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Research Article

Effect of Financial Stress on Students Academic Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Sokoto State: A Study of Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, Nigeria

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Abstract
The paper examines the effect of financial stress on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Sokoto state, Nigeria with particular reference to Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The research employs survey research design, the study population consists of 197 respondents from the three departments in the Faculty of Management Sciences Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. The sample size of 132 was drawn using the kreije and Morgan (1970) table which were selected using stratified proportionate sampling technique. The data for the study were analyzed using both descriptive statistical methods and the use of correlations and regression analysis to test the hypotheses of the study, facilitated by the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The results reveal that financial stress significantly affects academic performance. Based on the findings, the study recommends the adoption of flexible tuition policies, improved welfare support systems and subsidized academic resources to reduce the adverse effects of financial stress on academic performance.

Keywords: *Financial Stress, Academic Performance, Tuition Fees, Living Expenses, Academic Materials.*

INTRODUCTION
Higher education is widely acknowledged as a vital instrument for human development and national progress, but its accessibility and effectiveness are increasingly undermined by economic challenges. In Nigeria, where many university students come from low- and middle-income households, the rising cost of education poses a significant threat to their overall academic performance. Financial stress has emerged as a major factor affecting students' ability to focus, participate, and excel in their academic endeavors. This stress stems from various sources, notably tuition fees, daily living expenses, and the cost of academic materials. The inability to meet these financial demands contributes to mental strain, academic disengagement and in extreme cases, affects their academic performance. These challenges are particularly evident among students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, where economic hardship is an everyday reality for a large portion of the student population.

One of the most pressing concerns is the burden of tuition fees. While public universities in Nigeria are generally regarded as more affordable than their private counterparts, recurring hikes in tuition and administrative charges have strained students' financial capacity. According to the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) report (2023), the average tuition in Federal universities rose by over 50% between 2020 and 2023, despite no significant increase in government scholarships. Many students now rely on irregular remittances from parents or seek part-time work to pay their fees. This often results in fatigue, divided attention which affects their academic performance. The situation raises the question as to what extent does tuition fees burden affect students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto?

Beyond tuition fees, daily living expenses also contribute heavily to students' financial stress. The rising cost of transportation, food, accommodation and other necessities has made university life increasingly unaffordable. For instance, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024) reported a 34.8% inflation rate in December 2024, with food prices alone rising by over 39.8% year-on-year. These figures translate directly to higher daily expenditures for students.

A bag of rice that cost ₦30,000 in 2022 now sells for over ₦80,000, while transportation fares has doubled due to fuel subsidy removal by the present administration. As a result, students often skip meals, walk long distances, or reside in substandard accommodation to reduce costs. These adjustments, though necessary for survival, significantly impact on students' physical health, concentration, and overall academic performance. Hence, to what extent does daily living expenses influence students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto?

The cost of academic materials further exacerbates the struggle. In an increasingly digital academic environment, students are expected to have access to laptops, Smartphones, internet data, and updated textbooks. However, the cost of these resources remains out of reach for many. A 2023 campus survey by the Centre for Academic Research and Development 2024 (CARD) found out that 58% of undergraduates at public universities in Nigeria could not afford the recommended textbooks for their courses, while 65% reported irregular access to the internet due to high data costs. At Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, where access to university funded materials is limited, students depend heavily on personal resources to meet academic demands. Thus, lack of access to essential learning tools leads to incomplete assignments, poor exam preparation, and reduced participation in academic activities. This raises the question as to what extent does cost of academic materials impact on students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto?

These financial stressors are not abstract as they translate into real academic setbacks. Fatigue, absenteeism, low grades, and emotional distress are increasingly common among financially stressed students. While several studies such as Nasr et al. (2024) and Keykha (2024) have linked economic hardship to declining academic performance, few have focused specifically on how the key components of financial stress such as tuition fees, daily living expenses and academic materials jointly affect university students' academic performance in the Nigerian context. It is against this backdrop that the paper seeks to examine the effect of financial stress on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Sokoto state with particular reference to Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concept of Financial Stress

Financial stress can be described as the psychological and emotional strain individuals experience due to an inability to meet financial obligations, leading to anxiety, sleep disturbances, and reduced academic performance (Harrison & Walker, 2022). Similarly, Roberts and Evans (2021) opined that financial stress is the financial burden caused by insufficient income or financial resources, affecting students' ability to manage essential expenses such as tuition, housing, and daily needs. These definitions emphasized that financial stress not only affects students' financial stability but also has a significant impact on their mental health and academic well-being.

