

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Emotional and Mental Reaction of College Students: A Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract— This study sought to determine the significant relationship between the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on college students' emotional and mental reactions. It also aims to explore the emotional and mental challenges brought on by the covid-19 pandemic in the lives of college students, specifically in the Davao de Oro State College-New Bataan Branch. This study utilized mixed methods parallel convergent design. In the Quantitative study, 86 respondents completed an online questionnaire assessing variables perceived threats related to COVID-19. Statistical analyses included Pearson correlations. At the same time, the Qualitative study was conducted in-depth-interview with eight informants. The quantitative findings showed a significant relationship between the impacts of the covid-19 pandemic influencing students' emotional and mental reactions. The result is in line with the statement of Cao W et al. (2020) these stressors were positively associated with the level of negative psychological symptoms experienced during the pandemic. It is noted that emotions can hinder students in their academics, commitment, and their success in school since emotional aspects affect the way they learn. Seven major themes emerged from the qualitative study: 1) Lonely and stressed 2) Stress 3) Anxiety and Depression 4) Communicate to Family 5) Talk to friends 6) Think Positive 7) Communication is essential. Change of learning modality, students to faced stress, anxiety, and depression. In contrast, Communication with family and friends and manifesting positivity play a significant role in dealing with students' emotional and mental reactions. Social support from family and friends enables students to deal with the problematic situations brought about by the pandemic.

Keywords— mixed methods, COVID-19, emotional and mental reaction, stress, college students, communication, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

An increased prevalence of moderate-to-severe self-reported depressed and anxious symptomatology among the general public has been found by recent research analyzing the mental health consequences of COVID-19. (Wang et al., 2020. American College Health Association, 2019). Tertiary education institutions have shifted to an emergency online learning format, which is expected to further exacerbate student academic stressors (Wickens, 2011). Due to this crisis, students were forced to abandon the social advantages of the so-called "college experience" (e.g., social gatherings, group and peer discussions, in-person classes, and meetings), increasing anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

In the global context, the United States reported that learners faced particular difficulties due to the abrupt changes to their learning environment, the standard of their education, and other factors which harmed their mental health. Trauma or stress-related disorders were likely influenced by the stress brought on by this rapid social transition, potential disruptive issues at home, and concern about acquiring or transmitting COVID-19. (Esterwood E, and Saeed SA, 2020).

On the other hand, in the Philippines, education sector has not escaped the pandemic's devastating effects and wrath (Moralista y Oducado, 2020; Oducado et al., 2020). In a recent study involving college students, high fatigue levels due to social distancing measures were attributed to lower social connectedness with peers and friends and lower coping skills (Nitschke et al., 2020).

In the local setting, Davao de Oro State College is not an exception to this problem. The pandemic exposes students' lack of necessities for their education; before the pandemic, students rely on the school campus resources. But the loss of these essential tools makes many students struggle to attend virtual classes because of inequitable access to the internet and a lack of computers and digital technologies. That's why students suffer from anxiety, depression, and distress due to the force of the new learning modality. Students were experiencing great challenges and trouble staying focused on their work and attending classes. Some students decided not to attend college next semester and stopped studying college. In light of the pandemic, Aguilera-Hermida (2020) concluded that depression and anxiety symptoms are crucial among students.

Because of the above problem, which could be alarming to the present society, schools of New Bataan, specifically Davao de Oro State College, are aggressively searching for solutions and reforms to address the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the emotional and mental reaction of students. Understanding or at least being aware of the factors behind it is necessary. The major part of this attempt is to uncover students' mental and emotional reactions. As such, Identifying protective factors can prevent psychological problems when confronted with difficulties (Arslan, 2020).

This study's intervention is based on digital platforms. It considers various uses of digital interventions and their potential effects on clinical practice, clinical services, and the global availability of psychological treatments (Abdullah et al., 2016). A significant shift is starting to occur in the psychological management of mental and emotional health issues. The increasing use of "digital technology," which includes computers, the internet, mobile devices like smartphones, and mobile software applications (apps), is causing this transition. It is supported by Fairburn and Patel (2014) and Munoz et al. (2016) Direct-to-user digital treatments have considerable potential as public health interventions.

