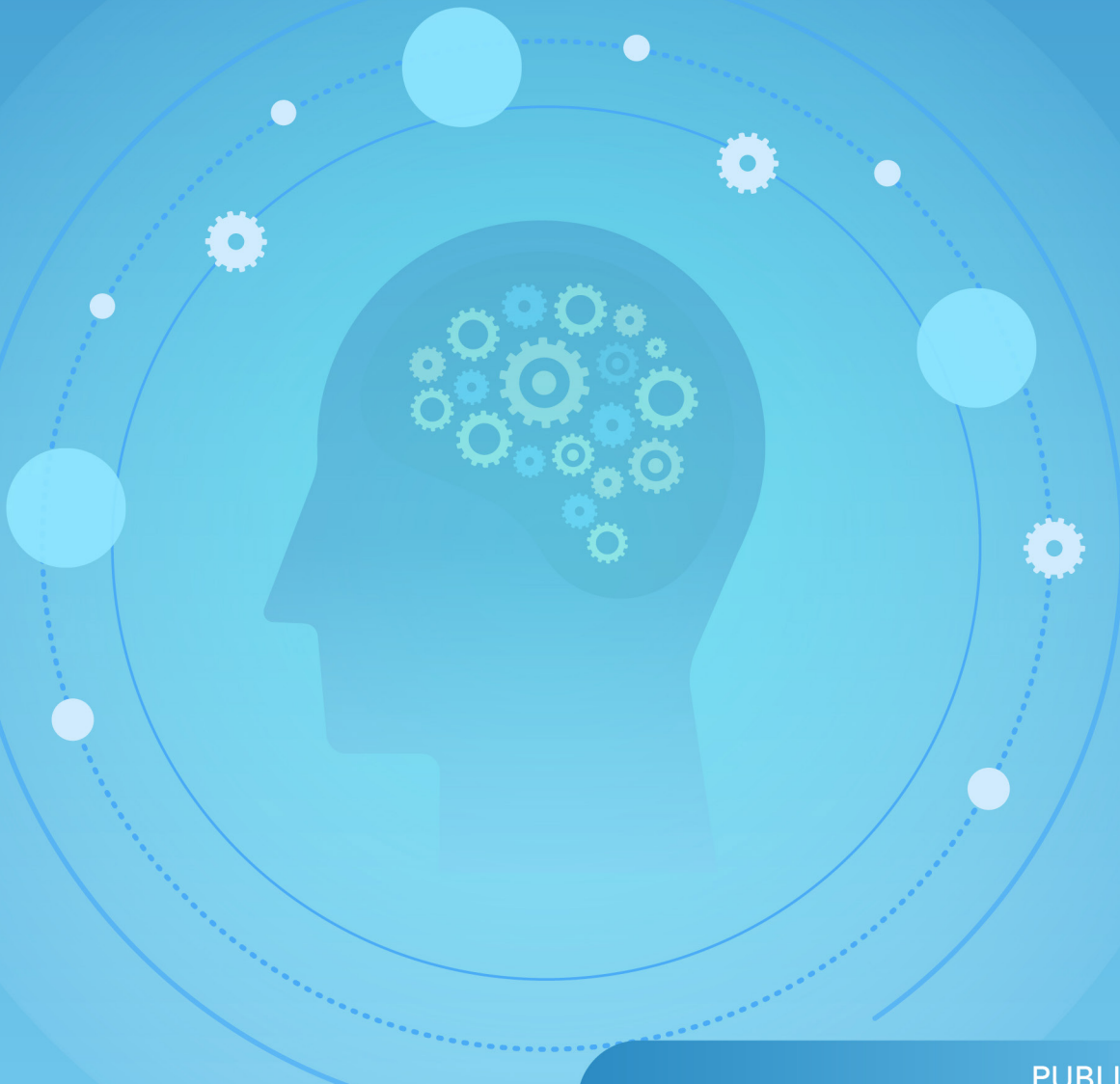




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## Academic Stress and Coping Style: Narratives of Private School Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study determined the dominant academic stress and coping styles of junior and senior high school students of Santa Lucia Catholic School, Inc., during the School Year 2023–2024. The students' profiles include grade level, age, sex, gender preference, birth order, parents' educational attainment and occupation, and study hours per day. Through the explanatory sequential research method, the study involved 154 students identified through stratified random sampling who answered the dominant academic stress. Of these, 75 students answered the coping styles questionnaire, and 10 were selected for interviews related to active coping style. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings showed that most respondents were 13-year-old, Grade Eight, female, male as their preferred gender orientation, eldest child, college-graduate parents working as skilled workers, and studied less than an hour per day. Among academic stress, study habits and exams were the most dominant, while academic attitude was low. Active coping is very high, while passive coping is moderate. Qualitative results highlighted three main coping styles: concentration efforts, self-study, and behavior. Recommendations include implementing proposed programs to address academic stress and improve coping styles and expanding future research such as parenting practices, time management, and student lifestyle.

### INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is the most common stressor of students here in the country and abroad. It can disrupt the student's performance in class and even their interaction with the people around them. Students reason to their teachers that they are overworked and find it hard to keep up with the lessons. Addressing the students' academic stress through interventions such as coping styles can minimize the negative impacts of stress on students. Findings from Central Luzon's private and public colleges indicate that academic stress makes students sleep less and feel exhausted, which lowers their mood and self-esteem (Austria-Cruz, 2019). This disturbance can lead to mental health concerns and other problems. A study by Kristensen *et al.* (2023) states that academic stress was highly related to academic self-efficacy and psychological distress at the interpersonal level for males, while the intraindividual impact of academic stress on psychological distress was greater for females.

Coping styles are stress management techniques performed by a person to ease their burden due to the stress brought by their situations or surroundings. Getting enough sleep, exercise, music, relaxation, etc., were other ways to deal with academic stress. An individual's upbringing and lifestyle, which may be influenced by their culture, educational background, and other developmental factors, determine how they cope with stress.

The significance of the study is determining the dominant academic stress and related coping styles of the students. Students may resort to maladaptive coping that does not resolve the problem or only temporarily lessen their academic stress. In addition, it provides guidance

counselors, educators, and school administrators with information and a proposed program at the end of the study that may be used as a foundation for creating an academic stress management plan for students.

The findings of this study provided insights into the different individuals who guide students in their education. The parents were able to assist their children in their academic coping styles. The teachers and school administrators were aware of the situation of their students and formulated activities or requirements that were not too burdensome. The guidance counselors develop their guidance program and provide coping styles to help students with their academic endeavors, particularly with regard to academic stress. This study is relevant to science as well as to future researchers because it provides recent information about the academic stress of students together with their coping styles. Lastly, this study proposed a program of activities that can be used by the Department of Education or other educational institutions to help their students who are struggling with academic stress.

### Statement of the Problem

This study determined the academic stress and coping styles of private school students during the School Year 2023–2024.

Furthermore, it sought to answer the following research questions.

What is the profile of the respondents in terms of the following:

- a. grade level,
- b. age,

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- c. sex,
- d. gender preference,
- e. birth order,
- f. parents' educational attainment,
- g. parents' occupation, and
- h. number of hours devoted to studying per day?

Which of the following is the dominant academic stress of the respondents:

- a. study habits and exams,
- b. sleep and living conditions,
- c. attitude, and
- d. class and teaching?

Which of the following is the dominant coping style on academic stress of the respondents:

- a. active coping, and
- b. passive coping?

What are the experiences of the respondents regarding their dominant coping style?

What program of activities can be proposed to address the results of the study?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### On Stress

Stress pertains to the emotional or physical tension a person feels. It is the body's response to unnoticed change or difficulties that arise from physical, emotional, or intellectual sources that are based on an individual's worldview or those around them.

The theory of emotion proposed by William James and Carl Lange, from 1884 to 1885, stated that emotions do not directly affect the perception of the cause of stress. It states that the feeling or other emotion begins only after the person experiences the bodily change due to an uncertain situation or problem.

Another theory is the emergency theory which was presented by Walter Cannon and later developed by Philip Bard. This theory is the opposite of the theory of emotion by James and Lange (Vandergriendt, 2018). It claims that the onset of a physiological reaction to stressful events is initiated by the primary release of an emotional response, which then transmits a signal to the brain's thalamus and cortex.

The Schachter-Singer Theory by Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer is also related to theories about stress. Emotional identification can only be determined through cognitive activity and emotional arousal. Man becomes aware of the reason for his emotional reaction, which leads him to search for related facts.

### On Academic Stress

A student's academic stress can be caused by a variety of circumstances. The main causes of academic stress are having trouble remembering all that has been studied, worrying about tests, and not focusing during study sessions (Yousif *et al.*, 2022).

Students must be suited to the learning environment to manifest a productive educational achievement. The person-environment fit theory affirms that there must

be a compatibility between the person's characteristics and environmental characteristics to produce a positive result (De Cooman & Vleugels, 2022). If a person regards himself as well-suited in an environment, he is likely satisfied and motivated to act whatever is demanded concerning the given task.

Studies show that there were a lot of factors contributing to the students' stressors. One of those factors is the student's study habits and exams. Research indicates a strong correlation between students' academic performance and their study habits (Jafari *et al.*, 2019). According to a study, students who studied more and used study techniques performed better on tests, while those who were highly distracted did worse (Walck-Shannon *et al.*, 2021). Maintaining good study habits can contribute to the better academic accomplishment of the students.

