

Unpacking Post-Pandemic Academic Burnout and Coping Mechanisms among Filipino College Students

Jefferson C. Lim¹, Joni Ruth T. Pacong², Chrizza Mae D. Alquizar³, and Jason O. Manaois⁴

Psychology Department, Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines^{1,2,3,4}

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the level of academic burnout and various coping mechanisms among Filipino college students. A total of 200 Filipino college students from Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan participated in a survey that measured coping mechanisms (Brief-COPE) and burnout (Breso's Academic Burnout Questionnaire). The study employed descriptive analyses to investigate the respondents' burnout levels and coping mechanisms when faced with post-pandemic stressful circumstances. Pearson correlation analysis evaluated the connections between coping strategies and burnout. The research findings suggest a positive and statistically significant correlation between the degree of burnout and coping strategies. It implies the tendency for students to use coping mechanisms as their levels of burnout rise. The study suggests numerous strategies to enhance students' academic performance and well-being. Educational institutions are urged to treat student well-being holistically, recognizing the complexity of these intricate links and adding to future studies to deepen our understanding of them.

Keywords — Filipino, burnout, coping mechanisms, correlation, college students

INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, academic upheavals led to numerous global developments that have profoundly impacted all facets of human society. It has significantly changed the nature of the educational experiences that students receive. Higher education institutions, historically pillars of stability and advancement, have been severely impacted by the crisis's wide-ranging effects. The sudden switch from traditional face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction and back again brought up several new problems, including navigating virtual classrooms, being unclear about rules and regulations, and managing emotional instability during in-person interactions with teachers and peers [1]. Students' stress and anxiety levels have increased due to the drastic changes in the academic environment.

As the globe dealt with the devastating effects of the pandemic, which was marked by an endless flow of people's emotional stability, it was put under strain by news of illness and death [2]. Both during and after the pandemic, there has been an increase in research on college students' mental health. It was demonstrated, for example, that college students were more vulnerable to mental health issues and that there remained a significant risk of mental health issues and suicidal thoughts six months after the initial pandemic [3]. These disruptions coupled with the rapid changes in teaching modalities could lead to feelings of emotional exhaustion and overload, which is especially pertinent in the present environment. One major concern has been the rise and escalation of student burnout [4].

Burnout is a three-dimensional condition that consists of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment. It is a chronic stress symptom that negatively affects students' overall health, hinders their learning ability, and attracts new stressors [5]. Many people have, therefore, gone through periods of tension, anxiety, and hopelessness. Studies have indicated that students experience

alarmingly high rates of burnout due to the intense competition in today's schools, financial strain, and academic demands [6]. Significantly, it was found that college students who experience academic stress and social isolation are more likely to experience burnout, which increases burnout symptoms [7].

Exposure to COVID-19 news and its relation to stress, depression, and anxiety in the context of difficulty in accessing social support [8]. Individual resilience and psychological well-being are significantly influenced by coping mechanisms, which are the behavioral and cognitive strategies used to manage stress and adversity [9]. People have been forced to adjust and develop coping strategies in order to manage stress. Coping strategies have been invaluable in reducing the psychological toll of burnout. Better mental health outcomes have been associated with problem-solving, seeking out social support, and finding positive meaning in adversity [10].

Conversely, maladaptive coping strategies, such as substance abuse and avoidance, can exacerbate stress and have negative effects on mental health [11]. For several reasons, coping mechanism research has been important. First, it has emphasized the value of flexible coping strategies and the need to comprehend how people might become resilient both during and after such disasters [12]. Second, new stressors and uncertainties are emerging, which has altered the context in which people cope [13]. Finally, individuals may need new coping strategies and resources to navigate this ever-changing environment as public health policies and support systems adjust to the changing circumstances [14].

Similarly, a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Filipino youth reported greater symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress and lower well-being compared to older respondents [15]. This quantitative study's goal is to evaluate the degree of burnout and coping mechanisms among Filipino college students.

Existing Literature about the Problem

Research on coping strategies and burnout levels has usually been conducted to gain a deeper understanding of college students. The results of studies are often used to make suggestions for enhancing mental health and figuring out useful coping mechanisms. Studies of this kind typically provide adequate evidence given the current circumstances [16]. Studies on college students from different cities and countries have therefore been produced. In addition, the literature review ought to look at the coping mechanisms that students employ. This entails a detailed examination of both healthy and unhealthy coping techniques, along with the ways in which students have managed stressors with an emphasis on burnout by utilizing tools like problem-solving techniques, social support, mindfulness, and other coping mechanisms [17].