Similarly, Moore et al. (2021) expand on this definition by linking financial stress to poor academic performance, higher dropout rates, and reduced social engagement. They argue that students facing financial hardship often experience economic difficulties that prevent them from affording essential academic materials, such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and digital resources. Connecting these ideas, both definitions suggest that financial stress is not only a financial issue but also a major barrier to academic success, forcing students to adopt coping strategies such as reducing their course loads or seeking external financial support. In addition to these, Nasr et al. (2024) perceived financial stress as the psychological burden students experience when they struggle to meet their financial responsibilities, which negatively affects their mental health, sleep patterns, and overall quality of life.

Tuition Fees Burden

Tuition fees burden is viewed as the financial strain experienced by students and their families due to the cost of higher education, often leading to academic, psychological and social challenges (Johnson, 2023). Similarly, Williams and Parker (2021) described tuition fees burden as the economic pressure that forces students to make difficult choices regarding their education, such as reducing study time, taking on part-time jobs, or even discontinuing their studies. These definitions highlight the financial constraints students face, which not only affect their academic performance but also influence their overall well-being and future career prospects. Furthermore, Keykha (2024) describes that tuition fees burden arises when the cost of education increases faster than family income or inflation, making higher education less accessible to economically disadvantaged students. This results in psychological distress, affecting students' focus, motivation, and long-term educational aspirations.

In addition, Ibironke and Adedugbe (2022) argues that tuition fees burden negatively impacts students' capacity development by reducing financial resources available for essential academic needs, such as books, transportation, and living expenses. This financial pressure often leads to lower academic performance and, in some cases, drives students toward anti-social behaviors as they struggle to cope with the financial demands of their education. Similarly, Bietenbeck et al. (2022) introduce the concept of the "sunk-cost effect," where students facing high tuition fees feel compelled to complete their studies to justify their financial investment. This suggests that while some students may persevere despite financial difficulties, others may experience stress and burnout due to the overwhelming burden of tuition fees. Furthermore, these authors discuss the "zero-price margin," which explains the psychological shift that occurs when students move from free education to a tuition-based system, making them more aware of the financial stakes associated with their education.

Daily Living Expenses

Daily living expenses is described by Smith, (2022) as the financial costs' students incur for essential needs such as food, housing, transportation, and academic materials, which significantly affect their financial stability and well-being. Similarly, Brown and Taylor (2021) describe daily living expenses as routine expenditures required to sustain a student's lifestyle, including personal care, utilities, and social activities, which can create financial stress if income sources are limited. These definitions highlight that daily living expenses encompass both survivals need and the costs necessary for maintaining a functional student life. Furthermore, Lewis (2023) emphasizes that the rising cost of daily living expenses has led to financial hardship, food insecurity, and an increased reliance on credit and part-time work, thereby affecting students' academic and personal well-being.

In addition to these perspectives, Nanai (2020) conceptualizes daily living expenses as a major component of students' financial burden, consisting of essential needs such as food, accommodation, and transportation. The study also highlights that financial instability in covering these costs can lead to high stress levels, reducing students' ability to concentrate on their studies. Likewise, Asiedu (n.d.) expands this concept by including sanitation and hygiene-related expenses, which are vital for students' health and well-being. Both definitions suggest that inadequate financial resources not only disrupt academic performance but also affect students' physical and mental health. Similarly, Al Matalka and Al Dwakat (2022) point out that even scholarship students face financial difficulties in meeting daily living expenses, as scholarship funds often do not cover all necessary costs. This further demonstrates how financial hardship extends beyond tuition fees to influence students' overall quality of life.

