

How do university students deal with stress ?

Rhianna poole
2403752
Physical Education

Introduction/Rationale



Globally, mental health disorders are highly prevalent, affecting individuals of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds (World Health Organization WHO (2025).

The WHO (2025) identifies stress-related pressures during adolescence and early adulthood as major determinants of mental health difficulties, with anxiety and emotional disorders among the most prevalent conditions in young people."

This relates to university students as they are highly under academic pressure and face new challenges within new environments Reichel, et al (2024).

why this Topic is important ?

stress is an important topic as it can effect hormones like cortisol and adrenaline which keeps the body in a prolonged "fight-or-flight" state. This damages physical health and mental well-being (anxiety, depression, memory issues) mayo clinic (2023).

regarding the effects stress has it is crucial for university students who are constantly experiencing stressful academic pressure to be able to manage there stress levels effectively as it can effect important aspects that are needed daily such as concentration,motivation,sleep and overall wellbeing world health orgaization (2023). Stress does not only cause immediate consequences, but can also negatively affect education and future ambitions by lowering academic achievement over time (Becker & Börnert-Ringleb, 2026).

Research aims/questions

The main aim of this study was to gather an understand of factors that cause stress and how university students manage that stress



why do university students feel stressed ?

what helps them reduce stress ?

Do they find physical activity contributes as a stress reliever?

Methodology

1.) Research approach

The data was collected by using a mixed methods approach

2.) Participants/sample and recruitment

university students taking part in sports and healthy living degrees. students were given an PSS10 the perceived stress test questionnaire to fill out online using a QR code, that was displayed during class, following the questionnaire the participants had the opportunity to proceed onto interviews. These interviews were recorded and took place on campus.

3.) Data collection method

data was collected through Microsoft Forms questionnaires, using the PSS test (perceived stress test) and interviews

4.) Ethical considerations

An ethics form was completed following the UWTSD ethics guidelines (UWTSD, 2022) and was signed off prior to data collection, consent was obtained before filling out any information, the testing was kept anonymous, questions were not invasive, targeted a group that hasn't got past mental health issues

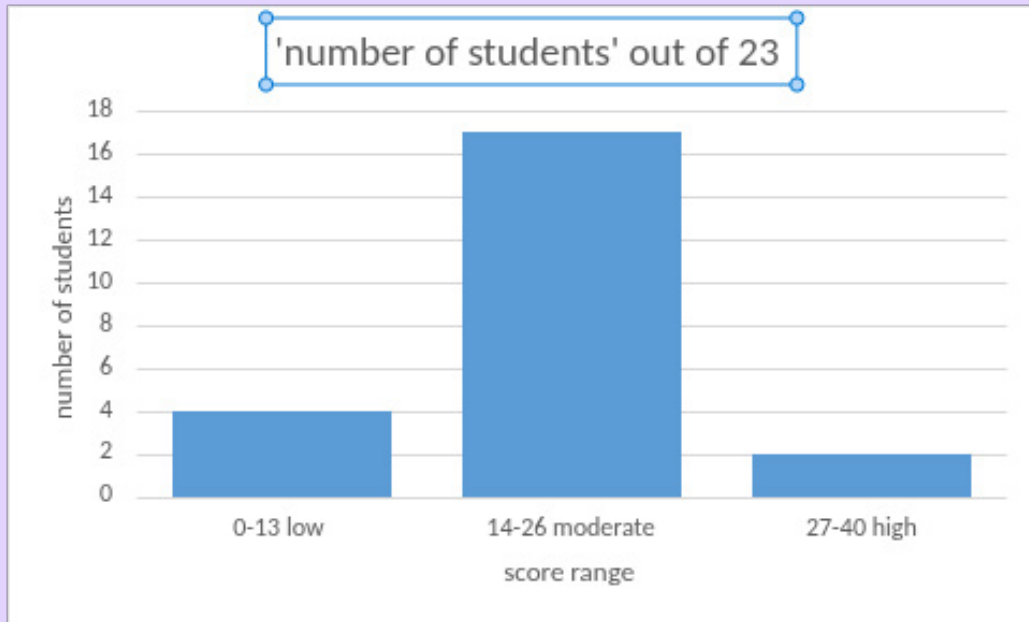
5.) Justification for key methodology choices

The mixed methods approach was used to ensure both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered. It ensures the strength from both methods. Strengths of mixed methodology explore multiple aspects more research to study wider variety, comparisons and correlations

6.) Reflective element

when using a questionnaire next time questions should be mandatory to answer before completing the questionnaire as some data was incomplete and therefore useless.

Key findings- quantitative data questionnaire



The percentage is

Low level 17.39%

Moderate level 73.91%

High levels 8.70%

The distrution shows that most students fall into the moderate range of stress scores with 22-25 interval.

Key findings-Qualitative data interviews

The interview was done with 4 participants, The aim of the interview was to find out a bit more on how they are able to manage stress and what factors influence stress



Most common answer to stress was academic pressure

student 1.) assignments, deadlines and workload

Student 2.) deadlines and university work

Student 3.) deadlines, exams, assignments and practical pressure

Student 4.) Assignment and exams

when asked what activities do you do to manage stress?
,every student said an area within physical activity

Student 1.) gym, football, sports

Student 2.) exercise

Student 3.) swimming walking

Student 4.) running and the gym

Discussion and interpretation

1.) What do the findings mean ?