In addition, the literature should address student resilience and adaptation, with a focus on characteristics that promote stability, such as positive psychology, personal growth, and post-traumatic growth. Furthermore, the educational impact and measures for reducing academic stress, as well as the role of social support and community resilience in supporting students' psychological well-being, are also crucial [18].

Deficiencies in the Literature

The majority of research on college students is conducted by reputable, well-established colleges and universities abroad. There are only a few studies on burnout and coping strategies for Filipino college students. The scope of attention is clearly limited, as most research focuses on broad categories of "college students." Changing the landscape of quantitative research is frequently required to look into environmental factors that affect students' experiences and coping strategies.

This deficiency translates into a failure to consider how diversity and distinguishing features of educational institutions affect students' psychological well-being and coping strategies. Addressing these flaws is critical to improving our understanding of students' levels of burnout and coping strategies in order to develop evidence-based guidance for identifying and implementing effective ways to meet students'

psychological needs.

Relevance of Study for Audiences

This research aims to provide vital information and understanding on burnout and coping mechanisms among Filipino college students, and the results of the study will be of great benefit to the following: a) *College Students*: The findings may assist them in measuring and evaluating their degree of burnout and coping mechanisms. b) *Parents*: The findings will be beneficial for them to understand their children's degree of burnout and to gain knowledge on different coping mechanisms. c) *Professors*: They will benefit from this study as they discuss relevant lessons, and it will make it easier for them to tackle related topics. d) *Future Researchers*: The findings of this study will allow future researchers to deepen and broaden their psychological study on Filipino college students. This could be used as a source of knowledge and reference data when performing future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gather data on Filipino college students particularly at Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan. Its goal is to determine their level of burnout and the range of coping techniques they have used. The lack of available data, literature, and evidence was the issue that spurred the authors to develop the study. The evidence from the study's findings could close a knowledge gap that exists between students, parents, teachers, and upcoming researchers.

Review of the Literature

College studies are stressful because they mark the beginning of autonomous adult life. Beginning studies can be complex for many students because it requires them to form new relationships, acquire new study habits relating to their chosen program, deal with overwork, learn time management, and, in many cases, relocate [19]. College students are acknowledged to be a 'high risk' population for developing mental health problems due to their multiple developmental, social, economic, and intellectual issues [20].

Student burnout has always existed with learning flexibility, student involvement, and student-faculty contact, which were found to be the most significant components of a high-quality learning experience by Neuman [21] in his study that looked at the relationships between quality of learning experience components and burnout. Two of the variables assessed in Maslach's burnout inventory, emotional exhaustion and felt accomplishment, are predicted by these variables. This would explain the possibility of student burnout because they would have to work hard to adjust to a rapidly changing school environment in a matter of two to five years.

In a different study, the connection between students and burnout has been examined. It focused specifically on the connection between burnout and social support and how it affects Filipino students enrolled in online modular programs. The findings demonstrate a significant relationship between social support and academic burnout, suggesting that a student's sudden isolation may have an effect on their risk of developing burnout [22].

A considerable number of researchers had developed an interest in the topic of burnout within a few years. This was particularly true during the pandemic when the stress of having to adjust to the new normal and feelings of loneliness increased mental instability. Students, particularly those attending colleges were severely impacted not only their social support network but also their educational quality. The lack of in-person instruction and technical challenges have made learning extremely difficult for these students [22].

Based on theories, some psychologists have created a range of coping mechanisms. Psychological stress and

coping research across a variety of disciplines have been greatly influenced by the transactional theory of stress and coping, which was developed by Lazarus and Folkman in 1984 [23]. To determine the extent to which the problem- and emotion-focused coping taxonomies meet the three requirements—each of which must be comprehensive, conceptually understandable, and mutually exclusive—for a reliable research idea classification.

We also examine two other taxonomies of coping: the hierarchical classification of coping by adaptive function proposed by Skinner, Edge, Altman, and Sherwood (2003) [24] and the cybernetic coping proposed by Edwards and Baglioni (1993, 2000) [25]. It looked into how coping strategies affected the relationship between challenges and physical and mental health. Four emotion-focused coping strategies (positive cognitive coping, wishful thinking, self-blame, and avoidance), one problem-focused coping strategy (problem-solving), and one seeking social support were identified by factor analysis. Multiple regression models revealed that independent of both levels, negative self-talk (wishful thinking and self-blame) strongly predicted total psychological and psychosomatic symptoms. Seeking social support and positive cognitive coping led to negative sadness and anxiety predictions.

