress, maladaptive coping, and compromised health (Haines, Norris, & Kashy, 1996). Literature has shown that there is a strong relationship between stress and high school students' performance (Ross, Neibling, Heckert, 1999). Normally, Stress is caused by environmental and internal demands that need to be managed in order to cope with the situation. These environmental and internal demands may be unique to each individual.

In many cases first year students experience homesick. This may occur as a result of moving to a new environment, not knowing anyone, missing home, and missing family and friends. Homesickness can debilitate students, making it difficult for them to study or cope effectively with academic life (Fisher, 1994).

 Research has shown that academic workload has been one of the major sources of high school students' stress. Chiang (1995) proposed that school is one of the main sources of stress among adolescents. Such stress comes from too much homework, unsatisfactory academic performance, preparation for tests, lack of interest in a particular subject, and teacher's punishment. The working hours, workload, lack of resources to carry out their job, and the low level of reward were most frequently identified as stressors (Tiwari and Balani, 2013). Normally students encounter high level of stress when they receive lower grades. This is because some students link their grades with their future. Stress is marked by overly high performance

standards, with high levels of worry, self-criticism of attention while preparing for or taking exams (Altmaier, 1983, p. 52). "The academic workload requires that students face a series of peak periods such as finals, there is a relatively constant underlying pressure to complete an upcoming assignment" (Hudd, Dumlao, Erdmann, Murray, Phan, Soukas, & Yokozuka, 2000). "Woking hours and workload were identified to be the powerful source of stress" (Tiwali and Balani 2013,p.29)

Furthermore, forming new relationships and making new friends has been a major headache for some high school students. Giving up or changing old friendships and developing new ones is often a stressful activity associated with high school life (Greenberg, 1996, p. 280). Again, pressure exerts by families of students can also be a source of stress. Parents expect their children to get high grades and this is a major source of stress to high school students.

3. Materials and Methodology
3.1 *Research Design*

The research was a descriptive survey. Descriptive research is a procedure for organizing and summarizing data in order to communicate and describe important characteristics of the data. It determines and reports the way things are (Gay, 1996). According to Gay (1996), a descriptive survey method is useful for investigating a variety of educational problems including assessment of attitudes, opinions, demographic information, conditions and procedures. This design helps in producing a good amount of responses from a wide range of people.

3.2 *Population*
The population for the study comprised all Senior High School forms 1, 2, and 3 Students in the Western Region of Ghana. There are 42 Senior High Schools (S.H.S) in the region, with an estimated number of 109,326 students. Out of the estimated total of 109,326 students, 63,409 (58%) were females and 45,917 (42%) were males. Out of a total of 28 localities in Shama-Ahanta East District, 10 (36%) of the localities in the metropolis have Senior High Schools. Out of a total of 30 localities in the Ahanta West District, 12 (40%) have Senior High Schools and out of a total of 27 localities in the Wassa West District, 8 (30%) of the communities have access to S.H.S. within 10 kilometres. Four schools were selected from the Schools in the Region. Two schools were selected from urban area and two from rural area.

3.3 *Sample and Sampling Procedures*
The Senior High Schools of Western Region were listed and grouped into urban school and rural school and two schools were randomly selected from each category. The samples for the study were selected using the stratified random sampling technique. In all, four Senior High Schools were sampled. One hundred and twenty (120) students were selected from four schools. A total of 30 students were sampled from each selected senior high school.

3.4 *Research Instrument*
The researchers adopted questionnaire as an instrument for the study. Section A of the instrument was design to gather demographic information. Section B of the instrument elicited the students views on perceived stress and the questions were made up of 4 point scale type of instrument which comprised twelve (12) items selected from *The Students-Life Stress Inventory (SSI)* by Gadzella (1991) where students answered item starting from "Not at All" to "Very Often".

The Student-Life Stress Inventory (Gadzella, 1991) is a self-report, 5-point Likert-type instrument that includes 51 items. The SSI was re-worded to 4-point likert-type instrument and included 12 items to suit the population and purposes of study. Gadzella and Baloglu (2001) reported an alpha value of .92 for the whole inventory. In 1993, Gadzella and Guthrie reported a test-retest reliability of .78 for the whole inventory. Researchers demonstrated the concurrent validity of this inventory (Gadzella, 1991; Gadzella & Baloglu,

2001). In exploring validity of the SSI, Gadzella, and Masten, (1997) found that the SSI was significantly correlated with deep processing, elaborative processing, methodical study, and test anxiety.

