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Academic Stress Examination And Its Sources Among Saudi Students In The United States

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ACADEMIC STRESS EXAMINATION AND ITS SOURCES AMONG SAUDI STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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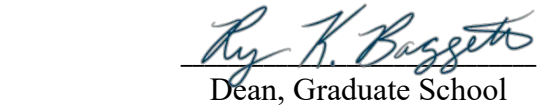
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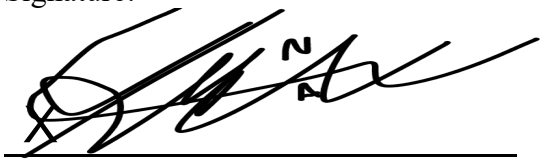

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BY

NAWAF ALSHAMMARI

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is to my loving parents, who have been nicely my supporter until my research was fully finished, and my wife and my daughter (Dayala, Alhadil, Shatha) who have encouraged and inspired me attentively with their fullest and truest attention to accomplish my work with truthful self-confidence. Also, I dedicate this work to my brothers and sisters who have supported me throughout my educational journey. I hope I have made all of you proud.

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ABSTRACT

Academic stress has been identified as one of the major concerns in current academic circles. Academic stress is an example of mental distress associated with anticipation or awareness of academic failure and/or the result of being in a given educational facility or pursuing academic work. Academic stress is a major concern because its effects are pervasive and have serious consequences. Research has shown that mental disorders, physical challenges, substance abuse and high rates of drop-outs are attributed to academic stress. Research has shown that the level of academic stress is highest amongst university students in general and international students in particular. Researchers have found that numerous factors such as personal, cultural, psychological, environmental, and gender factors as the causes of academic stress.

Over the years, the number of students from the Middle East undertaking studies in international institutions has increased significantly. The increase has been attributed to the desire by the government of Saudi Arabia to transform the economy as envisioned in its blueprint dubbed Vision 2030. Despite the government allocating billions of dollars to fund higher education, it has been established that a significant proportion of Saudi Arabian students studying abroad have been unable to complete their studies successfully. The purpose of this study was to evaluate academic stress faced by Saudi Arabian students studying in international universities.

The specific objectives of the study were to determine the main cause of academic stress; to establish if there were gender differences in the level of academic stress, and; to identify the coping mechanisms used by the students. The study participants consisted of Saudi students enrolled at U.S. universities. Data for the study was collected using questionnaires. The

questionnaires consisted of close-ended questions. The data was coded and analyzed using SPSS software. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics and *t*-test.

The researcher found that on average, personal, psychological and cultural factors did not significantly affect the level of academic stress faced by the students. The levels of academic stress amongst the male and female students in most instances were similar. The students used various coping methods such as religion and sports. In addition, making friends from other cultures and seeking assistance from their universities was very helpful to cope with academic stress.

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CHAPTER ONE

Statement of Problem

Over the last few decades, the number of international students in the United States has grown exponentially. According to the Institute of International Education (2020), the number of international students in the United States has grown to over one million during the year 2018/19. International students make up approximately 5.5 percent of the total number of students in the institutions of higher learning in the United States (Hanson, 2020). Chinese students make up the largest proportion of international students at 369,548, followed by, India at 202,014, South Korea with 52,250, and Saudi Arabia at 37,080 (Institute of International Education, 2020). The increase in the number of international students has been attributed to the increasing competitiveness and high quality of higher education in the United States.

Amongst the large number of international students who come to the United States annually are Saudi Students. The number of Saudi students seeking higher education in the United States has been increasing over the last two decades. The increase in numbers is mostly attributed to efforts by the Saudi government to transform and reform the Saudi economy through its development blueprint dubbed Vision 2030. Under Vision 2030, a key pillar for development is an educated population (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2021).

Regarding the growing number of international students in US universities, the Saudi students have significantly increased by the establishment of King Abdul Allah scholarship since 2005 that leads to exploring most essential factors that may affect students' academic performance (Alsahafi & Shin, 2017). One of challenges that may affect student’s mental health is academic stress. For many researchers, stress among university students has been a topic of concern (Hamaideh, 2011).

The academic stress has been one of the issues in modern academic circles. Academic stress is an example of mental distress associated with anticipation or awareness of academic failure. Every student desires to emerge successful in his or her academic pursuit (Kumaraswamy, 2013). This desire may contribute to the high levels of academic stress that students face. Kumarsawamy defined academic stress an example of mental distress associated with anticipation or awareness of academic failure. This issue arises because every student desires to emerge successful in his or her academic pursuit. Thakkar (2018) asserted that academic stress involves mental distress that arises from academic challenges, failures, or the possibility of failures are particularly more pronounced in international students.

A review of literature shows that the issue of academic stress amongst university and college students has been of great concern to educators and the government (American College Health Association, 2019; Bennet & Holloway, 2014; Uchil, 2017). Many studies have tried to understand the causes and consequences of academic stress (Alharbi & Smith, 2018; Karaman et al., 2019; Rice et al. 2012; Watson & Watson, 2016; Yeh & Inose, 2010). Despite a wide array of studies, few studies have tried to understand the experiences and challenges faced by Saudi students.

According to Wan et al. (1992), academic requirements are massive, teacher-student interactions are often fast, and mechanisms of universities and social support are not as relevant or similarly available to all foreign learners. The experience in classrooms can require expectations of roles that are not defined and conflict with their prior educational experiences. The resulting stress can have a significant, adverse effect on the experience of international learners in the American academic setting and their capacity to transfer experience and skills to their home nations. Therefore, the study sought to provide an insight into Saudi students'

experience in the United Sates, by comparison, the level of academic stress between Saudi students according to the gender and educational level.

The Significance of the Study

This study is significant for various reasons. Firstly, Saudi international college students who have been looking for opportunities for higher education in the United States have been steadily increasing in the last two decades. A number of researchers have investigated thoroughly the educational and personal problems international students face when studying in the USA. Although international Saudi students are increasingly present in the US, there is restricted literature on Saudi students experience in the US (Heyn, 2013).

The increase in enrollment of Saudi students in American universities required providing an appropriate atmosphere for success. For instance, it is essential for international students' offices, counseling centers, and student affairs, knowing obstacles in that students face to create a peaceful environment. Therefore, this study will draw recommendations that contribute to relieving potential negative impacts that may occur because of academic stress.

In addition, students are going to colleges in a culture not quite the same as their particular need to battle with novel social and instructive associations, practices and desires and managing the issues of alteration regular to understudies by and large (Zhou et al., 2008). Studying in a different culture is sufficiently troublesome when the newcomer knows about the distinctions ahead of time, however considerably more upsetting when the newcomer is ignorant and erroneously accepts that the new society works like their nation of origin. Thus, this study will be beneficial for the newcomer in terms of knowing factors associated with academic stress and coping skills.

Besides, the study is significant because of the potential adverse effects of academic stress that may cause. Academic stress is a serious mental disorder whose effects are so monumental to the health and even the academic life of a student may be compromised. Academic stress has been found to trigger several medical conditions. Some notable symptoms include difficulty in sleeping, muscle tension, tiredness, constipation, and even ingestion problems (Pascoe et al., 2019). Ideally, the health is affected and the normal physiological process in a person is affected. There are also far-reaching behavioral symptoms that can easily be noticed by people undergoing academic stress (Kumaraswamy, 2013). Some of these symptoms include increased uptake of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. A person experiences from academic stress can also suffer from increased eating or loss of appetite. Other behavioral symptoms include loss of sexual interest and tiredness.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the quantitative experimental study is to determine the prevalence of stress among Saudi students in the U.S. and to examine and compare the differences in academic stress between Saudi students according to gender and educational level in the United States. Additionally, the study aims to identify the main sources of stress. Moreover, the researcher will attempt to identify how Saudi students deal and cope with academic stress experience. Wan et al. (1992) asserted that it could not be expected that all international students are similarly stressful when it comes to cross-cultural education. People vary in their perception of the severity of the same educational requirements and resources they have available for coping with these requirements. Thus, the investigation will attempt to explore coping skills used by Saudi students.

Data will be collected through a questionnaire that will include closed-ended questions. The result of questionnaire will determine if there are significant differences among Saudi students or not. In addition, the questionnaire will identify what the main sources of stress. Moreover, it will provide more information about dealing with academic stress. Because academic stress in various phases of the education system influences the personal, mental, and physical well-being of students, as well as their level of academic performance (García-Ros et al., 2018), the study seeks to identify the most critical factors that may cause academic stress.

Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions. The first question is what are the main sources of academic stress in Saudi students studying in U.S. universities? The second question; is there a significant difference in sources of stress and level of stress among Saudi students according to gender in the United States? The last question is what are the coping skills that Saudi students attending U.S. universities use when they experience academic stress?

Hypotheses

Generally, the common concepts in the literature review determine the majority of hypotheses of the research. According to García-Ros et al. (2018), gender can play a significant role in the level of academic stress. Therefore, the current study focuses on academic stress among Saudi students attending U.S. universities. Consequently, the researcher hypothesizes that there is a significant difference among Saudi students according to gender in the United States.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one provided introduction of the dissertation. The problem statement, importance of the study, purpose statement, research questions, and the hypotheses have been discussed.

Chapter two provides a review of theoretical and empirical literature on academic stress. Chapter three provides the research methodology used to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Stress is described as a non-specific answer of the body to its demands or upsetting environmental events. It is a process that individuals perceive and face environmental threats and challenges not merely stimulus or response. Stress is accepted in small amounts, and it can help people become more active and productive. Nonetheless, extremely high-stress levels over a long time can cause serious mental and physical problems (Alsulami et al., 2018).

The pursuit of higher learning is a time of transition for many students, which is characterized by an environment of germane demands. Academic stress is defined as a result of a combination of academic requirements that exceed an available individual's adaptive resources (Wilks, 2008). International students come to the American universities with different perceptions and backgrounds that may cause stress.

For the most part, many international students are courted by American universities because they offer the student body a significant diversity of views and offset a decreasing American applicant pool (Wan et al., 1992). At the same time, the concern is increasing about the capacity of U.S. universities, when students arrive on campus, to effectively address cross-cultural adaptation problems. International students often discover that their academic experiences are greatly stressful.