There will be alternative tailoring. This allows students to select components of the intervention that suit their particular concerns. For example, people with depression might choose modules on Worrying, Difficulty Sleeping and Improving Concentration, as well as Low Mood and Negative Thinking. This Supporting recovery, online self-help programs will help strengthen prevention and treatment. On the other hand, the cost-effectiveness of online service therapy delivery platforms would be the best solution to

overcome the barriers to mental and emotional reactions of students in the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of covid-19 on students' emotional and mental reactions. This study will help address the psychological problems of students affecting their emotional and mental health. Many schools have had students facing the impact of covid-19 on their emotional and mental reactions due to some reasons they need to identify to address these issues, improve students' performance, and encourage positive health. Some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are prompted to establish management approaches regarding pandemics to encourage positive health behavior among students (Akan et al., 2010). Therefore, the result of the study aims to address common psychological problems of students, specifically on emotional and mental reactions of students. Likewise, it also means serving and assisting students with health disorders due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on Planned Behaviour Theory (PBT) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1991). Based on this theory, its central factor is the individual's intention to perform a given behavior. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence behavior as indications of how hard people are willing to try of how much effort they are planning to exert to perform the behavior. To the extent that a person has the required opportunities and resources and intends to perform the behavior, an individual should succeed.

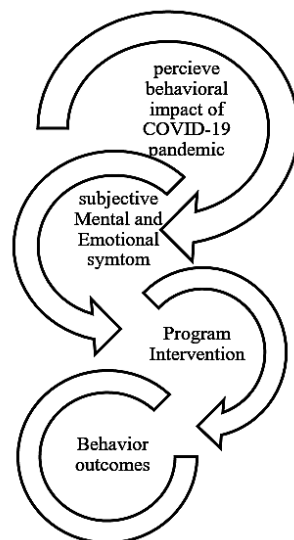


Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behavior Model

The researchers believe that the impact of the covid-19 pandemic significantly affects college students' mental and emotional reactions. Figure 1 shows the research paradigm, which presents the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable is the impact of covid-19 pandemic indicated by relationship and academic life, isolation and fear, and contagion that might impact the mental and emotional reactions of college students. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is adopted from the indicators formulated by the COVID-19 Students Stress Questionnaire Scale (CSSQ).

Relationships and academic life should be carefully targeted from this perspective because of the forced full-time cohabitation and practically exclusive time and space sharing throughout the day. Cao et al., 2020; Lee, 2020b; Sahu, 2020) and Cao et al., 2020; Lee, 2020b; Sahu, 2020) say that university students may be suffering more from their academic studies because they have fewer chances to learn from the university experience. They get sick because of changes in how they interact with professors and peers.

Sahu, Zhai, and Du (2020) claim that loneliness and dread best describe the condition being lived, which is frequently far from loved ones. In addition, Williams et al. (2020) took into account the significant impact that containment methods like isolation and social segregation have on people's psychological health and well-being, stress from social isolation, and changes in their sexual lives.

Contagion comprised one item assessing perceived stress related to the risk of infection. The relevance of the latter dimension is, indeed, in line with 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 of being a source of contagion for the others (Ahorsu et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2020).

The dependent variable in this study is the mental and emotional reaction of college students indicating Difficulty in concentration, sleeping habits, Own health and health of loved ones, Social relation/ social isolation, Academic performance, and eating patterns. Current studies that led to the identification of primary domains were conducted by Cohen et al. (1983).

Difficulty in concentration and media use is related to distraction and various indicators of failure in intentional control, such as concentration problems (Aalbers et al., 2019)

Lo Martire et al., 2019 Sleeping habits have been described in a bidirectional relationship across the life span. It is supported by Bonnet and Arand, 2010; Riemann et al., 2010, 2015). In particular, high cognitive and physiological arousal levels in response to stressors have been hypothesized to interfere with sleep according to the hyperarousal model of insomnia within the framework of a self-reinforcing loop.