Reliability was reported with Chronbach's alphas and Person product-moment correlations for responses on the SSI by 95 subjects (Gadzella, Fullwood, & Ginther, 1991).

Finally, in section C, students responded to mathematics achievement test. It consists of 30 multiple choice questions selected from past questions of the West African Examination Council (W.A.E.C). The WAEC is a body that organizes final examinations for high school students and the mathematics achievement test was adopted from one of its past questions administered in 2000.

3.5 *Data Analysis*

The completed questionnaires were serially numbered for easy identification and were finally scored. Items on the four point likert scale was scored 1, 2, 3, and 4 for items with the response strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree respectively

Percentages and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used for the analysis. The range, mean, and the standard deviation were used to classify perceived stress and academic performance. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to describe the relationship between the Students' Perceived Stress and Academic Performance.

4. RESULTS

The statistical tools used are frequency tables, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Data in this research were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Table 1: Sex of the Respondents

Respondents	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Males	78	65
Females	42	35
Total	120	100

Source: Field Data

Table 1 shows that out of the sample of 120 respondents, there were 78 (65%) males and 42 (32%) females.

Table 2: Age range of respondents

Age Range	Frequency (N)	Percentages (%)
12-14	2	1.7
15-17	32	26.9
18-20	77	64.7
Others	8	6.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Data

Table 2 shows the age range of the respondents. Out of the 4 categories given, 2 (1.7%) fall within the age range of 12-14, 32 (26.9%) were within the age range of 15-17, 77 (64.7%) were within the age range of 18-20, 8 (6.7%) represent those who did not fall within the age range given.

Table 3: Forms of the respondents

Forms	Frequency (N)	Percentages (%)
One	40	33.3
Two	40	33.3
Three	40	33.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Data

Table 3 shows the forms of the respondents. Forty (40) students representing 33.3% responded to the questionnaire in each form from the four schools. This shows that the questionnaire was distributed fairly to the students in their various forms or classes.

Table 4: Courses of Study of the Sampled Students

Courses	Frequency (N)	Percentages (%)
General Arts	32	26.7
Home Economics	5	4.2
Business	10	8.3
Visual Arts	1	0.8
Agricultural Science	3	2.5
Science	56	46.7
Others	11	9.2
Total	120	100

Source: Field Data

Table 4 shows the course of study of the respondents. There were 32 (26.7 %)

General Arts students, 5 (4.2%) students in Home economics class, 10 (8.3%) Business and 1 (0.8%) was a Visual Arts student who responded to the questionnaire. There were 3 (2.5%) students who were reading Agric. Science, 56 (46.7%) were Science students and 11 (9.2%) were reading other courses. It must also be stated that, majority of the students read Science.

Research Question 1

What is the Profile of Senior High School Students' perceived Stress? This research question sought to find out the level of perceived stress of the students. Section B of the questionnaire was used to elicit multiple responses relating to the research question. Table 5 shows how students fell with regards to their responses.

Table 5: Profile of Senior High School Students' Perceived Stress

Variables	Low N (%)	Moderate N (%)	Total N (%)
Sex: Male:	41 (52.6)	37 (47.4)	78 (100)
Female:	18 (42.9)	24 (57.1)	42 (100)
Total	59 (49.2)	61 (50.8)	120 (100)
Age: 12-14	0 (0)	2 (100)	2 (100)
15-17	11 (34.4)	21 (65.6)	32 (100)
18-20	42 (54.5)	35 (45.5)	77 (100)
Others	6 (75.0)	2 (25.0)	8 (100)
Total	59 (49.6)	60 (50.4)	119(100)
Form: one	19 (47.5)	21 (52.5)	40 (100)
Two	16 (40.0)	24 (60.0)	40 (100)
Three	24 (60.0)	16 (40.0)	40 (100)
Total	59 (49.2)	61 (50.8)	120 (100)
Course: General Arts	14 (43.8)	18 (56.2)	32 (100)
Home Econs.	1 (20)	4 (80)	5 (100)
Business	4 (40)	6 (60)	10 (100)
Visual Arts	0 (0)	1(100)	1 (100)

Agric Science	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)	3 (100)
Science	32 (57.1)	24 (42.9)	56 (100)
Others	6 (54.5)	5 (45.5)	11 (100)
Total	58 (49.2)	60 (50.8)	118 (100)

