Difficulties and Coping Strategies during Covid-19 Crisis of Selected Students of College of Arts and Communication, University of Eastern Philippines

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Difficulties and Coping Strategies during Covid-19 Crisis of Selected Students of College of Arts and Communication, University of Eastern Philippines

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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the difficulties and coping strategies of selected students of the College of Arts and Communication, University of Eastern Philippines. Specifically, the study aimed to document the profile of the respondents, identify the difficulties of the respondents during COVID-19 crisis, and discover the coping strategies of respondents during Covid-19.

These objectives were achieved through descriptive-survey research design and used survey questionnaire.

The salient findings of the study were: As to the profile of the respondents, majority were 22-25 years old, female, single, and have less than P400 weekly allowance.

Among the difficulties encountered by the students were: they are experiencing various difficulties along technical, financial and health amidst health crisis.

As to the coping strategies of the respondents, there are three identified major strategies which include task–orientation coping strategies, emotion–orientation coping strategies and, avoidance coping strategies.

Keywords: Technical, financial and health difficulties, coping strategies, COVID-19 crisis.

1. Introduction

Background

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is defined as illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan city, Hubei province, China. It was initially reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. On January 30,2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID -19 a global pandemic, its first such designation since declaring H1N1 influenza, a pandemic in 2009.

In countries like China, Spain, Italy and other affected countries, COVID-19 has great impact where they have declared restrictive measures, such as lockdown, shelter in place, or stay at home orders, to contain the pandemic at a local level.

In the Philippines, one of the high-risk countries from the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak recorded the first death outside China. The government has announced lock-down of Metro

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Manila, followed by the entire Luzon island and is mulling over more localized lock- downs. The Philippine government declared a state of calamity in the country for six months on March 17, 2020.

Meanwhile, in Northern Samar, Governor Edwin Ongchuan declared General Community Quarantine (GCQ) on the province on March 15, 2020. As a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the disease in the province of Northern Samar, and for the safety of the public, particularly the students. The Governor ordered the suspension of classes at all levels in public and private schools within in the province, beginning March 16, 2020.

Several months after the initial backlash in March 2020, CHED Chairperson, Prospero De Vera qualified the idea of flexible learning as "more encompassing than online learning." De Vera explains that while online learning requires internet access, flexible learning does not necessarily require connectivity. Instead, it "focuses on the design and delivery of programs, courses, and learning interventions that address the learners' unique needs in terms of pace, place, process, and products of learning". To address this situation, coping mechanisms/ strategies are important for learners. Coping can be understood as a process that is key in managing stress. In this process, the individual makes a cognitive and behavioral effort to manage both external and internal sources of stress. The Researchers have distinguished between approach coping and avoidance coping. In general, people who engage in approach coping focus on the problem at hand and make a cognitive and behavioral effort to control or eradicate stressors, while avoidance copers tend to focus on the emotions and make the same kinds of effort to avoid thinking about the source of stress and its consequences.

Amidst global pandemic, academic performance is a product of the complex environment that surrounds the student, shaped by aspects such as intensity of study, motivation and context of relationships, which affect the academic achievement of individuals. There may be other psychological or emotional factors, such as anxiety, level of psychological well-being, and behavior strategies for effective adaptation to concrete environment demands and their associated emotional stress.

Coping strategies are known to influence an individuals' experience of stress. For most students, managing stress during college can be extremely challenging. However, learning how to manage stress may help students cope with every day social and academic pressures, and thus have a better college experience. Effective time management strategies increase academic performance and are frequently suggested by academic assistance personnel as aids to enhance achievement for college students. Although programs emphasize starting large tasks well before due dates, breaking down large tasks into small ones, and doing small tasks on a regular schedule, students regularly ignore these techniques and find themselves in great distress before exams.

2. Objectives

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This study aimed to determine the difficulties and coping strategies during COVID-19 crisis of selected students of the College of Arts and Communication, University of Eastern Philippines.

Specifically, the study is guided by the following objectives:

1. Document the profile of the respondents in terms of:
   1.1 Address
   1.2 Age
   1.3 Civil status
   1.4 Sex
   1.5 Weekly allowance
2. Identify the difficulties of the selected students during COVID-19 crisis; and
3. Discover the coping strategies of the selected students during Covid-19.

3. Literature Review

COVID-19 pandemic has affected all levels of the education system. Educational institutions around the world (in 192 countries) have either temporarily closed or implemented localized closures affecting about 1.7 billion of student population worldwide. Many universities around the world either postponed or canceled all campus activities to minimize gatherings and hence decrease the transmission of virus. However, these measures lead to higher economical, medical, and social implications on both undergraduate and postgraduate communities.

