

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF TIME MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON REGULATION OF STUDENTS' STRESS LEVEL IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the perceived influence of time management practices on the regulation of students' stress level in Tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Three specific objectives, three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study was carried out in Rivers State. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 134,400, consisted of all students in public tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The sample size of the study was 398 students using Taro Yamene formula. A convenient sampling technique was used. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Perceived Influence of Time Management Practices on Students' Stress Regulation Questionnaire". The instrument was validated by two experts, one from the Department of Educational Management and the other from the Field of Measurement and Evaluation. The internal consistency of the instrument was measured and established using Cronbach Alpha Statistics which gave reliability coefficients of .81, .90 and .76. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The null hypotheses were tested using z-test statistical tool. The findings of the study revealed that goal-setting is one of the essential time management practices that greatly influence the regulation of stress among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The study recommended among others that time management workshops should be regularly organized by Student Affairs Departments to teach goal-setting. This will enable students cultivate the habit of managing time effectively to reduce stress levels.

Keywords: Time Management, Practices, Regulation, Stress Level, Tertiary Institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Stress has become an important subject in the academic sphere as well as in society. This is because stress is one of the major challenges faced by students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It appears as a common element in the lives of every individual, regardless of race or cultural background. The struggle to cope with academic, financial and social demands in the school community predispose students to various forms of stress which can affect their mental health and academic performance if not properly regulated.

Stress occurs when an individual is confronted by a situation that they perceive as overwhelming and that they cannot cope with (Adegboyega, 2020). It could also be described as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them. Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure (Schneiderman et al., 2020). It is influenced by individual perception, coping skills, and available social support. Corper and Quick (2017) perceived stress as a psychological state that arises when individuals perceive that they cannot adequately cope with the demands being made on them or with threats to their well-being. The World Health Organization (WHO) in Amie-Ogan and Michael (2023), defined work-related stress as the response to demands and pressures that challenge an individual's coping abilities. From the foregoing definitions, stress could be described as a response to threats and pressure, resulting to psychological and physiological reactions.

There are various contributors to the rising levels of academic stress among students in tertiary institutions, many of which are linked to the increasing demands and complexity of academic life. Key stressors include heavy coursework, tight deadlines, competitive grading systems, financial pressures, and the need to balance academic responsibilities with social and personal commitments. Additionally, the shift toward digital learning platforms and online assessments have introduced new forms of anxiety related to technology use, self-regulation, and isolation (Son et al., 2020). These factors are often intensified by students' concerns about future employment, academic performance, and family expectations, all of which contribute to elevated stress levels and potential mental health challenges (Beiter et al., 2015). Consequently, academic stress has become a major concern for higher education stakeholders, calling for more proactive student support systems, mental health services, inclusive learning environments and time management practices that prioritize students' well-being.

Administrators of tertiary institutions are responsible for regulating students stress by engaging in effective time management practices within the school. Time management practices could be referred to as the strategies used to allocate time for a set of activities so as to regulate time used on task for enhanced productivity and goal achievement. Raju and Swamy (2017), defined time management is the process of planning and exercising conscious control of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. Thus, the practice of time management involves an intentional planning of tasks that could facilitate the achievement of a set goal. Effective time management is not just managing time, but also managing tasks and behaviors in relation to time in a goal-oriented way.

Time management plays a crucial role in moderating students' stress levels, especially in the demanding environment of tertiary education. Effective time management allows students to plan their academic tasks, set realistic goals, prioritize responsibilities, and allocate adequate time for study, rest, and leisure. This sense of control reduces the likelihood of last-minute rush, academic overload, and procrastination which are all major contributors to stress (Liu et al., 2024). When students manage their time well, they experience improved academic performance, greater confidence, and reduced anxiety, which contributes to overall psychological well-being (Saputro et al., 2025). Conversely, poor time management often results in disorganization, missed deadlines, and excessive workload, all of which heighten stress and impair academic outcomes (Alshutwi et al., 2023). Therefore, integrating time management skills into student development programs is essential for promoting healthier learning environments and minimizing stress-induced academic challenges.

