PERCEIVED STRESS AND COPING STYLES OF BALIUAG UNIVERSITY COLLEGE STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The research study aimed to determine the perceived stress and coping styles of the college students of Baliuag University during pandemic. Participants were 308 students from the seven (7) colleges of the University. The study utilized a descriptive correlational research design with the modified version of Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Brief-COPE as instruments of the study. The findings revealed that the respondents' frequency of experiencing perceived stress was fairly often. The respondents spent a medium amount of the three (3) coping styles, namely: problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidant-focused in dealing with their perceived stress. Moreover, the frequency of experiencing perceived stress was higher among female respondents. Among the colleges where the respondents belong who were experiencing highest frequency of perceived stress were the College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and General Education, College of Information Technology Education and College of Hospitality Management and Tourism. Likewise, based on the findings of the study, majority of the respondents utilized the three (3) coping styles in dealing with stress. It is recommended that university counselors as well as social workers should consider stress management programs and workshops on stress and effective coping styles for students as well as parents.

Keywords: Perceived stress, coping styles, Covid-19 pandemic, stress levels, problem-focused coping style, emotion-focused coping style, avoidant coping style

Introduction

Individual and communal traits such as perseverance, resourcefulness, wit, and humor help the Filipinos get through challenging times (Bucoy, 2010). However, the Covid-19 pandemic came into the picture and has become a major problem in the world since its outbreak. It has resulted in a worldwide loss of human life and faces an unparalleled threat to public health according to the World Health Organization (2020). Furthermore, it continues to impact all aspects of our society (Halem et al., 2020). Quarantine measures have been implemented around the world. Many industries, establishments, schools, and other societal needs are forced to close, and everyone is advised to stay at home to prevent the spread of the virus. Thus, putting a question mark on the resiliency of Filipinos.

The education sector was not spared from the effects of the global crisis. The current state of the country with the Covid-19 pandemic has forced schools and universities to shut down, having over 1.5 billion students worldwide and over 28 million Filipino learners to adjust to the abrupt changes in the learning system. In order to continue the education, the Department of Education adapted to a new normal way of learning and implemented Modular Distance Learning (Pe Dangle & Sumaong, 2020).

Students have no choice but to adjust and adapt to the new normal where online or distance learning becomes the new mode of education. According to Stern (2018), Online Learning is the newest and most famous form of distance learning. Students can receive an education without having to be physically present in a classroom. They receive instruction through online classes, video recordings and conferencing, or any other audio/visual technology medium (Loveless, 2018). Blona (2005) stated that trying to cope and adapt to new living conditions causes students to experience stress. Based on the findings of the study of Tee (2020), out of 1,879 of his Filipino respondents, one-fourth reported moderate to

severe anxiety, and one-sixth reported moderate to severe depression. These numbers only prove that this pandemic takes a toll on the mental health of the Philippines and its citizens including the students.

Students who are having difficulties with the new normal learning continue to find ways to divert their attention and cope with their stressors. In a survey conducted by Baloran (2020), students used personal coping strategies. These strategies include connecting with their families and friends, having a small conversation, giving them motivation, and diverting their attention to other things at home as it helps reduce their stress. In addition, some students use other positive coping styles such as approaching their teachers, practicing time management, doing things ahead of time, releasing their frustration through crying, and praying (Rotas & Cahapay, 2021).

Coping styles, such as avoidance strategies were linked to higher stress levels, whereas having a positive attitude were linked to less psychological distress (Sim, 2010). However, a study by Thai (2021), discussed that students who reported having good knowledge, attitude, and skill and even inclination towards adaptive coping strategies, still came across high levels of stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The researchers chose Baliuag University as the research locale. It is a university that accommodates many students from elementary to graduate studies. In addition, the university has a department called the Center for Career, Counseling, and Student Welfare (CCC-SW) that provides services to facilitate academic adjustment, self and relationship development, career decision-making, and total well-being of the students. During the height of the pandemic and when online learning is already implemented, they have conducted programs and activities that address the topic of stress, coping, and adjustment to the new normal. Examples of the activities are the "Zoomustahan" where the students

were asked about what they feel and how they are adjusting to the online learning system, and webinars about Mental Health Awareness.

With the pervasiveness of stress among the youth in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers decided to make a study on the perceived stress level of Baliuag University students and their coping styles during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Review of Related Literature

University life is one of the most enjoyable and exciting stages of adolescence. It is a venue where students can develop their educational and intellectual skills. Unfortunately, young adults appear to be struggling to cope with life. Students face several challenges in their daily lives, and these challenges, which lead to stress, uncover the real picture of lively campus life (Pariat et al., 2014).

Yusoff (2010) stated that it is important to keep in mind that excessive stress can lead to emotional problems, physical and mental health issues, exhaustion, and even mental break. Inability to cope can result in more serious mental disorders. Holahan (1987) emphasized that knowing that different coping strategies might help with different circumstances of life problems is an inevitable aspect of life. As a result, university students must be taught how to deal with stress in various scenarios.