Source: Field Data

Table 5 shows the Senior High School Students perceived stress level. Out of a total of 120 respondents, 78 (65%) were males of which 41 (52.6%) had low stress level and 37 (47.4%) had moderate stress level. Out of a total of 42 (35%) females, 18 (42.9%) had low stress level and 24 (57.1%) had moderate stress level. None of the respondents had high stress level. With regards to students' age, those with ages ranging from 12-14 were 2 (1.7%); this age group had moderate stress level. Respondents with 15-17 years were 32 (26.7%) and out of these, 11 (34.4%) had low stress level and 21 (65.5%) had moderate stress level. There were 77 (64.2%) within 18-20 years and out of these 42 (54.5%) recorded low stress level and 35 (45.5%) had moderate stress level. The other categories of ages were 8 (6.7%) out of which 6 (75%) had low stress levels and 2 (25%) recorded moderate stress.

Data were collected on forms one, two, and three. There were 40 (33.3%) students who responded to the questionnaire from each class. Out of 40 (33.3%) form one students, 19 (47.5%) had low stress level and 21 (52.5%) had moderate stress level. There were 16 (40.0%) form two students who had low stress level and 24 (60.0%) recorded moderate stress level. There were 24 (60.0%) form three students, who had low stress level and 16 (40.0%) had moderate stress level.

Data were gathered on the courses of the students. General Arts students were 32 (26.7%) out of these 14 (43.8%) had low stress level and 18 (56.2%) had moderate stress level and none had high stress level. Home Economics students were 5 (4.2%) and 1 (20%) had low stress level and 4 (80%) of the respondents had moderate stress level. Students who read business were 10 (8.3%), out of which 4 (40%) recorded low stress level and 6 (60%) had moderate stress level. Only one person was a Visual Arts student and this represents .8% who had moderate stress level. There were 56 (46.7%) science students, out of these, 32 (57.1%) were experiencing low stress level and 24 (42.9%) were experiencing moderate stress level. There were 3 (2.5%) Agric students and 1 (33.3%) had low stress level and 2 (66.7%) had moderate stress level. Students who were reading other courses were 11 (9.2%) out of these, 6 (54.5%) experienced low stress level and 5 (45.5%) experienced moderate stress level. Research findings by Ross, Neibling, Heckert, and (1999) showed that there is a strong relationship between stress and high school students' academic performance. The study showed that students are not highly stressed, however 59 of the students had low stress levels and 61 were moderately stressed.

Research Question 2

What is the Academic Performance of Senior High School Students? This research question sought to find out the performance of the students. Students responded to Standardized Mathematics Achievement Test on section C of the questionnaire to answer the research question.

Table 4: Academic Performance of Senior High School Students

Variable	Below Average N (%)	Average N (%)	Above Average N (%)	Total N (%)
Sex: Male:	15 (19.2)	29 (37.2)	34 (43.6)	78 (100)
Female:	25 (59.5)	16 (38.1)	1 (2.4)	42 (100)
Total	40 (33.3)	45 (37.5)	35 (29.2)	120 (100)
Age: 12-14	1 (50)	0 (0.0)	1 (50)	2 (100)
15-17	15 (46.9)	14 (43.8)	3 (9.4)	32 (100)
18-20	20 (26)	27 (35.0)	30 (39.0)	77 (100)
Others	3 (37.5)	4 (50)	1 (12.5)	8 (100)
Total	39 (32.8)	45 (37.8)	35 (29.4)	119 (100)
Form: one	19 (47.5)	12 (30)	9 (22.5)	40 (100)
Two	10 (25)	17 (42.5)	13 (32.5)	40 (100)
Three	11 (27.5)	16 (40)	13(32.5)	40 (100)
Total	40 (33.3)	45 (37.5)	35 (29.2)	120 (100)
Course: General Arts	22 (68.8)	7 (21.9)	3 (9.4)	32 (100)
Home Econs.	4 (80.0)	1 (20)	0 (.0)	5 (100)
Business	2 (20)	8 (80)	0 (.0)	10 (100)
Visual Arts	1 (100)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	1 (100)
Agric Science	0 (.0)	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)	3 (100)
Science	7 (12.5)	25 (44.6)	24 (42.9)	56 (100)
Others	3 (27.3)	2 (18.2)	6 (54.5)	11 (100)
Total	39 (33.1)	44 (37.3)	35 (29.7)	118 (100)

Source: Field Data

Table 4 shows the academic performance of the students. Out of a total of 78 males 15 (19.2%) were below average and 29 (37.2%) were average while 34 (43.6%) were above average. Out of a total of 42 female students 25 (59.2%) scored below average, 16 (38.1%) were average and 1 (2.4%) was above average.