One of the major practices of time management among students is the setting of realistic goals. Goal setting is valuable stress management technique which provides clarity, focus, and a

sense of control for students. Goal setting is the process of identifying specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives to give direction and purpose to one's efforts. It is a key self-regulatory strategy that enhances motivation, improves focus, and provides a sense of accomplishment when goals are met. Students can overcome the feeling of overwhelm and anxiety when they have their goals sets broken down in smaller objectives. Setting clear and attainable goals help reduce stress by breaking overwhelming tasks into manageable steps, providing a roadmap for action, and offering motivation through progress tracking (Kim, Lim & Kim, 2021). When students align their goals with their capabilities and available resources, they are less likely to experience chronic stress and more likely to feel empowered and in control of their circumstances. Hence, students are to be admonished to cultivate the culture of setting realistic goals to have a clear focus of their academic pursuit leading to less probability of being predisposed to stress.

Another time management practice that is essential for reducing stress level among students is time planning. Time planning involves prioritizing tasks, allocating time effectively, and developing strategies to stay on track and meet deadlines. (Aeon & Aguinis, 2017). Time planning is a proactive process of organizing, allocating, and managing time effectively across various tasks and responsibilities to achieve specific short-term and long-term goals within set deadlines. It involves identifying priorities, estimating the duration of tasks, setting schedules, and anticipating potential obstacles to ensure optimal use of available time resources. Principally, time planning revolves around creating schedules of tasks and activities that are related to the overall goals. In academic setting, time planning helps individuals reduce procrastination, minimize stress, and improve productivity and goal attainment. It integrates tools such as to-do lists, calendars, planners, and digital apps to enhance time awareness and discipline. As a self-regulatory skill, effective time planning empowers individuals to balance competing demands, maintain work-life harmony, and enhance their overall performance and well-being (Aeon & Aguinis, 2017).

Stress tends to increase when students are not engaging in restorative practices that could refuel their energy and focus. Restorative practices are activities that focused on techniques that help the body and mind recover from the effects of stress. These practices aim to promote relaxation, reduce tension, and improve overall well-being of students (Gregory et al., 2016). Practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques during recovery plays a vital role in maintaining emotional well-being. These practices help individuals stay anchored in the present moment, which significantly reduces feelings of anxiety and stress. Restorative circles, peer mediation, and community-building activities help students feel heard and valued, which reduces feelings of isolation, anxiety, and emotional overload that are common contributors to academic stress. Through emphasis on emotional expression, active listening and collaborative problem-solving, restorative practices empower students with self-regulatory strategies and social-emotional skills essential for coping with pressure and managing mental health. Moreover, the consistency and predictability in restorative models create psychologically safe environments that buffer the impact of school-related stressors.

Studies have been carried out on identifying the strategies and techniques for reducing stress among students to avoid worst cases like social isolation, suicide and poor academic performance. The study of Saputro et al. (2025), on the relationship between time management and academic stress found a statistically significant impact of time management on student anxiety, with a p-value of .041 ($p < 0.05$). This indicated that poorer time management is associated with higher levels of anxiety among postgraduate students. In another study by Liu et

al. (2024), a significant positive correlation between time management disposition and mental health was found among postgraduate students. Those with stronger time management tendencies reported fewer psychological problems and higher mental health levels. Diverse studies have been carried out especially in Nigeria to identify the strategies to curb or reduce the students' level of stress. In order to add to existing research works, this study investigated, "Perceived Influence of Time Management Practices on Regulation of Students' Stress in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State".

Statement of the Problem

In today's increasingly demanding academic environment, students in tertiary institutions face high levels of stress due to tight schedules, academic workloads, social pressures, and financial constraints. In Nigeria, the situation is not different, as many students struggle to balance academic responsibilities with personal and social demands. While stress is a natural part of the learning process, unmanaged or chronic stress can lead to negative consequences such as declining academic performance, mental health issues, poor decision-making, and reduced motivation. A key factor influencing students' ability to manage academic stress is their time management practices. Despite the growing recognition of time management as a vital self-regulatory tool, many students seem not to take advantage of it to regulate their stress levels. This is notable as there are increasing cases of mental challenge, social isolation, suicide ideation in most tertiary institutions not only in the study area but in Nigeria at large. Based on the foregoing this study explored, "Perceived Influence of Time Management Practices on Regulation of Students' Stress Levels in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State".