Moreover, quarantine could have reduced daylight exposure, essential for synchronizing the circadian body clock, consequently affecting many processes, including sleep and mood (McClung, 2013; Vадnie and McClung, 2017).

According to Ahorsu DK, Lin Cy, V et al., 2020 and Harper CA, Satchell LP et al., 2020 Own health and loved ones is other major source of fear regarding COVID-19 risk of loved ones being infected.

Social relation/ social isolation contributes to anxiety and depression (Mishra SK et al., 2018). Prolonged isolation can adversely affect physical and emotional health, altering sleep and nutritional rhythms and reducing opportunities for movement (Cacioppo, J. T., Hughes, M. 2003). Lack of social connections and feelings of loneliness cause higher morbidity and mortality rates (Yanguas, J, Pinazo and Henandis, S 2018).

Shankar et al., (2011) Social isolation and loneliness are related concepts and often coexist – loneliness can lead to isolation, and vice versa. Loneliness has been an emerging issue in society in recent years and has been linked to depression, irritability, and preoccupation with negative self-related thoughts, alongside a 26% increase in the risk of premature death.

Further, social isolation and loneliness may be stronger predictors of suicidality than other well-known risk factors, such as anxiety and hopelessness (Hom et al., 2017).

Academic performance, lockdown impacts students' learning performance. Their findings revealed that the lockdown made significant disruptions to students' learning experience. The students also reported some challenges that they faced during their online classes. (Kapaisa et al., 2020)

Pietrobelli et al. (2020) stressed that Eating patterns, and consumption of unhealthy foods, including potato chips, red meat, and sugary drinks, significantly increased three weeks into lockdown in a sample of 41 young people. Therefore, multiple factors may have increased the intake of unhealthy or comfort foods during the

COVID-19 lockdown, including already being the overweight or obese, more sedentary time at home, and an overall change in dietary habits/patterns.

According to Ammar et al. (2020), unhealthy food consumption had increased during confinement due to changes in mood, including lack of motivation, anxiety, and/or boredom. The increase in negative eating behaviors was thought to be due to increased anxiety in this population during lockdown (Pellegrini et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem

The main aim of this study is to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental and emotional reactions of college students. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following queries:

1. What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as perceived by the students in terms of:
 - 1.1 relationship and academic life;
 - 1.2 isolation and;
 - 1.3 fear of contagion
2. What is the level of the mental and emotional reaction of students to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of:
 - 2.1 difficulty in concentration;
 - 2.2 sleeping habits;
 - 2.3 own health and health of loved ones;
 - 2.4 social relation/ social isolation;
 - 2.5 academic performance and;
 - 2.6 eating patterns
3. Is there a significant relationship between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the level of the mental and emotional reaction of college students?
4. What are the mental and emotional challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic in the lives of the students?
5. What mechanisms did you use to cope with the challenges encountered during this pandemic in dealing with emotional and mental reactions?
6. What are the insights you gain during the COVID-19 pandemic in dealing with emotional and mental reactions?

Significance of the Study

- ***This study benefits a number of groups of people in the society enumerated hereunder:***

The School. The results of this study would serve as a significant tool for the School to implement and design solutions and coping strategies to address the emotional and mental problems encountered by the students due to

the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also lead them to continually assess and aid students' psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and stress, as well as establish programs for having positive health behavior for all students.

The study aspires to give input for evaluating the challenges revealed by students in dealing with psychological issues faced by the students. Knowing students' great struggles and difficulties serves as one of the bases for designing relevant solutions and coping strategies such as improving communications and providing psychological assistance, reducing boredom in addressing the said dilemma.

This research will also help teachers and school administrators formulate strategies and equip them with coping strategies and skills to assess students' mental and emotional reactions. They will also re-evaluate strategies implemented by the school regarding effectiveness in dealing with such problems. As a result, this will give ideas for implementing or strengthening intervention programs to be adapted for the student's emotional and mental schemes.

