

The Causes of Stress Experienced and Coping Strategies Adopted by Student Teachers

Jeron B. Mina*

College of Teacher Education, Saint Ferdinand College, Cabagan, Philippines

Abstract: In recent years, stress has gained attention, and much research has been done to understand its causes and coping strategies better. This study investigated the causes of stress experienced and coping strategies adopted by student teachers in Saint Ferdinand College Cabagan Campus. A qualitative research design through interviews and focus group discussion was utilized to identify the causes of stress experienced and coping strategies adopted. Results of the study revealed that financial stress was the main cause of their stress. Additionally, academic and family stress are the other causes of their stress. Findings of the study also showed that coping strategies adopted by the students in managing their stress were behavioral, spiritual, and social.

Keywords: causes of stress, coping strategies, student teachers.

1. Introduction

Stressors are demands from one's internal or external atmosphere that have their physical and psychological aspects. To correct this imbalance, one must take immediate and appropriate action. Stress was believed to be an interchangeable phenomenon that is influenced by the perceiver's interpretation of the stimuli. Stress is, therefore, not a common occurrence that can be disregarded. To avoid its worst effects, it is vital to pay close attention to it as soon as the symptoms appear and to respond appropriately.

Student teachers face significant challenges and issues as they pursue their academic goals. As a result, student teachers generally seemed stressed. Most of them stay away from their homes, families, and friends for the first time. Additionally, they are accountable for achieving well in their advanced academic work. The bodies and minds of student teachers may suffer when they are under excessive stress. The focus of student teachers is caused by numerous factors which hurt them.

The main component of the student teachers is seen as teaching practice in colleges and universities. It is a crucial component of the teacher preparation program (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). Some students struggle to adjust to the pressures of a new atmosphere, new friends, academic stress, and sexual worries, which leads to stress. Students and their families may experience financial strain as a result of attending college. They may have shaky hands, stiff muscles, migraines, headaches, and various other stress-related symptoms due to these conditions. These can make individuals more susceptible

to early incapacity and even death from different chronic conditions, such as hypertension and peptic ulcers (Blonna, 2006). Academic pressure was the most significant stressor for the students, and they had positive coping mechanisms for dealing with it (Grande, 2006).

All cognitive and behavioral efforts to master, lessen, or accept the pressures that caused an individual to feel stressed are called coping mechanisms (Folkman, 2010). Similarly, coping methods describe how pre-service teachers deal with complex events or circumstances. Understanding how students manage difficulties in internships will help teacher education programs determine the most effective ways to assist. Effective coping mechanisms had been discovered to mitigate the impacts of stress (Harvey, 1999, as cited by Gutierrez et al., 2016). Hence, to address the arguments above, the researcher aimed to determine the following: (1) causes of stress experienced among student teachers; and (2) coping strategies adopted by student teachers.

2. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design in gathering the data. An interview and focus group discussion was employed to identify the causes of stress experienced by student teachers and their coping strategies.

B. Selection and Description of Respondents

Total enumeration was employed in selecting and collecting data. A total of 15 student teachers were the participants in this study. The study's respondents were student teachers during School Year 2022-2023. 5 were Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED), and 10 were Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) – two (2) of whom majored in Mathematics and eight (8) majored in English.

C. Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Saint Ferdinand College, College of Teacher Education, Cabagan Campus-Centro, Cabagan, Isabela.

D. Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was utilized in gathering the data to elicit the responses of student teachers on the causes of stress

*Corresponding author: jeron.mina@sfc.edu.ph

experienced and their coping strategies adopted.

E. Analysis of Data

The data were collected and analyzed. Responses were coded and transcribed into themes.

3. Results and Discussions

A. Causes of Stress Experienced

White (2016), as cited by Somoso (2022), affirmed that studies on stress have long been conducted, so this is not a new development. Therefore, it is essential that a person experiencing stress identifies the main causes of their stress to control, and effectively cope with it. The following are the causes of stress experienced among student teachers.

1) Financial stress

In this study, financial stress emerged to be the top cause of stress among student teachers. A student teacher's well-being and the practicum experience may suffer due to the financial hardship that participating in practicum can cause or amplify (Grant-Smith et al., 2018). Every student worries about money. They are concerned about paying for their classes. Most students know that they need financial assistance, but do not want to burden their parents with the cost of college. The student might then feel bad about using their parents' money. Financial burdens such as tuition fees, books, and boards can be a source of stress (Walker, 2022).

Financial problems were found to be a stress source (Mapfumo et al., 2012). The student teachers stated that it is difficult to provide funding for the tuition fee and other costs, such as copies of prints, allowances, and transportation. They continued by saying that they frequently expend their food allowance to meet their academic obligations, which led them to borrow money from their peers because they did not have enough money aside for food and fares. They added that their parents are also concerned about their financial situation because they need another payment of allowance from their parents. Financial challenges can cause stress (Q. U. A. & Sonia, 2017; Amponsah et al., 2020).

