

Academic Stress: The Lived Experiences of Development Communication Students from

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, stress is a part of academic life as a result of the numerous internal and external expectations imposed on students. They are especially susceptible to the issues brought on by academic stress since they are going through both personal and social transitions. In order to develop appropriate and effective intervention measures, it is crucial to comprehend the causes and effects of academic stress. Thus, this study examined the causes, effects, and coping mechanisms of stress on the students of the Bachelor of Science in Development Communication program at Tarlac Agricultural University. It was primarily concerned with three things: the causes of stress faced by this generation, its effects, and the coping mechanisms of these students. This study uses a qualitative exploratory research design. Ten students enrolled in Tarlac Agricultural University's Bachelor of Science in Development Communication provided information through the use of a structured interview guide. The study's findings indicate that almost every student was under academic stress. Students often cite the semester system, many exams, a lack of time management, and expectations from family and parents as major sources of academic stress. The qualitative findings also pointed to some prominent coping strategies, namely praying coping, self-distracting activities such as watching TV and listening to music, and seeking social support.

Chapter I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

This chapter of the paper presents the problem and its setting. It includes the background of the study, objectives, the statement of the problem, significance of the study, scope and delimitation of the study, and definition of terms.

Background of the Study

The body's general reaction to demands made of it or disturbing events occurring in its environment is referred to as stress. It is a process, rather than merely a stimulus or reaction, by which people perceive and react to environmental risks and challenges. As long as it's managed properly, stress is a normal part of life and can boost activity and productivity. Chronically high levels of stress, however, can have a serious detrimental effect on the body and the psyche. In recent years, in the academic community, stress has grown in importance as a topic for analysis studies.

According to Neseliler et al. (2017), academic stress results from a student's mental state as a result of ongoing social and self-imposed pressure in a school environment that drains the student's mental resources. Throughout their secondary, high school, and university educations, students deal with academic stress. It may result in low attendance, a significant drop in grades, or even resentment toward their assignments, which could all have an adverse effect on an excellent student's performance in class. Numerous studies have also been done to show the connection between responsibility in the classroom, academic stress, and performance. As a matter of fact, according to Deb et al. (2015), melancholy, anxiety, behavioral issues, and impatience are just a few of the numerous issues documented in adolescents under severe academic stress. Teenagers under stress were also more likely to experience depression, which is associated with problems

paying attention, a fear of failure, a poor outlook on the future, and many other symptoms (Busari, 2012). Several dangerous behaviors, such as unprotected sex, increased alcohol and drug use, irregular eating and sleeping patterns, and physical inactivity were also documented among adolescents.

At the Tarlac Agricultural University, academic problems are probably the main cause of students' stress. When deadlines or exams are approaching, for instance, students frequently experience stress, which is made worse when they lack the ability to manage their time effectively and organize their work. Sometimes, students' stress is self-inflicted because of the amount of work they have to do (Hamaideh, 2011). As they were worn out with the current curriculum, third-year students were most likely the ones who were affected. Apparently, because some courses from the old curriculum might not be included in the new curriculum, they had to pass every subject because there was no chance of making up a failed course in the upcoming semester or academic year. Additionally, failing their classes would prevent them from moving on to their internship, which might delay their alleged graduation year. Accordingly, given the aforementioned facts, it was inevitable that third-year students would experience stress more frequently due to their involvement in other activities and exposure to elements that could raise their stress thresholds and impair their performance. Thus, in this study, Tarlac Agricultural University students studying development communication were asked about their sources of stress, how they dealt with it, their coping mechanisms, and their academic achievement. This study looked at the association between stress and students' academic performance. To ensure that students' well-being is taken into consideration, the findings may offer some academic planners guidance on how to provide the students with quality academic services during their time at the

institution. The outcomes could also be used as a guide for developing policies and implementing interventions.

Significance of the Study

The researchers made an effort to provide beneficial information to the following individuals:

- **The administrators** – The institution’s communications department will benefit from the study’s findings by putting the recommended action plan into practice, helping development communication students in the process.
- **Teachers:** The findings of this study will provide helpful insight into how to approach students who are stress while they are enrolled in classes and how to design successful instruction for those students so they can still relate to and review the lessons given.
- **Communication Students** – After reading this, the students at the aforementioned school should be able to relate to the study’s findings and feel more optimistic about the future.
- **Students** – Other students may be able to find comfort and validation in the shared experiences of the research participants.
- **Researcher-** This will broaden the researcher’s knowledge of the lives and daily struggles faced by students in their pursuit of success.
- **Future researchers** – The findings of this study can be beneficial for next researchers. The works cited and the concepts put out here may be important for the advancement of future research.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate the real-world experiences of communication students from Tarlac Agricultural University. This study will assist in identifying some of the stressors and examining how the students manage them.