The School Administrators. The study results will also allow school administrators to evaluate the programs and coping strategies implemented at the school level and how these programs and strategies affect the psychological problems students in their quest for learning. As a result, school leaders will be updated on what extent the program has gone far in empowering and improving the emotional and mental reactions of the students. It will also provide a wide range of knowledge and understanding of the challenges. The online learning modality encountered by the students serves as the bases to raise awareness to provide upgraded action to the problem.

The Teachers. They will become aware of the psychological problems faced by the students during this crisis. It will also lead them to design coping strategies that would best address the psychological issues faced. And provide teaching and learning more engaging.

Parents. They will be more aware and able to assess their child's needs and the situation. They will be more aware experiences of their children during online learning and how it's going, during this crisis, so that it will lessen the psychological burdens of their children while continuing online classes.

Students. They will be familiar with those psychological issues as well as the coping strategies for dealing with such psychological issues.

Other Researchers. This research serves as a reference for other researchers who will engage in research related to this study.

Scope and Delimitation

A mixed-method research study using the convergent parallel research design, this research undertaking deals with the impact of covid-19 on the emotional and mental reactions of students. In this study, Davao de Oro State College will be the place of interest to further gather relevant information and data for the development of the research.

The conduct of the study is only limited to students of the said school. Arguably, the numbers of research participants are not commensurate equitably with the school's total population, but they are carefully chosen according to their contribution to the study.

The implementation process is within the study's intervention from October 2021 – June 2022. Hence, thereupon the participants were randomly selected. In this first phase, the researcher administers the survey questionnaire to the respondents. The obtained data were analyzed with appropriate statistical tools. Thereafter analyzing the quantitative data, the purposeful random sampling was done, taking eight (8) to be the key informants in the in-depth interview. Prior to the interview, the researchers obtain the informants' consent to become key informants. The eight (8) informants were subjected to the in-depth interview to explore mental and emotional reaction challenges during a covid-19 pandemic. Open-ended data with protocols will be collected and analyzed using procedures specific to the qualitative approach.

Nevertheless, there are certain weaknesses and limits in this research. Due to the fact that we are all in a new normal setting, online interviews were employed. The participants may choose a virtual interview utilizing apps such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Messenger. However, if the participants cannot participate in an online platform, then we conducted the face-to-face interview. Of course, health protocols were observed, such as wearing a face mask and face shield when interviewing participants.

Definition of Terms

In order to gain clarity and grapple with a better understanding of the terms used in the study, lexical and operational definitions are given.

COVID-19. Stands for Corona-Virus. It is a contagious illness brought on by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The majority of virus-infected individuals will experience a

mild to severe respiratory disease and will recover without the need for special care. However, some people will get serious illnesses and need to see a doctor.

Anxiety. It is a sensation of dread or trepidation about what is ahead. Most people may experience anxiety and panic on their first day of school, at a job interview, or when giving a speech.

Depression. A chronic sadness and loss of interest are symptoms of a mood illness. It affects how you feel, think, and behave and can cause a number of mental and physical issues. Clinical depression or major depressive disorder are other names for it. You can find it difficult to carry out your daily tasks, and you might occasionally think life isn't worth living.

Stress. It is a natural bodily, mental, and emotional reaction to a difficult incident. Everyone experiences it regularly. Stress may spur development, action, and change when it is used constructively. But persistently negative stress might lower your level of well-being.

Psychological problems. Mental irregularities, also known as mental disorders, produce enduring behavioral patterns that can significantly negatively impact your day-to-day functioning and quality of life.

E-Learning or Electronic learning. It is an electronic technology to access education, specifically in the teaching and learning process. The primary element of E-learning is the use of computers and the Internet.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Phase

- The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

The impact of the covid-19 pandemic as perceived by students is moderately stressful. The measure being described compliments many but not the majority of all. The indicators that showed moderately stressful ratings are relationship and academic life, isolation, and fear and contagion. This means that the impact of the covid-19 pandemic is moderately stressful in the students' lives.

