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Assessing Stress Levels and Coping Strategies in the New Normal among Students of Magsaysay College

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to assess stress levels and analyze coping strategies among Magsaysay College students. Utilizing a descriptive correlational research design, the study explored the relationship between students' demographic profiles, including age, gender, marital status, year level, family income, and reported stress levels. It also examined the correlation between stress levels and the use of coping strategies. The research concluded that demographic factors do not have a significant impact on stress levels among students and that stress is a ubiquitous challenge for students across different backgrounds. Interestingly, there is a slight negative correlation between family income and stress levels among students; this relationship is not statistically significant. This suggests that students show resilience and do not let the challenges of lower family income escalate their stress levels appreciably. A positive correlation was identified between stress levels and the employment of coping strategies, indicating that students tend to rely more on coping mechanisms as stress levels increase. It was recommended that Magsaysay College's Guidance Center enhance its mental health support services by providing more resources, educational programs, and online counseling on effective coping strategies. Local Government Unit (LGU) of Magsaysay and other stakeholders are advised to collaborate community-based support programs and invest in mental health initiatives to bolster the well-being of the students. Such collaborative efforts could significantly contribute to a more supportive learning environment, fostering students' academic success and personal growth.

KEYWORDS

Stress levels, coping strategies, student well-being, mental health, descriptive correlational design, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The transition to 'new normal' educational settings, primarily characterized by online learning and pandemic-related stressors, has led to an increased need to understand the stress levels among students and the coping strategies they employ. College life is a pivotal time when students encounter numerous stressors and develop coping strategies to navigate their academic and personal lives (Mulaudzi, 2023). Understanding students' stress levels and coping strategies is crucial for fostering an environment that promotes mental well-being and academic success (Hammoudi Halat et al., 2023). Students report moderate to high-stress levels attributed to academic pressures, future uncertainties, and financial difficulties (Yang & Yang, 2022).

In addition, coping strategies can significantly mediate the relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being (Asturias et al., 2021). Gustems-Carnicer et al. (2019) suggest that coping partially mediates stress and well-being among teacher-education students, using avoidance-type strategies potentially leading to adaptive difficulties. Stress levels can influence academic performance, and students' coping strategies are diverse and complex (Freire et al., 2020; Shdaifat et al., 2018).

Studies such as Philips (2023) highlighted the differences in stress and coping strategies among students from different countries, suggesting that cultural context might influence the effectiveness of coping mechanisms. Further research could delve into culturally tailored coping strategies and their effectiveness in reducing stress in diverse student populations. Given the dynamic and demanding nature of academic environments, assessing the specific stressors and coping strategies employed by students at Magsaysay College is imperative. This understanding can inform targeted interventions and support systems that address the unique needs of the student body, ultimately contributing to their well-being and educational attainment.

In this study, the researchers aim to assess the stress levels and coping strategies among students at Magsaysay College, drawing insights from recent literature to guide our investigation and interventions to promote a supportive learning environment.

FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984). This model posits that stress is a transaction between an individual and the environment and is mediated by appraisal and coping. Applying Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Scott, 2012) to students' experiences, it becomes clear that stress is not just about the challenges faced in the realms of academia, finance, and social life but also how students perceive and respond to these challenges. Academic stress, for instance, emerges when students view their coursework and deadlines as exceeding their coping abilities. Through secondary appraisal, they may employ time management skills and mindfulness techniques to regain control and mitigate stress. Financial stress, too, is significant in students' lives, often appraised as a threat when the cost of education and living expenses seem insurmountable. Adaptive strategies like seeking support systems and carefully budgeting can transform financial challenges into manageable tasks, thereby reducing stress levels. On the other hand, maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance can exacerbate financial worries in the long run.

Social stress, exacerbated in the new normal by reduced physical contact, can lead to feelings of isolation. However, the model suggests that by appraising their available social resources, students can activate their support systems—relying on friends, family, or counseling services—to navigate these turbulent times. Additionally, relaxation techniques and mindfulness can serve as personal coping resources to manage the emotional toll of social stress. Overall, the model underscores the importance of perception and action, illustrating

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