Theoretical Framework

One of the most significant aspects of the research process is the theoretical framework. In selecting the topic, designing research questions, the conceptualization of the literary review, the design and analysis plans for the thesis study, the importance of theory-driven thought, and acting will be emphasized (Grant & Osanloo, 2016). Several theories came to explain and understand the phenomena of academic stress among students. In this study, the Self-Efficacy

theory (Bandura & National Institute of Mental Health, 1986) and the Lazarus theory (Lazarus, 1993) will be used.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Albert Bandura and National Institute of Mental Health (1986) developed the principle of self-efficacy theory. Bandura considered self-efficacy is a type of cognitive evaluation that each person carries out over his or her own competence (Sebastian, 2013). Self-effectiveness is thus an assessment of an individual's own capacity to organize and structure his / her activity to achieve certain results. Bandura believed that some evaluation and persuasion processes that include a cognitive evaluation of the knowledge we possess about our self-efficacy are the source behind our belief in our self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is considered a resource for personality and stress vulnerability in a social-cognitive theory. The theory focuses both on the emotional and behavioral relevance of the cognitive process. Only after a negative cognitive evaluation could a certain event be perceived as negative. The outcome of our assessment depends on whether an individual has to face the oscillation in the initial event evaluation. Upon evaluating the significance and implications of a particular event, people react to their environment. The interaction of a person with the world leads to physiological results, cognitive evaluations, and social and motivational responses. If a person perceives a certain stimulus as a threat, the emotional reaction that generates a state of stress is stepped up. Self-efficacy is a way of controlling individual emotions that can provide many advantages in the field of stress. Self-efficacy can thus clarify the vulnerability we show in stressful situations. Consequently, the way we think can affect our behavior as well as our physiological and emotional levels. When we evaluate ourselves as underperforming in a particular activity; we are exposed to higher stress, and this can affect the whole of our life and our health. Stress can effectively prevent the use of

our resources. Persons who feel effective are better at dealing with stress and are more focused when dealing with daily activities.

The Lazarus Theory

There are two principles that are fundamental to any philosophy of psychological stress: appraisal that is the evaluation and management of the individual's efforts to meet specific needs for their own well-being. Stress is viewed as a relational definition. Stress is not described as a specific kind of external stimulation, or physiological, behavioral, or subjective sequence of reactions. Stress is instead seen as a relationship between people and their environment, and it requires dealing with the available cope sources. Thus, stress refers to a relation to the environment that the individual considers important to his or her well-being (Krohne, 2002). Therefore, this definition indicates two processes as main mediators in the transaction between person and environment: cognitive appraisal and coping (Krohne, 2002).

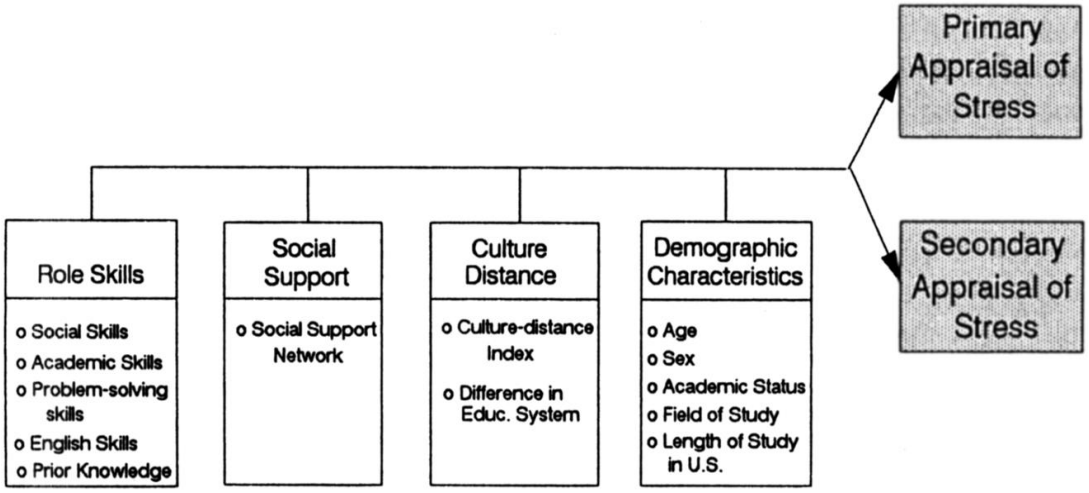
The cognitive appraisal can best be clearly defined as the process of classifying an encounter, and its multiple aspects, with regard to its importance for well-being. It is considerably evaluative, centered on meaning or importance, and takes place continuously throughout waking life (Lazarus, 1984). There are three types of stressful appraisal: harm/loss, threats, and challenges. Harm/loss refers to the damage already experienced by a person, the threat refers to expected harms or losses, and the challenge refers to events that have a chance to master or gain. Threat and challenge are not poles of a single continuum; they can happen at the same time and have to be seen as separate systems, although sometimes related. The secondary appraisal is a judgment as to what could and could be done. The secondary appraisal involves an evaluation of the efficacy of the option for the coping, successful implementation of a specific strategy or collection of strategies and an assessment of the implications for other internally

and/or externally demands or limitations of using a particular strategy. Reappraisal refers to a changed evaluation based on new environmental and/or personal information. A reappraisal differs only in that an earlier assessment follows. Reappraisal often arises from cognitive coping efforts. They are known as defensive reevaluations, and often hard to differentiate between reappraisals based on new information.

Wan et al. (1992) explained how the primary and secondary appraisals caused academic stress for international students particularly. Academic stress is a consequence of the cognitive appraisal by students of the stressfulness of role expectations known as the primary appraisal and their sense of ability to meet the requirements that referred to the secondary appraisals. The variations in this appraisal of student academic stress can be affected by the cultural differences between the homeland and the USA, the relative levels of social support available and varying expectations of student position (role competency) and personal characteristics. When, for example, Bangladesh and the United States have a cultural distance greater than that in the United Kingdom, Bangladeshi students in the US should experience more stress than United Kingdom students in the U.S. classroom. Social support refers to the extent to which students have a network of friends in the host culture that provides guidance, support, and encouragement both to help the international student understand the new culture and to improve the self-confidence of the person. A major factor in academic stress was the role skills (or competences), that included academic competences, problems-solving competences, English-language competences, and prior US education. Lastly, personal characteristics include a variety of control variables such as demographic factors such as the age of the students, the academic status, the field of study, and the length of time they were in the United States.

Figure 1

The operational model of academic stress (Adapted from Wan et al., 1992)



Previous Studies

The causes of academic stress amongst students have been the focus of research studies over the last three decades. Macan et al. (1990) established that poor study habits mostly due to poor time management inhibited students from preparing properly for exams and other academic work, which translated to creating academic stress. The findings of Macan et al. were confirmed by Arora (2015), Baldwin et al. (2000), Dong (2014), and Robotham (2008), who found that students did not study enough or allocated insufficient time to studying which resulted in poor performance and academic stress.

Ahmad and Rana (2012), Baker (2003), and Bartholomew et al. (2015) found that the transition to university life was often a source of academic stress for undergraduate students. Binder (2014), Coccia and Darling (2014), and Lumley and Provenzano (2003) found that the new undergraduate students face the challenges of making decisions of their career paths in addition to developing and negotiating new relations, getting new ideas that challenge their past-learnt views and moving away from home. Dresel and Grassinger (2013), Herrero (2014), and Sinha et al. (2001) found that the academic environment is full of high expectations, information

overload, academic pressure, unrealistic expectations, limited opportunities, and high competitiveness which are the common sources of stress resulting in tension, fear, and anxiety for the students. In their study of undergraduate students in several universities in the United States, Dahlin et al. (2005) established that the requirements to meet assessment deadlines was a major source of stress. Further, Dong (2014), Gnika et al. (2015), and Misra et al. (2000) found that the greatest sources of academic stress come from taking and studying for examination, the need to get good grades and the vast amount of content that the students had to master in a given period of times.

Mani (2010) found that the course load of students was positively correlated with the level of academic stress experienced by students. Talib and Zai-ur-Rehman (2012) found that for a majority of students, the course load was a major source of stress with the students indicating that they could not master all the course content. Aside from the course load, researchers have also established that the type of course being studied determined the level of stress. Kuhn et al. (2005) established that students doing medical courses had the highest level of academic stress. The demands of the courses such as variable hours working on shifts, clinical rotations, and sleep deprivation affected medical students. Psychology students were found to suffer from academic stress resulting from field placement as an individual's placements was determined by supervisors, with differences between the students and supervisors resulting in bad placements. Talib and Zai-ur-Rehman established that there is a significant level of difference between perceived stress levels of engineering and management science students. The engineering students were found to have higher stress levels than management science students.

Can et al. (2016) found the daily challenges of university life arising from interpersonal relations were often a key source of academic stress. These challenges arose due to interpersonal

differences due to different beliefs, situational intentions, and goal commitments. This confirmed the findings of Devonport and Lane (2006), who established that there was a strong positive correlation between interpersonal problems and other stressors; the higher the number of interpersonal problems a students faced the higher the level of academic stress. Bang (2009) established that personal factors were challenges that determined the level of stress as well as the coping mechanisms of students. The most important personal factor was the lack of financial resources. Students were forced to deal with the added pressure of finding part-time work to meet their financial obligations. The students were also faced with the challenge of finding a balance between their job, academic, and personal live. Baldwin et al. (2000) established that the students with the highest stress levels were those who worked, the stress levels were found to be the high during midterms and final examinations. Robotham (2008) found that the highest level of absenteeism amongst university students was amongst those who worked. This category of students was found to miss 30% of their classes and failed to hand in course work due to work commitments.