Theoretical Perspective

This study employs a post-positivist theoretical framework, which recognizes the complexities of studying human behavior and experiences while also acknowledging that complete objectivity in social science research is elusive [26]. This method recognizes that subjectivity and bias can have an impact on research, but it seeks to mitigate these effects through rigorous techniques and critical analysis of findings.

From the empirical standpoint, quantitative research aims to test theory. This can be achieved by questioning previous research and established theories, then postulating a hypothesis and collecting and analyzing data to see if the findings confirm or disprove those theories [27].

Research Questions

This study aims to evaluate Filipino college students. Specifically, this seeks to answer the following questions.

1. To what extent did burnout affect Filipino college students?
2. What coping mechanisms do Filipino college students employ post-pandemic?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the degree of burnout and coping mechanisms among Filipino College Students?

METHODS

Respondents

The respondents of this study were 200 Filipino college students at Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan majoring in Psychology. The total population comprises 37 male and 163 female college students from Year I (male 8, female 30), Year II (male 0, female 8), Year III (male 17, female 111), and Year IV (male 12, female 14).

Measures

1. *Breso's Academic Burnout Questionnaire* [28]: A validated tool with 15 items measures exhaustion, cynicism, and academic inefficacy on a seven-point Likert scale. Scores range from 15 to 105, indicating varying levels of burnout. A designated system categorizes levels as Low (15-37),

Moderate (37-60), and High (above 60), with a critical threshold of 50. Developed by Bresó and colleagues, the questionnaire provides a quantitative assessment of burnout experiences in educational settings. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient measures the internal consistency, or reliability, of a set of survey items. This statistic helps to determine whether a collection of items consistently measures the same characteristic. Cronbach’s alpha quantifies the level of agreement on a standardized 0 to 1 scale. Higher values indicate higher agreement between items.

2. *The Brief-COPE* [29]: To assess coping strategies in response to stressful life events using the Brief COPE questionnaire, comprising 28 items across 14 subscales. The respondents rated each item on a Likert scale. The questionnaire identified three coping styles: Problem-Focused, Emotion-Focused, and Avoidant Coping. Scores were calculated for each respondent, revealing predominant coping strategies. Problem-focused coping suggested practical problem-solving approaches, while emotion-focused coping provided insights into emotional regulation. High scores in Avoidant Coping indicated efforts to disengage from stressors. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient measures the internal consistency, or reliability, of a set of survey items. This statistic helps to determine whether a collection of items consistently measures the same characteristic. Cronbach’s alpha quantifies the level of agreement on a standardized 0 to 1 scale. Higher values indicate higher agreement between items.

Data Gathering Procedures

Permission to gather data from the college students was obtained from the College of Arts and Sciences, Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan. A brief introduction to the study was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire to inform them about the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent, ensuring their voluntary participation in the research study. The respondents completed the questionnaires online using Google Docs, and physical surveys were conducted.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data gathered via the questionnaires was then coded and interpreted. This information was used to perform descriptive and correlation analysis, as well as calculate means and standard deviations. Tables were also used to summarize the data concisely.

The Pearson Correlation analysis was used in this study to investigate the relationship between the degree of burnout and coping mechanisms among Filipino college students. A structured survey was used to collect quantitative data on relevant variables, and correlation coefficient was used to assess associations, providing insights into potential links between burnout and coping mechanisms. This statistical method allowed for a more in-depth investigation, which contributed to a more complete understanding of the study. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29.0) [30].

RESULTS

TABLE I. STATISTICS OF DEGREE OF BURNOUT TO FILIPINO COLLEGE STUDENTS

Burnout Indicators	M	SD	Frequency					
			Very Low	Low	Medium Low	Medium High	High	Very High
Emotional Exhaustion	3.04	1.17	1	13	31	43	86	26
Cynicism	3.75	1.01	0	0	1	14	108	77
Academic Efficacy	2.86	1.4	102	47	27	14	9	1

In Table 1, the levels of burnout are displayed by a descriptive analysis of burnout indicators among Filipino college students. Students report feeling emotionally exhausted on average at a moderate level (M = 3.04,

SD = 1.17), with a significant percentage reporting a high level of emotional exhaustion. A higher mean (M = 3.75, SD = 1.01) indicates that cynicism is a prominent aspect of burnout, with a significant proportion of students reporting high levels of cynicism. On the other hand, the majority of students reported extremely low academic efficacy, and the average score was 2.86 (SD = 1.40). This suggests that academic efficacy is comparatively lower.

