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ABSTRACT

This study sought to find out the profile of maritime students of NSU, the stressors they encountered and their coping mechanisms they used to deal with these stressors.

The BSMarE and BSMT students served as respondents of the study of which the former comprised 39 of them and; the latter, 61 constituting an aggregate number of 100 respondents.

The data were gathered with the use of a questionnaire and the same were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means and rank to describe the findings.

Results revealed that the average age of respondents was nearly 20 years old, predominantly males and singles. Exactly half of the respondents resided with their parents with the latter predominantly supporting the education of the former.

The most stressful stressors the respondent encountered were: (a) academic and research responsibilities or pressure, (b) poor school-life balance, and (c) debt. The mechanisms they used cope on deal with these and other stressors were: (a) listening to music, (b) eating, (c) laughing, (d) doing exercise and, (e) indulging in physical activity and sports.

KEYWORDS: Stressors, Coping, Maritime Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

People are currently living in a society that is rapidly changing and requires continual adaptation to new life styles. This constant instability obliges individuals to adapt daily to new situations resulting in transformations that can lead to stress (Pacheco, 2008). When confronted with a threatening situation, individuals may react by using coping mechanism in order to handle and adapt to a new situation (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Therefore, coping is defined as the ability to confront and adapt, enabling people to react to behaviors, thoughts, and emotions caused by stressful events (Flores-Torres et al; 2011).

While literatures parallel to this work are limited to support this claim, yet it can be safely assumed that maritime students are more exposed to stressful events than students from other courses because of the nature of their profession which continually embroils them in situations of danger and uncertainties while sailing the seven seas should they become seafarers someday.

Thus, a person (student) should possess a multitude of qualities such as tenacity, perseverance, patience, diplomacy, and above all, hard work. They should orient themselves and never forget but rather understand that seafaring is recognized as and remains a dangerous profession, as Dimerel and Mehta (2009) warned.

In view of this thought, maritime education is regarded as the most difficult training to endure. Throughout their student life, maritime students face numerous stressors. In fact, for most students, starting university often means learning how to manage actions on their own. This change in the social, family and school environment can, in some cases, generate feelings of anxiety that may bring on stress (Ramos and Carvalho, 2008).

Coping with this stressors requires access to a variety of resources varying from personal strength to social support, changes in the social support network can cause students to withdraw and isolate themselves because they do not find or recognize the necessary social support, inducing them to use coping strategies considered negative, such as defensiveness and social isolation (Costa and Leal, 2014). Thus, an intense feeling of withdrawal may occur, manifested in feelings of apathy and lack of motivation to engage in academic activities (Montiero, Freitas and Ribeiro, 2007). Consequently, students may quit or leave school because academic stress is likely to affect their optimal performance or even remain in the academic program.

In the light of the foregoing facts, it is believed that the “fate” of students confronted with heavy academic demand and pressure is uncertain unless a timely and workable help, by way of identifying stressors and coping mechanism, is offered.

Framework of the Study

Theoretical. The stress coping Theory advanced by Lazarus (1966) was used as basis for the conception of this work. This theory views coping as a process characterized by the continuous appraisal and reappraisal of a person’s interaction with his/her environment. The way a person views the stressors is based on the outcome he/she expects from the situation.

This view of a stressor was originally called an “appraisal” by Arnold (1960) and elaborated by Lazarus in regard to stress. Shifts in the way an individual views stress may come from the environment or situations outside of the individual’s control, or they may come from efforts to manage the stress by the individual. This theory suggests that research examining coping mechanism related to a specific event, rather than as generalized statements, will yield a more accurate appraisal of individual coping strategies.

Conceptual. The afore-said theory helps back and strengthen the herein concept that while the students stay at NSU in pursuit of their maritime education, they are confronted with problems and/or stressors which put them in situations where their interaction with their academic environment produces outcome which determines their fate as students.

If the coping mechanisms they use in response to the stressors they encounter are effective, a feeling of relief and satisfaction motivates them to move on and work harder to realize their cherished dreams. Otherwise, if the stressors (problems) cannot be eliminated despite the use of opposite coping mechanisms, the students should be helped by way of professional intervention to avoid possible loss of interest, quitting school, frustrations, or worse, even death.

The concept of this study is schematized in Figure I.