Academic Stress Sources of International students

According to Alharbi and Smith (2018), international students have other factors that increase their stress level. These include separation from family and new responsibilities. The international students have to adapt to the new culture and academic approach used in the host country. Various researchers have established that international students suffer from acculturation (Hamarta et al., 2015; Poyrazli, 2003; Poyrazli et al., 2010). The acculturation is moderated by perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hate, fear, change, guilt, and nonspecific factors. Chavajay and Skowronek (2008) found that geographic origins, English fluency, social connectedness, and satisfaction with social support network affected the level of

academic stress. These findings were confirmed by Rice et al. (2012) and Choi and Nirminen (2012), who studied international students in the United States. Rice et al. found that India students had lower levels of academic stress as compared to Chinese students as they had greater familiarity with western culture and society and had stronger English language ability

Students' perception of the comprehensive knowledge base and their perception of insufficient time to develop it are academic stressors. At predictable times, each semester, students experience academic stress. Academic stress among students has long been investigated, and researchers have recognized sources of stress such as preparing and studying for exams, grade competition, and many requirements to learn in a short time (Nandamuri & Gowthami, 2011). Msengi (2007) established that adaptation to a different culture and environment was a source of anxiety and stress. The adaptation requires adjustment to the new culture that includes new general lifestyle, new ways and mediums of learning such as learning in English and psychological adjustment.

Academic Factors

Students at college face several difficulties to achieve maximum academic performance. A successful college career takes a lot more than just studying different stressors including time management and social activities can pose a threat to the academic performance of a student. Students are likely to be victims of stress in higher learning institutions when the students ' demands depend on deadlines and pressure for excellent training or exams (Nandamuri & Gowthami, 2011). The pressure illustrates the need for studies to investigate students from different level institutions ' causes of academic pressure. With such knowledge, educators will be able to pay more attention to the students ' sources of academic stress and to the use of counseling to help students improve their minds and bodies.

English Proficiency

English fluency as an academic factor is one of resources of academic stress as a result of acculturative stress. Many international student populations reported a variety of personal and mental health issues that may cause by language barriers. It can be especially distressing for students who could not express themselves in English very well (Yeh & Inose, 2003). The inability to understand the language of instruction means that the students are unable to understand the class lectures and they get little information from the notes, and they are performing poorly in any test and fail exams (Banjong, 2015). Most of the international students have their accent, which is sometimes difficult for the teachers to understand and give proper answers to their questions and this happens with the students, as they cannot understand the accent of the teacher when they move to the U.S., and this becomes the reason for less communication and understanding (Kuo, 2011). Language difference has a significant impact on the academic performance of international students. Language factor is a reason for less participation in classrooms and communication with faculty staff and other students. Therefore, language barriers particularly may cause poor academic performance for international students and thus will lead to academic stress (Alsahafi & Shin, 2017).

Cultural Factors

Students or learners are going to colleges in a culture not quite the same as their own particular need to battle with unique social and instructive associations, practices and desires and managing the issues of alteration generally. This is sufficiently troublesome when the newcomer knows about the distinctions ahead of time, however considerably more troublesome when the newcomer is ignorant and erroneously accepts that the new society works like their nation of origin (Zhou et al., 2008). Newcomers effectively move toward becoming 'lost in interpretation.'

The aggregate effect of such new encounters on social voyagers overall has been named cultural shock. Student sojourners are a case of such voyagers, expanding in numbers in numerous English-speaking countries. Shock culture originates from inalienably distressing life changes, so individuals taking part in culturally diverse experiences should be versatile, adjust, and create adapting methodologies and strategies. Change is viewed as a dynamic procedure of overseeing distress at various foundational levels for both situational and individual.

Differences between cultures have a high impact on international students' academic and social lives. The fact that non-Western foreign students' countries of origin are primarily collective cultures, which value their own interpersonal relationships, have their influence in creating challenges and stresses. They are also characterized by their high sense of family members. There are therefore some sources of emotional, social, and academic stress for non-Western foreign students with difficulties in interaction with Americans (Razek & Coyner, 2014).

The culture difference with international students is that they become stressful in the new environment. This stress and culture difference pressure leads international students to mental illness and psychological illness. They thought distracted, anxious, and depressed most of the time (Banjong, 2015). Additionally, the stress caused by high academic expectations may lead international students to take unethical academic choices involving cheating or plagiarism to compensate for low self-efficacy in the academic achievement of individuals (Razek & Coyner, 2014).

Psychological Factors

Mental health is known to be one of the most important determinants of quality of life and satisfaction. Mental health is complex and often difficult to understand (Pedrelli et al., 2015).

Studies conducted throughout the globe have found that stress, anxiety, and depression are highest among university students relative to the general population (Mayer et al. 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2013; Mkize et al., 1998). When not diagnosed and treated properly mental problems can cause distress amongst students and negatively influence their lives and academic performance.

Mental health issues can manifest in various ways including the loss of appetite, lack of sleep, lack of concentration, apathy, and poor hygiene (Fergusson et al., 2007). In a study of students at Okinawa University, Ratanasiripong et al. (2018) found that the main cause of psychological problems amongst students was the lack of self-esteem, self-confidence, personality types, and loneliness. McCrae and John (1992) found that high levels of neuroticism and low extraversion were causes of depression amongst university students. Kawase et al. (2008) found that moving away from home and living an independent life often posed a challenge for undergraduate students.

Fortney et al. (2016) found the life in the university made underlying mental health challenges faced by some students worse. This was attributed to the fact that life in university is full of anxiety which increases mental health problems. Kawase et al. (2008), also found that the course of study determined the level of stress. Students studying medicine and health-related sciences had a higher prevalence of depression and anxiety compared to their non-health science counterparts.

Acculturative Stress

The adaptation process to a new culture may cause a negative psychological impact that known acculturative stress (Smart & Smart, 1995). Stress is one of the results that may occur because of acculturative stress. Therefore, the adjustment process is complex and experienced by both international students and their host institutions (Ra & Trusty, 2017). Adjusting in the new

cultural environment takes five different stages as referred by Adler (1975) contact with the new culture, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and interdependence. Moreover, many international students used strategies to help them to adapt to the new culture. Enhancing language was shown as an extremely supportive methodology to improve their academic performance and to adapt to the new culture and utilizing the accessible resources, celebrating particular social events with people from a similar culture and combining with others (Alsahafi & Shin, 2017). In addition, self-efficacy is one of the primary personal resources that have been consistently found to predict culture adjustment. As a result, people who have higher self-efficacy are more likely will find it easier to adapt to the new culture and have the ability to cope with difficulties experiences (Rujiprak, 2016).

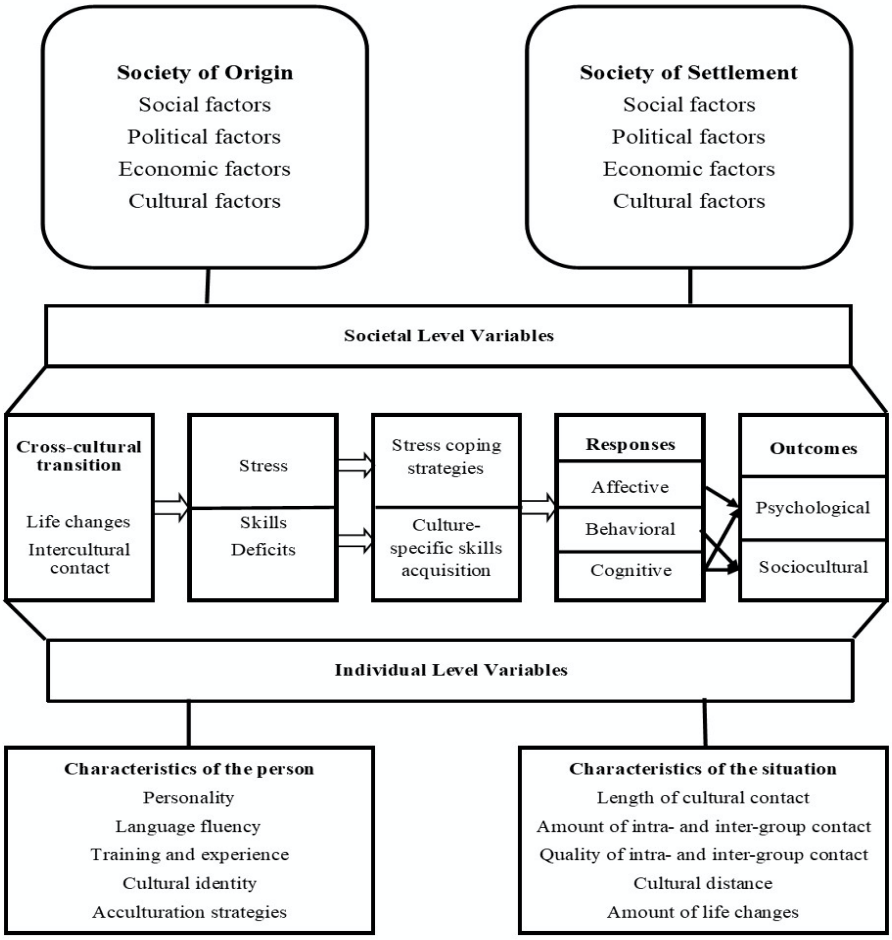
While there are several models of adaptation can exist in the literature reviews, nonetheless, Ward and his collaborators have suggested that intercultural adaptation should be divided into two categories: psychological adaptation, which is primarily located within stress-coping and socio-cultural adaptation within a culture-learning environment (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward et al., 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Their model is one of the most valuable conceptualizations. This design views adaptation as a two-dimensional phenomenon Socio-cultural adjustment in the first dimension refers to the behavioral context and the success of the modern culture achieving people's daily goals. It is gained in a process of culture (e.g., culture-specific skills, norms, and so on). The second dimension, psychological adjustment, relates to the wellbeing in the new culture and is focused on the mechanism of resolving the stress of intercultural change (Zhou, 2008).

Ward et al. (2001) included a range of micro and macro-level variables, including social identity, as a predictor of adjustment outcomes and integrates the stress and coping and cultural

perspectives on acculturation that distinguish psychological and social-cultural domains of adaptation. This model, therefore, provides an organizational framework for the synthesis of a large and varied set of theories and studies on the affective, behavioral, and cognitive elements of intercultural and intercultural transitions and cross-cultural transition. Cross-cultural transition is conceptualized as important events in life that include unexpected changes and new ways of intercultural interaction. Although this experience can be called stimulant, challenging confusing or disorienting, people are rarely prepared to navigate or cope with a wide range of stressful conditions and unfamiliar styles of social interaction effectively at least at the earliest stage of the change. This state of affairs can be described in terms of deteriorating stress or social skill deficiency depending upon people's theoretical preference. In any case, evaluation and action are essential for personal and situational factors. This can include cognitive, behavioral, and affective reactions to stress and cultural competencies. Both societal and individual variables are involved in appraisal and action domains, as well as in psychological and socio-cultural performance.

