

# Surviving the Semester: Stress Management for Student-Scholars

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## ABSTRACT

There have been several studies focused on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of both the students and the educators. However, there are limited studies that specifically focused on the experiences of college student-scholars adapting to online classes amid the global pandemic. Most of the time, student-scholars come from financially challenged families, and unlike regular college students, they seem to face greater pressures in their studies especially on maintaining their grades since the hope of finishing their education rests on being able to keep their scholarship grants. This study aims to identify the stressors that student-scholars face in the online class setup and identifies the coping strategies employed to manage these stressors. This study is a quantitative research that used a survey questionnaire administered to the student-scholars under various courses from the different universities in Cebu City. This study found out that among the five categories of stressors, student-scholars experience financial stressors the most, which mostly stemmed from the increased household expenses due to the excessive electricity usage during the online class. Listening to music has emerged as the most common coping strategy used to deal with stress. Thus, it is implied on the development of stress management interventions for the student-scholars which is useful for the university and/colleges' Guidance and Counseling Services and the scholarship granting institutions.

## Keywords

stress management; student-scholars; surviving and stressors

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## Rationale

Since the first case of the COVID-19 in the Philippines was reported last January 2020, several safety measures were taken to help lessen the spread of the virus- the whole country was placed under a state of calamity, the lockdowns were imposed, the number of cases has been rising, and falling, several people lost their jobs and the classes were suspended. The global pandemic had affected everyone in different ways and had brought about unexpected changes in our society.

One of the pandemic's unexpected changes is the transition of classes from traditional or "face-to-face" classes to online and distance learning. All the educational institutions, public and private at all levels had to adapt to this change. Pace, et. al (2020) has associated this current circumstance as a crisis learning. Toquero (2020) also pointed out the need for educational institutions to improve not only their curriculum but as well as the usage of new methods and strategies in their instructions. Both the educators and the students alike have their own set of struggles and challenges in the new educational setup. There are already a few recent studies conducted that focus on the effects of COVID-19 on educators as well as tertiary students. Other researches focus on the

challenges and the opportunities of online learning. However, there are only a few existing studies that deal with the challenges, struggles, and coping of the specific unit of the student population- the academic scholars.

On top of their tasks and responsibilities as students, the college academic scholars have to maintain a certain grade point average (GPA) to keep their scholarships. As part of the student population, scholars suffer problems in facing greater pressures on how they could maintain their grades and how to make them higher (Guimba, Wardah et.al., 2015). The family situation also adds to the pressures that they are experiencing since most of them came from financially challenged families who have the least to no capacity to fully support their children's tertiary education. It's safe to say that before the global pandemic hit, the student-scholars are already dealing with different interpersonal pressures which include the academic demands of their scholarship and the expectations of their families. Now, with the new online and distance learning setup, the student-scholars are faced with new struggles and challenges in addition to these existing pressures.