Moreover, Tok and Cheah (2024) emphasize that inflation and lifestyle changes, particularly due to digitalization and the pandemic, have caused a sharp rise in daily living expenses. As a result, students must develop financial knowledge and budgeting skills to manage their expenses effectively. Likewise, Norazlan, Yusuf, and Al-Majdhoub (2020) explain that financial constraints force students to prioritize immediate survival needs over long-term academic goals, leading to a decline in academic performance and well-being. These perspectives indicate that students with poor financial management skills may struggle more with daily living expenses, further affecting their educational success. Furthermore, Commons Library (2023) highlights how the rising cost of rent, food, and transportation has led many students to consider dropping out of school, showing that daily living expenses can directly impact students' ability to complete their education.

Cost of Academic Materials

The cost of academic materials can be seen as the financial burden that students bear when acquiring textbooks, digital resources, and other essential learning materials required for their studies, often influencing their ability to access quality education (Johnson, 2022). Similarly, Adams and Wright (2021) describe the cost of academic materials as the total expenditure on educational resources, including laboratory equipment, access codes, and course packs, which can create financial stress and negatively impact students' academic performance. Expanding on these definitions, Lo, Jordan, and Surbaugh (2023) emphasize that students often resort to coping mechanisms such as borrowing, renting, or relying on outdated editions to mitigate these costs, thereby highlighting the financial strain that academic material expenses impose on students.

In addition to these perspectives, Munda and Odebero (2014) define the cost of academic materials as the financial obligation associated with purchasing textbooks, laboratory equipment, and examination fees, which disproportionately affects students from low-income backgrounds. They argue that students who cannot afford these materials often struggle academically due to limited access to essential resources. Likewise, Wittkower and Lo (2020) emphasize that high textbook and course pack costs force students to seek alternative cost-saving strategies, such as relying on library resources or sharing materials with peers. Connecting these ideas, both definitions underscore the reality that the inability to afford academic materials not only places financial pressure on students but also influences their academic behavior and overall performance.

Student Academic Performance

Student academic performance refers to the level of achievement a student attains in their educational pursuits, commonly measured through grades, test scores, and engagement in learning activities. According to Tinto (2017), academic performance is closely linked to student retention, persistence, and the ability to integrate into the educational environment. Similarly, Kuh et al. (2011) define academic performance as the extent to which students meet predefined learning objectives and institutional standards, often assessed through both quantitative and qualitative measures such as grades, standardized tests, and classroom participation. These definitions highlight that academic success is not only about obtaining high marks but also about a student's ability to sustain progress and actively participate in learning.

Moreover, academic performance can be understood as the cumulative outcome of students' engagement with academic activities and their mastery of subject content. York, Gibson, and Rankin (2015) emphasize that student success is determined by both knowledge acquisition and the practical application of skills in real-world situations. Likewise, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) argue that motivation, self-regulation, and perseverance play crucial roles in academic achievement. When students take an active role in setting goals, managing their time effectively, and persisting through challenges, they are more likely to excel. These perspectives suggest that performance should not be measured solely by academic scores but also by students' ability to demonstrate competence and resilience in learning.

In addition, academic performance is influenced by instructional quality and the overall learning environment. Hattie (2009) asserts that high-impact teaching strategies, such as formative assessment and timely feedback, significantly improve student outcomes. Similarly, Zimmerman and Schunk (2011) describe academic performance as a function of self-regulated learning, where students take charge of their own education by setting goals, monitoring progress, and adapting their learning strategies. Both perspectives emphasize that students achieve better academic results when they receive proper guidance from educators and actively engage in their learning process. Therefore, the quality of teaching and students' learning autonomy play critical roles in determining academic success.