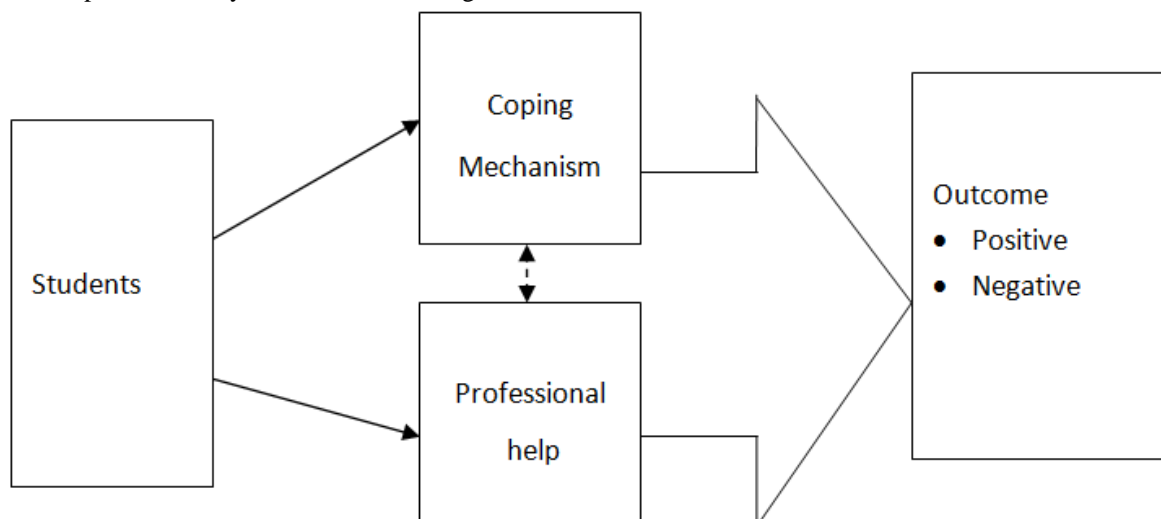


Figure 1. Conceptual diagram of the study

2. METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

To find out the stressors and the coping mechanism of maritime students enrolled in the College of Maritime Education of Naval State University.

Research Design

The descriptive method was used because it was suitable for this type of study. By the nature of the variables of interest, this work was deemed descriptive because it was concerned with the conditions or opinion of the respondents' profile, the stressors they encounter the coping mechanisms they use to deal with these stressors.

Research Respondents

There were two groups of respondents involved in this study, those who took BS Maritime Engineering (BSMarE) and those who took BS Maritime Transportation (BSMT). In view of the numerosity of these groups of respondents combined, a sample by way of a convenience sampling method was done comprising of 39 BSMarE and 61 BSMT students constituting an aggregate number of 100 respondents (Table III).

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was the lone data gathering tool used in this study comprising of three parts. Part I focused on the profile of the respondents and Parts II and III were designed to elicit information about the stressors of the respondents encountered and the coping they used to deal with the

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to actual data gathering, a letter was sent to the Dean of the College of Maritime Education to ensure full support and cooperation of those concerned. Upon approval, data collection proceeded as scheduled. Data collection lasted for two weeks.

The complete names of the respondents were obtained from the office of the dean of COME.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means and rank were used to describe the findings.

3. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table I. Age of the Respondents

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percent
18	22	22
19	34	34
20	19	19
21	9	9
22	8	8
23	6	6
24	1	1
25	1	1
Total	100	100
Mean		19.74

Age. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 25 years old with an average of nearly 20 years old (Table I). Those who were at the age of 19 and 18 comprised 34 percent and 22 percent, respectively, followed by those

who were at the age of 20 years old (19 percent). The age of 20 years old (19 percent). The rest were at the age of 21 (9 percent), 22 (8 percent), and 23 years old (6 percent). The same numbers of respondents were at the age of 24 and 25 years old (1 percent).

This finding suggests that the respondents were in their late teens – young and able – bodied to do the rigors of seafaring.

Table II. Sex and Civil Status of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Female	8	8
Male	92	92
Total	100	100
Civil Status		
Married	1	1
Single	99	99
Total	100	100

Sex and Civil Status. Ninety two percent of the respondents were males and the rest (8 percent) were females. As to their civil status, almost all of them (99 percent) were married. This finding implies that seafaring is traditionally a man's trade and, therefore dominated by male respondents and no marital or family obligations yet because they are concentrating on their studies; otherwise, they will have a divided attention focus.

Table III. Course Taken by the Respondents

Course	Frequency	Percent
BSMarE	39	39
BSMT	61	61
Total	100	100

Course Taken. Of the respondents who took maritime education, 61 percent comprised BSMT students and 39 percent were BSMarE students. This finding has something to do with the nature of work as graduates of BSMT are future ship captains, the highest post in the shipping hierarchy.

Table IV. Residence Status of the Respondent

Residence Status	Frequency	Percent
Residing with family	50	50
Residing with boarding houses	44	44
Residing with relatives	6	6
Total	100	100

Residence Status. The respondents came from within and outside the province of Biliran and; hence, different residence status. Among the respondents, those residing with their families constituted exactly half of them

(Table IV), followed by those residing in boarding houses (44 percent). The rest (6 percent) resided with their relatives.

This finding indicates that a considerable number of students come to the Province of Biliran to pursue their maritime education at NSU which implies the construction of dormitories within the campus to address their housing needs.