Another factor is sleep and living conditions. Research indicates that improved sleep quality, duration, and consistency are linked to improved academic achievement (Okano *et al.*, 2019). Living conditions also affect the students' academic performance. A study in Latin America shows that overcrowding is a significant factor in the impact of a child's academic performance, specifically in language and mathematics (Contreras *et al.*, 2019). Constant noise and distraction from the surroundings decrease students' focus on studying or completing their tasks.

Students' attitudes, particularly their lack of confidence, also contribute to academic stress (Yousif *et al.*, 2022). According to a study on students' attitudes and academic performance, affective, cognitive, value, and effort all positively correlate with students' academic success in the course (Melad, 2022).

A study shows that students' academic performance is influenced by the teachers' efforts and other environmental factors (Azmat, 2019). According to Nwokedi (2023), a teacher's pedagogy contributes to the student's active participation through a student-centered approach in teaching. Academic competition may bring discomforts to students like crab mentality. However, it can help students become more motivated to study. A study about class competition states that class competition did not have a direct relation with academic achievement (Li *et al.*, 2022).

### On Coping Styles

The term "coping" describes the entirety of shifting behavioral and cognitive patterns intended to control a person's exposure to external or internal pressures or circumstances. This coping can be reactive or proactive (Langerak *et al.*, 2022). Reactive because it is already dealing with a present problem and proactive because it is a preventive mechanism. The coping style is the conscious action of a person in dealing with the present demand or conflict coming from internal or external situations. According to Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman's Stress and Cognitive Appraisal, stress is a two-way process (Fubin & Zhen, 2022). It pertains to the

influence of environmental stressors and the individual's subjective response to those stressors.

Problem-focused coping differs from emotion-focused coping in how a person manages their ways of coping positively or negatively. Problem-focused involves a support system and adopting active coping strategies. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping involves denial, acceptance, religious support, optimistic interpretation, and emotional support (Lin & Chen, 2010). Yang Min Lin and Farn Shing Chen assert different coping mechanisms, referring to active problem coping, which focuses on solving the problem and searching for assistance; active emotional coping, which focuses on the attitude of emotional adjustment and emotional outburst; passive problem coping, which centers on adopting procrastination and evasive behaviors; and lastly, passive emotional coping, which focuses on the attitude of being emotionally downcast and losing emotional control (Lin & Chen, 2010).

### On Profile

Based on the study about the influence of sociodemographic factors on stress and coping strategies among undergraduate nursing students, it reveals that demographic factors might have influenced the stress level and coping styles of the respondents (Asturias *et al.*, 2021). Also, the diversity of respondents' backgrounds has contributed to their stress levels, especially those without family and supporting relations (Asturias *et al.*, 2021). Another study that compares parents' educational attainment to their children's academic achievement finds that parents' education plays a big role in moral upbringing. However, there is no correlation between uneducated parents and their children's academic performance (Idris *et al.*, 2020).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research Design.** The study employed the explanatory sequential method of research.

**Population and Sample.** In the quantitative phase, there were 154 students, from grade seven to grade 12, who served as the study's respondents about dominant academic stress and were determined through stratified random sampling. Of the 154 respondents, 75 students were identified as the respondents and answered the dominant coping style questionnaire related to study habits and exams. In the qualitative phase, from the 75 students, 10 participants (five males and five females) were identified for the interview about their active coping style.

**Data Gathering Instrument.** The researcher used a questionnaire in the needed data for the study, namely:

Part I – sociodemographic profile of the respondent's grade level, age, sex, gender preference, birth order, parents' educational attainment, parents' occupation, and

the number of hours devoted to studying per day;

Part II – adapted factors of academic stress questionnaire of Yousif *et al.* in presenting the students' academic stress which is divided into study habits and exams (items 1-10), sleep and living conditions (items 11-20), attitude (items 21-30), and class and teaching (items 31-40).

Part III – coping styles questionnaire indicating active coping (items 1-10), and passive coping (items 11-20) based on Ying Min Lin and Farn Shing Chen (2010).

Part IV an interview guide based on the result of a quantitative study related to active coping.

**Data Analysis.** For the quantitative phase of the study, the descriptive method was used to analyze the results. Percentage was used to describe the profile of the respondents. The mean was used to determine the dominant academic stress and coping styles of the respondents. The data gathered for the qualitative phase was treated using Clarke & Braun's Thematic Analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile of the respondents

**On Grade Level.** A great percentage (20.13%) of the respondents are in Grade eight, while 11.69% are Grade 11 students.

