Academic Stress and coping Strategies of Filipino College Students in private and public universities in Central Luzon

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Abstract— *This study explored the academic stress and coping mechanisms of three hundred eighty-two (382) college students from public and private universities in Central Luzon, Philippines using descriptive research design. Results showed that major contributors to the respondents' stress were from teachers, completion of requirements and peers who commit cheating. They felt academically stressed and experience sleeping problems low self-confidence and moodiness. Respondents coped with stress through spirituality, one of the prominent traits of Filipinos. The study highlights the need to comply with the mental health protocol and to create avenues to attain well-being for students with varying interests.*

Keywords — *Academic stress, coping mechanism, mental health, stress, stress management.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Students pursuing college degrees are undeniably confronted by many challenges and problems. Everyone can attest that college life is difficult. It presents the first real challenge to students' academic motivations and skills. Moreover, college is a stage where students face a myriad of pressures and challenges in the academic environment as they seek to maintain optimal performances or even to remain in the academic program.

For some individuals, college is a high point in their lives where they look forward to it enjoy it and carry pleasant memories when they graduate. Along with these unforgettable memories are experiences filled with anxiety, doubt and struggle [1].

Finishing college education nowadays is very challenging. These challenges come in the form of problems and difficulties that students need to overcome in order for them to finish college. Identifying these problems provides information on improving the student guidance and counseling services of the school. It helps students handle the challenges of academic life, thus giving them a better chance to survive and finish college [2].

The causes and levels of stress may vary from one person to the other. No person is free from stress, regardless of how privileged, reasonable, clever, and intelligent he may be.

Every person will be challenged at times by frustrations, losses, changes and conflicts [3].

Academic stress is commonly experienced by college students. There are many stressors within academic life such as academic demands and achievements from parents, a personal inclination for academic self-actualization, amount of assignments, conflict with a classmate and final writing assignments (thesis), and so on. Earning high grades is a source of stress that affects them to succeed in making good impressions to their parents, classmates and significant other people. Failures become pressures that come from intrapersonal, interpersonal, academic and environmental stressors [2]. Since not all students have the ability to cope with the above-mentioned stressors, consequently they experience academic stress.

With the help of family, friends, and perhaps campus stress-management resources, many students are able to keep their stress levels relatively under control or even thrive in the college setting. However, for some students, the challenges and frustrations of campus life appear to lead to severe emotional problems.

The present generation of graduating college students belongs to the most time-pressed generation in history. With this, the need for research concerning stress experience is deemed necessary. Stress management was developed and premised on the idea that stress is not a direct response to a

stressor but rather one's resources and ability to cope mediate the stress response and are amenable to change, thus allowing stress to be controllable, thus, this study finds meaning and significance.It sought to present the academic stress management of Filipino college students in private and public universities in Central Luzon. It specifically focuses on the causes, effects of academic stress and the coping mechanisms of students in different universities taking up different bachelor degree courses.

II.   METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the descriptive research design in determining the challenges encountered by the respondents. According to [4], as cited by the authors in [5], "descriptive research systematically describes a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or program, attitude toward an issue or simply, it provides information on a subject". The researcher used a questionnaire because it is most frequently a very concise, pre-planned set of questions designed to yield specific information to meet a particular need for research information about a pertinent topic. The research information is attained from respondents normally from a related interest area, easy to tabulate and interpret. The study was conducted in public and private universities in Central Luzon, Philippines. The respondents of the study who were chosen purposively [6] were from public and private universities in Central Luzon, Philippines.This study was delimited into 382 students in public and private universities in Central Luzon Philippines as the respondents.

III.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1. Causes of Academic Stress
1.1 Teacher Related Academic Stress

Table 1. Teacher Related Academic Stress

Teacher-related	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Difficult to deal with teachers	3.35	Moderate likely cause of stress
2. Unfair treatment of teacher (favoritism)	3.23	Moderate likely cause of stress
3. Teachers absenteeism	3.17	Moderate likely cause of stress
4. Unapproachable teachers	3.07	Moderate likely cause of stress
5. Inconsiderate teachers	3.32	Moderate likely cause of stress
Average Weighted Mean	**3.23**	**Moderate likely cause of stress**

It may be gleaned on the table that the teacher-related academic stress of the respondents. Statement 1 "Difficult to deal with teachers" obtained the highest weighted mean of (3.35) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress" while statement 4 "Unapproachable teachers" obtained the lowest weighted mean of (3.07) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress". The average weighted mean of the table is (3.23) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress".