Figure 2

The model of the acculturation on process (Adapted from Ward et al., 2001).



The characteristics of the settlement society and the society of origin may be significant at the macro-level. Sociopolitical and demographic factors such as ethnic composition and influential ethnic and cultural outgroup perceptions may be discriminatory. The individual and

the situation can prove to be important in terms of micro-level characteristics. Factors including language skills, personality cultural identity, and acculturation techniques may also include networks of communication, cultural distance, intergroup relations, and social support. Overall, the model is particularly efficient to investigate the process of acculturation. It permits the integration of selected contemporary aspects of social identity research and the synthesis of theory and analysis of the estimation of the intercultural transition psychological and sociocultural components (Ward et al., 2001).

Effects of Academic Stress

Research has established that students face academic stress brought about by various factors including poor study habits, cultural factors, finances, course content, and volume of work, amongst other factors (Ahmad & Rana, 2012; Arora, 2015; Binder, 2014; Dong, 2014: Macan et al., 1990; Robotham, 2008). Consequently, this stress has an effect on the students. This section of the study discusses the effects of academic stress.

Academic Stress and Mental Wellbeing

According to Thakkar (2018), academic stress causes mental distress, which manifests in psychological challenges such as depression, anxiety, and nervousness. Thakkar established that depression is the most common mental health challenge faced by university students. It is an indication of the student's frustration, pressure, and conflict. The findings of Thakkar confirmed the findings of Ribeiro et al. (2017) who established that academic stress precipitated mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression. The prevalence level of anxiety of students pursing post-secondary education was found to be as high as 35% (Moylan et al., 2013). The prevalence of depression in the post-secondary students was found to be 30% (Bayram & Bilgel, 2008; Ozen et al., 2010).

In a study of the suicide mortality rates in India, the Lancet established that suicide was the highest cause of death for persons between the ages of 15-24 (Patel et al., 2012). According to Patel et al., the main cause of the suicide was mental distress attributed to pressures that the youngsters faced key amongst them being academic pressure. The researchers found that the students faced high pressure from their parents and society to pass exams with those unable to get good grades facing mental distress leading to suicide.

Academic Stress and Quality of Life

Quality of life refers to how individuals view their position and status in life with regard to culture, value system, their goals, standards, and factors that they hold to be important (Ribeiro et al. 2018). Since the 1970s, the need to assess and accurately determine the quality of life has become important as it is affected by illnesses and other life circumstances (Berlim & Fleck, 2003; Pekmezovic et al., 2011). According to Jamali et al. (2013) and Pekmezovic et al., there is a negative relationship between academic stress and quality of life of students particularly those at graduate and post-graduate level. Domantay (2014) associated insomnia and burnout as part of the academic stress faced by students that significantly and negatively impacted their quality of life.

The deterioration in the quality of life was found to be highest amongst medical students (Domantay, 2014; Pagnin & de Queiroz, 2015; Paro et al., 2014). The studies associated the deterioration in the quality of life to burnout associated with little or no sleep, anxiety, and depression because the medical students had course overload. In addition, they had to deal with patients with different diseases, and had difficult relationships with their teachers and supervisors at the teaching hospitals. Additionally, the milestones that the medical students had to achieve before they could graduate were numerous. Dyrbye et al. (2006) and Henning et al. (2012)

established that university students had a lower quality of life than their peers who did not further their studies due to the challenges of academic life.

Academic Stress and Academic Achievement

In addition to affecting the quality of life and the mental health of the student, academic stress has been established to cause poor academic performance amongst students. A study of both male and female students aged between 31-26 in Mexico (Ribeiro et al., 2018), established that students with low grades had the highest level of academic stress. These findings confirm findings in the United States. Students with self-reported anxiety and depress due to academic factors were found to have low academic performance and poorer grades (Chapell et al., 2005; Kessler, 2012). According to Humensky et al. (2010), academic stress causes a decrease in the concentration levels of students that reduced their ability to study and to complete assignments. The findings of Fröjd et al. (2008) indicated that poor performance and academic stress are not limited to the students in the North America. In a study of Finish students, Fröjd et al. found that those with high self-reported stress level had difficulty in concentration, poor social skills, low reading and writing skills, and poor academic performance. Jonsson et al. (2010) found that males with academic stress often had poor academic performance. These challenges resulted in the high dropout rates.

Fröjd et al. (2008) further established that episodes of stress in students' lives *affected their ability to learn, adapt to college life, and how they perform in professional careers.* In a longitudinal study of students in New Zealand that covered 25 years period and sampled 982 individuals, Fergusson et al. (2007) established that academic depression and stress resulted in long-term poor employment outcomes. The individuals who exhibited signs of academic stress or self-reported as having academic stress had higher levels of dependence on the welfare

support from the government and unemployment. Fergusson et al. concluded that academic stresses have long-lasting impacts.

Students who suffer from a high level of stress often become disorganized and lose sight of their goals and priorities. These results in their inability to effectively and efficiently manage their time (Stupart, 2020). Further, highly stress students have been found to procrastinate and neglect their work that makes it difficult for them to meet deadlines. According to Stupart, these factors result in lower academic performance of the students. Beilock (2011) argued that the constant worry and restlessness of students due to academic stress results in poor performance given that the students cannot concentrate on their work. According to Beilock, stressed students have self-defeating thoughts that demotivate them and reduces their ability to work hard and to complete basic tasks.

Academic Stress and Substance Abuse

In a study of 128 students attending competitive private schools in the United States, Leonard et al. (2015) found that students who experienced academic stress had high rates of alcohol and drug use. Similarly, Boulton and O'Connell (2017) found that students with higher level of academic stress turned to stimulants to help them study. In a study that sampled 558 students in different universities and college, Begdache et al. (2019) established that there were cyclical behaviors related to the mental status of the students. Students who were found to be comfortable with their academics had positive behaviors such as abstinence from the use of substances like drugs and alcohol, studies behavior, responsible and hardworking. According to Begdache, this category of students had brain chemistry profile that allowed them to control their moods and to behave maturely. Students who showed signs of severe academic distress had brain

chemistry that stimulates substance abuse, poor academic performance, poor sleep patterns, and overall neglect.

Academic Stress and Sleep Disorders

Some researchers have argued that several lifestyles, environmental, and psychological factors have a negative impact on the quality and quantity of sleep (Brick et al., 2010; Lemola et al., 2015). The consumption of alcohol, caffeine, energy drinks, stimulants, and the use of technologies such as phones have been identified as lifestyle factors that affect the sleep quality and quantity of individuals. Livings conditions such as sleeping in dormitories have been identified as environmental factors that affect sleep quality (Dimitriou et al., 2015; Mansouri et al., 2012). The psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress bring on sleep disorders (Buysse et al., 2008). According to the American Medical Association Academy of Sleep Medicine, the lack of sleep amongst young people is a very serious risk to their health (Owens & Adolescent Sleep Working Group, 2014). According to Owens and Adolescent Sleep Working Group, a significant portion of the youth population does not get sufficient sleep. Stress has been established to be a key factor that limits the quality and quantity of sleep in young people (Curcio et al., 2006).

In a survey of 384 students in the United States, Noland et al. (2009) found that academic stress was a significant impediment to sleep. In a study of the sleep quality of different demographic groups, Rezaei et al. (2018) established that university students have huge academic requirements that expose them to the increased risk of developing sleeping disorders. Rezaei et al. found that the prevalence of daytime sleepiness amongst university students was 50%, which was significantly higher than that recorded in the general population at 36%.

Researchers have established that the effect of academic stress on poor sleep patterns is most severe in female students in the United States (Wallace et al., 2017). Almojali et al. (2017) also established that academic stress has a more severe impact on the sleep quality of female students in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Waqas et al. (2015) also found that the sleep patterns of female students in Pakistan were more negatively impacted than those of male students by academic stress. These findings indicate that the cross-cultural impact of academic stress on sleep patterns.

According to Curcio et al. (2006), lack of sufficient sleep only works to increase the level of academic stress experienced by students. The lack of sleep made it difficult for the students to pay attention and concentrate in class, which negatively impacted their academic performance. Noland et al. (2009) found that some students were turning to drugs and pills to help them reduce their sleep levels, which ultimately resulted in drug and substance addiction. Further, those students who could not sleep due to academic stress and pressure were turning to sleeping pills, alcohol, and drugs, which ultimately resulted in substance abuse. Sleep related challenges are major contributing factors to the poor learning ability and reduction in the quality of life of students.

Academic Stress and Eating Disorders

Student life is associated with high works loads which take up extensive amounts of time. This generates stress that makes some students skip meals. The lack of time also means that the students do not cook but rather consume fast foods and soft drinks (Dahlin et al., 2005). In a study of students in Kuwait, Ahmed et al. (2014) established that stress is highly associated with the choice to consume unhealthy foods. In their study of different groups of students, Aljaber et al. (2019) established that of all categories of students, medical students had the highest level of

eating disorders. Further, first-year medical students were found to have the highest level of eating disorders. These disorders were attributed to the new environment that was both psychologically and physically challenging. According to Oliver and Wardle (1999), students are very vulnerable to developing eating disorders in universities as they are in a new and challenging environment. The students are required to adapt to new learning approaches and to depend on themselves. Further, university students have to have self-disciple, which is often difficult. Additionally, the presence of a large number of fast-food outlets close to the universities propitiates the high consumption of fast foods, which are often high in calories (Ganasegeran et al., 2012).

Academic Stress and Physical Health

Current evidence suggests that there is an inverse relationship between stress and physical health (American Psychological Association, 2012; Da Silva et al., 2012; Lutz et al., 2010; Roshanaei-Moghaddam et al., 2009). McEwen (1998) found that all types of stress have a deleterious effect on a wide range of physical health outcomes in individuals. Rozanski et al. (1999) and Kivimäki et al. (2002) found that stress is a major contributor to the development of coronary heart disease and in the occurrence of acute myocardial infractions in all age groups. It is maintained that those suffering from stress are likely to suffer from severe cardiac events (Kivimäki et al., 2002). Further, stress is thought to compromise the immune system making the sufferer susceptible to contracting infectious diseases (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004). The nervous system of an individual is also thought to be compromised by stress (Sapolsky, 1999; Woolley et al., 1990). Stress is also thought to be the cause of individuals experiencing excessive fatigue (Cho et al., 2012; Hasler et al., 2005; Theorell-Haglöw et al., 2006).