Specifically, it will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the participants in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Allowance
2. How well are the students performing academically?
3. Does stress among development communication students have a substantial impact on how well they succeed in school?
4. What suggestions do the students have for dealing with stress?

Objectives of the Study

1.1. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to qualitatively assess sources of stress, types of stressors, and coping mechanisms employed by development communication students.

1.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Identify how development communication students from Tarlac Agricultural University best describe their world and school lives.
- To identify the challenges that these students face in their school lives.
- To identify the effects on the students' school performance.
- To determine what strategies the students use to cope with the stressors they face.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on the real-world experiences of communication students from Tarlac Agricultural University. The participants of this study were composed of 10 respondents from the Bachelor of Science in Development Communication program, particularly 3rd year communication students. Therefore, the focus of the study did not include the 1st, 2nd, or 4th year students of this program.

Definition of Terms

- **Academic Stress:** It is the tension, psychological, and biological relating to the students' perception of the workload and pressure that comes with their academic life.
- **Bachelor of Science in Development Communication:** It is a four-year degree program in the Tarlac Agricultural University that centers on the importance of communication in the quest of growth.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter presents the related literature and studies after the thorough and in-depth search done by the researcher. This will also present the theoretical and conceptual framework to truly understand the research to be done and for better comprehension of the study.

Review of Related Literature

Stress as defined by Kumaraswamy (2013), is the mental condition produced from a person's evaluation of their perceived or actual skill at navigating through and adjusting to societal expectations. Academically, stress in school is one of the issues that complicates a student's life. Accordingly, Kumaraswamy also revealed that the current group of college students face more stressors compared to the college students from the past two decades. Some of the academic stressors include fear of failing grades, time pressure and cramming, pressure in performing at high academic levels, as well as remaining competent.

Causes of Academic Stress

The transition of students from the secondary level environment to university level is one of the reasons behind the academic stress of college students. According to Thawabieh and Qaisy (2012), the transition of students from their previous school life towards entering college life commonly results in psychological, academic, and social shock bring upon the different education systems including the methods of learning, academic requirements, faculty and students relationship and social relationship of students among their fellow students. The adjustment phase

usually happens during the student's first year in college. Thawabieh and Qaisy (2012) also emphasizes that due to this adjustment, college students suffer from academic stress which usually leads to poor academic performance.

Baste, V. S., &Gadkari, J. V. (2014) listed the excessive amount of syllabus, multiple examinations, lectures and demonstrations, and the examination result as factors that add up to the stress faced by college students. However, Baste, V. S., &Gadkari, J. V. (2014) also added that aside from academic stressors, college students also suffer from other stressors such as gender stress, hostel accomodation, interactions with their seniors, and emotional stress. But the most extreme academic stressor is the school education indicating that achievement is the most important thing for students, making students stress themselves in lessons and activities.

Aside from the transition from middle school to college and the excessive amount of syllabus, other academic stressors include completion of graduation requirements, approachability of school's staff, change and sleeping habits, and new responsibilities. Other factors also include competition, high marking, and the approaching examinations. The identified factors need to be addressed to avoid the possibility of burn out and to provide students a healthy academic environment. (Harikiran, A., Srinagesh, J., Nagesh, K. S., &Sajudeen, N., 2012).

Impacts of Academic Stress

Safree, Yasin and Dzulkifli (2010) infer that depression, anxiety, and academic stress are all related to academic achievement. When a student suffers from a high level of stress, the academic performance tends to decrease. The lower the academic performance of a student, the lower the student's chance of finishing the academic year. Hence, it is important to manage stress

in an academic environment. Students who can effectively handle their academic stress perform better in school than those who fail to control their stress.

Academic stress also contributes to the deteriorating mental health of students. The high level of stress on students is accompanied by the high level of anxiety. Stress level for students often increases when there is a high study load and whenever students prepare for their next classes. Such academic activities hinders the students from getting a complete sleep. Sleep deprived students are more vulnerable to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Ruzhenkova, V. V., Ruzhenkov, V. A., Lukyantseva, I. S., & Anisimova, N. A., 2018).