Distance learning has its own characteristics that distinguish it from traditional face-to-face learning; it requires the adaptation of digitally advanced teaching approaches and techniques to modern integrated teaching methodologies that are instructionally appropriate for the target group of students (Kedraka, 2016). Moreover, today's university students have grown up in a digital world. They value the internet because it is their primary source of information, as well as a tool for maintaining relationships

and accomplishing hundreds of other tasks. According to current studies, internet use may be both a source of stress and a good way to cope with stress (Deatherage, 2013). Center for Disease Control (2020) highlighted that coping with a stressful event, such as this pandemic, can have encouraging or debilitating impact on physical health, medical issues and mental well-being.

Perceived Stress

Perceived stress involves emotions relating to the difficulty in someone's life, how they would deal with problems within their abilities, how much one tries to solve it, and the changes that are happening in their lives. It is all about how the person feels about the general stress in their life and their capacity to cope with stress. People may experience the same difficult situations, but the impact of stress could be different for each person due to the influence of their personality, coping styles, and relationships with others (Phillips, 2013).

Salleh (2008) and Yusoff (2010) accentuated stress as a natural response of humans to the demands and pressures in the society and environment, those causes called stressor. Yusoff added that stress is the emotional disruption or changes that are caused by the stressors. Moreover, in a study of Shankar and Park (2016), they said that stress could affect our cognitive skills (eg. paying attention, concentration), mental health (eg. psychological responses), and physical health. Stress could also have an impact on the students' academic performance.

Mazo (2015) stated in their study that stress could cause high-risk health problems like heart problems, depression, and migraines if we did not properly handle the stress. They also said that people have different responses when it comes to stress. For example, two individuals have the same problem, but the other one might be more in control of the situation than the other.

According to the study of Dalton and Hammen (2018), they said that stress causes people to have maladaptive behaviors such as eating unhealthily, doing sedentary activities, not getting enough sleep, and using illegal or misusing legal substances. They also said that these maladaptive behaviors could be symptoms of depression that we get from negative happenings in our daily life. In the local context of the situation in the Philippines, based on the study of Lee et. al. (2020) conducted during the early stage of Covid-19 in the country, reveals that one- fourth of their respondents reported moderate-to-severe anxiety and one-sixth reported moderate-to-severe depression and psychological impact.

Perceived Stress and Sex

Different studies suggest that students' stress levels vary depending on the courses they are taking, as well as their gender. Female students have a higher level of stress and more health problems than male students (Varghese & Thavaraj, 2015). This finding is in line with previous studies that found female university students to be more stressed than their male colleagues (Thawabieh & Qaisy, 2012; Jia & Loo, 2018). Yet, other studies have found that men are more stressed than women due to poor coping strategies (Shaikh et al., 2004; Pariat et al., 2014). Women, in general, are more likely to claim being stressed than men, but this does not imply that men perceive less stress than women (Lai & Cheah, 2020).

High levels of stress among females have been linked to a variety of reasons, including hormonal shifts, emotional expressiveness, and thoughts or worries regarding their social situation (Goldstein et al., 2005; Bierman, 1999). Female college students tend to binge eat when they are experiencing stress. It says in the study that the female college students mostly used emotional and avoidant coping, and it results in them eating a lot in a short period of time. They also stated that the coping strategies the female college

students used were associated with stress. That is why stress could also affect our physical health (Sulkowski et al., 2011).

Perceived Stress on College Fields

In every department, there are particular stressors that are associated. Students from the department of English language and literature, as well as students from the department of law, are more stressed as a result of interpersonal stressors. The students of the department of medicine and the department of international relations were more vulnerable to environmental stressors, as well as the students in the tourism and hotel management departments. Between the students of the department of civil engineering and the department of architecture, the usual cause of their stress is academics academic (Elema, et al., 2021). Moreover, according to the findings of the study of Habibah et al. (2011), undergraduate students are moderately vulnerable to stress, with academic stressors topping the list of stressors. When compared to other students, medical students and final-year students were more likely to report higher levels of stress. Medical and healthcare students were shown to have good or positive coping strategies in managing and overcoming their stress and mental. health issues (Singh et al., 2016; Al-Dubai et al., 2011). While students in other fields are more likely to use ineffective and maladaptive coping mechanisms (Mahmoud et al., 2012).

In support of what was mentioned previously, a study entitled "Levels of Stress in Medical Students due to COVID-19" by O'Byrne and colleagues (2020) revealed that there is a significant association between reported stress and the transition to online learning and online assessment formatting concerns for personal health and for the health of family members. In these difficult times, improving student mental well-being has become a greater priority of schools and universities. To reduce the known consequences of ongoing psychological distress and lessen any adverse effects of the pandemic on mental health among medical students.

Schools and other educational institutions should focus primarily on preventative measures such as screening and educational programs to lessen stress and psychological impact among medical students. (Pablo et al., 2020).