Furthermore, socioeconomic factors and institutional support systems significantly affect student academic performance. Sirin (2005) explains that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often face challenges such as limited access to learning resources, financial instability, and lower levels of parental support, which negatively impact their performance. Similarly, Astin (1993) highlights that student involvement in academic and extracurricular activities is a strong predictor of success. His research suggests that students who actively participate in discussions, research projects, and university activities tend to perform better academically. These insights demonstrate that academic success is not solely dependent on individual effort but also on the broader social and institutional environment in which students learn.
Additionally, technological advancements have reshaped how academic performance is assessed and improved. Means et al. (2013) argue that digital learning tools, such as online assessments and virtual classrooms, provide new ways to evaluate student progress. Likewise, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlights that academic performance is not only about earning high grades but also about developing critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and social competencies that prepare students for lifelong learning. Both perspectives emphasize that modern education should focus on developing well-rounded individuals who are equipped with both technical knowledge and the ability to adapt to changing societal needs.

Based on the review, student academic performance can be operationally defined as the extent to which students successfully achieve the learning outcomes set by their respective faculties, measured through continuous assessments, examinations, research projects, active participation in academic and other extracurricular activities.

Empirical Review

Nasr et al. (2024) conducted a study titled the Impact of Financial Stress on Student Well-Being in Lebanese Higher Education in Lebanon, Middle East, Asia. The research investigates how financial stress affects university students' mental health and well-being and is framed within the Financial Distress Model, the study used a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach, surveying 1,272 university students aged 17 and above from private and public universities across Lebanon through convenience sampling. Data was collected using the Financial Distress/Financial Well-Being Scale (IFDFW), Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), Beirut Distress Scale (BDS-10), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), and the Well-Being Index (WHO-5). The study applied descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, including t-tests, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analysis, using SPSS version 25. Findings indicated that financial stress significantly affects students' mental health, with higher financial distress correlating with poorer sleep quality, increased psychological distress, and lower well-being scores. The study recommended expanding financial aid, increasing psychological support services, and developing institutional policies to mitigate the impact of financial stress on students. The study investigates financial stress on mental health while the current will focus on student academic performance at UDUS.

Keykha (2024) evaluated the effects of tuition fees on the academic decisions of master's and Ph.D. students in the management faculties at Tehran University, Iran, which is located in Asia, specifically the Middle East. The study is framed within Human Capital Theory, a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach was used, encompassing a total of 3,392 master's and Ph.D. students from the management faculties during the academic years 2015-2020. Complete census sampling was employed, and data were collected from existing archival records. The study utilized multinomial logistic regression (LR) for statistical analysis, applying SPSS software to assess the impact of independent variables such as age, GPA, course type, marital status, and year on academic decisions, including dropout rates and leaves of absence. Findings revealed that tuition-paying students were significantly more likely to drop out compared to their non-tuition counterparts, with the odds multiplied by a factor of 1.71, while factors such as age and GPA were also found to negatively influence dropout decisions. The study recommended enhancing financial support systems and implementing tuition discounts to mitigate dropout rates. The study focuses on master's and Ph.D. students, ignoring undergraduate students who are more financially vulnerable. The current study will focus on undergraduate students in UDUS.

Tok and Cheah (2024) conducted a study investigating the factors influencing students' cost of living in Malaysian universities, with a focus on various demographic and financial knowledge aspects affecting student expenditures in Malaysia, Southeast Asia. The study is grounded in financial socialization theories, a cross-sectional quantitative design was utilized, collecting primary data through structured questionnaires from 454 respondents selected via a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The questionnaires contained both open-ended and closed-ended items, covering demographics, financial knowledge, and spending behaviors. Ordered regression analysis was employed for data analysis, with computations performed using Stata statistical software. Findings indicated that younger, male, and Chinese students generally spent more on living expenses, while good financial knowledge was associated with lower spending. Peer influence also played a significant role in increasing expenditures among students. The study recommends that policymakers and university authorities implement strategic educational interventions to enhance financial literacy and spending behaviors among students to mitigate the challenges of living costs. The study focuses on financial behaviors of Malaysian students but does not explore how financial stress affects academic performance.