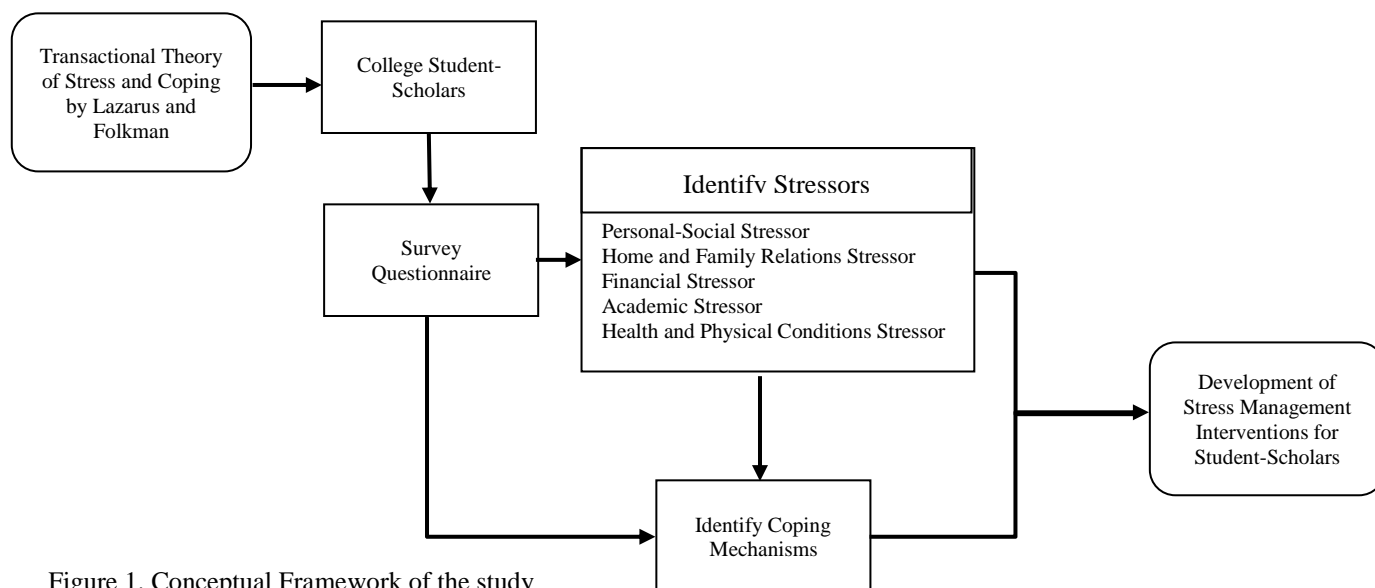


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the study

### Theoretical Background

Based on the age placement guidelines by The Beacon School- Philippines, ideally, students graduate from senior high school by around 17 years of age. Thus, it is safe to say that most of the college students in the Philippines start their first year at the age of around 17-19 years old which are still considered adolescents. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines “adolescents” as individuals between 10-19 years of age group.

Developmental theorists such as E. Erickson and J. Piaget believed that the stage of adolescence is a period of rapid change that is accompanied by psychological challenges. Erickson, in his Psychosocial Development Theory, points out that this is the stage wherein adolescents need to develop their sense of self and personal identity. Moreover, students at this age also undergo challenges in almost every aspect of their lives such as physically, mentally, emotionally, and also academically. In addition to these existing challenges, the students are now also dealing with the challenges and changes brought about by the global pandemic, COVID-19.

All the above-mentioned challenges of the college students in the adolescent stage are also experienced by the college student-scholars to a greater extent. Before the pandemic, they were already prone to more academic pressures because they were aiming to keep their scholarships. With online and distance learning, the student-scholars are facing even more pressures not only academically but as well as financially which may affect their emotional or psychological health. Thus, this study adopts the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman

which identifies the process of coping as a mediator of the stressful person-environment transactions. This theory views stress as a relational concept that is a transaction between individuals and their environment while it defines coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them. In relation, Lazarus and Folkman also identified two types of coping in their theory, *problem-focused coping* includes “confrontative coping, planful problem-solving, and seeking social support” and *emotion-focused coping* includes “self-control, distancing, positive appraisal, accepting responsibility, and escape or avoidance.”

### Problem Statement

This study aims to identify the stressors that the college student-scholars are facing in the new learning setup as well as their strategies to cope with these stressors. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do the college student-scholars experience the different stressors caused by or augmented by the online/distance learning setup?
2. What are the coping mechanisms adopted by the student-scholars to deal with the different stressors?

### Literature Review

According to Landow in his study on Stress and Mental Health of College Students, the change and challenges in the students’ life at this stage of their lives are evident in almost every area of growth,

including physiological, cognitive, behavioral, and environmental realms. In addition, Sharma, Bunty, et. al (2021) also found out that with academic progression, the level of stress among the undergraduate students also increased.

With the outbreak of the global pandemic, the COVID-19 virus, college student-scholars, like the rest of the students around the world, are facing new changes and challenges. One of the major changes that the student population is currently facing is the shift to online and distance learning of all classes which is also known as synchronous instructional delivery. In the Sentiment Analysis on Synchronous Online Delivery of Instruction due to Extreme Community Quarantine in the Philippines caused by COVID-19 Pandemic by Pastor (2020), the majority of the students who responded to the study had negative sentiments with the new instructional method, which implies that they might encounter several problems during the delivery of instruction synchronously. This is further supported by the results of the National Survey of Medical Students in the Philippines which implied that the availability of fast and reliable internet connection was a bigger concern than either device ownership or technical aptitude. It was also pointed out that the internet costs restricted the students' access to online content. In addition, it was also identified that the pandemic has caused psychological stress to the students which made it difficult for them to focus on their studies.