Coping Styles

Coping is described as the thoughts and activities used to deal with stressful circumstances both inside and outside the person (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). It is a term that distinguishes conscious and voluntary act mobilization from 'defense mechanisms', which are subconscious or unconscious adaptive responses aimed at reducing or tolerating stress (Venner, 1988).

Coping strategies, as defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) are the efforts to control emotions, behaviors, conditions, psychophysiology, and environmental factors in reaction to the stress of everyday events. Each problem or circumstance needs the use of a particular coping method (Wu et al., 2020) and there are over 400 coping strategies that have been documented according to Skinner et al. (2003). Researchers proposed these three distinct types of coping strategies: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Chen, 2016; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004) that people used in dealing with stress.

The higher education literature indicates that coping strategies of students varies, reflecting personal impacts on their coping patterns, when it comes to the effect of academic stress on coping. Students often report employing proactive behavioral strategies such as time management, problem solving, and seeking advice and resources. Students also employ cognitive emotion-related behavior, such as positive reconceptualization of stress-inducing situations, to cope with stress, according to Mattlin (1990). Aside from other issues, some personality types are thought to play a role in students' perceptions of anxiety about their studies and

academic achievement. Chapell and colleagues (2005) discovered that students who are more test apprehensive have lower GPAs than those who are not anxious.

Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) said that majority of students, regardless of gender, adopted positive coping mechanisms such as praying, taking action to help minimize stressors, seeing the bright side of events, and learning from them and receiving emotional support from friends and family. Many were also learning or trying to live with and accept their stressful situation. However, it was discovered that a small percentage of the students utilized cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs to cope with stress.

In social work, the performance of an individual in his or her many roles in society is referred to as "social functioning". Student, son, daughter, father, mother, husband, wife, employee, patient, and citizen are all examples of roles. Difficulties arising from such roles may be caused by personal and situational inadequacies which make it difficult for a man to cope with the demands of his environment or are beyond his coping capacities leading to dysfunction (Mendoza, 2008). Also, Mendoza (2008) stated in her book that social work efforts are therefore focused on either helping a person adjust to, modify, change or cope with his/her environment or situation.

Problem-Focused Coping

Problem-focused coping style is characterized by strategic responses to stressful events, such as modifying or removing the sources of stress. This form of coping technique is also considered to be more effective than emotional and avoidant strategies since it focuses on identifying and eliminating stress sources so that they do not reoccur in the future (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Hence, using problem-focused strategies may not be effective in some situations. For instance, problem-focused strategy may not be useful while dealing with the loss of a loved one.

Emotion-focused coping will become more beneficial in this case since it involves seeking to reduce the negative emotions associated with stress (Peer, 2016). Problem-focused, as defined by other researchers as an effort to alter the stressful situation itself. For instance, the pressure and anxiety of an incoming test can be reduced by studying for it, eliminating the test's stress-inducing potential (Zaromb et al., 2017).

Emotion-Focused Coping

Emotion-focused coping is a method of stress management that aims to lessen stress- induced unpleasant emotional reactions. To reduce or remove unpleasant feelings including discomfort, fear, concern, anxiety, enthusiasm, and impatience, people adopt a range of coping tactics. Emotion-focused therapy would be the only realistic option when the source of stress is beyond a person's control (Mcleod, 2009). If the issue cannot be changed, this coping method entails emotional distance or seeking social assistance (Simpson, 2016). Moreover, in a study investigating the coping strategies used by Irish college students by Ryan (2013), it was found that male students were shown to be more likely than female students to adopt active emotion- focused coping skills such as humor, acceptance, and emotional support. Emotion-focused coping does not solve the problem directly, but it's a great tool to have for dealing with stressful situations you can't change or control (Raypole, 2020). It is also worth mentioning that in a 2015 study by Ruth, et al. reveals that people who tend to use emotion-focused coping strategies may be more resilient to stress and enjoy greater overall wellness.

Avoidant Coping

Avoidance coping is related to emotional distress because it involves cognitive and behavioral attempts aimed at denying, diminishing, or otherwise avoiding dealing directly with stressful demands (Cronkite & Moos, 1995;

Penley et al., 2002). Although the potential for avoidance coping to cause stress has not previously been studied, it appears that relying on avoidance coping is especially prone to causing a wide range of stressors. For example, cognitive avoidance may allow stressors to grow out of control, such as financial or health issues. When emotional discharge worsens difficulties in-home or work relationships, behavioral avoidance may actively encourage new stressors (Holahan et al., 2005). Considering the article written by Dr. Elizabeth Scott in 2015, she explained that people who use avoidant coping styles tend to be unhealthier or form maladaptive behavior. This type of coping style is maladaptive (or unhealthy) because it often exacerbates stress without helping a person deal with the things that are causing them stress (Dijkstra, 2016). Contrary to the study of Dr. Scott, there are some forms of passive coping, which are not maladaptive and are healthy. These healthier forms of coping do not necessarily approach the problem directly, but they do affect our response to the problem (Gharavi, 2015). Stress relief strategies like relaxation techniques and jogging can minimize the stress response when you face a problem and even increase your self- confidence. They can empower you to face your stressors more effectively (Nasiri, 2015).

