Research Paper

Impact of Stress and Study Habits on Learning Outcomes of Secondary School Students

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Abstract
This study investigated the impact of stress and study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students in Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State. To guide this study, three hypotheses were formulated. Relevant literatures on the variables were extensively discussed, the study adopted correlation research design. The population of the study consists of all senior secondary school two (2) students in Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State. From this population, Three hundred secondary school two students were selected using simple random sampling techniquefrom Six (6) secondary schools randomly selected in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. The two instruments used to collect data was a self-made questionnaire title; "Stress and Study Habits Questionnaire while SSS Two students previous scores were used to measure learning outcomes". These instruments were validated by two test experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Delta State University, Abraka. These instruments were administered on Fifty (50) students outside the sample of the study to ascertain its reliability. Cronbach Alpha Statistics was used to analyze the data gotten and a coefficient value of .78 was obtained for stress and .70 for study habits questionnaire. The researcher's administered the instruments to the sampled participants with the help of two trained research assistant for the study. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tool. Based on the data analyzed, the following were the findings of the study; there is significant impact of stress on learning outcomes of secondary school students, there is a correlation between study habits and learning outcomes of secondary school students, there is significant impact of stress and study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students on the basis of gender in favor of male students. From the findings of the study, it was recommend among others, schools should incorporate study skills development into their curriculum, teaching students effective learning strategies, time management and organization techniques to enhance learning outcomes.
Keywords: Stress, Study Habits, Learning Outcomes, Students.

I.   Introduction
Education is supposed to promote the economic and technological development of Nigeria, the reverse is the case because of poor quality in learning outcomes and the poor economic factor in our nation (Odofin, 2020). Education is an importantprocess that enables a person to contribute positively to the society in which he or she lives. It's a complex endeavor that requires long-term investment, with success often only realized when educated individuals effectively fulfill their roles in the future (Febianti&Rezania, 2024). Education is crucial for all who seeks knowledge, as it should be impacted correctly, wisely, and through effective teaching.

Education is a deliberate effort to facilitate a learning process that enables students to actively nurture their inherent potential, benefiting themselves, society, the nation, and the state. The hallmarks educational quality include the enhancement of student learning outcomes, ensuring students not only grasp the learning material but also develop the capacity to tackle problems through educational journey (Yuniani et al, 2022;Ikogho&Akpokiniovo, 2025).

Learning in education is a continuous process and effort taken by an individualto bring about a new change in behavior that can be influence by his\her experiences and interactions with the environment which is a fundamental responsibility and duty of every human being. The desire to learn can be observe in behavioral changes, such as improved learning skills in school, positive behavior both at home and in the school, and the improvement of personal potential and these positive changes can be closely linked to better learning outcomes (Ikogho& Onoharigho,2025).

Learning outcomes refers to the level of success a student attains in their academic pursuits, typically measured by their grades and test scores. It is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various aspects of academic success (Pintrich, 2020). Learning outcomes is the outcome of a course of study to show that learning has taken place, it implies the total outcome of both the teachers' and the students' efforts in day to day learning in school work. It involves the end of each student's physical, social, psychological, and cognitive wellbeing, it is an index of general mental abilities which are responses to tests of different kinds (Odofin&Okorodudu, 2019).Research has shown that learning outcomes is influenced by a range of factors, including stress levels, study habits and others. Learning outcomes is a measure of a student's scholarly achievements and progress in their educational pursuits and can be evaluated through various metrics, including Grade Point Average (GPA), standardized test scores, and course completion rates (Adelman, 2021). However, these measures provide only a partial picture of a student's academic abilities, as they do not account for important factors like creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Wiggins &McTighe, 2018;Anyaehie, et al.,2025).

Students learning outcomes are closely related to the Stress factor.Stress is an emotional or psychological response to a perceived threat or demand, it can have a variety of physical, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations in a student (Freeman, 2021). Over the decades, research has expanded our understanding of stress, its causes, and its impacts on human health and well-being. There are two main categories of stressors, which are external events or circumstances that cause stress, and the individual's appraisal of the stressor as a threat or a challenge, this appraisal process is critical in determining the individual's emotional and physiological response to stress.