Researchers have also established that in addition to direct effects on health, stress has indirect maladaptation, which result in the decline of physical health overtime and obesity. Stults-Kolehmainen and Bartholomew (2012) found that stress in young people results in impairment of lifestyle practices such as taking part in physical activities and increased self-isolation. Further, persons with high levels of stress have longer recovery periods (Hamer, 2012). Stults-Kolehmainen and Sinha (2014) established that high levels of academic stress increased the probability of the students developing preventable physical health problem during the time in school and even in later life. Further, they found that within the student population the highest stress levels were during examination time during which time the students engaged in little physical activity, which had negative effects on their overall health. Pervanidou and Chrousos (2012) found that increasing cases of metabolic syndrome, reduced insulin, obesity, and eating disorders in young people was due to the high levels of stress that they faced. Stupart (2020) found that high levels of academic stress resulted in physical symptoms such as headaches, shaking, neck and back pains, stomachaches, high blood pressure, and chest pains.

Academic Stress and School Burnout

School burnout is the exhaustion and tiredness experienced by students due to the high levels of academic stress. It is considered a malfunction of the psychosomatic status of the students and results in cynical attitude, insecurity, lethargy towards school and schoolwork and self-alienation (Salmela-Aro et al., 2008). This comes about because the process of obtaining an education is an effort driven process that requires high levels of energy and leads to burnout (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014). According to Li et al. (2014), when the level of work stress surpasses an individual's ability to cope over a long period of time burn out occurs. In a study of

2640 students, Lin and Huang (2013) established that academic stress has a positive and significant effect on burnout.

Yan et al. (2018), in a study of 757 students aged 12-18 years, showed that academic stress is negatively correlated with quality of sleep and that depression and school burnout were negatively correlated to the quality of sleep. The study further showed that school burnout and depression medicated the relationship between academic stress and sleep quality of students. These findings give clarity to the arguments that depression and burnout overlap. According to Walburg (2014), burnout is one of the elements of emotional exhaustions, which entails having negative feelings and lack of positive sentiments. In such a case, these emotions can be turned off while depression is a more permanent emotional disruption.

Academic Stress and Level of Drop Out

Academic stress induces burnout, depression, exhaustion, cynicism, reduced performance, and poor health. This results in a reduction in the motivation of students to continue with their education. The relationship between academic stress and the dropout rate has been found to be positive and statistically significant (Liu, 2015; Liu & Lu, 2011). Further, researchers have established that the rate of drop out due to academic stress is not specific to gender, race, or culture (Walburg, 2014).

Academic Stress and Violence

Stress can be handled as a stimulus, a reaction, or a process. When stress is handled as a stimulus, it affects the natural balance and soundness of an individual (Lurea & Safta, 2018). As a reaction, it provides an explanation for the nervousness of an individual when faced with a new situation or challenges. Thus, different people have different reactions to stress. According to Lurea and Safta, violence and aggressive behavior are because of stress, particularly in young

persons. Alam and Halder (2018), in a study of 250 students in grade eleven in West Bengal, established that there was a negative and statistically significant relationship between academic achievement and aggression amongst students. Alam and Halder concluded that aggressive and violent behavior is due to stress, depression, anxiety, and an unsettled mind. These mental disorders result in the mind being chaotic which impedes academic performance. Settled and happy students tend to have settled minds and thus not prone to violence and are able to concentrate on their studies.

According to Chen et al. (2010), the academic performance of students determined their state of mind. Poor academic performance is often a predictor of bad behavior and violence. Johnson (2009) also established the overall low grades and poor academic achievement were good predictors of the likelihood that a student will have aggressive and violent rather than indicators of specific learning disabilities. Researchers have found the degree of violence and aggression amongst students is correlated to certain demographic factors. According to Chatterjee (2016), females and students from high social-economic groups were more prone to react violently and with aggression when faced with academic challenges and stresses. These findings contradicted the findings of Akhtar and Kushwaha (2015) who established that boys are more likely to use violence as a coping mechanism to academic stress.

Coping with Academic Stress

In their empirical study, Renk and Smith (2007) established that students like all other groups employ suitable coping strategies to deal with academic stress. The coping strategies used by students include avoidant coping, substance abuse, denial, and behavioral disengagement. Some students were found to use active coping strategies such as acceptance, planning and

positive reframing, and taking the necessary steps to overcome the academic stress (Sreeramareddy et al. 2007).

Deberard et al. (2004) and Korobova and Starobin (2015) indicated that the most common means of coping with academic stress during the transition to university life was through greater social interactions and support from the university, fellow students, and religious entities who counter the harmful effects of stress. Other forms of coping mechanisms used by students include sports, participation in the arts, spending time with friends, and sleeping (Li et al., 2014). Kaya et al. (2015) established that the psychosocial skills of the students also determined their ability to cope with stress. Those with higher problem-solving skills had better psychosocial adjustments to life in the university and academic stress. According to Baker (2003) and Devonport and Lane (2006), male students had higher psychosocial skills that used more active coping mechanisms like positive reframing, planning, and accepting stressors unlike their female counter parts who focused on venting, self-blame, and behavioral disengagement.

In summary, academic stress among students can have both positive and negative impacts if students do not manage it properly. Academic stress becomes more challenging when the discussion comes to foreign students. Compared to domestic students, international students face several factors such as language and cultural factors, and so forth. Therefore, it is important to conduct studies regarding international students' experiences to improve the educational environment.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

A review of literature suggests that academic stress is caused by a multitude of factors. In this chapter, the methodology that will be used to answer the research questions is discussed. This chapter presents an overview of the study participants, research instrument, research procedure, data analysis, and validity and reliability of the research instrument.

Participants

Participants of the study refer to the people who possess the qualities that the researcher hopes to investigate (McCombes, 2019). Researcher will evaluate the levels of academic stress among Saudi students in the United States. According to the Saudi government, as of January 2021 there were 19,000 Saudi students in the United States. The size of the target population was very large. Thus, the researcher had to use sampling. Using the Cochran's (1963) approach at significance value of 5%, the desired sample size was determined to be 392 respondents. The respondents were chosen using random sampling. The researcher sent emails to Saudi students through the Saudi students of American Association. The emails invited them to participate in the survey.

Instrument

The first step to conduct the study is to obtain an approval from the Institutional Review Board. The level of stress experienced by Saudi students will be evaluated using a scale developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was developed using extensive literature on academic stress particularly that faced by university students studying from other countries. The scale consists of four sections that evaluate the academic, personal, psychological, and cultural factors that contribute to academic stress experienced by students. In addition, the scale includes

coping skill strategies used by participants. Responses are given through a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 denotes *strongly disagree*, 2 denotes *disagree*, 3 denotes *neutral*, 4 denotes *agree*, and 5 denotes *strongly agree*. Scores for the questions are summed for a total stress response score. High scores suggest that the respondent has high level of stress. The scale also consists of a section describing coping skills used by Saudi students.

Procedure

McCombes (2019) defined the research design as the approach used by the researcher to answer the research question. Research design is determined by the type of data needed for the study; the location and period of the study; the participants; the research questions, and the method of evaluating the study data. A review of studies on the subject matter of this study found that the descriptive research design. This approach entails trying to understand academic stress experienced by Saudi students and to describe their experiences to understand their experiences.

Researcher will request each of the students to participate in the study. The questionnaire will be administered to the students through email and google survey. The questionnaire will have a cover letter indicating to the respondents the objectives of the study, indicating that their identities will not be disclosed, and informing them of their rights. Respondents will be informed that it is not compulsory for them to fill in the questionnaire. If they decide to fill in the questionnaire, they should answer only questions they feel comfortable answering. Respondents will be advised not to write their names on the questionnaires. Researcher will store data by using google forms until conducting the study and obtaining results. To keep data confidential, researcher will set a password to keep data confidential.

Data Analysis

Questionnaires will be checked for completeness. Thereafter, each questionnaire will be assigned a number. Responses will be entered into an Excel worksheet. Data will be analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The *t*-test will be used to determine if there is significant difference in the level of academic stress experienced by Saudi students according to gender. Study findings will be summarized in tables and charts.

Validity and Reliability

In social sciences research, there is often the use of different measurements that need to be quantified from abstract, intangible, and unobservable constructs. Quantifications are in different forms of inference. Inferences made by the research depend on the measurements used (García-Ros et al., 2018). Therefore, the researcher has to ascertain that the research instrument actually measures what it is intended to measure, and that instrument provides stable and consistent responses. Researcher has to ensure that the research instrument is valid and reliable. Validity refers to the extent to which the research instrument measures or captures what it is required to. Reliability refers to the degree to which the data captured by the research instrument can be replicated (García-Ros et al. 2018).

Validity of the research instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient.

Table 1

Results of Cronbach's Alpha Test

Variable	Cronbach's Coefficient
Academic Factors	0.704
Personal Factors	0.789
Psychological Factors	0.836
Cultural Factors	0.796

Coping Skills	0.858

The coefficient measures the internal consistency of the items in each of the sub-scales. Items with coefficients of less than 0.7 were removed (García-Ros et al. 2018). In addition, the instrument has been reviewed and evaluated by three experts who have experience in studying abroad. Researcher has sent the instrument to panel of experts through their official emails. They have given constructive feedback and suggestions to improve the instrument items. To ensure that the questions are understood, the questionnaire will be subjected to a pilot study. Researcher will conduct a pilot study prior to the study. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), the purpose of conducting a pilot study to examine and review the material and the methods.

The pilot study will be administered to 15 students who will be chosen randomly. The questionnaire will be updated using their feedback. The 15 students who participate in the pre-test will be excluded from the final study to reduce the chance of bias.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to assess the academic stress faced by Saudi students in the United States. This section of the study provides the analysis of the data used to answer the following research questions: What are the main sources of academic stress for Saudi students studying in U.S. universities? Is there a significant difference in sources of stress and level of stress among Saudi students according to gender in the United States? What are the coping skills that Saudi students attending U.S. universities use when they experience academic stress?

