



## PERCEIVED STRESS LEVEL OF COLLEGE STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to find out the stress level of college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. It sought to determine the profile of the students-respondents in terms of their age, sex, and college where they were enrolled. It also aimed to look into the causes of stress and the coping strategies used by the respondents. The study was conducted during the first semester of the school year 2021-2022 and employed the descriptive survey method of research. A survey questionnaire through messenger was used in gathering the data. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents belonged to age bracket of 17-18 (68.42%), dominated by females (92.48%), from the college of business administration (34.59%). Study revealed that students stress level reached the critical stage. The causes of respondents' stress was due to school works, deadline, and being under pressure. The coping strategies used by the respondents was through connecting with family and friends, listening to music, and prayers.*

**Keywords:** Stress level, causes of stress, covid-19 pandemic, coping strategies

### Introduction

Life is full of challenges and stress is one of those challenges that human being can never escape. Experience proved that stress is inevitable and everybody experience stress men and women, rich and poor, young and old.

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes an individual frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is the body's reaction to a challenge or demand. Therefore, stress can be positive such as when it helps to avoid danger or meet a deadline. However, stress can also be negative when it lasts for a long time because it may harm an individual's health.

People experience different intensity of stress. The level of stress on an individual depends on how the person will handle and react to a particular stressor. Most of the stressor people face in work, school, finances, and relationships are part of everyday life.

Like any other individual, college students experience different stress. Causes of their stress may vary from every individual as to their particular situation during their journey in studying. In that sense, they may also use different coping strategies that would best suit to the stress they experienced and they are capable in order to eliminate stress. The

occurrence of pandemic would probably worsen and complicate the level of stress experienced by students since face-to-face learning activities were not allowed. It should be noted that covid-19 pandemic is a major stressor that has led to a mental health crisis. (American Psychology Association, 2020; Dong and Bouey, 2020)

For college students, COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant changes and disruptions to daily life, elevated stress level, and mental physical health deterioration (American Psychology Association 2020; Husky et al. 2020).

The stress experienced by the student is seen as an important predictor of their motivational state of burnout/engagement. (Salanova et al 2010)

For the above reasons, it was the primary concern of this study to find out the stress level of college students during the covid-19 pandemic.

### Objective of the Study

Specifically, this study aimed to (1) find out the stress level of college students during pandemic, (2) determine the causes of stress that college students experience and (3) identify the coping strategies students used in addressing their stress.

### Methodology

This study was conducted in the University of Eastern Philippine's main campus during the first semester of school year 2021-2022. The respondents of this study involved 266 first-year college students enrolled in Physical Education subject. A descriptive survey method of research which was designed to gather, tabulate analyze, and interpret data was utilized.

### Results and Discussion

This simple study revealed that majority of the respondents belonged to age bracket of 17-18 (68.42%), dominated by females (92.48%), from the college of business administration (34.59%). On the level of experienced by the respondents, the study revealed that 28 (10.53%) of respondents experienced normal stress level and another 28 (10.53%) experienced serious stress, 34 (12.78%) experienced severe level and 176 (66.16%) experienced critical level of stress.

The fact that these students just stayed home while studying, makes it different from normal setup of learning and thus, it added to the stress experienced by them. When stress is experienced too strongly or too frequently, it is likely to harm the organism. (Epel et al. 2018).

Soliman (2014) argue that high level of stress do not only lead to anxiety and loss of objectivity but could also lead to increased incidence of errors and improper behavior such as cheating in examination, fraud and negligence.

Stress experienced by college students is multi-factorial and can be attributed to a variety of contributing factors (Reddy et al. 2018)

According to Pariat et al. (2014), the negative effects of stress can cause headache, sleep problems, anxiety, restlessness, sadness, drinking problem, falling into depression, and many other health problems.