This shows that the respondents have difficulty dealing with teachers which caused academic stress to the students which might affect their academic performance.

1.2 Subject-Related Academic Stress

Table 2. Subject-Related Academic Stress

Subject-Related	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Poor interest in hard subjects	3.23	Moderate likely cause of stress
2. Examination results	3.47	Likely cause of stress
3. Requirements completion	3.68	Likely cause of stress
4. Early schedule	3.42	Likely cause of stress
5. Understanding the subject matter.	3.67	Likely cause of stress
Average Weighted Mean	**3.49**	**Likely cause of stress**

It is clearly shown in Table 2 the subject-related academic stress of the respondents. Statement 3 "Requirements completion" got the highest weighted mean of (3.68) with a verbal interpretation of "Likely cause of stress" while statement 1 "Poor interest in hard subjects" got the lowest weighted mean of (3.23) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress". The average weighted mean of the table is (3.49) with a verbal interpretation of "Likely cause of stress". This implies that subject-related academic stress can be a contributory factor to students' stress levels which can lead to absenteeism or feelings of hopelessness that interfere with effective study habits and then further weaken academic achievement. The authors in [7] made a conclusion that "academic stress not only impedes academic performance but also an adjustment to a greater extent"

1.3 Classmate-Related Academic Stress

Table 3. Classmate-Related Academic Stress

Classmate-related	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Uncooperative	3.37	Moderate likely cause of stress
2. Competitive classmates	3.22	Moderate likely cause of stress
3. Bully classmates	3.37	Moderate likely cause of stress
4. Cheaters	3.58	Likely cause of stress
5. Poor relationship	3.22	Moderate likely cause of stress
Average Weighted Mean	**3.35**	**Moderate Likely cause of stress**

Table 3 presents the classmate-related academic stress of the respondents. Statement 4 "Cheaters" earned the highest weighted mean of (3.58) with a verbal interpretation of "Likely cause of stress" while statement 2 "Competitive classmates" and statement 5 "Poor relationship" both earned the lowest weighted mean of (3.22) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate Likely cause of stress". The average weighted mean of the table is (3.35) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate Likely cause of stress'. This implies that students often face pressure from their classmates to experiment with potentially harmful behaviors.

2. Effects of Academic Stress
2.1 Physical Effects of Academic Stress

Table 4. Physical Effects of Academic Stress

Physical	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Body pains/fatigue	3.27	Moderate likely cause of stress
2. Lack of appetite	3.18	Moderate Likely cause of stress
3. Physically weak	3.10	Moderate Likely cause of stress
4. Gained/ lost weight.	3.10	Moderate Likely cause of stress
5. Tired and sleeping more/ less	3.60	Likely cause of stress
Average Weighted Mean	**3.25**	**Moderate likely cause of stress**

It is presented in Table 4 the physical effects of academic stress on the respondents. Statement 5 "Tired and sleeping

more or less" gained the highest weighted mean of (3.60) with a verbal interpretation of "Likely cause of stress" while statement 3 "Physically weak" and statement 4 "Gained or lost weight" both gained the lowest weighted mean of (3.10) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress". The average weighted mean of the table is (3.25) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress".

This indicates that students who are tired or do not feel well because of the physical effects of academic stress will find that their performance or attendance in class suffers.

According to [8]"headache, excess perspiration, and fatigue were the most common symptoms of stress experienced by students in terms of physical stress while negative thinking, tension, and feeling of failure are the most commonly encountered in terms of behavioral stress. As academic activities become tougher, the higher stress levels become and different coping mechanisms are applied".