Perceived Stress and Coping Style

Individuals' perceptions of stress vary if the stress reaction is seen as an interaction between the environment and humans, according to Lazarus (1999/1984). Individuals can go through two types of evaluation processes: one to assess external stresses and personal risks, and another to assess personal resources that can be applied to deal with stressors. When these two appraisal processes are out of sync, stress arises because personal resources are insufficient to meet the stressor's expectations. It is necessary to pay attention to increasing levels of health stress and the types of coping strategies that could help minimize the impacts of excessive tension throughout stressful life events. The

transactional model of stress proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1987) provides light on these issues. Emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping are two types of coping responses (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Khan et al. (2015) stated that stress can be a healthy and adaptive response to a threat since it directs people's focus towards the stressors. Thus, it is vital to emphasize that a certain level of stress is necessary for students in the sense that it drives them to actively grow in their academic journey; otherwise, they would be passive and uninteresting beings (Nandamuri &Gowthami2007). Moreover, in a study of Yikaelo et al. (2018), many researchers pointed out that stress is not necessarily detrimental. It also makes a beneficial difference in people's lives by providing motivation. Examination stress or academic workloads, for example, might encourage and strengthen a student to complete academic tasks successfully, as well as improve academic achievement and creativity. Ganesan et al. (2018) said that some stress can be good, as the right kind of stress motivates people to change and grow.

Perceived Stress and Coping Styles among University Students during Pandemic

As reported by Aiateeq (2020) in her study "Perceived Stress among Students in Virtual Classroom during the Covid-19 outbreak in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with 367 student respondents coming from five regions of the country, 54 (14.7%) resulted to low level of stress, whereas 202 (55%) resulted to moderate level of stress, and 111(30.2%) resulted to high stress. In the study of Rogowska et al. (2020), Polish university students' level of perceived stress is high (56%) and it is from the majority of students (65%). The students who got poor results on their general health questionnaire showed higher levels of emotion-oriented coping styles and perceived stress. It is also stated in the study that there are factors like high stress, and the repetitive use of emotion-oriented and task-oriented

coping styles may be considered as contributors in the 60% that causes anxiety in the students at the time of the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

University students are doing everything to make the most of their college education by addressing stress in a healthy way according to Yasmin et al, (2020) and there are numerous strategies to cope with stress. We all have different ways of dealing with stress, just as we all perceive it differently. However, not all stress management strategies are beneficial, and some may make it feel even worse. It is critical to understand how to manage stress effectively in order to overcome it. After all, an individual has no control over their stressors in life but has the power over how they respond or react to them. To reduce stress and improve coping methods as well as to prevent further psychological repercussions; online stress management programs are recommended. Further research is needed to conduct longitudinal examinations of psychiatric conditions, such as depression and anxiety in order to develop evidence-based mental health interventions during crises (Awoke et al, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Students have different methods of dealing with stress. A theory that can be used to determine how students cope with their stress is the transactional Theory of Stress and Coping developed by Richard Lazarus.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) present stress as a result of an encounter between a person and his or her environment; and coping as a response that individuals use in dealing with internal and/or external stressors perceived to exceed their personal resources. The theory implies how an individual appraises a stressor; a primary appraisal assesses or interprets a potential threat to determine whether it is threatening or not, followed by a secondary appraisal, which evaluates coping resources and options for dealing with the stressful situation/addresses the individual's ability to cope or respond with stress effectively.

Coping could be divided based on its function. An individual will usually develop an emotion-focused coping response such as wishful thinking, distancing, emphasizing the positive, self-blame, self-isolation, etc. when the person thinks he/ she doesn't have the capacity to respond to the stressful event or if the appraisal says nothing can be done. Emotion-focused coping includes those strategies used to regulate an individual's stressful emotions. If an individual has the resources to manage a stressful event or if appraisal says something can be done, he or she is most likely to develop a problem-focused coping response by actively trying to do things to address it or seeking support from others to solve it (Lazarus, 1993). Moreover, when an individual escapes or avoids a stressful event rather than dealing with them such as procrastination, rumination, etc., he is most likely developed an avoidant- focused coping response (Scott, 2019). These strategies or responses are the methods that are mostly used by students to cope with their stress.
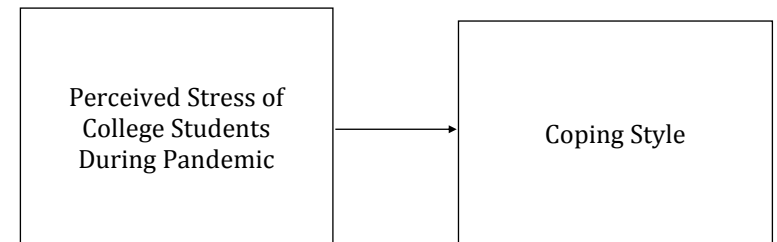
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Research Paradigm of the Study

Figure 1 shows the paradigm of the study which illustrate the perceived stress and coping style of the Baliuag University college students during pandemic.