Students within the age range of 12-14 years were 2, out of which 1 (50%) was below average and 1 (50%) scored above average. Students within the age range of 15-17 years were 32, out of which 15 (46.9%) scored below average, 14 (43.8%) of these students scored average and 3 (9.4%) scored above average. A total of 77 were in the 18-20 years group, out of which 20 (26.0%) were below average, 27 (35.0%) were average students and 30 (39.0%) were above average. There were 8 students who did not fall within the age categories provided on the questionnaire, out of these, 3 (37.5%) were below average and 4 (50%) were average students while 1 (12.5%) was above average.

Out of 40 students in form one, 19 (47.5%) were below average, 12 (30.0%) were average students and 9 (22.5%) scored above average. Out of 40 form two students, 10 (25%) were below average, 17 (42.5%) were average and 13 (32.5%) were above average. Out of 40 form three students, 11 (27.5%) were below average, 16 (40%) were average students and 13 (32.5%) were above average.

Out of a total of 32 General Arts students, 22 (68.8%) were below average, 7 (21.9%) were average students and 3 (9.4%) scored above average. Out of 5 Home Econs. Students, 4 (80%) were below average, 1 (20%) was average and none of them had above average. There were 10 Business students of which 2 (20%) were below average and 8 (80%) were average students none of them scored above average. There was 1 (100%) Visual Arts student who had below average. There were 3 Agric Science students and 1 (33.3%) was average student, 2 (66.7%) were above average and none was below average. There were 56 science students out of which 7 (12.5%) were below average, 25 (44.6%) were average and 24 (42.9%) were above average. There were 11 students reading other courses of which 3 (27.3%) scored below average, 2 (18.2%) were average and 6 (54.5%) were above average.

Research question 3

What is the Academic Performance of Senior High Schools? This research question sought to find out the performance of the four schools.

Table 5: Academic Performance of Senior High Schools

Schools	Below Average N (%)	Average N (%)	Above Average N (%)	Total N (%)
S.H.S 1	1 (3.3)	5 (16.7)	24 (80)	30 (100)
S.H.S 2	8 (26.7)	20 (66.7)	2 (6.6)	30 (100)
S.H.S 3	12 (40)	9 (30)	9 (30)	30 (100)
S.H.S 4	18 (60.0)	12 (40)	0 (0)	30 (100)
Total	39 (32.5)	46 (38.3)	35 (29.2)	120 (100)

Source: Field Data

Table 5 shows how the four schools performed on the Standardized Mathematics Achievement Test. There were 30 students from S.H.S.1, out of which 1 (3.3%) was below average, 5 (16.7%) were average students and 24 (80%) students were above average. Also, there were 30 students from S.H.S 2, out of which 8 (26.7%) scored below average, 20 (66.7%) students were average students and 2 (6.6%) were above average. There were 30 students from S.H.S 3, 12 (40%) were below average, 9 (30%) were average and 9 (30%) were above average. Students of S.H.S 4 were 30, out of which 18 (60%) were below average, 12 (40.0%) were average and none scored above average.

Table 6: Academic Performance of Rural and Urban Schools

School Category (%)	Below Average N (%)	Average N (%)	Above Average N (%)	Total N
Urban	10 (16.7)	24 (40.0)	26 (43.3)	60 (100)
Rural	30 (50.0)	21 (35.0)	9 (15.0)	60 (100)
Total	40 (33.3)	45 (37.5)	35 (29.2)	120 (100)

Source: Field Data

Table 6 shows the academic performance of rural and urban schools. Out of the total of 60 urban students, 10 (16.7%) scored below average, 24 (40.0%) recorded average mark and 26 (43.3%) scored above average.

With regard to the rural schools, out of 60 students, 30 (50.0%) were below average, 21 (35.0%) were average students and 9 (15.0%) were above average. This result shows that, schools in the urban areas performed better than the schools in the rural areas.

Hypothesis

Specifically, the study provided answer to one research hypothesis. Table 7 shows the results in accordance to the research hypothesis. In this study, one null hypothesis was tested for the significant level at 0.01.

H_0: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$. There is no significant relationship between Senior High School Students' Perceived Stress and Academic Performance.