**On Age.** A great number (24.03%) of the respondents are 13 years old; meanwhile, the least (3.90%) respondents are 18 years old.

**On Sex.** A great number (51.95%) of the respondents are females, while 48.05% are males.

**On Gender preference.** A great percentage (44.81%) of the respondents identified the man as their gender, while 0.65% as gay.

**On Birth order.** A great number (38.31%) of respondents are eldest child; meanwhile, the least (15.58%) respondents are middle child.

**On Father's educational attainment.** A great number (47.40%) whose educational attainment of a father is College Graduate while the least are 0.65% Elementary Level.

**On Mother's educational attainment.** A great number (45.45%) of mothers are also College Graduates, while the least are both 0.65% Elementary Level and Elementary Graduate.

**On Father's occupation.** Out of 154 respondents, a great number of fathers' occupation, (70.13%) are Skilled workers while the least are 4.55% Unemployed.

**On Mother's occupation.** A great number of mothers (54.55%) are Skilled workers, while the least are (16.23%) Professional workers.

**On Number of hours devoted to studying per day.** A great number (46.10%) of the respondents devoted one hour and below to studying per day while the least were two and a half hours to three hours (3.90%).

### Academic Stress of the Respondents

**Table 1:** Item Mean Ratings Showing the Academic Stress of the Respondents

No	Items	x	DR
<b>Study Habits and Exams</b>			
1.	I have difficulty remembering what I have studied.	3.31	S
2.	I have trouble focusing when I'm studying.	3.29	S
3.	I have difficulty in understanding the lessons.	3.05	S
4.	I find it hard to arrange my notes for review.	3.19	S
5.	I do not have a regular study routine.	3.14	S
6.	I find it hard to study for my examination.	3.27	S
7.	I have trouble concentrating when taking examinations.	3.12	S
8.	I am anxious to finish my exams as quickly as possible.	2.90	S
9.	I feel nervous each time I take examination.	3.25	S
10.	I forget most of the things I reviewed while taking examinations.	3.40	S
	Overall	3.19	Moderate
<b>Sleep and Living Conditions</b>			
11.	I easily get sleepy while reviewing my lessons.	3.42	FO
12.	I easily get sleepy during classroom discussions.	3.21	S
13.	I do not get much sleep the night before quiz or exam.	3.38	S
14.	I do not get much sleep the night before a graded recitation.	3.19	S
15.	I have trouble falling asleep at night.	3.15	S
16.	I prefer to sleep rather than to study at night.	3.17	S
17.	My study area is not very bright.	2.73	S
18.	My study area lacks proper ventilation.	2.99	S
19.	My study area is noisy.	2.77	S
20.	My study area is not spacious.	2.51	AN
	Overall	3.05	Moderate
<b>Attitude</b>			
21.	I think that studying is difficult.	3.12	S
22.	I think that studying is not important.	1.58	N
23.	I think that studying is not interesting.	1.90	AN
24.	I do not enjoy studying.	2.29	AN
25.	I worry about my academic performance.	3.45	FO
26.	I lack confidence in my abilities to complete my schoolwork.	2.89	S
27.	I am not comfortable to follow school policies.	2.58	AN
28.	I do not like to go to school regularly.	2.20	AN
29.	I do not like to submit my academic requirements on time.	2.64	S
30.	I do not like to socialize with my schoolmates.	2.47	AN
	Overall	2.51	Low
<b>Class and Teaching</b>			
31.	There is unhealthy competition among us students.	2.96	S
32.	There is crab mentality within the class.	2.70	S
33.	There are students who cause disturbances during lectures.	3.74	FO
34.	There are negative peer influences in our class.	3.06	S
35.	There are a lot of note taking during lectures.	3.47	FO
36.	Teachers seem unprepared during lectures.	2.29	AN
37.	The explanation of our teachers is inadequate.	2.84	S
38.	Teachers do not always answer students' questions about the lesson.	2.50	AN

39.	Teachers give too many academic requirements.	3.21	S
40.	Teachers have boring teaching styles.	2.58	AN
	Overall	2.94	Moderate
<b>Legend</b>			
Mean Ranges	Item Descriptive Rating	Overall Descriptive Rating	
4.21 – 5.00	Very Often (VO)	Very High (VH)	
3.41 – 4.20	Fairly Often (FO)	High (H)	
2.61 – 3.40	Sometimes (S)	Moderate (M)	
1.81 – 2.60	Almost Never (AN)	Low (L)	
1.00 – 1.80	Never (N)	Very Low (VL)	

### Study Habits and Exam

The respondents experience Moderate academic stress related to their study habits and exams, as demonstrated by the mean rating of 3.19. It implies that the respondents' study habits and examination might not be severely overwhelming, but it may still increase their academic stress. According to Sasikumar and Bapitha (2019), students suffered from exam stress for a number of reasons, including inadequate study habits, a lack of necessary information, and a lack of preparedness.