Stress has a significant impact on the learning outcomes of secondary school students in Nigeria, as evidenced by numerous studies and observations. The fast-paced and demanding nature of the educational system, combined with various personal and environmental factors, can lead to increased levels of stress among students, which can negatively affect their learning outcomes in various ways (Balogun and Tosin, 2020; Dokai and Wanogho, 2021). Research has shown that stress can disrupt cognitive processes, impair memory and concentration, and reduce motivation and engagement in learning (Ekong, 2021;Ikogho, 2022). Moreover, stress can lead to negative coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse or avoidance, which can further impact academic performance. For example, students who are experiencing high levels of stress may skip classes or procrastinate on assignments, leading to lower grades and a lack of mastery of course material (Oshim, et al., 2021).

Study habits refer to the regular practices and behaviors that students adopt to prepare for and excel in their academic pursuits. These habits can include time management, note-taking, active reading, and test preparation strategies (Mosker and Black, 2019). The concept of study habits has been widely studied in the field of education, with scholars and educators recognizing their importance in determining academic success. According to Pajares (2020), effective study habits are linked to higher academic achievement, as they enable students to better organize and process information, as well as manage their time effectively.

The learning outcomes of secondary school students in Nigeria is significantly influenced by their study habits while various individual and environmental factors can contribute to a student's academic success, the development of effective study habits is widely recognized as a crucial predictor of learning outcomes. In a study by Adegboyega and Fayeye (2022), it was found that Nigerian secondary school students, who reported better study habits, including regular homework completion and timely revision, were more likely to achieve higher grades in their exams. Also, students who have developed effective study habits tend to be more organized and efficient in their learning, enabling them to better manage their time and prioritize tasks (Ibik, et al., 2022). This, in turn, leads to a more comprehensive understanding of course material and better retention of information.

Stress, study habits, and learningoutcomes are all intricately intertwined, particularly in the context of secondary school students in Nigeria. The complex interplay between these factors can have a significant impact on students' overall academic success. Previous researches have shown that stress can significantly disrupt the development and maintenance of effective study habits, leading to poor academic performance. For example, students who are experiencing high levels of stress may procrastinate or avoid studying altogether, leading to

lower grades and a poorer understanding of course material. Conversely, effective study habits can help mitigate the negative effects of stress on learning outcomes. For instance, time management skills, such as breaking assignments into smaller tasks and creating a study schedule, can help students feel more in control and less overwhelmed, reducing the negative impact of stress on learning outcomes.

1.1 Hypotheses
The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study;
- There is no significant impact of stress on learning outcomes of secondary school students.
- There is no significant impact of study habit on learning outcomes of secondary school students.
- There is no significant impact of stress, study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students on the basis of gender.

1.2.1 Literature Review
Concept of Stress

Stress, a term frequently used in everyday language, has nuanced meanings and implications in various fields such as psychology, medicine, and sociology. It can be broadly defined as a physical, mental, or emotional response to events that cause bodily or mental tension. Stress is a natural part of life, with its roots traced back to the human body's instinctual fight-or-flight response to threats. Stress can be categorized into acute stress, which is short-term and arises from specific events, and chronic stress, which persists over a long period. Acute stress is the body's immediate reaction to a new challenge, event, or demand and can be thrilling and exciting in small doses. For example, the rush one might feel before an important presentation or while meeting a tight deadline is a form of acute stress (American Psychological Association (2020). On the other hand, chronic stress results from ongoing situations such as a demanding job, chronic illness, or a challenging personal relationship, leading to long-term health problems such as hypertension, heart disease, and mental disorders (Mayo, 2021).These stressors can be physical, such as injury or illness; psychological, such as fear or anxiety; or social, such as interpersonal conflicts or work-related pressures.