H_1: $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$. There is a significant relationship between Senior High School students' Perceived Stress and Academic Performance.

Decision Rule:

Reject H_0 but accept H_1, if calculated $|p| < 0.01$

Accept H_0, but reject H_1, if calculate $|p| > 0.01$

** Given a significant level of 0.01 (2 tailed), when p is less than 0.01 there is a significant relationship

The results of the above hypothesis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Correlation Matrix for Stress, and Academic Achievement

Variables	Stress	Academic Performace. in Mathematics
Stress	1	
Academic Performance	-.14	1

**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 7 shows the correlation between perceived stress, and academic performance. The result shows that there is no significant relationship between students' perceived stress and academic performance ($r = -.14$, $p > 0.01$). This means that, a negative relationship exists but it is not significant. Therefore, do not reject the null hypothesis.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research on the profile of Senior High School Students' perceived stress revealed that female students were moderately stressed compared to males. The study also showed that, students between 12-14 years were moderately stressed. This may be attributed to the transition from childhood to adolescence during which young people go through several problems which could be stressful to them. There were 24 (60%) form 2 students who were moderately stressed as compared to the other forms, with 24 (60%) form 3 students having the lowest stress level. This finding is not consistent with studies conducted by Altmaier, 1983; Pancer 2000; Fisher, 1994 which have shown that the period of greatest stress during students' transition to high school is in the first weeks and months in form one.

There was 1 (100%) Visual Arts student who recorded moderate stress level and 32 (57.1%) science students had the lowest stress level. This may be as a result of resources available to science students in terms of teachers, laboratories and books. Students also place less priority on Visual Arts course compared to science in Ghana.

Generally, many researchers have found significant relationship between perceived stress and academic performance. Literature has shown that there is a strong relationship between stress and high school students' performance (Ross, Neibling, Heckert, 1999). In contrast, this research found out that, there was

no significant relationship between stress and academic performance (r = -.14, p > 0.01). Although, there is negative correlation between perceived stress and academic performance, the relationship is not significant. The student generally experienced moderate stress levels and stress did not significantly affect academic performance. The difference may be as a result of environmental factors and academic workload as suggested by Hudd, Dumlao, Erdmann, Murray, Phan, Soukas, & Yokozuka, 2000 " The academic workload requires that students face a series of peak periods such as finals, there is a relatively constant underlying pressure to complete an upcoming assignment".

The results of the research showed that, male students performed better than female students. There were 34 (43.6%) males who scored above average as compared to 1 (2.4%) female student. This difference may be that male students were lower in stress as compared to their female counterparts. Males are more interested in reading science programmes in Ghana as compared to female and mathematics as a course work is compulsory for science student.

The findings confirmed that, students in the urban schools performed better academically compared to students in the rural schools. This may be due to a variety of factors such as parents' occupation, environmental factors, social factors as well as cultural factors. Residential status of the respondents may also be a factor. Inadequate resources such as laboratories, classrooms, teachers, books, dormitories in the rural schools might have also contributed to the poor performance of the rural schools. Urban schools have relatively high academic resources compared to rural schools and this might be a major factor for their above average performances.

In conclusion, this study was conducted among Senior High Schools Students' because they are perceived to go through various kinds of academic stress due to the transition to the tertiary. This research work has given indebt knowledge of the profile of Senior High Schools Students' perceived stress and academic performance. The research concluded that none of the students were highly stressed. However, female students were stressed as compared to their male counterparts. The study revealed that, stress and academic performance are not always significantly correlated. The research showed a relationship but not significantly enough to reject the research hypothesis. Therefore, the academic performance of the students did not significantly influence by the stress factors. It has also been found that students in the urban area are likely to perform better compared to students in the rural area.

7. Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Guidance programs such as workshops, symposiums, and public lectures on stress should be organized periodically for students so that they can be adequately equipped with the needed skills to handle issues related to stress.

2. Counseling centers should be put in placed in all Senior High Schools to help student build their positive self-concept as well as helping students cope with stress.

3. Teachers and educators must focus on intrinsic motivation which will have greater impact on students in achieving high academic performance in the absence of external rewards.

4. The Government should formulate good and favorable policies that will help both the urban and rural school students to perform academically. Again, the necessary resources and infrastructure should be provided to enhance teaching and learning in both rural and urban areas.

5. Quiz competitions, class presentations and inter school debates should be organized for students in order to release them from distress and enhance their academic performance.

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