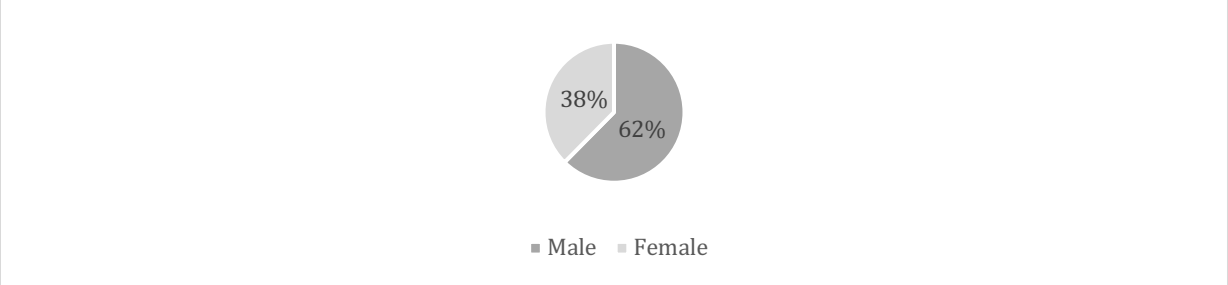
The study participants consisted of Saudi students enrolled at U.S. universities. Data for the study was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires consisted of close-ended questions. The data was coded and analyzed using SPSS software. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics and *t*-test.

Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

The researcher sought to understand the age, gender, level of education, and length of stay of the participants in the United States.

Figure 3

Respondents' Gender



The results presented in Figure 3 indicate that the majority of respondents were male (62%), only 38% of the respondents were female. These findings show that there were more male respondents than female respondents.

Figure 4

Respondents' Level of Education

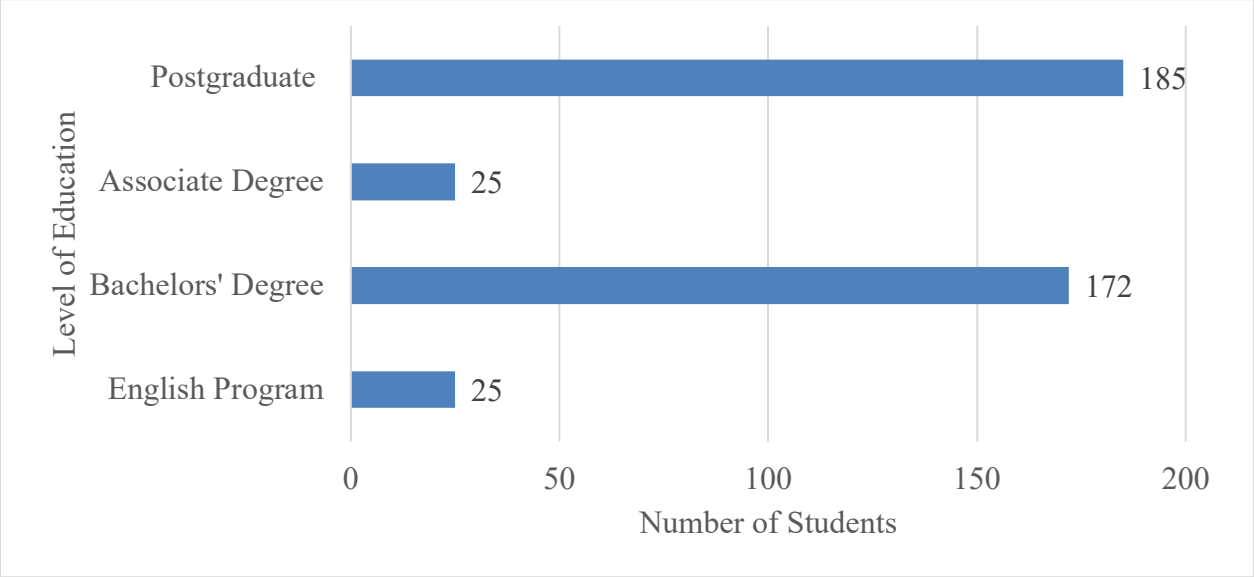


Figure 4 depicts the current level of education of each of the respondents. The findings show that of the 407 respondents 185 were postgraduate students, 25 were associate degree students, 172 were undertaking bachelors' studies, while only 25 were doing the English program.

Table 2

Length of Time in the United States

Time	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Less than 1 year	20	4.9%
Between 1-2 years	60	14.7%
Between 2-4 years	141	34.6%
Between 5-10 years	186	45.7%
Total	**407**	**100%**

Academic Stress

The researcher sought to determine the kind of academic stress faced by Saudi students in the United States. A comparison of the levels of stress between male and female students is summarized in Table 3. The comparison was conducted using the independent *t* test. The null hypothesis states that the population means are equal.

Table 3

Academic Factors

Academic Factors		Mean	Std. Deviation	*t* statistic	*p*-value
It is difficult to move from English language program entry requirements to university academic program	Male	3.20	1.023	-2.049	0.041
	Female	3.41	.977		
My professors give too much assignments	Male	3.57	.962	-0.592	0.554
	Female	3.63	.948		
I feel stressed about assignment deadlines	Male	3.85	.912	-2.403	0.017
	Female	4.07	.882		
I hesitate to ask instructors for more clarifications	Male	3.25	1.144	1.301	0.194
	Female	3.09	1.209		
I do not feel confident when speaking English in classrooms	Male	3.12	1.204	0.407	0.751
	Female	3.08	1.249		
Writing assignments in English language stress me out	Male	3.15	1.147	-0.572	0.567
	Female	3.23	1.360		

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

The findings summarized in Table 3 shows that both males and females were neutral on the question if it was difficult to move from English language program entry requirements to university programs. The computed *t* statistic was -2.049 and *p*-value was 0.041, which suggest that the null hypothesis is rejected. The result implies that the population means are different.

The findings show that the male students were less stressed about assignment deadlines as implied by means of 3.85(male) and 4.07 (Female). The *p*-value of 0.017 indicates that the

null hypothesis is rejected, which means that the difference between the means is statistically significant. The findings suggest that both males and females were neutral to the questions of hesitating to ask instructors questions, confidence when speaking English, and writing in English language as implied by means of 3.25 (male), 3.09 (female), 3.12 (male), 3.08 (female), 3.15 (male), and 3.23 (female) respectively. However, the standard deviations were above one, which implies that there was significant divergence in the responses given.

Personal Factors

The researcher sought to determine the personal factors that cause academic stress amongst Saudi students in the U.S. universities.

Table 4

Personal Factors

Personal Factors		Mean	Std. Deviation	*t* statistic	*p*-value
My study habits need to be organized.	Male	3.70	1.04		
	Female	3.58	0.98	1.12	0.263
It is easy for me to manage my time	Male	3.11	1.08		
	Female	2.85	1.11	2.299	0.405
I lack financial resources	Male	3.02	1.13		
	Female	3.01	1.22	0.109	0.914
I can manage my financial resources efficiently	Male	3.22	1.07		
	Female	3.22	0.96	0.083	0.934
I can engage and discuss with a different gender of mine in classrooms easily	Male	3.64	1.05		
	Female	3.67	0.97	-0.339	0.735
I have a hard time managing my priorities	Male	3.08	1.04		
	Female	2.92	0.98	1.516	0.130
My family has high expectations of my academic ability that makes me feel stress	Male	3.41	1.19		
	Female	3.40	1.21	0.114	0.909
I feel stressed when I compare myself to classmates	Male	3.26	1.19		
	Female	3.61	1.20	-2.904	0.004

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

The findings summarized in Table 4 suggests that the students were neutral on the questions of their study habits need to be organized as implied by means of 3.70 (males) and

3.58 (females). The *p*-value of 0.263 means that there is no difference in the means. Male students ($M = 3.11$) are neutral on time management while female students ($M = 2.85$) have a challenge managing their time. The *p*-value of 0.405 suggests that the mean of the challenge of time management is similar for males and females. The findings show that the means for the question, I feel stressed when I compare myself to classmates, are 3.26 (males) and 3.61 (females). The findings suggest that the Saudi students are indifferent to how they compare to their classmates. The *p*-value of 0.004 implies that there was a difference in the means for males and females with females feeling more stressed than males feel.

Psychological Factors

Table 5

Psychological Factors

Psychological Factors		Mean	Std. Deviation	*t* statistic	*p*-value
I lack self-confidence	Male	2.59	1.055		
	Female	2.70	1.142	-1.032	0.303
I lack self-efficacy	Male	2.62	.954		
	Female	2.56	1.075	0.653	0.514
I lack motivation	Male	2.81	1.209		
	Female	2.66	1.083	1.235	0.218
I am worried when I have examinations	Male	3.88	.925		
	Female	4.10	.890	-2.386	0.017

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

The findings presented in Table 5 suggest that both the males and females disagreed with the assertion that they lack self-confidence as implied by means of 2.59 (males) and 2.70 (females) respectively. The *p*-value of 0.303 suggests that the means have equal variance. The means of 2.81 (males) and 2.66 (females) indicate that the Saudi students do not lack motivation. The *p* value of 0.017 shows that means of male and female student statistically are different to examinations and suggests that the female students have anxiety about exams.

Cultural Factors

The cultural factors that impact the level of academic stress faced by Saudi students studying at U.S. universities are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Cultural Factors

Cultural Factors		Mean	Std. Deviation	*t* statistic	*p*-value
It is difficult to adjust to the new culture	Male	2.96	1.038	0.174	0.862
	Female	2.94	1.200		
I feel some people do not accept me because of my ethnicity and cultural background.	Male	3.20	1.143	1.004	0.316
	Female	3.08	1.265		
I find it difficult to practice my religion outwardly.	Male	2.80	1.134	-2.219	0.027
	Female	3.07	1.268		
The clothing is not familiar to me	Male	2.19	1.016	-1.819	0.070
	Female	2.38	1.028		
The food is not familiar to me	Male	2.69	1.118	3.108	0.002
	Female	2.35	1.041		

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

The means of 2.96 (males) and 2.94 (females) indicate that the respondents disagree with the assertion that it was difficult for them to adjust to the new culture. This implies that the respondents felt comfortable being in the United States. The means of 3.20 for males and 3.08 for females suggests that the respondents were neutral to acceptance by others because they come from a different culture. The standard deviations of 1.143 (males) and 1.265 (females) suggest that there was significant variation in the responses given implying that some respondents agreed while others disagreed. The means of 2.80 and 3.07 suggests that the males disagreed while the females were neutral to the assertion that they felt it difficult to practice their religion outwardly. The *t* value of 2.219 and *p*-value of 0.027 suggests that the difference

between the means was statistically significant with females finding it more difficult to practice their religion. The findings indicate that the food is familiar for both males and females. The difference in the means was statistically significant with males reporting a higher level of unfamiliarity with the food.