Lewis (2023) conducted the study titled Students and the Rising Cost of Living in the United Kingdom, Western Europe, Europe. The study examines the financial struggles of higher education students due to increased living costs and is framed within Economic Hardship Theory, which suggests that financial stress affects well-being and academic performance. A descriptive research design with a quantitative approach was used, analyzing survey data from the Department for Education and other student financial reports. National student expenditure surveys were used as data collection instruments, and descriptive statistics (percentage distributions, comparisons over time, and expenditure trends) were applied for analysis. The study did not mention the use of specific inferential statistics or software. Findings revealed that student living costs increased by 17% since 2022, with rising rent, food, and transportation costs creating financial difficulties for many students. The study recommends increasing government financial support, reintroducing maintenance grants, adjusting maintenance loans in line with inflation, and expanding hardship funds at universities. This study examines students and rising costs of living but does not talk about its effect on students' academic performance.

Lo, Jordan, and Surbaugh (2023) conducted the study The Cost of Success: Exploring the Impact of Textbook Costs at a Hispanic-Serving R1 Institution in the United States, North America, America. The research investigates the financial burden of textbook costs on students at the University of New Mexico (UNM), a Hispanic-Serving R1 institution. The study is framed within the Cost, Outcome, Usage, and Perceptions (COUP) framework, the research used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, with 5,500 degree-seeking undergraduate students randomly invited to participate, and 341 students responding. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered via Qualtrics. Descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, percentages) and inferential statistics (Chi-square tests at $p < .001$) were used for analysis. The study did not specify statistical software used. The findings revealed that 70% of students found textbook costs unreasonable, leading to financial strain, reduced course loads, and alternative strategies such as renting, sharing, or seeking free digital versions. The study recommends implementing open educational resources (OER), increasing institutional support for textbook affordability, and advocating for policy changes to reduce student financial burdens. The study only focuses on textbook costs and ignores printing and photocopying costs, which are also financial burdens for students, this Study will include an analysis of additional academic material costs such as printing and photocopying, particularly for UDUS students.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory as its theoretical framework. The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, introduced by Hobfoll (1989), provides a relevant framework for understanding how financial stress influences students' academic performance. COR Theory posits that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect resources such as financial stability, emotional well-being, and cognitive capacity because these resources are essential for survival and success. When resources are threatened or lost, individuals experience stress, which can negatively impact their ability to function effectively. In the context of financial stress, the depletion of economic resources limits students' ability to focus on academic responsibilities, thereby affecting their performance.

Several researchers, including Halbesleben et al. (2014), have applied COR Theory to examine how resource loss affects individuals' psychological and behavioral responses in various domains, including education and work. More recent studies, such as those by Ofoegbu (2021) and Ahmed et al. (2023), have used COR Theory to analyze the impact of financial stress on students' academic performance and mental well-being. Their findings indicate that students facing high levels of financial stress struggle with resource conservation, leading to reduced academic focus, lower motivation, and higher dropout rates. According to COR Theory, when students lack financial resources, they must allocate their remaining energy and cognitive resources carefully, often prioritizing immediate survival needs over their academic performance.

At its core, COR Theory assumes that people are motivated to protect their existing resources and acquire new ones whenever possible. It also suggests that resource loss is more impactful than resource gain, meaning that students experiencing financial stress are likely to feel the negative effects more intensely than the positive effects of occasional financial relief. In academic settings, students who struggle with tuition fees, daily living expenses, or the cost of academic materials often experience chronic resource depletion. This, in turn, affects their academic performance, emotional resilience, and ability to engage effectively in their studies. Additionally, COR Theory assumes that individuals who lack sufficient resources are less able to cope with stressors, which may explain why financially stressed students exhibit higher levels of anxiety and lower academic performance compared to their peers with greater financial security.