The Problem

The research study aimed to determine the frequency of experiencing perceived stress and the coping styles of the Baliuag University college students during pandemic. It also aimed to assess the correlation of the two variables.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. How may the level of perceived stress of the respondents be described?

2. How may the respondents' coping styles be described in terms of:
   2.1   Problem-Focused Coping;
   2.2   Emotion-Focused Coping; and
   2.3   Avoidant Coping?

3. How may the respondents' perceived stress and coping styles be described in terms of:
   3.1   sex; and
   3.2   college?

4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' perceived stress and coping style?

Method

The study utilized a descriptive correlational research design with students from the seven (7) colleges of Baliuag University as the participants, namely: College of Business Administration and Accountancy (CBAA), College of Environmental Design and Engineering (CEDE), College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), College of Hospitality Management and Tourism (CHMT), College of Information Technology Education (CITE), College of Liberal Arts and General Education (CLAGE), and College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences (CNAHS).

The research study used a purposive-quota sampling method, where the sample size (n=308) was divided equally according to sex (male and female) and the college/ department where the respondents belong. However, graduating students were excluded from the study. Furthermore, Slovin's Formula was used to get the sample size of the study.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), PSS-10 version was used to assess the perceived stress level of the respondents. This is a self-reported 10-item questionnaire commonly used as a psychological tool for assessing stress perception (Cohen et al., 1994).

To describe the frequency of experiencing perceived stress of the respondents, the following points and verbal interpretations were used:

Point	Scale	Interpretation
4	3.26-4.00	Very Often
3	2.51-3.25	Fairly Often
2	1.76-2.50	Sometimes
1	1.00-1.75	Almost Never
0	0	Never

Meanwhile, The Brief COPE (Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced) Inventory adapted by Charles S. Carver (1997) was the other instrument used in the study. It is a 28-item survey-questionnaire that will determine the coping strategies of the respondents with scores on the three subscales: problem-focused, emotional-focused, and avoidant coping.

To determine the coping styles of the respondents, a four point Likert Scale was used with the following scale and verbal interpretations:

Point	Scale	Interpretation
4	3.50-4.00	"Been doing this a lot"
3	3.50-4.00	"A medium amount"
2	1.50-2.49	"A little bit"
1	1.00-1.49	"Haven't been doing this at all"

A higher score indicates that the respondents are better at coping with the situation. A study by Deatherage et al. (2014) reported good internal consistency among college students using the same measure, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.77 to 0.83. In addition, Yusoff's (2011) Malay version of the Brief COPE has good reliability and validity with a total Cronbach's alpha score of 0.83 among the Malaysian secondary school students.

Responses were tallied and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Means and Standard Deviation were calculated to determine the perceived level of stress and the coping styles of the respondents. The data was also analyzed and interpreted using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to explain the relationship between perceived stress and coping styles.

Results and Discussions

These chapter presents the data gathered in response to the questions posed in Chapter 1. The data are presented in statistical tables, followed by their analyses and interpretations.

Table 1
Frequency Distribution Table of Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	154	50.0
Female	154	50.0
Total	**308**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows the Frequency Distribution Table of Sex of the Respondents. A total of 308 students participated in the study. Female and male respondents have equal numbers.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution Table of the Respondents from the Seven College Departments

College	Frequency	Percentage
College of Education and Human Development	44	14.3
College of Business Administration and Accountancy	45	14.6
College of Environmental Design and Engineering	44	14.3
College of Hospitality Management and Tourism	65	21.1
College of Information Technology Education	44	14.3
College of Liberal Arts and General Education	22	7.1
College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences	44	14.3
Total	**308**	**100.0**

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of the number of respondents from the various colleges of the University. A high percentage (21.1%) of respondents came from the College of Hospitality Management and Tourism with 65 participants while the least percentage (7.1%) of participants were from the College of Liberal Arts and General Education with 22 respondents.

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation Distribution Table of Respondents' Frequency of Experiencing Perceived Stress

Perceived Stress Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	2.81	0.90	Fairly Often
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	2.64	0.90	Fairly Often
In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	2.98	0.87	Fairly Often
In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your problems?	2.46	0.83	Fairly Often
In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	2.31	0.81	Sometimes
In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	2.36	0.96	Sometimes
In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	2.38	0.86	Sometimes
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	2.04	0.89	Sometimes
In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	2.58	0.93	Fairly Often
General	**2.51**	**0.49**	**Fairly Often**

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' frequency of experiencing perceived stress. The table revealed the respondents' general verbal interpretations of the frequency of their perceived stress was

"Fairly Often". This was supported with a study by AIAteeq (2020), that during the Covid-19 pandemic among her 367 student respondents, 202 (55%) resulted to moderate level of stress and 111 (30.2%) resulted to high stress, while only 54 (14%) of the students resulted to low level of stress.