Item 10, "I forget most of the things I reviewed while taking examinations," got the highest mean rating of 3.40 with an item descriptive rating of Sometimes. It implies that the majority of respondents may have trouble remembering the material they studied or may have forgotten what they reviewed. According to the study of Ta and Grnaz (2023), students forget what they reviewed because they lack understanding of their lesson. They weren't able to fully grasp the meaning of the lesson. Meanwhile, the lowest mean rating was accorded to Item 8, "I am anxious to finish my exams as quickly as possible," with an item descriptive rating of Sometimes. It signifies that the respondents at times feel anxious about finishing their examination immediately. A study by Burnham and Makienko (2017) states that students' test anxiety disrupts their concentration and distorts their focus in the examination.

### Sleep and Living Conditions

In terms of the respondents' sleep and living conditions, they experience Moderate academic stress, as demonstrated by the mean rating of 3.05. This implies that living conditions and sleep deprivation have an impact on students' academic performance. Students feel that sleep difficulties and discomfort in the living environment affect their class participation. This finding affirms the study of Ayalew *et al.* (2022), indicating that academic anxiety and stress are highly associated with sleep deprivation. Living conditions and the learning environment also have an impact on students' academic performance, either positively or negatively, depending on how distracted they are. Students with a pleasing physical environment performed better than those who do not have a conducive environment (Baafi, 2020).

Item 11, "I easily get sleepy while reviewing my lessons," got the highest mean rating of 3.42 with a Fairly Often description. It implies that due to fatigue and boredom, most of the respondents feel sleepy while reviewing their lessons, which contributes to their poor academic performance. Sleepiness compromises learning goals, memory, grades, driving performance, and mood (Hershner & Chervin, 2014). Meanwhile, the lowest mean rating was accorded to Item 20, "My study area is not spacious," with an item descriptive rating of Almost Never. It signifies that the respondents have comfortable study areas at their respective homes. Students preferred a conducive workplace area to study where they could move freely (Mirana, 2022). A conducive study area helps students concentrate on their studies and perform well academically.

### Attitude

Attitude as an academic stress is Low, as demonstrated by the mean rating of 2.51. It implies that the respondents do not see studying and education negatively. They perceive the importance of education for themselves. Mappadang *et al.* (2022) asserts that students who exhibit a negative attitude during the learning process are likely to have a harmful impact on the learning outcome.

Item 25, "I worry about my academic performance," got the highest mean rating of 3.45 with a Fairly Often description. It implies that respondents' academic anxiety is specifically about their academic performance, and it can have either positive or negative effects. As stated by Horton *et al.* (2024), students with different levels of focus in a task may perceive the feeling of worry differently, either as motivation or distraction regarding academic performance. Meanwhile, the lowest mean rating was accorded to Item 22, "I think that studying is not important," with an item descriptive rating of Never. It shows that the respondents' thought academics were very important. As stated by Sharma and Ankit (2023), students perceive education as important because it will help them achieve their goal, grow personally and intellectually, and help in nation-building. A positive outlook regarding education and its importance can boost students' motivation to learn.

### Class and Teaching

In terms of class and teaching, the respondents' level of academic stress is Moderate, as demonstrated by the mean rating of 2.94. It implies that classmates and teachers play a significant role in learning inside the classroom. Respondents feel the importance of the teacher's lesson mastery and their classmates' cooperation during lectures. A teacher's pedagogy comprises a variety of teaching methods that bring more interactive or student-centered approaches that encourage active participation from students (Nwokedi, 2023). Granero-Gallegos *et al.* (2019) found that disruptive classroom conduct impairs learning, particularly for boys who exhibit more disruptive behaviors and lower levels of intrinsic motivation than girls.

Item 33, "There are students who cause disturbances during lectures," got the highest mean rating of 3.74, with Fairly Often as a descriptive rating. It implies that the respondents feel that peer distraction during lectures disturbs their attention and participation in class. As

mentioned by Zhao and Zhao (2020), disruptive peers may influence teachers' pedagogical methods and hinder learning specifically for girls, who are more sensitive to the misbehavior of their disruptive peers. Meanwhile, the lowest mean rating was accorded to Item 36, "Teachers seem unprepared during lectures," having an item descriptive rating of Almost Never. It implies that respondents believe teachers occasionally lack the necessary preparation to present their lessons. Findings support Damien and Claire (2022), which found a strong relationship between students' academic achievement and teachers' preparedness in the classroom.