In Table 2, the findings demonstrate the coping strategies used by Filipino college students. The standard deviations, which range from 0.73 to 1.30, and mean scores, which range from 2.10 to 2.71, shed light on the complex tactics that students employed. Based on 73 respondents' mostly low ratings and the lowest mean (M = 2.10), substance use is found to be the least used coping strategy. On the other hand, the most commonly utilized strategy is the use of emotional support, which has the highest mean (M = 2.71) and significant engagement from 50 students in the high category and 129 students in the moderate category.

TABLE II. STATISTICS OF COPING MECHANISMS AMONG FILIPINO COLLEGE STUDENTS

Coping Mechanisms Indicators	M	SD	Low	Frequency	
				Moderate	High
Self-Distraction	2.57	0.8	33	125	42
Active Coping	2.47	0.88	40	120	40
Denial	2.33	1.3	52	133	15
Substance Use	2.1	0.81	73	109	18
Use of Emotional Support	2.71	0.76	21	129	50
Use of Instrumental Support	2.61	0.75	26	137	37
Behavioral Disengagement	2.27	0.75	49	127	24
Venting	2.35	0.73	45	136	19
Positive Reframing	2.55	0.82	33	122	45
Planning	2.61	0.79	31	126	43
Humor	2.65	0.77	28	135	37
Acceptance	2.61	0.76	28	125	47
Religion	2.37	0.75	44	135	21
Self-blame	2.44	0.86	33	122	45

TABLE III. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND COPING MECHANISMS

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Emotional Exhaustion	3.04	1.16	-																
2. Cynicism	3.75	1.01	0.091	-															
3. Academic Efficacy	2.86	1.39	.431*	-															
4. Self-Distraction	5.14	1.64	0.026	0.123	-														
5. Active Coping	4.94	1.78	0.017	0.063	.157*	.393*													
6. Denial	4.67	2.62	.152*	0.112	0.067	-	-												
7. Substance Use	4.2	1.62	0.08	-0.07	0.04	-	-	.183*											
8. Use of emotional Support	5.41	1.54	0.065	-	0.025	0.055	0.111	0.091	-										
				0.039					0.064										

9. Use of Instrumental	5.21	1.51	0.019	-0.017	-0.12	0.094	0.044	0.014	0.028	.255*								
10. Behavioral Disengagement	4.53	1.5	0.026	-0.102	.140*	0.005	-0.056	.178*	.222*	-0.045	0.029							
11. Venting	4.68	1.52	0.043	-0.061	0.103	.204*	.173*	-0.014	-0.106	0.017	0.057	.266*						

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

The standard deviations for each of the 14 subscales indicate variation in the way these coping mechanisms are applied, highlighting the range of coping techniques that Filipino college students use.

Table 3 demonstrates the relationships between emotional states, coping mechanisms, and academic efficacy. Academic efficacy and active coping have a positive correlation ($r=0.157$, $p=0.026$), indicating that higher academic efficacy is linked to more active coping. As a result, a positive correlation ($r=0.152$, $p=0.031$) is found between emotional exhaustion and denial, suggesting that higher levels of denial are associated with greater emotional exhaustion. Similarly, there is a positive correlation between behavioral disengagement and academic efficacy ($r=0.140$, $p=0.048$), indicating that higher behavioral disengagement levels are linked to higher academic efficacy.

Additionally, there is a moderately positive and statistically significant correlation ($r=.184$, $p=0.009$) between cynicism and planning, indicating that those who plan more frequently tend to be moderately more cynical. Furthermore, there is a weak but statistically significant positive correlation ($r=.149$, $p=0.036$) between academic efficacy and planning, suggesting that those who plan more often also tend to be slightly more efficacious in their academic endeavors.

Furthermore, a positive and moderate correlation ($r=.210$) was found between cynicism and acceptance, suggesting that those who were more accepting also tend to be more cynical. It was discovered that there was a statistically significant correlation ($p=0.003$). The results of the study also reveal a positive and moderate correlation ($r=.188$) between cynicism and religion, indicating a possible link between higher levels of religious involvement and cynicism. Statistical significance was also attained by this relationship ($p=0.008$).

Finally, there is a moderately negative correlation ($r= -.191$) between academic efficacy and self-blame. This shows that students with lower levels of academic efficacy tend to be more self-blame oriented. Significantly, at $p = 0.007$, this correlation was statistically significant. These results clarify the complex relationships that exist between coping strategies, emotional states, and academic efficacy.

DISCUSSION

This quantitative study was designed to shed light on the prevalence of burnout and coping mechanisms among Filipino college students.