The posture "always alert and constantly expecting" generates anxiety and this "necessary sensorial" diligence leads to great psychological distress. Studies have described how the stressful and dangerous nature of working inside a prison environment can have repercussions in the health of these professionals, in the form of physical diseases, stress, burnout, family problems, or incapacity to carry out their duties, in addition to compromising institutional safety.

Rhodes, H. A. (2009) found out that Pursuing an online education is an appealing endeavor for busy professionals with full lives. However, whether you've chosen to continue your education on campus or online, earning your college degree can naturally be stressful.

Griffiths A. K., Preston K. R. (1992) study found out that test anxiety is something that students can overcome with a little time, patience, and persistence. Most students experience a little anxiety before a test and it is healthy to do so. A little stress motivates people to adequately prepare for an exam. There are students who become mentally paralyzed by tests and who are unable to perform at their best when they get to a test. These students suffer from test anxiety.

Other studies report longitudinal changes in university students' levels of distress (Deasy et al., 2014). These studies also observe that students experience higher stress levels in their first year of study, although the results of the former study indicate a high degree of stress in the last year. Prior research on proactive strategies implying the use of both self- and co-regulative strategies in reducing burnout is useful among teacher students in promoting a good learning environment fit, and in reducing the risk of burnout. Vaez and Laflamme 2008 found that students who were older or enrolled in shorter degree programmers (e.g. three

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year-programmers) were more likely to complete their studies successfully. Less attention has been paid to the effects of stress and coping styles on academic achievement.

4. Methodology

This study was conducted at the College of Arts and Communication, University of Eastern Philippines.

This study used survey method to measure the existing phenomenon and to use the data for problem solving. The respondents of this study were the eighty (80) selected students. A survey questionnaire was used to gather data needed in this study. The researchers used this instrument to ensure that the respondents personally answered all the queries.

This study made use of statistical tools to analyze and interpret the information gathered such as following: tally, ranking, frequency counts, percentage computation.

5. Analysis – Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

<u>Age</u>

The data in Table 1.1 show the distribution of the respondents' profile according to age. The data revealed that 8 or 10 percent were 18-21 years old, 61 or 76.25 percent were 22-25 years old while 11 or 13.75 percent were 26-29 years old.

The data in hand revealed that majority of the respondents were 22-25 years old which means that this age bracket is for college students.

Table 1.1. Distribution of the Respondents according to their Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-21 years old	8	10
22-25 years old	61	76.25
26-29 years old	11	13.75
Total	**80**	**100**

<u>Sex</u>

The data in Table 1.2 show the distribution of the respondents' profile according to sex. The data revealed 32 or 40 percent were male while 48 or 60 percent.

The data further revealed that most of the respondents were female.

Table 1.2. Distribution of the Respondents according to their Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	32	40
Female	48	60
Total	**80**	**100**

<u>Civil Status</u>

The data in Table 1.3 show the distribution of the respondents' profile according to civil status. The data revealed that 79 or 98.75 percent were single while 1 or 1.25 percent was married.

From the data, it can be observed that almost all of the respondents were single.

Table 1.3. Distribution of the Respondents according to their Civil Status

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Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	79	98.75
Married	1	1.25
Total	**80**	**100**

Weekly Allowance

The data in Table 1.4 show the distribution of the respondents' profile according to weekly allowance. The data revealed that 34 or 42.5 percent have less than P400 weekly allowance, 32 or 40 percent have P400-P600 per week, 8 or 10 percent have P601-P800 weekly allowance and, 2 or 2.5 percent have, P801-P1,000, P1,001-P1,200 and, P1,501 and above weekly allowance.

The data further revealed that majority of the respondents have P400-P600 weekly allowance. From the data, it can be observed that the respondents still have weekly allowance despite of no face to face classes due to flexible mode of learning that required load allowance.

Table 1.4. Distribution of the Respondents according to their Weekly Allowance

Weekly Allowance	Frequency	Percentage
Below P400	34	42.5
P400-P600	32	40
P601-P800	8	10
P801-P1,000	2	2.5
P1,001-P1,200	2	2.5
P1,501 and above	2	2.5
Total	**80**	**100**

Difficulties Encountered by the Respondents

Table 2 exhibits the difficulties encountered of the respondents. As to the technical difficulties there were seven (7) identified which include: unstable and/or poor internet connection, system errors encountered in the online classes, lack of gadget (i.e. smart phones, laptop and others which would meet the need for virtual classes), difficulty in signing into the Moodle App, difficulty in adapting to new technology, gadget not compatible for the different online applications used by the professors and, lack of technical–know–how in using the gadgets and online applications.