This study, which investigates the effect of financial stress on students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, is directly informed by COR Theory. The theory provides a framework for understanding how financial stress such as tuition fees, daily living expenses, and the cost of academic materials contribute to resource depletion among students. For instance, students who struggle to afford academic materials may experience heightened stress (a resource loss), which subsequently reduces their ability to concentrate on their studies. Similarly, those burdened by tuition fees may be forced to take on part-time jobs, further draining their time and cognitive resources. According to COR Theory, if students perceive a continuous loss of financial resources without sufficient compensation such as scholarships, family support, or financial aid, their academic performance is likely to decline due to the cumulative stress on their mental and emotional well-being.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts survey research design and quantitative approach. The reason for selecting survey is due to its effectiveness in collecting data from respondents who are representative of the target population. Furthermore, quantitative approach in this study was chosen based on its suitability for describing and gathering respondents' opinions about the research phenomenon without manipulating any variables using questionnaire. It also ensures objectivity and minimizes biases.

The study population is divided into the target and accessible populations. The target population comprises all undergraduate students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto (UDUS) across various faculties and departments. However, due to the large and dispersed nature of this population, it is neither practical nor feasible to study the entire students. Therefore, the accessible population is limited specifically to 400-level students of the Faculty of Management Sciences, cut across the departments of Public Administration, Business Administration, and Accounting department.

The choice of the Faculty of Management Sciences is based on the direct relevance of its academic disciplines to the focus of the study, which is the effect of financial stress on students' academic performance. Students within this faculty are more likely to possess foundational knowledge in finance, budgeting, and economic decision-making, making them more capable of articulating how financial stress affects their academic performance. Furthermore, the selection of 400-level students is justified by their prolonged exposure to university life, which allows them to provide informed and reflective insights based on their cumulative experiences. These students have encountered multiple academic sessions, tuition fee adjustments, fluctuations in the cost of living, and challenges related to academic materials and accommodation, making their input particularly valuable for a study of this nature.

The total accessible population consists of one hundred and ninety-seven (197) students, from the three departments mentioned above. The table below provides a detailed breakdown of the population per department.

Table 1: Population Distributions

S/n	Department	Population
1	Accounting department	82
2	Business administration department	61
3	Public administration department	54
	Total	**197**

Source: University Faculty Office 2025.

The table above indicates the student's population from the three departments: Accounting Department has a total of eighty-two (82) students, Business Administration Department has sixty-one (61) students, and Public Administration Department has a total number of fifty-four (54) students. Together, all the departments have a total number of 197 students. This implies that each department has a reasonable number to be selected as a representation in sampling. Based on the population of this study which is 197, the sample size to be used is 132. This size is determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) size determinant table. The table was chosen because it is widely regarded for its ability to minimize sampling error (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

This study employed both stratified proportionate and simple random sampling techniques to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample. Stratified sampling, as described by Sekaran and Bougie (2013), involves dividing the population into distinct strata and then randomly selecting samples from each stratum. This method is particularly effective when the population has diverse characteristics and is segmented into various groups or categories.

Therefore, based on the conditions above, stratified sampling was chosen because the study population at faculty of management science consists of various departments (Accounting Department, Business Administration Department and Public Administration Department) each with unique characteristics such as skills, study area, behaviour and from different family status. These departments, while studying within the same faculty, have different attributes and thus require proportional representation. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to ensure that each group was accurately represented, reducing sampling error.

In addition to stratified sampling, simple random sampling was also employed to provide each respondent from the three strata in all the departments has an equal chance of being selected. Further details of the sampling procedure are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Proportionate Sample Size Distribution among Department

Departments	Population	Percentage	Stratum	Proportionate Sample Size
Accounting	82	82/197×100= 41.6%	41.6/100×132	55
Business Admin	61	61/197×100= 30.9%	30.9/100×132	41
Public Admin	54	54/197×100=27.5%	27.5/100×132	**36**
TOTAL	**197**	**100%**		**132**

Source: Developed for the study, 2025

Table 2 above provides a detailed breakdown of the sampling distribution across all the three department. Accounting, representing 41.6% of the total population (82students), contributed 55 respondents to the sample. Business administration constituted 30.9% of the population (61students) and accounted for 41 respondents and public administration represented 27.5% of the population (54students) with 36 respondents. Furthermore, within each stratum, respondents were then randomly selected within each group using simple random sampling technique with the help of random number generators in excel through the use of students list obtained from the class representatives. This method ensures a fair and unbiased representation of selected respondents, thereby providing robust and reliable insights into the effect of financial stress on student's academic performance.