Coping Mechanism

Baste, V. S., &Gadkari, J. V. (2014), suggested that providing intervention programs to students can help decrease their stress burden. Intervention programs can be through counseling, and conducting stress relaxation programs inside the campus once in a while. Such kinds of activities will excessively give comfort to the students especially during examination periods. Additionally, Baste, V. S., &Gadkari, J. V. (2014), also introduces the use of music to help the students calm. Music can effectively enhance the mood of the students, help them relax, and improve their performance in school.

For Kumar, M., Sharma, S., Gupta, S., Vaish, S., &Misra, R. (2014), performing non-academic activities can help in de-stressing. A student can try relaxation activities, perform yogic exercises, and participating in extra-curricular activities during their free time can help in keeping the students on track. This will lessen their stress load and will help them breathe after a day in school. Practicing proper time management according to Kumar, M., Sharma, S., Gupta, S., Vaish,

S., & Misra, R. (2014) can also help in monitoring the time and activities of students. This will improve the academic performance and functions of the students.

College is considered as a stressful stage for many students. Though it is completely impossible to eliminate academic stress, students have ways to cope up with stress. Gallagher, K. M., Jones, T. R., Landrosh, N. V., Abraham, S. P., & Gillum, D. R. (2019), introduces socialization as one of the coping mechanisms for students aside from listening to music. Socializing with friends allows the students to open up about their experiences in school and lessen their burden. This will enable the students to have a fresh start for their academic journey.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Enrolling in university means a new and different situation from middle school. The amount of stressors in university doubles than the stressor during high school. Saleh, D., Camart, N., & Romo, L. (2017) proposes a study that evaluates the vulnerability of French college students to stress. The result of the study implies that the majority of French college students suffer from psychological distress, depression, and anxiety. More than half the respondents also display low self-esteem and optimism. Of all the mentioned stressor, satisfaction, self-esteem, optimism, self-efficacy and psychological distress are the most identified stressors.

A study conducted by Ramachandiran and Dhanapal (2018), in a private university in Malaysia assesses the perceived factors of stress among Generation Y and Z students. The result shows that the majority of the respondents suffer from moderate levels of stress. The study also proves that among the factors affecting the student's academic stress includes pressure, time management, and was also affected by family and financial problems. Hence, the researchers came

up with the recommendation that university management teams should conduct activities and programs to reduce students' stress and to promote good mental health in the university. This, according to the researchers, will contribute to the better academic performance of the students.

Acob, R. U., Arifin, H., & Setiya Dewi, Y. (2021), conducted a study to determine the depression, anxiety, and stress level of tertiary students. The respondents of the said study are the tertiary or college students enrolled in either private or public higher education institutions in Leyte, Philippines. The record was compared to the record collected before the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ). The result of the comparison revealed that depression, anxiety, and stress are higher for tertiary students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The transition from the traditional learning to the new normal education contributed to the high level of depression, anxiety, and stress of students. Hence, the researchers concluded that developing community-based mental health programs will help in preventing the increase of depression, anxiety, and stress level of students.

According to the study of William Smith, et al (2017), the experiences of 36 Black male students, in focus group interviews, enrolled at Harvard University; Michigan State University; University of California, Berkeley, and University of Illinois. Across these experiences, Black males were defined as being "out of place" and "fitting the description" of illegitimate nonmembers of the campus community. The results of the study is that the students reported psychological stress responses symptomatic of racial battle fatigue, frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear during in their academic in the Harvard University, Michigan State University, University of California, Berkeley and University of Illinois.

To examine the academic experiences of college or university students, Erin T. Barker (2018) focuses on examining the reliability of the self-reported depressive experiences of college students. The examination shows that depressive symptoms of college students usually increase during December which is connected to the high level of stress in academics.

Studying internationally is another thing. International students are perceived to face more stress other than academic problems. Eman S. Alharbi (2018) conducted a study in search of the major sources of stress for international students. For international students, it is identified that common sources of stress include separation from home, financial issues, new environment, and passing. Adjusting to a new culture also contributes to the stress experienced by international students.