Table V. Source of Financial Support for the Respondents

Source	Frequency*	Percent
Parent/Family	93	1
Government Scholar	42	2
Relatives	11	3
Self-supporting (working)	10	4
University scholar	5	5
Private sector scholar	2	6

*multiple response

Source of Financial Support. When asked about the source of financial support for their maritime education at NSU, the greatest number reported “parent/family” as their source (Table V). Some were supported by the government, university and private section and scholars and; the rest, by their relatives. Emulatively, there were those who pursued their maritime education through “blood”, “sweat” and “tears” by working while studying.

This finding implies that a lot of students are supported by their parents in view of the difficulty of availing scholarships due to many documentary and other pertinent requirements.

Table VI. Stressors Encountered by the Respondents

Stressors	Frequency*	Rank
Academic responsibilities or pressures	34	1
Research responsibilities or pressures	33	2
Poor work/school-life balance	32	3
Finances or debt	31	4
Anxiety	30	5.5
Burnout or compassion fatigue	30	5.5
Professional isolation or lack of social support	29	7
Physical health issue	28	9.5
Teachers’ factor	28	9.5
Family issues	28	9.5
Depression	28	9.5
Discrimination and bullying	27	12.5
Marital/relationship problem	27	12.5
Other interpersonal issues	25	14.5
Death, loss or grief	25	14.5

*multiple response

Stressors Encountered by the Respondents

Presented in Table VI is an array of stressors the respondents' encountered while studying at NSU. Foremost were: (a) academic responsibilities or pressures, (b) research responsibilities or pressures, (c) poor-work/school-life balance and, (d) finances or debt.

This finding indicates that while the respondents encountered a lot of stressors, the most stressful are those concerning academic, adjustment and financial-related problems.

Table VII. Coping Mechanisms used by the Respondents

Mechanism/Strategies	Frequency*	Rank
Listen to music	39	1
Eat	38	3.5
Laugh	38	3.5
Do exercise	38	3.5
Indulge in physical activity and sports	38	3.5
Rest if ill	37	7
Manage time	37	7
Learn to say "no"	37	7
Think positive	36	11
Take a break	36	11
Pamper yourself	36	11
Try relaxation technique	36	11
Get more sleep	36	11
Friend bonding (drinking)	35	15.5
Take a vacation	35	15.5
Talk to someone	35	15.5
Read	35	15.5
Play (game)	34	18
Take caffeine alcohol and nicotine	32	19
Keep a stress diary	31	20

*multiple response

Coping Mechanism

In Table VII, it is shown that while the respondents were confronted with stressors, they coped with the same by: (a) listening to music, (b) eating, (c) laughing, (d) doing exercise and indulging in physical activity and sports, among others.

This finding implies that while these may be effective strategies for other stressors, but not for "academic and research responsibilities", "poor school-life balance" and "debt" considered as the most stressful problems as this study disclosed. These stressors can, however, be dealt with or coped by effective time management, social support and engagement in leisurely pursuits, according to Walton (2002).

4. SUMMARY

This study sought to find out the profile of maritime students of NSU, the stressors they encountered and the coping mechanisms they used to deal with these stressors.

The BSMarE and BSMT students served as respondents of this study comprising of 39 and 61 students, respectively, with an aggregate number of 100 respondents.



The data were gathered with the use of a questionnaire and the same were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage, means and rank to describe the findings.

Results revealed that the age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 25 years old with a mean of nearly 20 years old; predominantly males and single with 61 percent of them taking BSMT. Exactly half of the respondents resided with their parents; while 44 percent, in boarding houses, with their parents as the source of their financial support for their education.

The four most stressful stressors the respondents encountered were: (a) academic responsibilities or pressures, (b) research responsibilities or pressures, (c) poor school-life balance and, (d) debt. The mechanisms or strategies they used to cope with these and other stressors were: (a) listening to music, (b) eating, (c) laughing, (d) doing exercise and (e) indulging in physical activity and sports.

5. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The age of the respondents ranges from 18 to 25 years old with an average of nearly 20 years old.
2. The respondents are predominantly males, single and half of them are residing with their parents.
3. They pursue their studies at NSU predominantly taking BSMT with their parents wholly supporting their education.
4. The stressors they consider most stressful are academic and research responsibilities or pressures, poor school-life balance and debt.
5. The respondents listen to music, eat, laugh, do exercise and indulge in physical activity and sports to cope or deal with stressors.

6. RECOMMENDATION

In view of the foregoing findings, the following recommendations, although suggestive, are hereby offered:

1. Recreational and sports facilities should be provided by the school so that students can make use of these amenities as a way of easing pressure and tension caused by heavy academic demands.
2. Full implementation and sustainability of the free education system to students enrolled in state colleges and universities. This system will lighten the financial burden of students whose parents have marginal income. This will also eliminate and/ or reduce the financial stressor felt by the students.
3. The guidance office should conduct regular dialogue and individual counseling session with the students to facilitate provision of timely and adequate solution to students' problems. Students with suicidal tendency, because of severe encounter with stressors (problems), be given immediate and serious psychiatric attention to avert possible loss of life.
4. A similar work be conducted in other maritime institutions to verify and/ or confirm the trueness of the results of this study.

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