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviation Distribution Table of Coping Styles in terms of Problem-Focused

Problem-Focused	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.	2.98	0.72	A medium amount
I've been taking action to try to make the situation better.	3.01	0.71	A medium amount
I've been getting help and advice from other people.	2.54	0.91	A medium amount
I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.	2.95	0.74	A medium amount
I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.	2.91	0.71	A medium amount
I've been looking for something good in what is happening.	3.00	0.70	A medium amount
I've been trying to get advice or help from other people about what	2.52	0.92	A medium amount
I've been thinking hard about what steps to take.	2.95	0.71	A medium amount
General	**2.86**	**0.50**	**A medium amount**

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of the respondents coping styles in terms of Problem-Focused. The study revealed that the respondents spent "A medium amount" on the indicators of the Problem-Focused coping style. In the study of Zaromb et al., (2017), problem-focused is an effort to alter the stressful situation itself. For instance, the pressure and anxiety of an incoming test can be reduced by studying for it, eliminating the test's stress-inducing potential.

Table 5

Mean and Standard Deviation Distribution Table of Coping Styles in terms of Emotion-Focused

Emotion-Focused	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
I've been getting emotional support from others.	2.62	0.92	A medium amount
I've been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.	2.56	0.86	A medium amount
I've been criticizing myself.	2.86	0.87	A medium amount
I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.	2.66	0.88	A medium amount
I've been making jokes about it.	2.66	0.89	A medium amount
I've been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened.	3.04	0.75	A medium amount
I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.	2.68	0.95	A medium amount
I've been learning to live with it.	3.00	0.72	A medium amount
I've been blaming myself for things that happened	2.67	0.90	A medium amount
I've been praying or meditating	2.90	0.96	A medium amount
I've been making fun of the situation.	2.25	0.95	A little bit
General	**2.70**	**0.42**	**A medium amount**

Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' coping styles in terms of Emotion-Focused. The results of the study revealed that the respondents spent "A medium amount" on the indicators of the Emotion-Focused coping style. In the study of *Stress management* by Mcleod (2009), to reduce or remove unpleasant feelings including discomfort, fear, concern, anxiety, enthusiasm, and impatience, people adopt a range of coping tactics. When a student believes he or she lacks the capacity to respond to a stressful event or if the appraisal says nothing can be done, he or she will usually develop an emotion-focused coping response such as wishful thinking, distancing, emphasizing the positive, self-blame, and self-isolation, among others (Lazarus, 1993). A study of Ruth, et al. (2015) reveals that

people who tend to use emotion-focused coping strategies may be more resilient to stress and enjoy greater overall wellness.

Table 6

Mean and Standard Deviation Distribution Table of Coping Style in terms of Avoidant-Focused

Avoidant-Focused	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.	3.00	0.75	A medium amount
I've been saying to myself "this isn't real."	2.17	0.93	A little bit
I sleep more than usual.	2.59	0.98	A medium amount
I've been giving up trying to deal with it.	2.32	0.90	A little bit
I've been refusing to believe that it has happened.	2.24	0.86	A little bit
I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things.	2.95	0.77	A medium amount
I've been giving up the attempt to cope.	2.21	0.88	A little bit
I've been doing something to think about it less, such as going to movies, watching TV, reading, daydreaming, sleeping, or shopping.	3.15	0.80	A medium amount
General	**2.58**	**0.47**	**A medium amount**

Table 6 shows the mean and standard deviation of the coping styles of the respondents in terms of Avoidant-Focused. The results of the study revealed that the respondents spent "A medium amount" on the indicators of the Avoidant-Focused coping style. According to the study of Scott (2019), when an individual escapes or avoids a stressful event rather than dealing with them such as procrastination, rumination, etc. the student will most likely develop an avoidant-focused coping response. The standard deviation (0.77) of the item that students are more likely to turn their attention to other things or activities rather than dealing with their stressors or problems, they are also prone to being in denial and giving up. In an article written by Dr. Elizabeth

Scott in 2015, she explained that people who use avoidant coping styles tend to be unhealthier or forms maladaptive behavior. Contrary to the study of Dr. Scott, there are some forms of passive coping, which are not maladaptive and are actually healthy. These healthier forms of coping do not necessarily approach the problem directly but they do affect our response to the problem (Gharavi, 2015). The role of Social Workers or even administrators of the University is to facilitate self-awareness among its students to minimize or even avoid unhealthy avoidant coping strategies.

Table 7.1
Respondents' Coping Styles Based on Sex

Coping Styles	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Male - Problem-Focused Coping	2.77	0.48	Fairly Often
Female – Problem-Focused Coping	2.95	0.50	Fairly Often
Male – Emotion-Focused Coping	2.64	0.40	Fairly Often
Female – Emotion-Focused Coping	2.77	0.43	Fairly Often
Male – Avoidant Coping	2.52	0.47	Fairly Often
Female – Avoidant Coping	2.64	0.46	Fairly Often

Table 7.1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' coping styles based on sex. It revealed that female students have slightly higher standard deviation (0.50) in problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (0.43) than male students while in avoidant coping, female students have slightly lower standard deviation (0.46) than the male students (0.47).