2.2 Psychological Effects of Academic Stress

Table 5. Psychological Effects of Academic Stress

Psychological	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Paranoid	2.98	Moderate likely cause of stress
2. Low morale	3.05	Moderate Likely cause of stress
3. Absent-minded/forgetful	3.07	Moderate Likely cause of stress
4. Self-confidence	3.18	Moderate Likely cause of stress
5. Unmotivated	3.07	Moderate Likely cause of stress
Average Weighted Mean	**3.07**	**Moderate Likely cause of stress**

It is shown on the table above the psychological effects of academic stress on the respondents. Statement 4 "Self-confidence" obtained the highest weighted mean of (3.18) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress" while statement 1 "Paranoid" obtained the lowest weighted mean of (2.98) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress". The average weighted mean of the table is (3.07) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderately Agree".This implies that students having low morale and unmotivated cannot concentrate well in their studies which may affect their academic performance.

2.3 Emotional Effects of Academic Stress

Table 6. Emotional Effects of Academic Stress

Emotional	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Moody	3.53	Likely cause of stress
2. Sensitive	3.27	Likely cause of stress
3. Depressed	3.40	Likely cause of stress
4. Irritable	3.12	Moderate Likely cause of stress
5. Insecure	2.97	Moderate Likely cause of stress
Average Weighted Mean	**3.26**	**Moderate likely cause of stress**

Table 6 shows the emotional effects of academic stress on the respondents. Statement 1 "Moody' gained the highest weighted mean of (3.53) with a verbal interpretation of "Likely cause of stress" while statement 5 "Insecure" gained the lowest weighted mean of (2.97) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderately Agree". The average weighted mean of the table is (3.26) with a verbal interpretation of "Moderate likely cause of stress".

This shows that having emotional academic stress may not only affect the student itself but it can also affect the people around them because of their becoming moody, sensitive, depressed, irritable and insecure. The authors in [9] said that "stress reactions to various situations affect the overall level of a person's health. One that they felt is always overwhelmed while they eat poorly, sleepless and overwhelmed with stressful events". All the presented literature and studies that deal with stress related to the present study in terms of the feelings and emotions of college students about stressors and the result of these factors affecting them especially in family and peer relationships, while meeting the demands of school related works.

3. Coping Mechanisms

Table 7. Coping Mechanisms

Coping Mechanisms	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Go out with friends	3.60	Likely cause of stress
2. Ask the advice of friends/classmates/family	3.53	Likely cause of stress
3. Keep self-busy	3.60	Likely cause of stress
4. Watching movies and other programs on television	3.41	Likely cause of stress
5. Engaging in sports	3.43	Likely cause of stress
6. Using the internet (chat, Facebook, etc.) and playing online games	3.42	Likely cause of stress
7. Limiting your contact to the source of stress	3.58	Likely cause of stress
8. Go out of town to unwind	3.40	Likely cause of stress
9. Be more spiritual	3.67	Likely cause of stress
10. Get some rest	3.63	Likely cause of stress
Average Weighted Mean	**3.53**	**Likely cause of stress**

Table 7 presents the coping mechanisms of the respondents. The statement "Be more spiritual" got a highest weighted mean of (3.67) with a verbal interpretation of "Likely cause of stress" while statement 8 "Go out of town to unwind" got the lowest weighted mean of (3.40) with a verbal interpretation of "Likely cause of stress". The average weighted mean of the table is (3.53) with a verbal interpretation of "Likely cause of stress". This implies that students can overcome whatever trial that God put in their way, how they perceived the problems within their reach or way beyond their control is also a factor on how they can cope with the stress they experienced.When under stress, individuals employ coping responses to either change the nature of the situation to make it more manageable or to reduce their negative effect [10].

IV.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: As to the causes of academic stress, the majority of the students are having difficulty in dealing with teachers, requirements completion, and having cheater classmates. The

students agreed that because of academic stress, they were tired and sleeping more or less which affects their self-confidence and they are being moody. Furthermore, respondents agreed that to cope with academic stress they choose to be more spiritual.

Based on the findings, proper utilization of coping mechanisms can be designed to help students to manage their stress and be competent enough in their academic performance. The teachers may support the students all the time to establish a harmonious and professional relationship with them. Discussion for the most practical adaptation to prevent the existence of the excessive amount of stress in the students should be conducted to train the learners for increasing their analytical skills in situational settings by solving both complex and simple problems [11]. Furthermore, the most possible activities should be given to decrease the strength of stressors that could effect on the physical, psychological and mental behavior of the students. Lastly, a follow-up study on the stress factors and academic performance of the college students may be conducted for a broader and deeper understanding of the problem.

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