On the other hand, social support, personal resilience, and adequate coping skills have been identified as vital personal resources to effectively manage and bounce back from stressful situations such as disease outbreaks and disasters (Duncan, 2020). In a recent study by Savitsky et al. (2020), higher levels of resilience and positive coping skills are related to decreased levels of pandemic-related anxiety among students during the mandatory lockdown.

### Research Methodology

This study used quantitative research. It used survey questionnaires to determine the stressors that the student-scholars are currently facing in the new learning setup during the global pandemic and to what extent they are experiencing these stressors. The survey questionnaires were used to identify the coping mechanisms that are used by the student-scholars to address the identified stressors. In addition, the research made use of open interviews to solicit additional information from the respondents on how they cope with the identified stressors. The

respondents of this research are 53 academic scholars from the different universities and colleges in Cebu City. These respondents were the first year to third-year students who are currently enrolled under different undergraduate programs who are recipients of either private or government-funded scholarships. The study used a survey questionnaire which will be divided into three parts. The first part focused on the research participants' background information. The second part was the stressors questionnaire, while the third part was the checklist of coping mechanisms and strategies for the respondents.

The stressor questionnaire was adopted from Yumba (2008) which was modified by the researcher to suit the context of the research respondents as well as to suit the research topic. It also incorporated some questions from the COVID-19 Student Stress Questionnaire by Zurlo, et. al. (2020). It was divided into five main categories, namely the Personal-Social, Home and Family Relations, Financial, Academic and Health, and Physical Stressors. For the coping mechanism checklist, the researcher took inspiration from the Healthwatch Mini Project- Student Stress Questionnaire (2016). The survey questionnaire was administered through an online application particularly with the use of Google Forms. The collected data were coded and tallied. It was presented in a tabular form. For the stressor questionnaire, to measure the extent of how each category of stressors is experienced by the respondents, then calculate the weighted mean of each category. The study used the succeeding numerical range to interpret the extent of the stressors.

For the coping mechanism checklist, the researcher got the frequency of each of the specific coping mechanisms and got the percentage of the responses received. It was ranked, and presented in a tabular

form. The use of snowball sampling in which the student-scholars who are respondents of the study refer to other student-scholars who also become respondents of the study.

Five Numerical Ranges for the Stressors Questionnaire	
Description	Numerical Range
Very True	5.00-4.20
True	4.19-3.40
Quite True	3.39-2.60
Somewhat True	2.59-1.80
Not True	1.79-1.00

**Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Data**

This study focused on identifying the stressors and to what extent the student-scholars are dealing with these stressors as well as the coping mechanisms and/or

strategies that they used to manage the stressors they are experiencing in the online class setup.

The respondents of this study were the college student-scholars in six of the universities in Cebu City which is shown in Table 1.

*Table 1- Composition of Respondents*

Schools	#	%
Cebu Institute of Technology -University	7	13.21%
Cebu Normal University	10	18.87%
University of Cebu	9	16.98%
University of the Philippines- Cebu	8	15.09%
University of San Carlos	10	18.87%
University San Jose- Recoletos	9	16.98%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 2 exhibits to what extent the student-scholars are experiencing the five categories of stressors. The responses showed that the student-scholars are experiencing Financial Stressors the most, seconded by

the Academic Stressors, followed by the Personal-Social Stressors, then their Health and Physical Conditions and the Home and Family Condition as the least stressor they experienced.

*Table 2 - Category of Stressors Experienced by Student-Scholars*

Stressors	Category Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Personal-Social	3.53	TRUE
Home & Family Conditions	2.74	QUITE TRUE
Financial	4.39	VERY TRUE
Academic	3.99	TRUE

Health & Physical	3.00	QUITE TRUE
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>	<b>3.49</b>	<b>TRUE</b>

The Financial Stressors got a weighted category mean of 4.39 which is descriptively interpreted as Very True. Under the Financial Stressors Questionnaire shown in *Table 2-1*, the majority of the respondents have rated very true on the increase of the expenses due to the internet connection fees/payment, the increase of electricity bill due to the usage of computers/gadgets during the online class as well as the increase of the overall household expenses. They also expressed concern about their family’s food and financial resources at the time of the pandemic. Additionally, most of the respondents also rated the lack of stable income of their parents as very true. Some respondents are experiencing financial stress due to the debts of their parents, while others have rated that the allowances they received from their scholarship grants are insufficient especially with the current condition.