Table 7.2
Respondents' Perceived Frequency of Experiencing Perceived Stress Based on Sex

Stress Level	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Male	2.50	0.50	Fairly Often
Female	2.53	0.48	Fairly Often

Table 7.2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the frequency of experiencing perceived stress of the respondents based on their sex (gender). Based on the result, female student respondents have slightly lower standard deviation (0.48) than male. This means that the frequency of experiencing perceived stress of female respondents is a bit higher than male respondents. According to the study of Varghese & Thavara (2015), female students have a higher level of stress and more health problems than male students. In the study of Goldstein (2005), high levels of stress could be linked to hormonal shifts, emotional expressiveness, and thoughts or worries regarding their social situation. However, Lai & Cheah (2020) stated that women are more likely than men to indicate that they are stressed, but this does not mean that males are less stressed.

Table 8.1
Mean and Standard Deviation Distribution Table of Coping Styles and Stress Level

Coping Styles – Problem-Focused	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
College of Education and Human Development	2.94	0.47	Fairly Often
College of Business Administration and Accountancy	2.96	0.60	Fairly Often
College of Environmental Design and Engineering	2.79	0.49	Fairly Often
College of Hospitality Management and Tourism	2.82	0.50	Fairly Often
College of Information Technology Education	2.78	0.49	Fairly Often
College of Liberal Arts and General Education	2.74	0.42	Fairly Often
College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences	2.95	0.43	Fairly Often

Table 8.1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' Problem-Focused coping style based on the college where they are enrolled in. The first three colleges that have the lowest standard deviations are "College of

Liberal Arts and General Education" (0.42), "College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences" (0.43), and "College of Education and Human Development" (0.47); while the other four colleges – "College of Environmental Design and Engineering" (0.49), "College of Information Technology Education" (0.49), "College of Hospitality Management and Tourism" (0.50), and "College of Business Administration and Accountancy" (0.60) – have the highest standard deviations. It means that the three colleges that got the lowest standard deviations are more likely to and prefer to use problem-focused coping than the other four colleges that got the highest standard deviations.

Table 8.2
Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents' Emotion-Focused Coping Style

Coping Styles – Emotion-Focused	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
College of Education and Human Development	2.73	0.43	Fairly Often
College of Business Administration and Accountancy	2.85	0.45	Fairly Often
College of Environmental Design and Engineering	2.75	0.43	Fairly Often
College of Hospitality Management and Tourism	2.62	0.43	Fairly Often
College of Information Technology Education	2.54	0.39	Fairly Often
College of Liberal Arts and General Education	2.70	0.37	Fairly Often
College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences	2.77	0.36	Fairly Often

Table 8.2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' Emotion-Focused coping style based on the college where they are enrolled in. The first three colleges that have the lowest standard deviations are "College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences" (0.36), "College of Liberal Arts and General Education" (0.37), and "College of Information Technology Education" (0.39); while the other

four colleges–"College of Education and Human Development" (0.43), "College of Environmental Design and Engineering" (0.43), "College of Hospitality Management and Tourism" (0.43), and "College of Business Administration and Accountancy" (0.45) – have the highest standard deviations. It means that the three colleges that got the lowest standard deviations are preferred to use emotion-focused coping over the other four colleges that got the highest standard deviations.

Table 8.3
Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents' Avoidant-Focused Coping Style

Coping Styles – Avoidant-Focused	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
College of Education and Human Development	2.55	0.49	Fairly Often
College of Business Administration and Accountancy	2.60	0.39	Fairly Often
College of Environmental Design and Engineering	2.64	0.45	Fairly Often
College of Hospitality Management and Tourism	2.55	0.50	Fairly Often
College of Information Technology Education	2.43	0.50	Fairly Often
College of Liberal Arts and General Education	2.75	0.44	Fairly Often
College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences	2.63	0.45	Fairly Often

Table 8.3. shows the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' Avoidant-Focused coping style based on the college where they are enrolled in. The first four colleges that have the lowest standard deviations are "College of Business Administration and Accountancy" (0.39), "College of Liberal Arts and General Education" (0.44), "College of Environmental Design and Engineering" (0.45), and "College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences" (0.45); while the other three colleges– "College of Education and Human Development" (0.49), "College of Hospitality Management

and Tourism" (0.50), and "College of Information Technology Education" (0.50) – have the highest standard deviations. It means that the four colleges that got the lowest standard deviations are preferred to use avoidant coping than the other three colleges that got the highest standard deviations.