The research's participants felt that study habits and exams were the main sources of academic stress, as the highest mean rating. This finding supports the study of Jafari *et al.* (2019), indicating that study habits and examinations affect students' performance. Moreover, Attitude gained the lowest mean rating.

### On Coping Styles

**Table 2:** Item Mean Ratings Showing Coping Styles of the Respondents

No	Items	x	DR
<b>Active Coping</b>			
1.	I tried my best to remember the lessons I learned.	4.75	SA
2.	I relax myself when I am troubled in focusing on my studies.	3.97	A
3.	I search and look for related data from the Internet when I have difficulty understanding the lessons.	4.63	SA
4.	I borrow the notes of my classmates when my notes are incomplete.	3.99	A
5.	I allot a specific time for my studies.	4.13	A
6.	I review my lessons with my classmates in preparation for examination.	3.91	A
7.	I focus myself on the questionnaire when taking examination.	4.75	SA
8.	I have an optimistic attitude when I am anxious in taking examination.	3.71	A
9.	I try to keep calm when I am nervous during examination.	4.24	SA
10.	I answer easy questions first when I cannot remember the things I reviewed while taking examination.	4.76	SA
	Overall	4.28	Very High
<b>Passive Coping</b>			
11.	I indulge myself in eating before I study.	3.15	N
12.	I let nature take its course on my studies.	3.33	N
13.	I am used to leaving aside the problem and not handling it for the time being.	3.47	A
14.	I lower my standards in my academic performance.	2.68	N
15.	I sleep frequently in my class.	2.29	D
16.	I study other subjects that I like when the class is not interesting.	2.49	D
17.	I draw on a piece of paper or doodle when I am nervous in taking examination.	3.00	N
18.	I sleep when I cannot understand the lesson during class.	2.27	D
19.	I play games to divert myself from academic demands.	2.68	N
20.	I go out with my friends when I have a lot of academic requirements.	1.95	D
	Overall	2.73	Moderate
<b>Legend</b>			
Mean Ranges	Item Descriptive Rating	Overall Descriptive Rating	
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very High (VH)	

3.41 – 4.20	Agree (A)	High (H)
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral (N)	Moderate (M)
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree (D)	Low (L)
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very Low (VL)

The active coping of the respondents is Very High, as demonstrated by the mean rating of 4.28. It implies that respondents employed a solution-focused and positive coping habit related to academic stress. Item 10, “I answer first easy questions when I forget the things I reviewed while taking examination,” got the highest mean rating of 4.76 with a Strongly Agree description. It indicates that students mostly focused on the easy part before proceeding to the difficult level of the examination. The lowest mean rating was accorded to Item 8, “I have an optimistic attitude when I am anxious in taking examination,” with the lowest mean rating of 3.71 with an Agree description. It signifies that there are some students who do not have a positive mindset when taking examination. Some students struggled in maintaining a positive outlook related to examinations.

The passive coping of the respondents is Moderate, as demonstrated by the mean rating of 2.73. It implies that students do not resort much to negative habits of coping associated with academic stress. Item 13, “I am used to leaving aside the problem and not handling it for the time being,” got the highest mean rating of 3.47 with an Agree descriptive. It means that when students experience academic stress, they tend to set aside the problems and take their time before facing them. Meanwhile, the lowest mean rating was accorded to Item 20, “I go out with my friends when I have a lot of academic requirements,” with the lowest mean rating of 1.95 with a Disagree description. It indicates that when students have a lot of academic obligations, particularly when deadlines are approaching, they often avoid hanging out with friends.

The most dominant coping style of the responders is active coping, which has the highest mean rating and a Very High description rating. It implies that students engage in healthy mechanisms in facing academic stress. Students practiced strategies like peer assistance and study methods (Özdemir, 2018). Students showed active coping styles like asking assistance from people, study groups, and other efficient strategies to address academic stress, specifically study habits and exams.

### Narratives on Dominant Coping Style

The themes that emerged from the narratives of the participants were (a) concentration efforts, (b) self-study, and (c) help-seeking behavior.

#### Theme 1: Concentration Efforts

##### Relaxation

Relaxation techniques in studying allow students to be calm and confident in reviewing their lessons. Participant 1: “I won’t think that it is difficult, so I will be calm.” Participant 2 mentioned that “I’ll relax my mind for a

while before reviewing again. There is a 15-minute break.” Participant 6: “I relax for a while. Stop for a bit and calm down, then focus on studying.” The findings of this study affirm the study of Gondo *et al.* (2023), indicating that regular relaxation practice leads to low stress levels.