This result aligns with the World Bank’s Economic Brief (May 2020) in which it was stated that “the COVID-19 pandemic will result in a massive income shock for many households.” It continued to add that “the household income of many families is likely to decline as rates of unemployment and underemployment rise.” The financial barriers in the online class setup during the pandemic are also pointed out by the parents who responded to the study by Abuhammad (2020). The parents expressed concerns about money and accessing equipment and technology. Abuhammad (2020) in his study had indicated that the expenses of distance learning online have increased due to the requirement of a good internet connection to access the lectures and assignments of some subjects.

Financial Stressors Questionnaire	1- Not True	2- Somewhat True	3- Quite True	4- True	5- Very true
Loss of job of the parent/s due to COVID-19	20.75%	16.98%	11.32%	16.98%	33.96%
Lack of stable income of the parents	7.55%	11.32%	15.09%	18.87%	47.17%
Increase electricity bills due to usage of computer/gadgets for the online class	3.77%	3.77%	11.32%	22.64%	58.49%
Financial debts of the family	24.53%	11.32%	15.09%	24.53%	24.53%
Increase of expenses of your education and siblings education	15.09%	15.09%	26.42%	24.53%	18.87%
Increase of expenses due to internet connection payment/purchase of mobile data	1.89%	0.00%	11.32%	18.87%	67.92%
Increase in overall expenses in the household (e.g. food and supplies)	1.89%	5.66%	13.21%	26.42%	52.83%
Expenses for the health condition of a family member	30.19%	11.32%	28.30%	18.87%	11.32%
Concerned about your family's food and financial resources during this time of the pandemic	1.89%	3.77%	13.21%	20.75%	60.38%
Not enough allowances from the Scholarship Grant	20.75%	9.43%	22.64%	24.53%	22.64%

The Academic Stressors which got a weighted category mean of 3.99 and is descriptively interpreted as True. In the Academic Stressors Questionnaire, the student-scholars gave a very true rating on the increase of class workload, the fast-paced lectures, the extended hours of studying, and the technical difficulty in their examinations during their online classes. Likewise, the minimal interaction to both their teachers and their classmates was rated very true alongside too much homework/ activity/ project and too little “downtime.” It was also true to some scholars that there is the difficulty maintaining the required grade of their respective scholarship grants.

There have been limited discussions in some classes which may have been caused by the limited internet connection and/ or technical difficulties on both the side of students and teachers. To manage these difficulties, some classes alternately hold

asynchronous sessions and provide students with reading materials or recordings of the lessons. It was also elaborated that the online delivery of the lessons has caused an adjustment in the respondents’ understanding and processing of the lessons. These findings on the Academic Stressors are supported by Abuhammad (2020) in which he presented the logistical barriers experienced by students in his study that include the difficulties in using distance learning and lack of student preparation, and the inability of distance learning to meet the students’ needs. Pursuing this further is the result of the study by Baticulon, et al. (2020) in which presented that the abrupt shift in curriculum delivery has caused the students to have difficulties in adjusting their learning styles. The study continued to state that with online learning, students have had difficulty studying topics on their own, and thus, to comprehend, students needed more hours in the current setup.

Academic Stressors Questionnaire	1- Not True	2- Somewhat True	3- Quite True	4- True	5- Very true
Increased class workload in Online Class	0.00%	5.66%	9.43%	16.98%	67.92%
Fast Paced Lectures	0.00%	3.77%	18.87%	18.87%	58.49%
Extended hours of studying	1.89%	1.89%	18.87%	22.64%	54.72%
Technical difficulty during online examinations	1.89%	3.77%	15.09%	32.08%	47.17%
Difficulty to approach professors	7.55%	20.75%	24.53%	24.53%	22.64%
Difficulty to maintain the required grade of the scholarship grant	7.55%	16.98%	22.64%	30.19%	22.64%
Minimal teacher-student interaction/discussion in online classes	7.55%	7.55%	16.98%	18.87%	49.06%
Minimal Class interaction/ participation during online discussions	11.32%	16.98%	22.64%	24.53%	24.53%
Too much homework/ activity/ projects	0.00%	5.66%	9.43%	20.75%	64.15%
Too little "downtime"/ time to relax	3.77%	3.77%	13.21%	30.19%	49.06%