**Table 1.** Stress Level of College Students During COVID-19 Pandemic

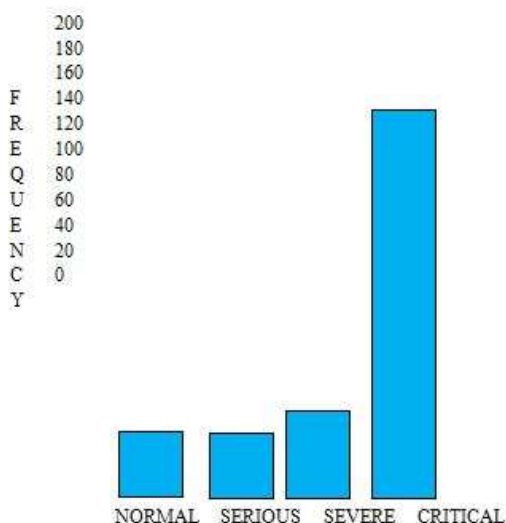


Table 2 discloses the causes of stress to college students during covid-19 pandemic. The result implied that school works and related activities are the main causes of stress followed by being under pressure and personal and family problems. The results of this study was similar to the study of Al-Dubai et al (2011) which revealed that worries of the future, financial difficulties, and academic life were the most common stressors among medical students.

Likewise, causes of stress to college students may be caused by failure in academic work, financial problems, health problems, loss of a family member or friend, and other social problems (Smith, Rosenberg, and Timothy Haight, 2014)

Another factor that contributed to the stress of students can be attributed to poor internet connectivity to distance learning. Zhang et.al highlighted that inadequate network access and unawareness of online platforms like Zoom was discovered to be the main obstacles and interruptions experienced by respondents.

**Table 2.** Causes of Stress to College Students During COVID-19 Pandemic

Causes of Stress	Frequency	Rank	Percentage
Household work and responsibilities	30	6	11.28
Personal and Family Problems	50	3	18.79
Financial Problems	22	7	8.27
Death of Loved Ones	4	12	1.5
Noisy Environment	16	8	6.02
Poor Sleep	7	10	2.63
Failure of Plans	8	9	3.00
Health Problems	5	11	1.87
Under Pressure	68	2	25.56
Worrying things	48	4	18.04
Social works and related Activities	152	1	57.14
Poor Internet Connectivity	36	5	13.53

The result in table 3 revealed that the coping strategies of students during COVID-19 pandemic was connecting with their families and friends. It was followed by taking a time out like (music, dance) and prayers. This result was similar to Chao's findings (2012) that social support such as seeking support from families and friends naturally help to manage stress.

Coping strategies to reduce stress is a necessary condition for preventing the harmful effects of prolonged stress (William et. al. 2010)

Pariat and colleagues (2014) in their findings, made a conclusion that those students with good coping skills tend to have a low psychological problems and those who do not have healthy coping strategies are more likely to have a great risk

of health problems or even antisocial behaviours. In such cases, students might develop issues with anxiety, stress overload, depression, and social conflicts.

Filipinos are religious in nature. Thus, the result of this study is similar to the study of Kwaah and Essilfie that students used multiple strategies, mainly praying, meditating, self distracting activities such as watching TV and listening to music to cope up with stress.

**Table 3.** Stress Coping Strategies During COVID-19 Pandemic

Strategies	Frequency	Rank
Take a Time Out (music, dance, relax)	32	2
Eat well-balanced meals	11	11
Get enough Sleep	12	9.5
Exercise daily	13	8
Take a Deep Breath	16	7
Mobile Games	2	16
Welcome Humor	3	15
Positive Attitude	12	9.5
Watch TV	18	4.5
Manage Time	17	6
Cry	5	14
Walk to Places	9	12
Social Media	8	13
Draw, read, and write	18	4.5
Pray	24	3
Connect with Family and Friends	48	1

### Conclusion

The stress level of college students during COVID-19 pandemic reached to critical level since no face-to-face learning was allowed. The only way to communicate with their teachers and classmates was through Messenger, zoom, and google meet. Causes of stress to students was mainly due to social works and related activities. Somehow, submissions causes stress to students because internet connectivity added to their problems.

To cope with stress students connected with their family and friends, take time out like listening to music and pray since as a catholic individuals, people usually pray asking for help in order to lessen their problems.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the university through the guidance office and the guidance counselor of every colleges should provide a virtual orientation about coping up students' stress during pandemic. Course coordinators should closely monitor their students especially those in remote areas where internet connectivity is one of the major problems because students cannot attend the online class regularly. Every subject instructor/professor must encourage students to continue their studies inspite of difficulties encountered

during covid-19 pandemic. Utmost considerations must be given to all students in order to lessen the burden of stress that they experienced.

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