##### Breathing Exercises

Participants mentioned that breathing exercises helped them to reduce their nervousness. Participant 3: “I take a deep breath to not become nervous.” Participant 4 mentioned that he applied breathing techniques to clear his mind: “I relax, inhale and exhale, and then I clear my mind so that I will not think of something else.” Participant 10: “Take a deep breath and focus on each item.” According to Mahalakshmi (2024), breathing techniques are a very effective strategy for lowering academic stress.

##### Brain-boosting Habits

Eating foods like memory boosters helped students retain information as well as helped them focus on reviewing. Participant 2: “I will eat chocolate to refresh my mind.” Participant 5: “I chew some chewing gum, then I can focus.” Participant 6: “Sometimes, I would eat a little while reviewing.” This finding supports the study of Sasaki *et al.* (2023), indicating that chocolates contribute to increased brain functional efficiency and cognitive performance. Furthermore, chewing gum also helped students relax and improve cognitive performance (Fantozzi *et al.*, 2021).

##### Solitude

Some participants stated that they prefer to study in a solitary place where they can focus and not be distracted by people. Participant 8: “I choose the quiet spot. I sit in front because my classmates are afraid to ask for answers when I’m in front, and it’s not too noisy there.” Participant 9 mentioned that she preferred privacy while reviewing, “I close the room, and then I’ll review there.” Similarly, Participant 10 stated that she liked to go to a silent room to review, “I will go to a room where there is nobody there, only silence.” Participants mentioned that they prefer to review in a peaceful and isolated area to study so that they can focus and not be disturbed by people or noise. Background noise disturbs students’ attention on logical reasoning tasks and reading comprehension (Braat-Eggen *et al.*, 2021).

##### Neglect

Some participants stated that they ignore outside distractions like peers or devices when reviewing or responding to test questions. Participant 3: “I ignore

the distractions like my classmates who are asking me questions during the exam so that I can concentrate on answering.” Participant 4: “I control my cellphone usage to focus.” Participant 6: “I don’t pay attention to those around me. I will just focus on the paper.” Peer and mobile distractions cause disturbance to the students. The greater the exposure to mobile phones, the higher the chance of negative impact on learning and academic achievement, especially in skills and cognitive abilities (Sunday *et al.*, 2021).

### Music

Some participants mentioned that listening to relaxing music helped them focus and relax while studying. Participant 5: “I’ll play some music for a while, then I can focus.” Participant 8 mentioned that, “I will go to a quiet place and play soft music because it will calm my mind.” A study by Faus *et al.* (2019) states that listening to music improves a person’s positive mood and reduces negative moods related to their academic experience.

### Theme 2: Self-study

#### Online Review

Some participants rely on online resources for additional information. Participant 1 mentioned that he preferred to watch on YouTube: “I watch YouTube about the lesson and will eventually have my self-study.” Participant 8: “I watch YouTube videos and tutorials and search pictures on the internet. There, I can easily understand the lesson.” Similarly, participant 10 mentioned that she also used online resources to understand the lesson: “I use online resources for additional information.” This finding supports the study of Kofo *et al.* (2022), showing that online learning resources helped students in their academic endeavors and guided them in their future learning.

#### Summary

Participants make summaries of their lessons to make the study easier to understand. Participant 1: “I will make a draft on a piece of paper. Through this, I can think of what to put as an answer.” Participant 3: “I will summarize the lesson and review its important parts.” Participant 10: “I prioritize the key information, create outlines or summaries, and organize notes into categories of the lesson.” This finding affirms the study of Özdemir (2018), stating that summarization is a sign of students’ high comprehension level since students could grasp the main idea from a narrative text.

#### Time management

Participants balanced their studies and other tasks through time management. Participant 1: “I have to balance studying and things that I do like hobbies and house chores.” Similarly, participant 4 also created his schedule for review: “I would create a schedule. Do it daily so that I’ll be used to following it, and it will be part of the day eventually.” Participant 10: “I will make a to-do list or schedule of what I will study.” This finding affirms

the study of Alyami *et al.* (2021), indicating that time management and preplanning are beneficial for students’ academic performance and also stating that those who manage their time well have high academic grades.

#### Difficulty Assessment

Participants stated that they would rather respond to easy questions before moving on to more complex ones. It is the strategy they employ not to cram near the end of the examination period. Participant 2: “I will start with all the easier ones, and I will do the difficult ones last. So that I’ll be sure that my answers are correct.” Participant 3: “What I do is, I skip the questions that I don’t know the answer and I will return when I finish answering the questions that I know and are easy.” Participant 4: “I will skip the question and then return later when I remember the answer.” The finding conforms with the study of Anaya *et al.* (2022), stating that students became optimistic in their examination performance when they answered easy questions found at the beginning of the test questionnaire.