This study employs primary data collection methods. Primary data was collected using an online questionnaire through Google form and self-administered questionnaire, which allows respondents to provide information directly, ensuring active participation. The two method of administering questionnaires were chosen for their cost-effectiveness and higher response rates, making them well-suited for this research context (Hair et al., 2007). The data for the study will be analyzed using both descriptive statistical methods, facilitated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), while the research will use correlations and regression analysis to test the hypotheses of the study.

RESULT AND FINDINGS

This section presents the response rate for the data collected during the study. It includes details on the distribution, retrieval, and validation of the questionnaires, which are crucial for understanding the completeness and reliability of the dataset. The details are presented as thus, out of the 132 questionnaires distributed, 123 were returned, 9 questionnaires were not filled, maintaining the number of usable questionnaires at 123. This gives a usable response rate of 93%, indicating a strong level of participation, with the majority of respondents providing complete and valid data for analysis. This high response rate suggests the data is reliable for drawing meaningful insights.

Table 3: Distribution of Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	100	81.3%
	Female	23	18.7%
	Total	**123**	**100%**
Age	20-34 years	110	89.4%
	35-44 years	10	8.1%
	45-54 years	3	2.4%
	Total	**81**	**100%**
Marital Status	Single	101	82.1%
	Married	22	17.9%
	Total	**123**	**100%**
Department	Accounting	52	42.5%
	Business Admin	39	31.6%
	Public Admin	32	25.9%
	Total	**123**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The demographic profile shows that majority of the respondents are male (81.3%), with most falling in the 20-34 age range (89.4%). In terms of marital status, 82.1% are single and the most represented department is Accounting (42.5%). This demographic composition indicates a predominantly young, male, and single sample, with a strong representation from the Accounting department, which may influence the perspectives captured in the study.

Data Analysis

This presents the analysis of the data collected from the respondents in the Faculty of Management Sciences at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The analysis is based on responses obtained through structured questionnaires administered to students across the departments of Public Administration, Accounting, and Business Administration. The data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), employing both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions and percentages are used to summarize demographic data, while inferential statistics including Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis is employed to test the research hypotheses and examine the relationship between financial stress variables tuition fees, daily living expenses, and academic materials as well as the students' academic performance.

Hypotheses Testing

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) analysis is used to test the hypotheses.

Hypothesis One

H_{O1}: There is no significant relationship between increase in tuition fees and students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

Table 4 Correlations

		Tuition fees	Academic Performance
Tuition Fees	Pearson Correlation	1	-.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	123	123
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.282**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	123	123

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 reveals a significant relationship between the increase in tuition fees and students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.282, coupled with a significance value of 0.002, which is well below the critical p-value threshold of 0.05, indicates that the observed negative correlation is statistically significant. This means that as tuition fees increase, students' academic performance tends to decrease. The implication is that rising tuition costs may impose additional financial burdens on students, which can translate into stress, reduced access to learning materials, and increased time spent on income-generating activities instead of academic pursuits. Although the strength of the correlation is moderate, the data clearly reject the null hypothesis (HO1) that there is no significant relationship between tuition fee increases and academic performance. Therefore, the findings highlight the importance of addressing tuition affordability to promote better academic outcomes and support student success at the university.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between increase in daily living expenses and students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

Table 5 Correlations

		Daily living expenses	Academic Performance
Daily living expenses	Pearson Correlation	1	-.340**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	123	123
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.340**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	123	123

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Table 5 reveals a notable and statistically significant negative relationship between the increase in daily living expenses and students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. With a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.340 and a significance level of 0.000, which is far below the 0.05 threshold, the data confidently reject the null hypothesis (HO2) that there is no significant relationship between these variables. This strong negative correlation suggests that as students face rising daily living costs—such as accommodation, transportation, and food—their academic performance is adversely affected. The increasing financial strain may divert their attention and resources away from academic commitments, leading to decreased focus, higher stress levels, and potential inability to afford essential study materials or support services. The evidence underscores how economic pressures extend beyond tuition fees alone and play a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes. Therefore, addressing the burden of daily expenses is imperative for universities aiming to foster an environment where students can excel academically without being hindered by financial hardship.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between the increase cost of academic materials and students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