The physiological response to stress involves the activation of the body's stress response systems, particularly the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the autonomic nervous system. When faced with a stressor, the hypothalamus releases corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), which stimulates the pituitary gland to secrete adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH). ACTH then prompts the adrenal glands to produce cortisol, a key stress hormone that helps mobilize energy and adapt to stress. Additionally, the sympathetic nervous system is activated, leading to the release of adrenaline and noradrenaline, which prepare the body for a "fight or flight" response (Sapolsky, 2020;Ikogho&Akpokiniovo, 2025).

Chronic stress, however, can have detrimental effects on health. Prolonged activation of the stress response can lead to various physical and mental health issues, including cardiovascular diseases, immune dysfunction, depression, and anxiety disorders (McEwen, 2019). The wear and tear on the body resulting from chronic stress, known as allostatic load, can compromise the body's ability to maintain homeostasis and respond effectively to future stressors (McEwen, 2019).

The causes of stress, known as stressors, can be diverse, encompassing environmental, social, psychological, and biological factors. Environmental stressors include natural disasters, noise, and pollution, while social stressors may involve relationships, work pressures, and financial problems. Psychological stressors often stem from personal fears, beliefs, and expectations, whereas biological stressors can be attributed to illnesses, aging, or hormonal changes.The physiological mechanism underlying stress involves the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which controls the release of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone. When an individual perceives a threat, the hypothalamus signals the pituitary gland to release adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH), which in turn stimulates the adrenal glands to produce cortisol. This hormone increases glucose levels in the bloodstream, enhances the brain's use of glucose, and curbs non-essential functions in a fight-or-flight situation (Sapolsky, 2020) while this response is crucial for survival, prolonged activation of the HPA axis due to chronic stress can lead to detrimental health effects, including impaired cognitive function, suppressed thyroid function, and increased abdominal fat (McEwen, 2019).According to this model, stress occurs when a person evaluates a situation as taxing or exceeding their resources and endangering their well-being. This model highlights the subjective nature of stress, emphasizing that different individual may respond differently to the same stressor based on their perceptions and coping resources.

Coping mechanisms for stress can be categorized into problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Problem-focused coping involves tackling the problem directly to eliminate or reduce the source of stress, such as time management or seeking social support. Emotion-focused coping aims to manage the emotional distress associated with the situation, through methods such as relaxation techniques, exercise, and mindfulness.

Research indicates that adaptive coping strategies, including social support and physical activity, can significantly mitigate the adverse effects of stress (Taylor, 2021).

In contemporary society, stress is ubiquitous and can stem from a multitude of sources. Occupational stress, characterized by job demands, lack of control, and work-life imbalance, is a prevalent concern that affects employees across different sectors. Social stressors, such as relationship difficulties, financial pressures, and social isolation, also significantly contribute to the overall stress burden. Additionally, global challenges, including economic instability, political unrest, and environmental threats, can exacerbate stress levels in individuals and communities (Schneiderman, Ironson, & Siegel, 2020).

1.2.2 Concept of Study Habits

The concept of study habit according to Husain (2022) is broad, as it combines nearly all other sub-concepts such as study attitude, study methods and study skills. Attitude is a mental and natural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a direct influence on the individual's response to related or unrelated situations around him or her.

Study habits are usually defined as students' ability to manage time and other resource to complete an academic task successfully. 'Study habit' is the amount and kind of studying routines which the student used during regular period of study occurred in a conducive environment. Crede&Kuneel (2020) defines study habit as study routines, including, but not restricted to, frequency of studying sessions, review of material, self testing,rehearsal of learned material and studying in a conducive environment.

Study habit is commonly referred to as regular patterns in approaching study tasks. These patterns are made up of a combination of one or more individual tactics or techniques such as note taking (Wade, Trathen&Schraw, 2021). When these techniques are used deliberately in particular study situations, they are called study strategies. A study strategy and in turn study habit, is a direct sequence of activities applied by the learner to a set of information rather than a single random event (Kail&Bisanz, 2022).

Study habit typically denotes degree to which students engages in regular acts of studying that are characterized by appropriate use of studying materials which typically occurs in an environment that is study conducive. Study habit refer to the activities carried out by learners during the learning process of improving learning and are intended for improving learning and guide one's cognitive processes during learning.