On the other hand, Personal-Social Stressors acquired the third-highest category mean which is 3.53 which falls in the descriptive interpretation as True. This indicates that most of the respondents experienced a change in their sleeping habits when the classes shifted to online which may be related to having an increase in school workload and too much homework/ project activity as identified in the Academic Stressors questionnaire results. Overthinking about the future was rated very true by the majority of the student-

scholars, the same as worrying about the present conditions specified on the threat of COVID-19. During the lockdown, students were (on the global level) ‘most of the time’ or ‘all of the time worrying about their professional career in the future (Aristovnik, A., et. al, (2020). The respondents also answered very true on the difficulty of understanding the lessons in the online class which may also be linked to the academic stressors that they are experiencing such as the minimal teacher-student

interaction or discussion in online classes. The same rating was also given by the respondents on the lack of group interaction or group work which may still be linked to the academic stressors especially on the minimal class interaction/participation during the online class discussions.

This is parallel to the results of the study by Son, et al. (2020) in which they presented that the students' difficulty in concentrating, the disruptions of their sleeping patterns, the decrease in their social interactions, their increased academic concerns, and their fear and worries not only about their health but as well as the health of their families and friends' health have increased their levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts. Rehman, et. al (2021) concluded in their study that while maintaining physical distance from others, social connectedness with the family, friends, colleagues, and other social groups are important.

For the Health and Physical Conditions, more than fifty percent (50%) of the respondents have identified that they are worried about contacting the COVID-19 virus (Table 2-4). In connection, the majority of the responses also showed that they are afraid of anyone from their social circle reports being sick. The student-scholars have also pointed out stressors relating to their neighborhood/ community such as the noise which may contribute to their difficulty in concentrating in their online classes and the failure of some of the community members/ neighbors to follow the minimum standard health protocol which may have resulted to the respondents increase in worrying about contracting the virus. This result is in line with the previous studies on the key role played by the fear of being infected, the fear for others (e.g. relatives, friends) to become ill, as well as the fear to be the source of contagion for others (Ahorse et. al, 2020).

Personal-Social Stressors Questionnaire	1- Not True	2- Somewhat True	3- Quite True	4- True	5- Very true
Change in relation with others due to the limited face-to-face interaction.	3.77%	18.87%	20.75%	35.85%	20.75%
Difficulty in studying alone	9.43%	16.98%	30.19%	24.53%	18.87%
Feeling isolated	13.21%	24.53%	20.75%	22.64%	18.87%
Lack of group interaction or group work	13.21%	20.75%	13.21%	26.42%	26.42%
Change of sleeping habits	0.00%	11.32%	3.77%	24.53%	60.38%
Difficulty in understanding the lessons in online class	0.00%	11.32%	24.53%	28.30%	35.85%
Change in eating habits	7.55%	24.53%	5.66%	32.08%	30.19%
Overthinking about the future	7.55%	0.00%	16.98%	20.75%	54.72%
Worrying about the present conditions (e.g. getting sick with COVID-19, etc.)	3.77%	11.32%	16.98%	22.64%	45.28%
Misunderstanding and conflict with friends/others	32.08%	28.30%	24.53%	11.32%	3.77%

Health and Physical Conditions Questionnaire	1- Not True	2- Somewhat True	3- Quite True	4- True	5- Very true
Feeling paranoid about contacting the novel CoronaVirus infection	11.32%	20.75%	18.87%	26.42%	22.64%
Difficulty sleeping by being worried about the Corona Virus pandemic	16.98%	35.85%	20.75%	16.98%	9.43%
Afraid if anyone in my social circle or friends reports of being sick	3.77%	11.32%	26.42%	22.64%	35.85%
Worried about myself and my family regarding the spread of COVID-19 Viral Infection	0.00%	5.66%	5.66%	22.64%	66.04%
Neighborhood/ community not following the minimum standard health protocol	11.32%	16.98%	24.53%	22.64%	24.53%
Noise around the house/ neighborhood	5.66%	7.55%	16.98%	26.42%	43.40%
Uncomfortable living conditions	13.21%	32.08%	22.64%	13.21%	18.87%
Ill/sickness of a family member	50.94%	15.09%	13.21%	18.87%	1.89%
Having injury that makes it hard to concentrate or distracts online and distance learning	60.38%	11.32%	9.43%	5.66%	13.21%
Experiences symptoms for COVID-19	67.92%	16.98%	9.43%	1.89%	3.77%