The findings suggest that stress is a common feeling amongst university students. As for managing stress students commonly suggested physical activities as a good combat method

2.) How do they respond to your research question

After the results were gathered from the questionnaire and interviews, It's clear that I was able to gather enough methods on how university students manage stress.

3.) Relevant concepts of literature

Phillippa Waterhouse (2025) University Students' Coping Strategies to Manage Stress: A Scoping Review. Alligned closely with my study

This study identifies gaps exist in terms of the populations of coping research, both in relation to countries of study and subject discipline

The papers asked students to report how they dealt with stress in general, rather than in relation to particular domains of stress, which ignores the situational variability of coping.

cross-sectional nature of the majority of studies has not allowed for the exploration of the dynamic nature of student coping and how coping may change in response to an evolving stressor or as a result of chronic stress

students cope with stress oscillate between highly specific behaviours to very broad overall strategies with the latter lacking enough detail to be useful to practitioners

5.) Acknowledge limitations of the study

Number of participants willing to do the interviews

Questionnaire: questions should've been compulsory as some questions weren't answered leading to incomplete data that was not used.



Conclusion and implications

Key take home message

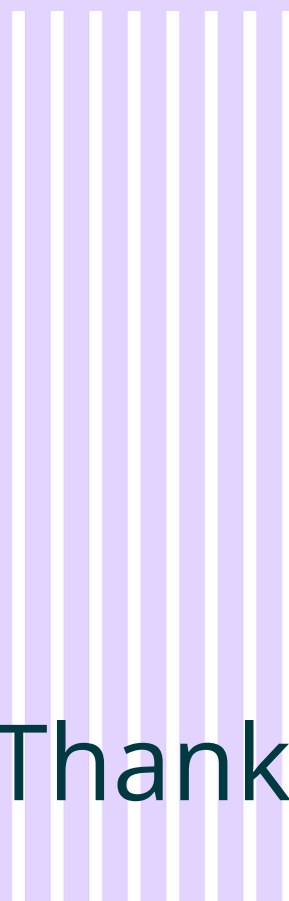
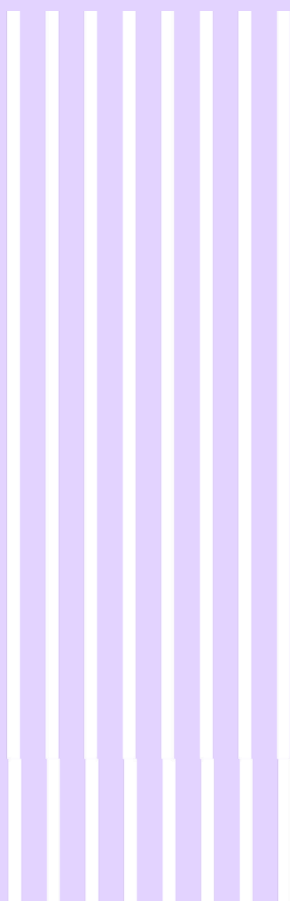
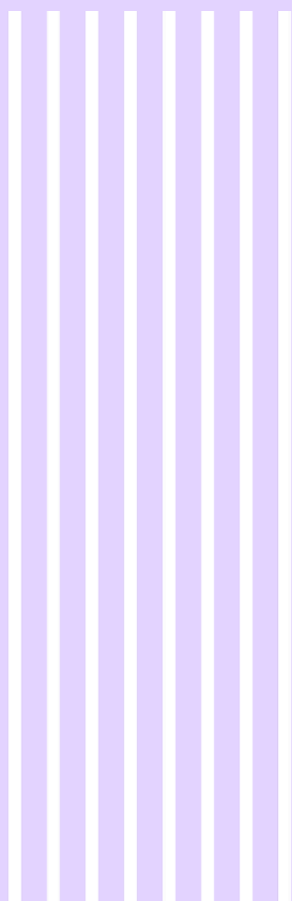
- The majority of university students deal with moderate stress
- Students have similar way to manage stress
- Students find academic pressure to be a key factor to stress
- Practical aspects towards physical activity could be done

Reflection on what you have learnt this year and how it will support you next year

- questions on testing questionnaire should be compulsory as it leaves blank data and wont be able to support my data analysis
- Learnt about ethics and when going down the route of any mental health topics is important not to ask invasive questions its also important to do a background check for example no previous history of mental health issues.
- learnt how to collect and analyse data



Any questions ?



Thank you

References

Becker, S. and Börnert-Ringleb, M. (2026) 'School-related stress and academic achievement: A longitudinal study on the moderating role of achievement orientations

Mayo Clinic. (2023) Chronic stress puts your health at risk.

Phillippa Waterhouse (2025) University Students' Coping Strategies to Manage Stress: A Scoping Review

Reichel, J.L. et al. (2024). University student stress and adjustment challenges in new academic environments.

(UWTSD,2022) UWTSD ethics guidelines

World Health Organization. (2023) Stress.

World Health Organization. (2025) Mental disorders.

World Health Organization. (2025) Mental health of adolescents.

Ai Acknowledgment

AI Tool (with url)	Date used	Why did you use this tool	Example prompt(s)
https://chatgtp.com/ Adobe ai	7/05/26	Images and articles	Help me find an article that is relevant to my topic (case study) Find me an image of discussion, question mark and so on.. Adobe provided images for these prompts