2) Academic stress

Academic stress is mental distress associated with some frustration over an academic disappointment or the knowledge of the possibility of such failure (Gupta et al., 2011). According to the student teachers, academic stress, such as lesson planning, field studies, research manuscripts, and narrative reports were found to be the causes of their stress where they find it hard to balance their tasks and do not know what to prioritize first.

According to reports, most of the students' frequent mental condition during training is academic stress. It is becoming more prevalent among them, most likely because of endless course requirements (Ramli et al., 2018). In the study of Somoso (2022), most of the student teachers' primary sources of stress were academic-related concerns. Mapfumo et al. (2012) found that academic stress, such as workload, was the primary source of the stress the student teachers. Similarly, González-Cabanach et al. (2016) showed that workload is one of the significant academic stressors. Furthermore, heavy

workloads were acknowledged as stressors (Brady & Wilson, 2021; Skinner et al., 2021).

Yang et al. (2021) affirmed that academic pressures like ongoing study, paper writing, and test preparations were the most significant daily concerns of students. Additionally, Kumaraswamy (2013) observed that concerns such as excessive assignments, peer pressure, exams, and time management issues cause academic stress. Dhal and Sheth (2016) also identified academic challenges as one of the pressures faced by student teachers.

3) Family stress

Due to numerous internal and external expectations placed on students, stress became a part of their academic lives (Reddy et al., 2018). It causes students to feel stressed (Kumar & Jadaun, 2018; Ma et al., 2018). High expectations from parents can sometimes cause students to have dramatic stress outbursts (Hazari, 2013). According to student teachers, parents' expectations were one of the causes of their stress. They are constantly under pressure to succeed and live up to their parent's expectations and this pressure became one of their sources of stress.

Another cause of stress of student teachers is family problems. Al-Sowygh et al. (2013), found family-related problems as one of the sources of stress of students. Likewise, a study conducted by Chao (2012) revealed that one of the causes of the stress of students was family conflicts. Student teachers said that they have difficulty concentrating which impedes their progress. The family challenges caused them unfocused with the tasks they need to accomplish.

B. Coping Strategies Adopted

One must know how to cope with and deal with stress (Acosta-Gomez et al., 2018). This is because people are most likely to feel the unpleasant emotion of stress when they struggle or cannot keep up with and meet the expectations of their environment (Kwaah & Essilfie, 2017). The following are the coping strategies adopted by student teachers.

1) Behavioral strategies

In this study, behavioral strategies emerged to be a major coping strategies of student teachers to manage their stress. These are watching movies, drinking alcohol, and venting out anger. Some methods of stress management include relaxation, exercise, maintaining good health, and managing time (Saklofske et al., 2012). In the study of Kwaah & Essilfie (2017), they found that drinking liquor is also one of the coping strategies of students. Students also employ harmful coping mechanisms to lessen stress, such as abusing alcohol and expressing their anger (Bamuhair et al., 2015).

2) Spiritual strategies

Spiritual such as praying and/or talking to God, listening to worship songs, going to church, and reading the bible played a major role in managing the stress of student teachers. Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) affirmed that praying or meditating is one of the coping strategies of students. Similarly, Commey-Mintah et al. (2022) confirmed that most of the student teachers used coping strategies such as praying and meditating. One of the coping strategies of student teachers in managing their stress

during their teaching practice is going to church (Mapfumo et al., 2012).

3) Social strategies

One of the vital ways in managing stress is social support (Chao, 2012). According to student teachers, social support such as talking, hanging out, and seeking advice from the family and/or friends help them to manage their stress. Awoke et al. (2021) examined students' stress and discovered that their main coping strategy to reduce their stress levels was seeking social support from family and friends – may it be by having someone to talk with and express their emotions with peers (Nattasuda et al., 2013) and having someone to count on (Paul, 2012).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

A. Conclusion

Stress is inevitable. Everyone experiences stress in life. Based on the findings of the study, it was found that the causes of stress experienced by student teachers were categorized into three classifications: financial, academic, and family stress. Financial stress was found to be the main source of their stress. In addition, student teachers' coping strategies for managing and reducing their stress were behavioral, social, and spiritual. It showed that even though student teachers experienced stress, they still find paths in meeting these challenges through coping strategies.

B. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

College of Teacher Education should be encouraged to include aspects like stress reduction and coping strategies for student teachers during their internship.

The Guidance and Counsellor should be encouraged to create a program on stress reduction or stress management that can help and guide student teachers to know what coping strategies suit their needs.

Future researchers should be suggested to broaden the scope of the study by including additional factors relevant to the study.

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