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine, "Perceived Influence of Time Management Practices on Regulations of Students' Stress Levels in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Determine perceived influence of goal settings on regulations of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
- Examine perceived influence of time planning on regulations of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
- Identify perceived influence of restorative practices on regulations of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What is the perceived influence of goal settings on regulations of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
- What is the perceived influence of time planning on regulations of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

- What is the perceived influence of restorative practices on regulations of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance

- There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how goal settings influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how time planning influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State
- There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how restorative practices influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Rivers State. As one of Nigeria's most economically vibrant states, Rivers has invested considerably in higher education, hosting a diverse range of public and private tertiary institutions that serve students from across Nigeria and West Africa. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all students in public tertiary institutions in Rivers State. As at the time of the study, the estimated population of students in the nine tertiary institutions of Rivers state was 134,400. The Taro Yamane formula was used to obtain a minimum sample size of 398 while convenient sampling method was adopted for the study. A total of 398 students were engaged in the study comprising 200 males and 198 females. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Perceived Influence of Time Management Practices on Students' Stress Regulation Questionnaire (PITMPSSRQ)". The questionnaire had three sections measuring the influence of goal-setting, time planning practices and restoration practices on regulation of stress level students designed on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The instrument was validated by two experts, one in Educational Management and the other from the Field of Measurement and Evaluation. The internal consistency of the instrument was measured and established using Cronbach Alpha which gave reliability coefficients of 0.81, 0.90 and 0.76. The instrument was distributed by the researchers and two research assistants. 398 copies of the questionnaire were distributed; however, only 390 copies (Male-192 and Females-198) were retrieved and used for analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to provide answers to the posed research questions. The decision rule for the research questions was such that questionnaire items with mean responses of 2.50 and above were adjudged "Agree" while questionnaire items with mean responses of less than 2.50 were rated "Disagree". The null hypotheses were tested using the z-test statistical tool. Null hypotheses were accepted when the z-calculated value was less than the z-critical value ± 1.96 and rejected when the reverse occurs.

RESULT

Research Question 1: What is the perceived influence of goal settings on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean responses on the perceived influence of goal setting on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Male-192			Female-198		
		Mean	SD	Rmk.	Mean	SD.	Rmk.
1.	Setting clear goals help students focus on what truly matters, reducing the stress caused by confusion or uncertainty.	3.01	0.76	Agree	3.71	0.42	Agree
2.	Setting goals help divide large tasks into smaller, achievable milestones, making overwhelming workloads feel more manageable and less stressful.	2.97	1.04	Agree	3.43	0.55	Agree
3.	With specific goals, students can plan and prioritize their time effectively, avoiding last-minute rush and deadline anxiety.	3.14	0.67	Agree	2.90	0.98	Agree
4.	Setting goals enable students to work towards defined objectives which enhances motivation and lowers stress caused by procrastination	3.45	0.90	Agree	3.19	0.83	Agree
5.	Achieving set goals, build self-efficacy and reduces stress related to self-doubt or fear of failure.	3.04	0.77	Agree	3.70	0.63	Agree
6.	Goal setting empowers students to take charge of their academic journey, countering feelings of helplessness and reducing stress.	3.18	0.82	Agree	3.40	0.49	Agree
7.	Predefined goals streamline decision-making and reduce mental exhaustion from having to constantly choose what to focus on.	3.20	0.67	Agree	3.41	0.54	Agree
8.	When stress arises, students with goals tend to respond with problem-solving rather than avoidance, leading to healthier stress management.	3.19	0.89	Agree	3.04	0.81	Agree
9.	Setting and working toward realistic goals, students develop persistence and coping skills that make them more resilient in the face of setbacks.	3.60	0.56	Agree	2.81	1.05	Agree
Grand Mean		3.20		Agree	3.29		Agree