#### Goal Setting

Some participants stated that they set goals that they must fulfill within a specific time frame. Participant 3: “I set goals and make a schedule to prioritize my tasks.” Also, Participant 9 established a set of goals for her to attain each session of review: “I set specific goals for each review session.” This finding validates the study by Al-Bataineh *et al.* (2019) that found academic goal-setting affected students’ progress in self-efficacy and reading proficiency.

#### Mnemonic Keywords

Some participants mentioned using mnemonics to retain the information better while reviewing their lessons. Participant 5: “I try to remember at least one keyword from those terms that have meaning.” Participant 8: “I will familiarize myself with the key points. I’ll just read; it at least I have reviewed something.” Radović and Manzey (2019) found that mnemonics improved students’ comprehension of mental representation and sequence tasks.

#### Repetitive Reading

Some participants said that in order to fully examine and comprehend the lessons, they read the questions or their notes several times. Participant 4: “I reread the question so I can understand better and answer well.” Participant 7: “I read my notes repeatedly.” The finding supports the study of Romig and Jetton (2023), indicating that repetitive reading improves reading fluency and students’ comprehension.

#### Highlighter

Some participants mentioned that they used highlighters to take note of the important parts of the lesson. Participant 5: “I used highlighter.” Similarly, Participant 10 used color-coding to note important parts of the

lesson: “I used color-coding or highlighting techniques.” Based on the study of Tante and Sass (2023), it was stated that those who used highlighting techniques had higher reading comprehension skills.

### Skimming

Some participants mentioned that they went over the questionnaire first before answering each question. This strategy helped them in answering the questions correctly. Participant 1: “I will look for hints in the succeeding answers or questions. I will put together all the succeeding answers or questions because sometimes the answers are found in the question.” Participant 9: “I read the whole exam first.” Participant 10: “I will analyze the question first before I answer.” Based on the study of Wiredufred (2024), it was noted that the prereading strategy employed by students is a sign of high reading comprehension leading to high academic performance.

### Theme 3: Help-Seeking Behavior

#### Help-Seeking Behavior

Participants mentioned that aside from study techniques, they would ask assistance from others, such as peers, regarding their notes and lessons. Participant 3: “What I do is, I ask my teacher, or I ask for help from my classmates who can understand the lesson.” Participant 4: “I will borrow my classmates’ notes so I can write down what I have missed.” Participant 5: “I ask for help from my teachers, my friends, or those classmates who are excelling in the subject.” The study’s findings affirm the study of Joseph and NT (2023), indicating that support from peers has a significant positive relationship with the academic achievement of students, leading to an increase in their academic lifestyle and achievement quality.

#### Integration of Results

The results on the study habits and exams revealed the highest mean rating concerning academic stress among the respondents. They frequently struggle to respond to questions during examinations due to environmental distractions and a lack of preparation. Students resort to passive problem and active problem-coping with addressing their difficulties regarding their academic stress. In active problem coping, they face their academic struggle by solving the main problem of their difficulties. However, there are instances that they also divert into unproductive methods. They tend to delay addressing their difficulty, such as sleeping or playing, to divert their attention. The study’s qualitative section details the participants’ coping styles. Students utilized concentration efforts to keep themselves focused on studies and examinations, used a variety of study techniques to help them comprehend their studies, and ask the assistance of their peers or teachers.

#### Proposed Program of Activities based on the Results of the Study

Based on the study’s findings, the proposed intervention

program of activities emphasizes the value of coping styles for academic stress and wellness activities that could support students in creating healthy coping styles. Study habits and exams activities centered on the student’s preparedness for examination and follow-up activities to monitor the progress and experience of students related to the examination.

Concentration efforts activities include mind-game exercises to improve students’ concentration and seminars about how pupils focus on academic tasks.

Self-study activities include seminars on cognitive skills, particularly lower-level and higher-order thinking abilities. Help-seeking behavior activities include the formation of study support groups and ‘kumustahan’ sessions that serve as follow-up for students.

Sleep and living conditions activities include wellness or recreation activities.

Activities pertaining to attitude are seminars and spiritual reflections that foster a positive outlook on education.

Class and teaching activities include seminars about classroom awareness and faculty development activities.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions were made:

A great percentage of respondents were from Grade eight, 13 years old. A great number of respondents were females, identified man as gender orientation, eldest, and parents were college graduates and skilled workers. Most respondents prefer one hour and below of studying per day. Study Habits and Exams were the dominant academic stress of the students. The dominant coping style was Active Coping. The themes that emerged from the participants’ narratives were Concentration Efforts, Self-study, and Help-Seeking Behavior. Intervention programs have been created to help students further strengthen their coping styles such as, seminars, follow-up meetings, and health activities.

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