Coping Skills

The researcher sought to determine the coping mechanisms used by the Saudi students at U.S. universities. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Coping Skills

Coping Skills		Mean	Std. Deviation	*t* statistic	*p*-value
Improving my English language skills	Male	4.44	.816	0.174	0.862
	Female	4.42	.749		
Making friends from other cultures	Male	4.20	.933	1.004	0.316
	Female	4.23	.801		
Seeking assistance from my university	Male	4.01	.891	-2.219	0.027
	Female	4.01	.843		
Religious practices and prayers	Male	4.38	.839	-1.819	0.070
	Female	4.25	.858		
Engaging in sport activities	Male	4.22	.861	3.108	0.002
	Female	3.68	.808		
Improving problem-solving skills	Male	4.32	.823	2.139	0.030
	Female	4.33	.733		

1 = Not helpful at all; 2 = Hardly Helpful; 3 = Not Sure; 4 = Helpful; 5 = Very helpful

The findings summarized in Table 7 suggests that improving their English language would increase the students' ability to cope in the United States. The *t* value of 0.174 and *p*-values of 0.862 suggests that the means of both females and males was equal. The *t* value of 2.219 and *p*-value of 0.027 suggests that the difference between the means was statistically

significant in the ease of seeking assistance from the university. The means of 4.38 (males) and 4.25 (females) suggest that both male and female students' religion is important for helping them cope with academic stress. The mean of 4.22 suggests that the male students use sports to cope with stress while the mean of 3.68 suggests that sports are not a tool used by females to cope with stress. The *t* value of 3.108 and *p*-value of 0.002 indicates that the difference in means was statistically significant. The means of 4.32 (males) and 4.33 (females) suggest that improving problem-solving skills helps both groups of students to cope with stress. The *t* value of 2.139 and *p* value of 0.030 indicates that the difference between the means was statistically significant.

Summary

The aim of this research study was to investigate academic stress faced by Saudi students. This objective was achieved by studying academic stress amongst Saudi students attending universities in the United States. The researcher analyzed academic stress levels amongst male and female students. The analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and *t*-statistic. The researcher found that the levels of academic stress amongst the male and female students in most instances were similar. On average, the students were not significantly affected by personal factors or psychological factors. Students were found to use various coping methods such as religion and sports. In addition, making friends from other cultures and seeking assistance from their universities was very helpful to cope with academic stress. Next chapter will provide interpretation of findings, implications for research and practice, study limitations and conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Stress is not a new phenomenon for university students. These students face various stressors that emanate from various domains. The stressors include factors such as personal factors, cultural factors, and academic factors. According to Guo et al. (2019), additional unique stressors affect international students that are intensive by the region on the world from which they come. The aim of this study was to examine academic stress faced by Saudi students attending universities in the United States.

The study aimed to answer the following questions. The first question was what are the main sources of academic stress in Saudi students studying in U.S. universities? The second question was is there a significant difference in sources of stress and level of stress among Saudi students according to gender in the United States? The last question is what are the coping skills that Saudi students attending U.S. universities use when they experience academic stress? The researcher hypothesized that there is a significant difference among Saudi students according to gender in the United States.

The study sampled 407 students studying in U.S. universities. Data for the study was collected through questionnaires. This section of the study provides a discussion based on the quantitative analysis aimed at establishing the sources of academic stress faced by Saudi students, the difference in the levels of academic stress faced by male and female students, and the coping mechanisms used by the students.

Interpretation of Findings

This section of the study provides an interpretation and discussion of the findings which are presented in chapter four. The research discussed four factors that may increase academic

stress among international students, and coping skills. These factors are academic, personal, psychological, and cultural factors.

Academic Factors

The main objective of the study was to understand the level of academic stress faced by international students with a specific focus on Saudi students. The findings summarized in Table 3 indicate that for Saudi students studying in American's universities, the ability to transition from English preparatory studies to learning in English is not challenging. These findings contradict the findings of Banjong (2015), who established those international students studying in the United States from non-English speaking countries often experienced challenges in transitioning from the English language classes to learning in English.

Female students indicated that they feel stressed by assignment deadlines. This variation between males and females can be understood that females experience more time pressure (Jogaratnam & Buchanan, 2004). According to Essel and Owusu (2017), the workload at university level is very high. In some instances, students have to do more than they can handle. This expectation makes students overextend themselves so that they can meet deadlines. According to Huntington-Klein and Gill (2020), many college students in the United States take more than four years to complete their bachelor's studies due to the high course load.

The findings of the study suggest that some students do not hesitate to ask instructors for more clarifications while other students are very hesitant. These findings confirm the findings of Wu et al. (2015), who when studying academic stress in students from China, Taiwan, South Korea, Mexico, Japan, and Vietnam that these students did not ask questions during class because it was considered rude to interrupt the professor while they are speaking. Additionally,

Wu et al. (2015) found that international students tend to be isolated from other students. This isolation extends into the classroom.

The respondents indicated that they were neutral about speaking English in the classroom. However, the dispersion in the findings suggests that for some students it might be more challenging. Wang et al. (2017) found that students who come from East Asian countries have significant challenges in adopting academically in the United States as compared to international students from English-speaking countries. This was attributed to the fact that students from East Asia had a low willingness to speaking in English because they did not want negative evaluations such as giving faculty the impression that they do not know English and being judged unfavorably by others. According to Hegarty (2014), the inability and unwillingness of non-English speaking international students to express themselves in English results in loss of opportunities for development.

From the responses given, it can be concluded that on average that both male and female students are not stressed out by writing in English. According to Longerbeam et al. (2013), East Asian and Middle Eastern students studying in the United States tend to have a problem with grammar, vocabulary, linguistic fluency, and accuracy, thus have a problem expressing themselves verbally and through writing. The findings imply that the English language programs offered in the U.S. universities address writing skills challenges sufficiently.

Personal Factors

The personal factors that affect the respondents are summarized in Table 4. The findings suggest that on average, both male and female respondents were neutral on the assertion that their study habits need to be organized. The findings show that the mean for males (3.70) was higher than that of females (3.58). The *p*-value of 0.263 indicated that the difference between

males and females was not statistically significant. According to Khan et al. (2015), the expectations put on male students to be bright and successful in academics is higher than those on females. Additionally, males are more outspoken and seek assistance from their teachers which means that they will be less stressed than female students.

The female students indicated that it was not easy for them to manage their time. The male students were neutral implying that on average they could manage their time. Adams and Blair (2019) showed that on average time management behaviors were not statistically significantly different across gender, age, entry qualification, and time spent in the program. The difference in findings can be attributed to the fact that the researchers only focused on first-year engineering students at the University of Toronto. This study focused on undergraduate students and post-graduate students.

In response to the question on the lack of financial resources. The mean of the responses for males and females was 3.02 and 3.01 respectively. These findings suggest that the students were on average neutral on the issue of financial stress. In a study of Asian, African American, American Indian, Caucasian, Hispanic, and other ethnic groups. Guo et al. (2019) found that financial stress was very high amongst international students than amongst American students. The contradiction in findings can be attributed to the fact that most of the participants in this study are on government sponsorship.

From the responses given, both male and female students can manage their financial resources efficiently. The findings suggest that the respondents were moderately confident about their money management skills. These findings are similar to the findings of Koposko et al. (2016), who through their comparative analysis of the financial habits of students in the United

States and Mexico found that young adults were only moderately confident in their financial acumen.

The respondents indicated that they were moderately capable of engaging and discussing with different genders in the classroom. In the United States, education is non-segregated while in Saudi Arabia, there is gender segregation. The findings suggest the issues of gender interactions are not significant for the respondents.

The female respondents indicated that they did not have a hard time managing their priorities while the male students indicated that they could moderately manage their priorities. This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Layfield (2018) who found that girls did better in managing their time and priories than boys. Layfield found that parents tend to watch girls more closely and correct mistakes. Parents were found to be more inclined to view success by girls due to effort and by boys due to ability. These parental attitudes tend to push girls to be better at priority management.

The respondents were neutral on their family's high expectations of their academic ability. A study by the University of Central Florida (2008) found that most students meet or exceeded the expectations of their families. However, the students in the study by the University of Central Florida felt that they fell short. This perception made the students report lower self-worth. The responses given by the respondents of this study suggest that the level of family expectations is moderate, and the students felt that they could meet the expectations.

The respondents felt moderately stressed when they compared themselves to their classmates. The difference between the males and females was not statistically significant. In a survey of international students from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa, Telbis et al. (2014) found that interactions in university were determined by self-efficacy. Students with high

self-efficacy were able to adapt easily to the new environment and to perform well academically. The findings suggest that the level of self-efficacy of the respondents was moderate.

Psychological Factors

The responses to the psychological factors are presented in Table 5. From the responses given, the respondents indicated that they do not lack self-confidence, self-efficacy, or motivation. These findings suggest that the respondents have high levels of self-esteem. The findings suggest that the respondents have a strong belief in themselves and their abilities. Research has shown that Asian students have lower self-esteem and self-confidence (Ho, 2003; Kim et al., 2008; Leung & Wong, 1997). As a consequence, the level of suicide is higher in Asian students. These statistics are due to the social strain that Asian students face (Amorim & Lam, 2013). The findings suggest that the social strains on the Saudi students are not so high.

The findings of the study suggest that the respondents are worried about exams. Rosen (2008) explained that anxiety and worry are common for everyone because life is unpredictable. For college students, the period in university is full of many obstacles and challenges that create worry (Vitasari et al. 2010). In this study, the female students have higher levels of worry than the males. However, Khoshlessan and Das (2017), in a study of anxiety faced by students studying at a southeast Texas university, found that male international students have higher levels of anxiety and worry.