Table 1 presents the opinion of male and female students on the perceived influence of goal setting on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Based on the criterion mean value of 2.50, the analysis of the mean responses revealed that male and female students agreed that; setting clear goals help students focus on what truly matters, reducing the stress caused by confusion or uncertainty (3.01 & 3.71); goals help divide large tasks into smaller, achievable milestones, making overwhelming workloads feel more manageable and less stressful (2.97 & 3.43); with specific goals, students can plan and prioritize their time effectively, avoiding last-minute rush and deadline anxiety (3.14 & 2.90); setting goals enables students to work towards defined objectives which enhances motivation and lowers stress caused by procrastination (3.45 & 3.19), achieving set goals, builds self-efficacy and reduces stress related

to self-doubt or fear of failure(3.04 & 3.70); goal setting empowers students to take charge of their academic journey, countering feelings of helplessness and reducing stress (3.18 & 3.40); predefined goals streamline decision-making and reduce mental exhaustion from having to constantly choose what to focus on (3.20 & 3.41); when stress arises, students with goals tend to respond with problem-solving rather than avoidance, leading to healthier stress management (3.19 & 3.04); and setting and working toward realistic goals, students develop persistence and coping skills that make them more resilient in the face of setbacks (3.60 & 2.81). The grand mean of 3.20 and 3.29 jointly revealed that majority of the respondents agreed to the items posed in table 1.

Research Question 2: What is the perceived influence of time planning on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean responses on perceived influence of time planning on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Male-192			Female-198		
		Mean	SD	Rmk.	Mean	SD	Rmk.
10.	Proper time planning allows students to spread academic tasks over a specified period, reducing the stress of last-minute rush or deadline panic.	3.11	0.76	Agree	3.23	0.69	Agree
11.	Well-planned schedules enhance consistent study habits, which lead to better understanding and performance thereby helping students feel more confident and less anxious.	3.17	0.60	Agree	3.38	0.78	Agree
12.	Students who plan their time can balance academic demands with social life, family responsibilities, and observe rest, leading to overall stress reduction.	3.35	0.63	Agree	3.39	0.67	Agree
13.	A structured time plan (helps students to avoid procrastination) thereby promoting discipline and routine.	3.22	0.70	Agree	3.53	0.60	Agree
14.	Effective time planning gives students a sense of control over their workload, which reduces feelings of helplessness or overwhelm.	3.63	0.59	Agree	3.65	0.63	Agree
15.	Students who manage time wisely are more likely to maintain consistent sleep schedules, eat well, and exercise; all of which lowers stress levels.	2.89	0.97	Agree	3.41	0.57	Agree
16.	Time planning ensures that students meet academic deadlines without unnecessary pressure or late penalties, reducing stress.	3.01	0.85	Agree	3.06	0.91	Agree
17.	Planned study schedules ensure students can revise gradually before examination, minimizing exam-related anxiety.	3.53	0.59	Agree	3.49	0.59	Agree
18.	Students who plan their time are more focused on achieving short- and long-term academic goals, which boosts motivation and emotional stability.	3.31	0.63	Agree	3.53	0.43	Agree
Grand Mean		3.25		Agree	3.41		Agree

Table 2 presented the mean responses of male and female students on the perceived influence of Time Planning on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. In comparing the item means to the criterion mean, the analysis showed that male and female students agreed that proper time planning allows students to spread academic tasks over a period of time, reducing the stress of last-minute rush or deadline panic (3.11 & 3.23); well-planned schedules support consistent study habits, which lead to better understanding and performance thereby helping students feel more confident and less anxious (3.17 & 3.38); students who plan their time can balance academic demands with social life, family responsibilities, and rest, leading to overall stress reduction (3.35 & 3.39), a structured time plan (helps students avoid procrastination) by promoting discipline and routine (3.22 & 3.53), effective time planning gives students a sense of control over their workload, which reduces feelings of helplessness or overwhelm (3.63 & 3.65), students who manage time wisely are more likely to maintain consistent sleep schedules, eat well, and exercise; all of which lowers stress levels (2.89 & 3.41); time planning ensures that students meet academic deadlines without unnecessary pressure or late penalties, reducing stress (3.01 & 3.06), planned study schedules ensure students can revise gradually before examination thus minimizing exam-related anxiety (3.53 & 3.49) and students who plan their time are more focused on achieving short- and long-term academic goals, which boosts motivation and emotional stability (3.31 & 3.53). The grand mean of 3.25 and 3.41 revealed that majority of respondents agreed to the items posed in table 2.