Lastly, for the Home and Family Conditions, three statements got the majority of very true ratings from the respondents. The difficulty in concentrating in an online class at home received the highest percentage of these responses while the two others were the unstable internet connection and the lack of privacy during an online class. The respondents' difficulty in concentrating in the online class may be connected to the lack of privacy they have at home. A study by Aristovnik, et al. (2020) also supported these findings

wherein he stated that “students found it difficult to focus during the online teaching in comparison to onsite teaching.” He further stated that studying from home commonly requires greater self-discipline and motivation to follow through online lessons which might affect the feeling of an increase in study obligations. Gonzalez, et al. (2020) also found out that undergraduate students found it more difficult to focus while graduate students and social sciences students were able to improve their perceived performance.

Table 2-5 : Home and Family Conditions Questionnaire

Home and Family Conditions Questionnaire	1- Not True	2- Somewhat True	3- Quite True	4- True	5- Very true
Difficulty to concentrate in online class at home	0.00%	0.00%	18.87%	35.85%	45.28%
Misunderstanding and conflict with siblings	32.08%	20.75%	24.53%	13.21%	9.43%
Feeling pressured in online classes since parents are around the house always	26.42%	18.87%	13.21%	20.75%	20.75%
Shared computer/gadgets for online class with siblings	41.51%	16.98%	16.98%	9.43%	15.09%
Unstable home internet connection	5.66%	11.32%	15.09%	32.08%	35.85%
No internet connection	58.49%	13.21%	15.09%	3.77%	9.43%
Misunderstanding with parents	28.30%	22.64%	26.42%	13.21%	9.43%
Using only mobile data as internet source	47.17%	18.87%	9.43%	7.55%	16.98%
Lack of privacy during online class	5.66%	15.09%	16.98%	30.19%	32.08%
Violence in the family	90.57%	7.55%	1.89%	0.00%	0.00%

The third part of the research instrument was the Coping Mechanism/Strategies Checklist in which the respondents were asked to identify which among the strategies listed help them relieve their stress. There is

also a free answer part in the questionnaire in which the respondents were free to specify the other coping mechanisms/strategies they use that are not included in the checklist.

Table 3 : Coping Mechanism/Strategies of the Respondents.

Coping Mechanisms/Strategies	Frequency	%	Rank
Listening to music/ singing with the song	49	11.92%	1
Taking responsibility for the situation.	35	8.52%	2
Opening up to family and/or friends	31	7.54%	3
Accepting and Planning Action/Solution	30	7.30%	4
Maintaining emotional composure or, alternatively, expressing distressing emotions.	27	6.57%	5
Exercise	26	6.33%	7.5
Viewing the problem through a religious perspective/ Daily Devotion/Praying	26	6.33%	7.5
Crying	26	6.33%	7.5
Humor	26	6.33%	7.5
Asking others to help or assist you/Doing classwork with close friend	25	6.08%	10
Using Relaxation techniques/Rest/Sleep	22	5.35%	11.5
Distancing from the source of stress.	22	5.35%	11.5
Eating too much or too little or drinking a lot of coffee	19	4.62%	13

Spend time with nature	15	3.65%	14
Criticizing yourself (negative self-talk)	10	2.43%	15
Avoiding friends and family	8	1.95%	16
Denial	5	1.22%	17
Playing with pets/Playing games	2	0.49%	18
Attending Counselling Sessions	1	0.24%	22
Becoming aggressive or violent (hitting someone, throwing or kicking something)	1	0.24%	22
Creating art	1	0.24%	22
Journal Writing	1	0.24%	22
Bonding with family and friends	1	0.24%	22
Watching Movies	1	0.24%	22
Reading manga/comics	1	0.24%	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

Listening to Music/Singing along with a song was the top coping strategy among the respondents. Music can have a profound effect on both the emotions and the body according to the University of Nevada, Reno. This is also supported by the study of psychologist D.J. Levitin, Ph.D. and M.L. Chanda, Ph.D., (2013) in which they found that music improves the body's immune system function and reduces stress. The next coping mechanism that the respondents identified is Taking responsibility for the situation. According to Knight (2016), taking responsibility for one's learning can lead to fast development and a sense of pride in one's hard work and newly acquired skills.