Table 6 Correlations

		Costs of Academic Materials	Academic Performance
Costs of academic materials	Pearson Correlation	1	-.361**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	123	123
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.361**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	123	123

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Table 6 reveals a significant relationship between the increase in the cost of academic materials and students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.361 and a significance level of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. This negative correlation suggests that as the costs of essential academic materials rise, students' academic performance tends to decline. However, this relationship should be approached with caution, as the moderate strength indicates that other factors also contribute to academic success. The rising expenses for textbooks, stationery, and digital resources may impose financial stress on students, potentially limiting their access to necessary learning tools and thus negatively impacting their studies. Alternatively, this pattern could reflect that students facing greater financial burdens might struggle to maintain consistent academic engagement. These findings reject the null hypothesis (Ho3) that there is no significant relationship between the cost of academic materials and academic performance, highlighting the need for interventions that ease financial barriers related to academic resources to support student achievement.

Summary of Findings

This section presents the key results derived from the analysis of the relationship between financial stress factors—tuition fees, daily living expenses, and academic material costs—and students' academic performance at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The findings reveal important insights into how these financial variables influence educational outcomes.

1. **The Impact of Increasing Tuition Fees on Academic Performance**
   The study found a statistically significant negative relationship between rising tuition fees and students' academic performance ($r = -0.282$, $p = 0.002$). This suggests that as tuition fees increase, students tend to experience a decline in academic achievement. The additional financial burden imposed by higher tuition fees likely exacerbates stress levels and may force students to divert time and resources from their studies to income-generating activities or coping mechanisms.
2. **Effect of Rising Daily Living Expenses on Academic Performance:**
   A strong and statistically significant negative correlation was observed between increases in daily living costs and academic performance ($r = -0.340$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that escalating expenses for essentials such as accommodation, transportation, and food negatively impact students' ability to concentrate and perform well academically. The financial strain may disrupt students' daily routines, reduce access to supportive services, and heighten psychological stress, all of which contribute to poorer academic outcomes.
3. **Relationship Between Increasing Academic Material Costs and Academic Performance:**
   The analysis also revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between the cost of academic materials and students' academic performance ($r = -0.361$, $p < 0.001$). Although this relationship is moderate in strength, it highlights how increased costs for textbooks, stationery, and other educational resources restrict students' access to essential learning tools. This limitation can adversely affect students' preparation, comprehension, and overall performance.

Conclusions

This study establishes that financial stressors namely the increase in tuition fees, daily living expenses and the cost of academic materials have a statistically significant negative effects on the academic performance of students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria. The correlations underscore the complex challenges students faced as they navigate the financial demands of higher education. The findings highlight that financial burdens do not merely affect students' ability to pay for their education but extend deeply into their academic engagement, mental well-being and access to necessary resources. Consequently, these financial pressures serve as critical impediments to optimal learning and achievement. Addressing these multifaceted financial challenges requires coordinated efforts from university management, policymakers and stakeholders to design holistic interventions that not only ease immediate financial stress but also foster long-term academic success and equity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the paper recommends as follows:

1. Based on the negative effect of rising tuition fees on academic performance, the university management should expand financial aid programs, including scholarships and fee waivers. By alleviating the direct cost burden, these measures will reduce students' financial anxiety, enabling them to focus more fully on their studies and will at the end improve educational outcomes.
2. Considering the strong adverse effect of daily living costs on academic performance, the university authority should collaborate with private sector to provides affordable accommodation and transportation services to students. Implementing subsidized accommodation on campus will directly reduce daily financial pressures, helping students maintain stable routines and concentrate on academic pursuit.
3. The negative correlation between higher costs of academic material and student performance calls for strategies to make essential learning resources more accessible. The university authority should invest in expanding library, providing digital textbooks.

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