Research Question 3: What is the perceived influence of restorative practices on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean responses on the perceived influence of restorative practices on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Male-192			Female-198		
		Mean	SD	Rmk.	Mean	SD	Rmk.
19.	Restorative practices such as guided reflection, mindfulness, or journaling help students process negative emotions, reducing mental and emotional stress.	2.81	1.05	Agree	3.34	0.63	Agree
20.	Practices such as peer mediation and restorative dialogue improve communication and resolve conflicts peacefully, reducing relational stress among students.	2.98	0.99	Agree	3.32	0.56	Agree
21.	Restorative circles and open discussions create supportive environments, which help students feel heard, valued, and less isolated, lowering emotional stress.	3.08	0.76	Agree	3.45	0.61	Agree
22.	Integration of calm and reflective moments into study schedules (e.g., meditation, nature walks), enhance focus, reducing time-wasting distractions and stress.	3.10	0.80	Agree	3.60	0.48	Agree
23.	Restorative practices encourage balance between academic work, sleep, meal time and social life hence reducing lifestyle-related stress.	3.34	0.63	Agree	3.06	0.94	Agree

24.	Practices like journaling or deep breathing, when built into study schedules, help students manage emotional reactions, making it easier to stay calm under academic pressure.	3.22	0.61	Agree	3.43	0.63	Agree
25.	Strategically planned recovery periods (e.g., after exams or long study sessions) improve cognitive function and reduce exhaustion thus lowering stress levels.	3.45	0.63	Agree	3.23	0.69	Agree
26.	Allocating time for personal reflection enables students to assess progress, set realistic goals, and adjust priorities, reducing anxiety about lagging behind.	3.50	0.48	Agree	3.11	0.87	Agree
27.	Restorative time management helps students learn when to pause, say no, or reschedule tasks thus preventing overload and academic fatigue.	3.41	0.52	Agree	3.30	0.65	Agree
Grand Mean		3.21		Agree	3.32		Agree

Table 3 showed the mean responses on perceived influence of restorative practices on regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The criterion mean value of 2.50 showed that majority of the respondents indicated "Agree" to the item statements in table 3 with mean values greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. The findings showed that restorative practices such as guided reflection, mindfulness, or journaling help students process negative emotions, reducing mental and emotional stress (2.81 & 3.34); practices such as peer mediation and restorative dialogue improve communication and resolve conflicts peacefully, reducing relational stress among students (2.98 & 3.32), restorative circles and open discussions create supportive environments, which help students feel heard, valued, and less isolated, lowering emotional stress (3.08 & 3.45), integration of calm and reflective moments into study schedules (e.g., meditation, nature walks), enhance focus, reducing time-wasting distractions and stress (3.10 & 3.60); restorative practices encourage balance between academic work, sleep, meals, and social life thus reducing lifestyle-related stress (3.34 & 3.06); practices like journaling or deep breathing, when built into daily schedules, help students manage emotional reactions, making it easier to stay calm under academic pressure (3.22 & 3.43), strategically planned recovery periods (e.g., after examination or long study sessions) improve cognitive function and reduce exhaustion thus lowering stress levels (3.45 & 3.23), allocating time for personal reflection enables students to assess progress, set realistic goals, and adjust priorities, reducing anxiety about lagging behind (3.50 & 3.11) and restorative time management helps students learn when to pause, say no, or reschedule tasks, preventing overload and academic fatigue (3.41 & 3.30). The grand mean values of 3.21 and 3.32 indicates that all the items in table 3 had mean responses above the criterion mean value of 2.50 which shows that respondents agreed to the posed statements.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how goal settings influence the regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 4: z-test analysis of difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how goal settings influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