As to the financial difficulties there were six (6) identified which include: lack of load allowance, financial difficulty experienced by the parents, no capability to purchase high quality gadgets, not a scholarship grantee, self–supporting student and, no financial support from the university and/or LGU.

As the health difficulties there were seven (7) identified which include: exposure to radiation brought by the gadgets, stress and/or depression and anxiety, developing poor eyesight, Psychological problem on academic performances, exposure to COVID–19, flu due to changes in the weather and, malnutrition due to imbalance diet.

From the data it can be gleaned that the students are experiencing various difficulties along technical, financial and health amidst health crisis.

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Table 2. Difficulties Encountered by the Respondents

Difficulties Encountered	Frequency	Rank
TECHNICAL		
Unstable and/or poor internet connection	63	1
System errors encountered in the online classes	38	2
Lack of gadget (i.e. smart phones, laptop and others which would meet the need for virtual classes)	36	3
Difficulty in signing into the Moodle app	26	4
Difficulty in adapting to new technology	16	5
Gadget not compatible for the different online applications used by the professors	12	6
Lack of technical–know–how in using the gadgets and online applications	11	7
FINANCIAL		
Lack of load allowance	48	1
Financial difficulty experienced by the parents	46	2
No capability to purchase high quality gadgets	28	3
Not a scholarship grantee	23	4
self–supporting student	20	5
No financial support from the university and/or LGU	18	6
HEALTH		
Exposure to radiation brought by the gadgets	34	1
Stress and/or depression and anxiety	29	2
Developing poor eyesight	21	3
Psychological problem on academic performances	17	4
Exposure to COVID–19	15	5
Flu due to changes in the weather	12	6
Malnutrition due to imbalance diet	8	7

*multiple responses

Coping Strategies of the Respondents

Table 3 exhibits the coping strategies of the respondents. As to the task–orientation coping strategies there were seven (7) identified strategies which include: I think about the event and learn from it, I analyze the problem before reacting, I determine a course of action and follow it, I think about how I solve similar problem, I focus on the problem and see how I can solve it, I take corrective action immediately and, I work to understand the situation.

As to emotion–orientation coping strategies, there were seven (7) identified which include: I blame myself for having gotten into this situation, I wish that I could change what had happened or how I felt, I focus on my general inadequacies, I blame myself about being too emotional about the situation, I feel anxious about not being able to cope, I blame myself for not knowing what to do and, I become very upset.

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As to avoidance coping strategies, there were also seven (7) identified strategies which include: I take some time off and get away from the situation, I visit a friend, I treat myself to a favorite food or snack, I spend special time with a special person, I buy myself something, I go out for snack or meal and, I phone a friend.

From the data it can be observed that the students have various coping strategies in order to combat difficulties in blended mode of learning amidst global pandemic.

Table 3. Coping Strategies of the Respondents

Coping Strategies	Frequency	Rank
Task–Orientation Coping Strategies		
I think about the event and learn from it	40	1.5
I analyse the problem before reacting	40	1.5
I determine a course of action and follow it	32	3
I think about how I solve similar problem	31	4
I focus on the problem and see how I can solve it	30	5
I take corrective action immediately	23	6
I work to understand the situation	20	7
Emotion–Orientation Coping Strategies		
I blame myself for having gotten into this situation	27	1
I wish that I could change what had happened or how I felt	24	2
I focus on my general inadequacies	23	3
I blame myself about being too emotional about the situation	22	4
I feel anxious about not being able to cope	18	5
I blame myself for not knowing what to do	17	6
I become very upset	14	7
Avoidance Coping Strategies		
I take some time off and get away from the situation	43	1.5
I visit a friend	43	1.5
I treat myself to a favourite food or snack	24	3
I spend special time with a special person	21	4
I buy myself something	16	5.5
I go out for snack or meal	16	5.5
I phone a friend.	14	7

*multiple responses

6. Findings

The data revealed that majority were 22-25 years old, female, single, and have less than P400 weekly allowance.

Among the difficulties encountered by the students were: they are experiencing various difficulties along technical, financial and health amidst health crisis.

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As to the coping strategies of the respondents, there are three identified major strategies which include task–orientation coping strategies, emotion–orientation coping strategies and, avoidance coping strategies.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

    i.   Majority of the respondents have four hundred weekly allowances only. Hence, the Local Government Unit in collaboration of University of Eastern Philippines may come up with program along financial aid for the students.

    ii.   The respondents are experiencing various difficulties along technical, financial and health. Hence, the University of Eastern Philippines should formulate policy that will help students in coping up these problems.

    iii.   The identified difficulties of the respondents in blended mode of learning should be given attention by the university and the college for more effective learning.

    iv.   Similar study be conducted that include other colleges of the University of Eastern Philippines for policy formulation.

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