The results of the study indicate a positively significant correlation between coping strategies and burnout levels. The students show a slight tendency to use coping mechanisms when their levels of burnout increase, revealing a high academic burnout among the sampled individuals. While the correlation between burnout and coping is statistically significant, however, it has limited practical significance because it suggests that factors other than coping mechanisms may moderate or contribute to this relationship. The substantial variability, indicated by the relatively high standard deviation, underscores the diverse nature of individual experiences within this group. In the educational cycle, learners with course stress, high course load, or

other mental elements have low emotional exhaustion and a low individual sense of success [31].

Target interventions can be shaped by an understanding of the variables influencing individual variability in burnout levels and the distinct effects of coping strategies. Developing a more resilient and well-adjusted academic community requires a nuanced approach to support mechanisms that are tailored to the specific challenges that each individual faces. Although different types of coping strategies can be used, they may vary in their effectiveness. Some studies reports that personality variables influence the coping strategies adopted and outcomes [32].

This calls for a more thorough investigation of the complexities surrounding burnout and acknowledges that variables other than coping strategies might influence or moderate the relationship. The small effect size draws attention to other important factors by suggesting that coping mechanisms may not be the main cause of burnout.

The coexistence of high academic burnout and a generally balanced coping approach raises interesting questions regarding the efficacy of the coping mechanisms that are being used. In spite of the wide range of burnout experiences, the respondents as a group take a consistent and moderate coping approach. These results suggest that interventions solely focus on enhancing coping skills may have limited effectiveness in addressing burnout among Filipino college students. While individuals can respond to notions and convictions that differ from their standpoints, others are more likely to decline concepts inconsistent with their system. The ambiguity of tolerance alludes to the way a person or group displays and handles information about an ambiguous circumstance when they experience a set of unknown, intricate, or inconsistent cues [33].

The use of technology for mental health is not new. Over the past decade, tele-mental health interventions have been on the rise. The meta-review reports that tele-mental health interventions have small to medium effects in the reduction of symptoms and dysfunctional cognitions associated with anxiety, substance abuse, and eating disorders [34]. The use of telepsychology practices has become invaluable from a public mental health perspective. It presents initial evidence of online synchronous intervention in improving the well-being, depression, and non-reactivity of the respondents. This bodes well particularly for resource-poor economies that have limited budgets and personnel for mental health services. Scalable interventions such as these may enable access to those who may need mental health psychosocial support [35]. The Katatagan program was designed by psychologists who were involved in providing disaster response in the Philippines. It was designed as a small group intervention because, in collectivist cultures like the Philippines, people derive support from their community— family, friends, and other trusted individuals. As such, resilience is not only an individual phenomenon but has a social component [36].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, even though the correlation study shows a clear connection between coping strategies and burnout in this situation, the small effect size necessitates a careful analysis. The observed weak correlation suggests that, although there is a statistically significant relationship, the real effect of burnout levels on the use of coping mechanisms is small. The coping mechanism indicates that respondents have a moderate level of engagement in managing strategies and generally take a balanced approach to coping across all subscales. The low standard deviation of coping mechanisms suggests a cohesive pattern and consistent tendency among the respondents' coping techniques. This consistency in coping mechanisms suggests a common adaptive reaction to academic stressors.

Implications to Practice

Numerous strategies to enhance students' academic performance and well-being are suggested by the

study's findings. a) Educational institutions ought to promote adaptive coping strategies vigorously, emphasizing the benefits of proactive coping for stress reduction and academic success. The potential negative effects of denial on emotional exhaustion must be addressed, which calls for interventions that encourage students to face their stressors head-on rather than avoiding them. b) Given the detrimental relationship between self-blame and academic efficacy, interventions targeting self-blame tendencies are essential. c) Educational institutions are urged to approach student well-being holistically, recognizing the complexity of these intricate relationships and adding to future studies to deepen our understanding of them.

Scope and Limitations

The post-pandemic academic burnout and coping strategies of Filipino college students were examined in this study. Male and female students majoring in Psychology from Years I to IV at Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan participated in the study. The study did not cover other problems and/or issues not related to the research questions.

Recommendation

To provide guidance for interventions aimed at mitigating academic burnout and enhancing the general well-being of students, researchers are urged to thoroughly investigate the complexities of coping mechanisms and their efficacy. Efforts to prevent and manage burnout may require equal or greater attention to strategies that address broader contextual factors, such as workload distribution, organizational support, and general satisfaction with academic experiences.

In order to provide a more thorough understanding of burnout among Filipino college students and to direct the development of focused interventions that address its multifaceted nature, future research should examine the intricate interactions between differing factors.

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