Yuwei Deng, et al (2022) also tries to explore the impact of students' level of stress and depression on their academic learning on Asian countries. The findings lead to the conclusion that teenage students were affected by academic and familial stress. The stress experiences of students leads to poor academic performance. Different from other studies, Yuwei Deng, et al (2022) also examines the connectedness of sociodemographic factors, especially the age in the level of stress and depression. It was highlighted that young people or teenagers are linked to a higher level of stress and depression especially as they start college where they faces extra challenges.

Academic stress often leads to decreased academic performance. In a study conducted by BROBBEY, E. (2020) at the University of Cape Coast School of Business, academic stress turned out to be a common phenomenon that affects students' academic performance. On the other hand, the study also highlighted that other factors aside from academics, affects the stress level of students. Factors such as financial status, not being able to hear anything from their families, and not enough sleep contributes to the academic stress of students. Brobbey, E. (2020), concluded

that enough time for extracurricular activities such as sports and entertaining hobbies will help in dealing with stress. Additionally, guidance counseling is also mentioned to be a great help for students.

To further look at the impact of academic stress to students, a qualitative study was conducted on undergraduate students in Cape Town. The respondents were asked about how academic stress affects their eating and sleeping habits, alcohol consumed, emotions, and academic performance. The respondents indicated that due to the academic stress, inadequate sleep was experienced. Students also face losing appetite leading them to decrease weight. Despite the zero record of drinking alcoholic beverages when stressed, records of irritability and mixed emotions were found when students suffer from academic stress. Colbeck, M. (2020)

Engaging in relaxing activities would calm the mind and body by releasing the stress hormones of the body. Wang, D., & Hagins, M. (2016) tries to examine the benefit of yoga in students' relaxation. The study was conducted through six focus groups involving students in New York City. The result of the study found that high school students consider yoga as an activity that increases self-regulation and self-esteem, improves physical conditioning and academic performance, and reduces stress. Additionally, students also realized that trying to go helps them develop their concentration which benefits them most of the time especially during their test or examinations.

The coping mechanism of a student also affects one's vulnerability in stress. As education transforms from traditional to a more modern technique, proper coping mechanisms are important in dealing stress. Kohler Giancola, J., Grawitch, M. J., & Borchert, D. (2009) tested the importance of coping as mediators for stressors and psychosocial outcomes. The outcome proposes that when the level of stressor increases, lower positive outcome is expected. And adapting effective coping

techniques always leads to positive outcomes. The researchers therefore suggested that college students should try the most effective style of coping up to achieve a positive impact when dealing with stressors in academics.