Cultural Factors

Table 6 summarizes the findings of the cultural factors. The respondents disagreed with the assertion that it was difficult to adjust to the new culture. This outcome implies that they did not experience problems trying to fit into the new environment. These findings contradict the findings of Sullivan and Kashubeck-West (2015), who in a survey of 104 international graduate

students from Asia, Europe, South America, Africa, and the Middle East studying in a Midwest University in the United States found that the students had a difficult time integrating into the new culture. Similarly, the findings of this study contradict the findings of Ishiyama (1989) who found that international students are new to the host countries culture and do not have the essential skills and capacity to manage the requirements of their new lives. According to Yang (2018), the use of social media platforms, and the proliferation of American culture through movies means that international students are familiar with the American culture.

The respondents were neutral on the question that some people do not accept them because of their different ethnicity and culture. These findings suggest that some people accept them while others do not accept them. Lee (2007) found that students from the Middle East, Africa, East Asia, Latin America, and India had a more difficult time as compared to students from Canada and Europe because of discrimination and lack of multiculturalism. Similarly, Tavakoli et al. (2009) found that both graduate and undergraduate international students have challenges due to differences in their culture and ethnicity. The findings of this study suggest that the Saudi students who participated in this study have been able to find some social acceptance.

The male respondents indicated that they did not find it difficult to practice their religion. The responses by the female students indicate that they were moderately comfortable with practicing their religion outwardly. Nasir and Al-Amin (2010) found that Muslim students experience a lack of respect or that there is no familiarity with their religious practices. As such, there are no mechanisms in place to allow them to practice their religious beliefs. After the 9/11 attacks and the London bombing, Bhatti (2011) found that there was an increase in discrimination against Muslim students. In a study of challenges facing Bangladeshi students in

China, Chen et al. (2019) found that the students were uncomfortable practicing their religion outwardly due to discrimination and misunderstanding.

The respondents indicated that the food was familiar to them. The finding suggests that the difference between the means was statistically significant. These findings were inconsistent with the researchers' expectations. This outcome is because the diet in the United States is different from that in Saudi Arabia. The diet and food practices in Saudi Arabia are very different from those in the United States. These findings might be explained by the arguments of Sanjur (1995) who stated that culture is learned rather than biologically determined. Sanjur (1995), further argued that eating habits are an example of the varying nature of cultural behavior that changes constantly.

Coping Strategies

Table 7 presents the coping strategies used by the respondents. The respondents agreed that improving their English language would help them to cope with life in the United States. Lee (2008), in an analysis of coping strategies used by international students from Asia, found that the students spent time with each other and avoided their American counterparts. The students indicated that they interacted with other international students comfortably because they did not laugh at them for lack of language skills and often understood how difficult it was to learn a new language. The respondents also indicated that making friends from other cultures helped them to cope with stress.

Both male and female students were unanimous in their responses that indicated that seeking assistance from the university helps them to cope with stress and to cope with life in America. The findings suggest that the techniques put in place by the university to cater for

international students are effective. The university has international students and scholar services that provide support for students.

The respondents unanimously agreed that religious practices and prayers help them to cope with life in the United States. Bhat (2015), in a study of 40 males and 60 females studying at Kashmir University, established that there was a significant negative relationship between academic stress and religion and prayer. The more religious the student was the less the amount of academic stress that they had.

The male students indicated that participating in sports helped them significantly to cope with academic stress. These findings confirm the findings of Slavinski et al. (2021) who in a survey of 845 students of the University of Belgrade in Serbia found that sports were the main tool used by the students to relax and to relieve stress. The female students were neutral. Suggesting that for female students engaging in sports was not particularly effective at reducing stress. The respondents indicated that problem-solving skills greatly helped them to cope with stress. These findings confirm the findings of Abdollahi et al (2016) who found that students who had good problem-solving skills performed better at university.

Implications of the Research and Practice

Over the last few years, the number of international students particularly Saudi Students joining universities in the United States has been increasing. It is therefore important that universities in the United States understand the factors that cause academic stress amongst their students, how the level of stress levels vary between Saudi students and the coping mechanisms used by the students. These findings will enable the universities to formulate strategies that help the students to cope with and manage academic stress.

Alnawar (2015) established that in the United States there was a stereotype of students from the Middle East due to the incidences of terrorism. These students are viewed with suspicion. This perception resulted in the students experiencing difficulties both inside and outside the classroom. Findings of this study will support the need for cultural sensitization as a means of reducing academic stress. Findings of the study will provide the Saudi government with an insight into the challenges and experiences of their students in the United States. The information will be useful when designing programs to support Saudi students studying abroad.

Saudi international students coming to universities in the United States from a vastly different culture and educational background to that experienced in the host country. Their teachers have specific limited information about the culture and educational expectations of Saudi students. This lack of information on the part of the students and the teachers may result in misunderstandings and barriers that result in academic stress.

The university needs to survey international students in order to identify their needs. The English preparation programs to speakers of other languages ESOL offered in the U.S. universities were sufficient in addressing the language skills needed by the students. Universities should teach more assertive skills to both Saudi parents and students to help them deal with the expectations and pressures of university.

In order to remain internationally competitive and attractive to international students, universities should put in place a multicultural framework for academic and non-academic life in university. The findings of this study show that the climate of campus life affects the academic achievements of students. A supportive atmosphere enhances the quality of teaching and learning and stimulates the students to have full unique opportunities and experiences.

In order to have a good acculturation and adaptation process for international students who come from non-English speaking countries it is important for universities to recognize the language and communication challenges, how they affect academics and interpersonal relationships. In addition, it is essential for universities to put in place mechanism to enhance learning language.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

A major limitation of this study was that the analysis was descriptive and exploratory. Thus, there are no causal conclusions that could be made. Additionally, the questionnaires were distributed through email, the researcher did not have an opportunity to introduce himself to the respondents, answer any questions that might have arisen, or ask clarifying questions. The findings of the study need to be carefully considered because the study focused only on Saudi students attending universities in the United States. Thus, the generalization of the findings beyond this group of students is limited. Additionally, the findings are limited to Saudi students living and studying in the United State.

Future studies should look at more student groups such as South Americans, Africans, Europeans, and Asians. The generality of the results obtained in this study should be tested on a bigger and more diverse study sample. Future studies should include other institutions such as high schools. The study should compare differences in region and the type of institution. Additionally, the analysis should be based on certain items such as level of income, age of student, region, and religion this would help in understanding the main causes of academic stress. Future studies should also be mixed methods to provide an understanding of the respondents' perceptions.

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that both male and female Saudi students in the United States face similar levels of academic stress. The findings of the study suggest that the respondents were moderately comfortable with their English writing and speaking skills. The findings also show that the respondents moderately asked questions. The researcher concludes that the English course needs to be enhanced further to build the students competencies. The study concludes that the Saudi students who participated in the study have the appropriate personal circumstances to navigate study in the international setting. The study found that the Saudi students were familiar with American culture, which helped them to integrate and adapt easily. The study concludes that students with self-efficacy, motivation, and confidence have lower levels of academic stress. The study further concludes that religion, prayer, sports, English skills, and university support help international students to adjust and cope to a new setting.

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APPENDICES

[Appendix A: Instrument]

[Appendix A: Academic Stress Scale]

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in a research study entitled (**Academic Stress Examination and its Sources Among Saudi Students in the United States).**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether, or leave blank any questions you don't wish to answer or withdraw any time without any penalty. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. All Saudi university students in the U.S. are illegible to participate in this study. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm or discomfort than you would experience in everyday life. If you feel stressful or upsetting, you are encouraged to visit the counseling center for students at your university. You are not likely to get any personal benefit from taking part in this study. Your participation is expected to provide benefits to others by improving the educational environment and psychological support for those who study abroad. You will not receive any payment or reward for taking part in this study.

If you agree to participate in this research, please, answer the questions on the questionnaire as best you. Survey questions should take approximately *(10 minutes)* to complete.

If you have any question or concern, feel free to contact:

Nawaf Alshammari

Nawaf_alshammari3@mymail.eku.edu

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Dissertation Title: Academic Stress Examination and its Sources Among Saudi Students in the United States.

Research Questions: The study aims to answer the following questions.

The first question is what are the main sources of academic stress among Saudi students in the United States universities?

The second question is are there statistically significant difference among Saudi students according gender?

The Third Question is what are coping skills used when Saudi students experience academic stress?

Demographic questions

What is your gender? Male- Female

What is your age?

What is your current Academic level?
a) A undergraduate student
b) A graduate student

How many years have you resided in the Unites States?
a) Less than 1 year
b) From 1- 2 years
c) From 2-4 years
d) From 5 - 10 years
e) More than 10

Academic factors
It is difficult to move from English language program entry requirements to university academic program

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

My professors give too much assignments

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I feel stressed about assignment deadlines

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I hesitate to discuss instructors for more clarifications

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

Writing assignments in English language stress me out

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

I feel do not confident when speaking English in classrooms

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

Personal factors

My study habits need to be organized.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

It is easy for me to manage my time

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

I have lack of financial resources

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

I can manage my financial resources efficiently

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

I can engage and discuss with different gender of mine in classrooms easily.

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

I have hard time managing my priorities

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

My family has high expectations of my academic ability that makes me feel stress

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

I feel stressed when I compare myself to classmates

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

Psychological factors

I lack of self-confidence

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

I lack of self-efficacy

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I lack of motivation

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I am worried when I have examinations

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

Cultural factors

It is difficult to adjust to the new culture

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I feel some people do not accept me because of my different ethnicity and cultural background.

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

I find it difficult to practice my religion outwardly

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

Clothing is not familiar to me

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

Food is not familiar to me

Strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

This section describes the coping skills used to deal with academic stress. Please, rate your answer.

Coping skill strategies:

Improving my English language skills

very helpful helpful not sure hardly helpful not helpful at all

Making friends from other cultures

very helpful helpful not sure hardly helpful not helpful at all

Asking assistance from my university

very helpful helpful not sure hardly helpful not helpful at all

Religious practices and prayers

very helpful helpful not sure hardly helpful not helpful at all

Engaging in sport activities

very helpful helpful not sure hardly helpful not helpful at all

Improving problem-solving skills

very helpful helpful not sure hardly helpful not helpful at all