The third coping mechanism with the highest response from the student-scholars is opening up to family and/or friends. Seeking external support can be an effective way of managing stress and at the same time can greatly reduce the negative effects of a difficult situation (Thompson, et al. (2010). The Accepting and Planning Action/Solution ranked 4th with the most responses. This can be considered as a problem-solving approach in which it involves identifying a problem that is causing stress and then developing and putting into action some potential solutions for effectively managing it (Thompson, et al. (2010). Next in rank is Maintaining emotional composure or expressing distressing emotions. This coping strategy is supported by Patel (2019) in her study on Consequences of Repression of Emotion in which she concluded that expressing one's true emotions and the feeling is significant to physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing. With the most responses are the

coping strategies namely Exercise, Religious Perspective/Praying, Crying, and Humor.

### Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The stressors that the student-scholars have faced on the financial aspect are the combination of the increase of the household expenses and instability of employment of their parents. Despite being adolescents, the respondents have been well-aware of the challenges that their families are facing financially. They also have identified the increase in their school workload and the apace delivery of their lessons online as the major source of their academic stresses. Moreover, the student-scholars' personal-social stresses have mostly stemmed from the changes in their sleeping patterns, the concerns they have about their future, the worries they have about the present conditions especially on getting sick with COVID-19, and the decreased in their social interactions not only with their classmates but also with their teachers. The fear of being infected as well as the fear for their family and friends to be also infected with the COVID-19 virus are the main sources of their stress for their health and physical conditions. On top of these, the respondents also deal with the instability of their internet connections as well as issues on concentrating on their school works at home.

To cope with all these stressors, the most common strategies used by the student-scholars are through listening to music, opening up to the people they trust,

taking responsibility for their situation, planning for solutions, and managing their emotions.

### Conclusions

The student-scholars have indeed experienced the stressors to a different degree. The student-scholars indeed experience financial stressors the most during the online classes amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic. It has also been true that they are dealing with both academic and personal-social stressors while it is quite true that they are experiencing stress in their family & home conditions as well as with their health and physical conditions. To help deal with these stressors, the respondents have utilized a mix of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms/strategies. Among the problem-focused coping mechanisms used by the respondents are seeking support from family and friends and planning for solutions for the stressors experienced while the emotion-focused coping mechanisms/strategies involved listening to music, accepting responsibility, and managing emotions.

### Recommendations

The implications on the development of stress management interventions for the student-scholars that are adaptive to the current online class setup which is useful for the university and/colleges' Guidance and Counseling Services and for the scholarship granting institutions.

Since face-to-face interactions are still at limits, it is recommended that Guidance and Counseling offices set up digital services (e.g. in chat/messenger/email) so that the delivery of stress management interventions and other guidance services are easily available for the student-scholars. An auto-reply can be set through the online platform especially in Facebook Messenger so the student-scholars can choose the services that they want to avail. The office can also provide daily/weekly non-mandatory well-being check in to student-scholars by auto-sending it through email to provide an opportunity for the students to express their feelings/emotions. An online video counseling can also be done by the counselors upon the request of students through sending an email meeting invite. The counselor can either accept or decline the invitation depending on his/her availability providing that if the counselor declined, she can offer to recommend another schedule for the counseling sessions. In addition, since based on the results, student-scholars crave personal interactions, the university guidance office can also open a limited face-to-face counseling

session as the need arises, in which student-scholars will undergo the same scheduling process as the online video counseling sessions. The counselor can also organize a webinar on topics such as improvement of personal study skills and effective time management to further assist the student-scholars in their online classes.

The referral service can also be incorporated in the stress management interventions by both the university/college guidance offices and the scholarship-granting institutions in cases wherein the student-scholars need interventions that are not provided by them such as for the problems/needs related to the difficulty in the finances of the student scholars family.

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