Conceptual Framework

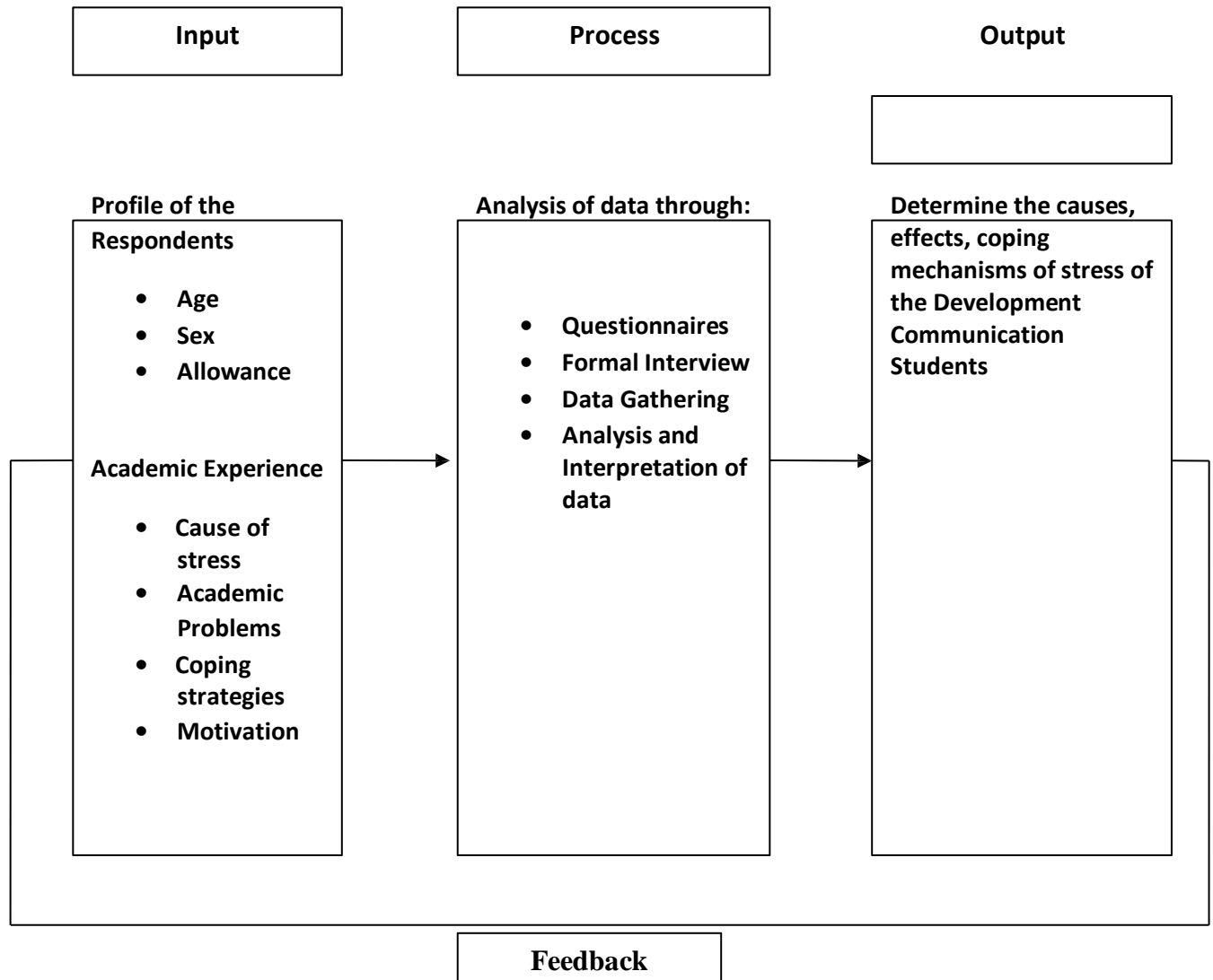


Figure I. Conceptual Model

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between the variables, methodology and the output of the study. In summary this is being presented using the conceptual framework which provides the statement of the problem of this study and the process which the researchers

conducted interview, questionnaire, observation and data analysis to find out the causes and effects and coping mechanisms of stress to the Development Communication Students.

Theoretical Framework

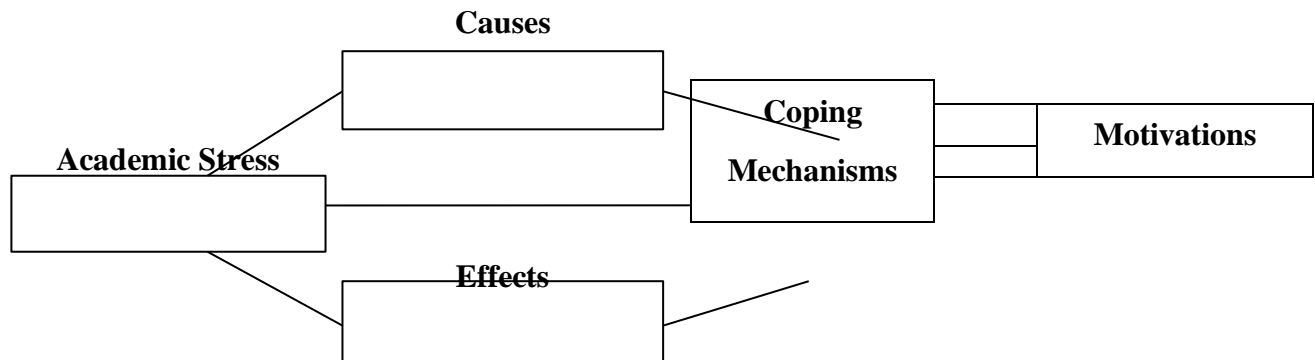


Figure II. Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

The theoretical framework used in this paper is the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). This theory claimed that a person's ability to cope with and adjust to challenges and problems is a result of transactions or interactions between a person and their environment. It is to determine the causes and effects of stress on the students that have an interaction with the participants' coping strategies towards stress.

CHAPTER III

METHODS OF STUDY AND SOURCE OF DATA

This chapter presents the methodology of study in gathering data from the respondents. This includes research design, participants of the study, sampling technique, research instrument, data gathering procedure and data analysis.

Research Design

The researchers used qualitative research to study the Academic stress of Development Communication students from Tarlac Agricultural University. To collect data researchers followed the exploratory research design as one type of qualitative research. This design preferred reliable to gather the result from the respondents of the study.

