

Abstract

The study aimed to unveil gender and age differences in the perceived stress levels of undergraduate students in the psychology department at a public university in western Kenya. The researcher applied a descriptive survey as the research design. A quantitative method was used to collect the data. Data were obtained from a questionnaire and Perceived stress scale inventory (PSS). The data collection tool consisted of three sections: Demographic profile of the participants was incorporated in section A; Section B consisted of Perceived stress scale inventory (PSS) which was developed by Sheldon Cohen in 1988. A perceived stress scale was used to capture the level of perceived stress in an individual. The perceived stress scale measures the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. Perceived stress is psychological as opposed to physiological indicators of stress. Section C contained the cluster of causes of stress. It consisted of four dimensions of stress sources: financial, academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal relationship. Respondents were required to choose appropriate scores for the four clusters of the generation of stress. Data were purposively collected from all the thirty-three psychology department students with a mean age of 21years. The result obtained showed different causes of stress among respondents. Perceived stress levels were grouped into four: Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Academic, and Financial sources. The results of the data analysis showed significant differences between the stress mean scores of male and female students. Stress was found to be an issue among undergraduate students that should be of clinical concern for psychotherapists. Female students reported higher perceived stress levels (86%) than their male counterparts (55%). The findings of this study will help mental health practitioners to develop interventions that will address the psychological needs of the students based on their gender.