Table 8.4
Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents' Stress Level

Stress Level	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
College of Education and Human Development	2.49	0.49	Fairly Often
College of Business Administration and Accountancy	2.68	0.51	Fairly Often
College of Environmental Design and Engineering	2.50	0.55	Fairly Often
College of Hospitality Management and Tourism	2.48	0.48	Fairly Often
College of Information Technology Education	2.29	0.48	Fairly Often
College of Liberal Arts and General Education	2.55	0.48	Fairly Often
College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences	2.62	0.37	Fairly Often

Table 8.4 shows the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' stress level based on the college where they are enrolled in. The first four colleges that have the lowest standard deviations are "College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences" (0.37), "College of Hospitality Management and Tourism" (0.48), "College of Information Technology Education" (0.48), and "College of Liberal Arts and General Education" (0.48); while the other three colleges – "College of Education and Human Development" (0.49), "College of Business Administration and Accountancy" (0.51), and "College of Environmental Design and Engineering" (0.55) – have the highest standard deviations. It means that the four colleges that got the lowest standard deviations were experiencing higher stress levels than the other three colleges that got the highest standard deviations – they have slightly lower stress levels.

Results of the study can be supported by the study of Singh et al., (2016); Al-Dubai et al., (2011), which states that when compared to other students, medical students were more likely to report higher levels of stress. Medical and healthcare students were shown to have good or positive coping strategies for managing and overcoming their stress and mental health issues. The tables have shown that in terms of stress levels in terms of college, College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences is on the top indicating that they have the highest level of stress. CNAHS has also obtained top 2 and top 1 spots in the Problem-Focused Coping and Emotion-Focused Coping style. A study of O'Byrne, et al. (2020) regarding the levels of stress of medical students due to COVID-19, reveals that there is a significant association between reported stress and the transition to online learning and online assessment formatting concerns for personal health and for the health of family members.

Table 9
Correlation Analysis on the Coping Styles and Perceived Stress of the Respondents

	Test for Significance (p-value)	Verbal Interpretation	Degree of Relationship (r)	Verbal Interpretation
Problem-Focused Coping–Perceived Stress	0.000	Significant	0.43	Low Correlation
Emotion-Focused Coping–Perceived Stress	0.000	Significant	0.49	Low Correlation
Avoidant Coping–Perceived Stress	0.000	Significant	0.58	Moderate Correlation

Table 9 shows the correlation of the coping styles and perceived stress of the respondents. Based on the results, perceived stress is significantly related to problem-focused coping style and the direction of the relationship is positive (*r* (308)=0.43, *p*¬4.49). This means that as the respondents perceived that they have moderate to high stress, there is a

tendency that they will engage in behaviors that intends to eliminate or manage the source of the stress. However, the magnitude of the relationship is low. This is supported by Lazarus and Folkman's theory which suggests that individuals go through two types of appraisals: one to analyze external stresses and personal risks, and the other to examine personal resources that can be used to cope with stressors. When these two appraisal processes are out of sync, stress results from a lack of personal resources to meet the stressor's demands. It is critical to pay attention to rising levels of health stress and the kinds of coping skills that might help reduce the negative effects of excessive tension throughout stressful life events. In the Social Work context, the inability of an individual to cope with the demands of the environment would lead to dysfunction (Mendoza 2009). Hence, it is paramount that the Social Workers using empowerment theory would ensure that the appropriate intervention to promote positive coping styles would be given to address the client's problem of dysfunction.

Conclusions

Based on the findings and summary of the study, the following were concluded:

1. The respondents' frequency of experiencing perceived stress was fairly often.

2. Based on the results of the study, the coping styles of the respondents can be described as follows:

    2.1. The respondents spent "A medium amount" on the indicators of the Problem-Focused coping style as a mean to cope with the stress.

    2.2. The respondents spent "A medium amount" on the indicators of the Emotion-Focused coping style as a mean to cope with the stress.

    2.3. The respondents spent "A medium amount" on the indicators of the Avoidant-Focused coping style as a mean to cope with the stress.

3. Based on the findings, the following were the level of perceived stress and coping style of respondents based on sex (gender) and college where they are enrolled in:

    3.1. The frequency of experiencing perceived stress of female respondents is a bit higher than male respondents.

    3.2. The frequency of experiencing perceived stress is higher among respondents who belong to the College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and General Education, College of Information Technology Education and College of Hospitality Management and Tourism.

    3.3. Respondents from the College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and General Education and College of Education and Human Development prefer problem-focused in coping with their stress.

    3.4. Respondents from the College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and General Education and College of Information Technology Education prefer emotion-focused in coping with their stress.

    3.5. Respondents from the College of Business Administration and Accountancy, College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and General Education and College of Environmental Design and Engineering prefer avoidant-focused in coping with their stress.

4. The perceived stress of the respondents is significantly related to their coping style with moderate correlation on avoidant-focused coping style.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Teachers and parents should acknowledge student stress dilemmas, especially during this time of pandemic, and start implementing emotion regulation strategies into their educational practices and routines that are preventative for causing high levels of stress.

2. University Counselors can come up with seminars on the pervasiveness of stress and poor coping style among students. Likewise, Social Workers can also consider stress management programs and conduct workshops on stress and effective coping styles for students as well as parent.

3. Make the students aware of the coping styles and strategies that could contribute and improve their academic performance and decrease their stress level.

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