Participants of the Study

The researchers gather the data from 10 respondents from 3rd year Development Communication Students studying at Tarlac Agricultural University in the Philippines.

Sampling Technique

In this study, the researchers used purposive sampling in selecting their respondents. Purposive sampling can otherwise call selective sampling, it is a sort of non-probability sampling that the researchers in light of their attributes and reason in the study chosen respondents.

Researchers Instrument

The research instrument use in the study is by means of structure interview. The researchers constructed questions to collect data from the participants. The question will be answered base on the interpretation of the respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure

The robotfoto method and semi-structured interviews will be used by the researchers to collect data on participant demographics and thoughts and perceptions, respectively. The robotfoto comprises the following information: participants' name, gender, grade level, and number of hours worked. A consent form is also needed and must be clear and include all the necessary information about the possible risks, benefits, and complications of the procedure needing consent (Hassan et al., 2015). The robotfoto and the consent form were utilized to gather the demographic data with the approval of the participants. It was used to organize the location and the time of the interview proper, while the information collected is kept confidential. Additionally, semi-structured interviews will also be employed in an effort to gain an in-depth understanding of the lives and experiences of research participants (Seidman, 2006, as cited by Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam, 2019). The interview consists of questions that allow disclosure of the participant's personal experiences, outlooks, and past encounters, which is useful for gaining extensive information. In addition, the researchers will use devices to record and obtain the responses of the participants verbatim.

Data Analysis

To study the Academic Stress: Lived Experience of Development Communication, the researchers collected the data using the research instrument which is structure interview. To interpret the data the researcher used narrative analysis to analyze text that comes from an

interview. Moreover, the researchers read the data by obtaining general sense of material.

Researchers derived from the data in paragraph form, the researchers finalized a reliable data to ensure the credibility of the study.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The study aimed to determine the stressors, effects of stress, and coping mechanisms of the development communication students at Tarlac Agricultural University in the Philippines. Specifically, the biological, behavioral, and psychological effects of stress on third-year Bachelor of Science in Development Communication students are determined by the researchers. It also determines the stress coping mechanisms of the participants, including biological, psychological, and behavioral coping mechanisms.

The robotfoto method and semi-structured interviews were the main data collection tools in this descriptive correlational study. On the profiles of the respondents and the sources of their stressors, percentages and frequency counts were employed, while weighted averages were applied to the data on the effects of stress and the coping techniques. The Pearson Product Moment of Correlation was used to analyze the association between the respondents' profiles and their stressors, while Kendal's tau-b was utilized to analyze the impact of stress and coping strategies. Ten third-year students in the Philippines' Bachelor of Science in Development Communication degree served as the study's respondents. The finding revealed the following:

Some of the third-year students at Tarlac Agricultural University are 21 years old. The great majority are male. Most of them have a PHP 1,000.00 allowance per week. All of the 3rd year development communication Students are experiencing stress caused by expectations from others, time management problems, and a lot of schoolwork to submit. Most of the problems that participants encountered in their academic work were related to poor internet connections, finances, and pressure from parents. Usually, the participants manage their stress by doing their

favorite hobbies and also praying. Their motivations are their family and the goal that they want to achieve in the future.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents and highlights the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the collected data.

Conclusion

The data collected led to the conclusion that the academic stress Development Communication students were experiencing was brought on by other people's expectations, poor time management, and an abundance of schoolwork. Poor internet connections, pressure, and money issues were among the Development Communication students' academic challenges. Despite this, it was seen that their coping techniques were a result of the combination of the issues and their impacts. They use their favorite pastimes and prayer as coping techniques.

Recommendations

Based on the data and information collected from the study, the researchers therefore recommend that:

1. School-based mental health advocacy must be performed- Mental health issues are one of the negative impacts of academic stress. Hence, mental health advocacy is important for the students to know that there is a safe space for their mental health.
2. An academic break has to be considered- Implementing an academic break will help students breathe. This will allow them to have time for themselves and a time to rest from the hectic life in school.

3. Family and peer support are important- To cope with stress, the support coming from their friends and families is important. Friends and families can serve as their support system when struggling with stress.

4. Students must practice positive coping mechanisms- It is also important that students help themselves during academic stress. Practicing positive coping mechanisms such as exercises will enable them to have the energy to overcome stress.

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