Azikiwe (2020) describes study habit as "the adopted way and manner a student plans his private reading, after classroom learning so as to attain mastery of the subject". According to her, "good study habit are good asset to learners because habits helps students to attain mastery in areas of specialization and ensuing excellent performance, while the opposite becomes constraint to learning & achievement leading to failure". In recent years, study skills and study habit or behaviors has been distinctly differentiated.

Bliss & Mueller (2020) were among the first to note that the difference lies in distinguishing between potential and actual behavior. This distinction is elaborated as:-Study skills: study skills are usually steps or procedures such as highlighting, outlining, note-taking, summarizing etc. that may be taught through explicit instruction (Gettinger& Seibert, 2021). Study skills are the specific techniques that make up the study plan.

1.2.3   Concept of Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes is frequently defined in terms of academic performance. Learning outcomes refers to what the students have learned or what skills the student has learned and is usually measured through assessments like standardized tests, performance assessments and portfolio assessments. The descriptive assessment information will usually be translated by grading system such as Grade Point Average (GPA) and course grade. This study will make use of Cumulated Grade Point Average (CGPA) since it provides information of the students' learning outcomes across time.

Learning outcomes is the outcome of education, the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goal. Academic performance is commonly measure by examinations or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important. Learning outcomes is measured by the examination results which is one of the major goals of a school with the aim of imparting knowledge and skills to those who go through them and behind all this is the ideal of enhancing good learning outcomes.

II.   Methods

This study uses the survey research design to obtain data. The target population for the study comprise of students in senior secondary school Two (2) within Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. The sample used for the study by the researchers was three hundred (300) secondary school students. The simple random sampling technique was used for the study by the researcher simply because it gave an opportunity for every member to be chosen equally for the study. Six (6) secondary schools were randomly

selected in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. This was achieved by writing all the names of the registered public secondary schools on a piece of paper which was folded in a ball shape and placed in a bowl. From the lot, 6 schools were randomly hand-picked. The researcher decided to sample fifty (50) students from each school making a total of 300 students.The questionnaire as a quantitative means of data collection was used to generate information in this research work. The questionnaire comprised of items, it is divided into two parts; Part A and B. Part A study habit contained items on psychological stress while Part B contained relevant items on which were measured with a four point scale of SA (4), A (3), D (2), SD (1). The previous scores of SSS Two students were used to measure learning outcomes. The type of validity that were used is the face and content validity because it has to do with the confidence gained from careful inspection of the measuring instrument to see whether it is appropriate on its face value. In line with the above, the questionnaire was presented to experts in data analysis, necessary corrections were made and the final instrument was constructed in line with the experts' advice.The administration of questionnaire was done personally by two research assistants by visiting the respondents at their respective schools. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents after permission from the school proprietors. The respondents were encouraged to fill the questionnaires independently with close supervision, and on the spot collection were made to ensure that all the questionnaires distributed are collected back. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

III. .Testing Hypotheses

3.1 Hypothesis I: There is no significant impact of stress on learning outcomesof secondary school students.

Table 1: Pearson (r) Analysis ofimpact of stress on learning outcomes of secondary school students

		Stress	Learning Outcomes
Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.275[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.075
	N	286	286
Learning outcome	Pearson Correlation	.275[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.075	
	N	286	286

[*] **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 1 shows a Pearson's r-value of 0.275 and a p-value of 0.075 testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is greater than the alpha level, so, the null hypothesis which states that "There is no significant impact of stress of learning outcomes of secondary school students"is rejected. Consequently, there is significant impact of stress on learning outcomes of secondary school students in Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State.

3.2 Hypothesis 2: There is no significant impact of study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students.

Table 2: Pearson (r) Analysis of impact of study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students

		Study habits	Learning outcomes
Study habits	Pearson Correlation	1	.450[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.203
	N	286	286
Learning outcomes	Pearson Correlation	.450[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.203	
	N	286	286

[*] **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 2 shows a Pearson's r-value of 0.450 and a p-value of 0.203, it is seen that the p-value is greater than the alpha level, so, the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant impact of study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students"is rejected. Consequently, there is significant impact of study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students in Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State.