Students	N	Mean	SD	Df	α	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
Male	192	3.20	0.79	388	0.05	1.19	± 1.96	Accepted
Female	198	3.29	0.70					

The result in Table 4 showed a z-calculated value obtained as 1.19 at 0.05 level of significance and 388 degrees of freedom. Since the z-critical value of ± 1.96 was greater than the z-calculated value, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how goal settings influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

H0₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how time planning influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

Table 5: z-test analysis of difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how time planning influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

Students	N	Mean	SD	Df	α	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
Male	192	3.25	0.70	388	0.05	2.34	± 1.96	Rejected
Female	198	3.41	0.65					

The analysis in Table 5 showed that the z-calculated obtained was 2.34 at 0.05 level of significance and 388 degree of freedom with a critical value of ± 1.96 which was less than the z-calculated value. Since the z-calculated value was greater than the z-critical value, the null hypotheses was rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students how time planning influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

H0₃: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how restorative practices influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 6: z-test analysis of difference between mean responses of male and female students on how restorative practices influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

Students	N	Mean	SD	Df	α	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
Male	192	3.21	0.72	388	0.05	1.562	± 1.96	Accepted
Female	198	3.32	0.67					

The result in Table 6 showed the z-calculated value obtained as 1.56 at 0.05 level of significance and 388 degrees of freedom, with a z-critical value of ± 1.96 which was greater than the z-

calculated value. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted which indicated, no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how restorative practices influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from research question 1 revealed that goal setting influences regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, with grand means of 3.20 and 3.29 for both male and female students. The result of hypothesis 1 also showed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how goal setting influence regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State with a z-calculated value of 1.19 and a z-critical value of ± 1.96 . The finding corroborates with Kim et al. (2021), who stated that, setting clear and attainable goals help reduce stress by breaking overwhelming tasks into manageable steps thus providing a roadmap for action and offering motivation through progress tracking. All of which are critical in reducing feelings of overwhelm and academic burnout. It was reiterated that students who set and work towards personal academic goals are better and able to cope with pressure and maintain psychological balance.

Findings on research question 2, of the study showed that time planning influence regulations of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State with grand mean values of 3.25 and 3.41. Finding on hypothesis 2 showed a significant difference between male and female students on how time planning influence the regulation of students stress levels in tertiary institutions with a z-calculated value of 2.34 which was greater than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 . The findings were in tandem with Aeon and Aguinis (2017), who posited that time planning as a self-regulatory skill, empowers individuals to balance competing demands, maintain work-life harmony and enhance their overall performance and well-being.

Lastly, findings on research question 3 showed that restorative practices greatly influence the regulation of students' stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State with grand mean values of 3.21 and 3.32. The corresponding hypothesis 3 in Table 6 showed a z-calculated value of 1.56 as against a z-critical value of ± 1.96 which indicated no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how restorative practices influence the regulation of students stress levels in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. This finding is consistent with Gregory et al. (2016,) who stated that restorative practices aim to promote relaxation, reduce tension and improve overall well-being of students. By emphasizing emotional expression, active listening and collaborative problem-solving, restorative practices empower students with self-regulation strategies and social-emotional skills essential for coping with pressure and managing mental health.

CONCLUSION

Time management practices such as goal-setting, time planning practice and restorative practices are essential time management practices influence the regulation of stress among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Hence, improving students' time management skills is vital for enhancing their academic performance and mental well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

- Time management workshops should be regularly organized by the Student Affairs Departments to teach goal-setting. This will enable students cultivate the habit of managing their time effectively for reduction of stress levels.
- Academic advisors should integrate time management guidance into routine academic counseling; this will help students make better decisions and plan their time effectively to avoid procrastination, fatigue and low motivation
- School administrators should ensure that restorative practices are encouraged by allocating time for rejuvenation through exercises, peer meditation, and open discussion. This will help students regain focus and refuel their energy.

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