3.3 Hypothesis 3: There is no significant impact of stress, study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students on the basis of gender.

Table 3: Pearson (r) Analysis of impact of stress, study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students on the basis of gender

		Male	Female
Male	Pearson Correlation	1	.511[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.261
	N	286	286

Female	Pearson Correlation	.511[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.261	
	N	286	286

[*] **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 3 shows a Pearson's r-value of 0.511 and a p-value of 0.261 testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value, which is 0.261 is greater than the alpha level, so, the null hypothesis which states "there is no significant impact of stress, study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students on the basis of gender" is rejected. The conclusion is that "there is significant impact of stress, study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students in Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State in favor of male students".

IV. Discussion of Findings

The result of research finding 1 revealed that there is a relationship between stress and learning outcomes of secondary school students. The results indicate that students experiencing high levels of stress tend to perform poorly academically, while those with effective stress management strategies exhibit better academic outcomes. This suggests that stress has a detrimental impact on students' cognitive functioning, motivation, and overall academic performance. This finding agrees with a study by Afolabi (2020) explored the relationship between stress and learning outcomes among Nigerian secondary school students which utilized a quantitative approach with a sample of 300 students from various secondary schools in Lagos. The study found that high levels of stress negatively impacted learning outcomes, as stressed students showed decreased concentration and lower grades.

The result of the second research finding revealed that there is a relationship between study habits and learning outcomes of secondary school students. This finding could be as a result ofstudents with effective study habits, such as regular reading, note-taking, and time management, tend to perform better academically. Conversely, students with poor study habits struggle to achieve academic success. This underscores the importance of developing good study habits and skills to enhance learning outcomes. This finding similarly agrees with the research conducted by Okoye (2021) who investigated the role of study habits in learning outcomes among Nigerian students. The study, which surveyed 250 students from secondary schools in Enugu State, revealed that students with organized and consistent study habits performed significantly better academically. Okoye's findings emphasize the importance of developing good study habits to enhance academic performance.Febianti&Rezania, (2024) revealed in their study that, there is a relationship between study habits and learning outcomes of elementary school students. Credé and Kuncel (2020) revealed in their study that effective study habits are positively correlated with higher learning outcomes, as they enhance students' ability to process and recall information during examinations and assessments.

The result of the third finding revealed that there is significant impact of stress, study habits on learning outcomes of secondary school students on the basis of gender in favor of male students.This suggests that male students are more able to tackle thenegative effects of stress and they have better study habits behavior, which can enhance their learning outcomes than their counterparts.This finding agrees with Musa and Ibrahim (2021) whose study examined the relationship between stress, study habits, and academic performance among male and female secondary school students in Northern Nigeria. Using a sample of 250 students, the researchers found that female students were more likely to exhibit poor study habits, such as procrastination and irregular study patterns, which in turn negatively affected their academic performance. Male students, on the other hand, displayed more consistent study habits, including regular revision and time management, which positively influenced their academic results. Their study also revealed that female students reported lower stress levels than males, but their poor study habits led to a more significant decline in academic performance.

V. Conclusion

This study's findings establish a significant relationship between stress and learning outcomes of secondary school students,the study results reveal a significant correlation between study habits and learning outcomes of secondary school students, the study also revealed a significant impact of stress and study habits on the learning outcomes of secondary school students on the basis of gender, more favorably to male students compare to their counterparts.

VI. Recommendations

• Secondary schools in Abraka should incorporate study skills development into their curriculum, teaching students effective learning strategies, time management, and organization techniques to enhance learning outcomes.

- Teachers should adopt student-centered approaches, fostering a supportive learning environment that encourages open communication, builds confidence, and reduces stress levels.
- Parents and guardians should prioritize their children's emotional well-being, monitoring stress levels and providing guidance on effective study habits to promote academic success.
- The Delta State Government should provide resources and infrastructure to support students' academic and emotional needs irrespective of their gender and age, including counseling services, libraries, and recreational facilities, to create a conducive learning environment.

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