Relationships and academic life seem to be moderately stressful, suggesting that the COVID-19 epidemic still places the same academic strain on college students using online learning. It is reinforced by Irawan et al. (2020), who identified the strain of online lecture tasks as one factor in students' stress rates. These assignments require them to use the online information they have just learned and must understand immediately. Agnew & Khan (2019) stressed that students even suffered from

poor mental health due to the disruption of academic routine.

Moreover, Isolation and Loneliness also resulted in moderately stressful. Zhai and Du (2020) found out that students struggled with loneliness and isolation due to their disconnections from friends and peers.

Fear and contagion are also reflected as moderately stressful, wherein Fears of contagion reflect feelings of apprehension about having or contracting COVID-19. And also, the COVID-19 pandemic triggers individuals' anxiety and stress, particularly surrounding the uncertainties brought by COVID-19. (Achenbach J., (2020). Therefore, fear of having or contracting COVID-19 may lead to college students experiencing mild stress and health problems.

Level of Emotional and Mental Reaction of College Students

The other variable considered in this study that displays a mild level is the emotional and mental reaction of college students. Difficulty in concentration, sleeping habits, own health and health of loved ones, social relation/ social isolation, academic performance, and eating patterns showed mild levels. This means that the level of the mental and emotional reaction to students' stress is sometimes influenced.

The mild level rating revealed mental and emotional reactions among college students were affected. This includes Difficulty in concentration, sleeping habits, own health and health of loved ones, social relation/ social isolation, academic performance, and eating patterns.

Difficulty in concentration recorded stress is sometimes influenced due to various sources of distraction. Online classes were subject to distraction due to a lack of interactions and prolonged attention to a computer screen. Additionally, some mentioned monotonous life patterns to negatively affect concentration on academic work.

The indicator of sleeping habits, stress is sometimes influenced. This signifies that students have had irregular sleep patterns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; they tended to stay up later or wake up and inconsistent time to go to bed during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Own health and health of loved ones who displayed stress are sometimes influenced because students were worried about their families and relatives who were more vulnerable.

Moreover, the Social relation/ social isolation indicator revealed stress is sometimes influenced, which signifies that students' disruptions to their outdoor activities have affected their mental health and worries about a lack of in-person interactions such as face-to-face meetings.

Academic Performance sometimes displays stress due to sudden changes in the quality of the classes, technical issues with online applications, and the difficulty of learning online. Grades in the online learning environment become a major stressor.

Eating patterns revealed stress is sometimes influenced this signifies that COVID-19 has also negatively impacted a large portion of participants' dietary patterns, wherein eating patterns have become inconsistent.

Correlation between Measures

The study shows a significant relationship between the impact of the covid-19 pandemic and college students' emotional and mental reactions. This implies that the impact of the covid-19 pandemic influences students' emotional and mental reactions. The finding is in line with the statement of Cao W, et al. (2020) these stressors were positively associated with the level of negative psychological symptoms experienced during the pandemic. It is noted that emotions can hinder students' engagement in their academics, commitment, and success in school as a whole since emotional aspects affect how they learn.

CONCLUSION

With the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The impact of the covid-19 pandemic as perceived by students is moderately stressful. Three indicators such as relationship and academic life, isolation and loneliness, and fear and contagion showed moderate stress results.
2. The level of emotional and mental reaction by college students, mild level, which indicates the level of emotional and mental reaction of college students, stress is sometimes influenced. The indicators' own health and health of loved ones, social relation/ social isolation, academic performance, and eating patterns revealed mild results.
3. There is a significant relationship between the impact of the covid-19 pandemic and the level of emotional and mental reactions of college students.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered by the researchers;

1. Schools must strengthen the emotional and mental well-being of students by providing students stresses counseling as well as providing a non-threatening e-learning modality. Faculty members must also display positive behavior and attitudes, which will influence students to be motivated despite the challenges.
2. Students should be provided with the essential coping strategies in order for them to be able to help themselves escape from various threats such as depression, anxiety and etc.
3. Students may also be able to join online support groups through college counseling facilities to share shared issues and find social support. Students must be aware of handling their stress amid a pandemic for them to be able to cope.
4. Parents must always check on their children for the students to become motivated and gain a personal support system.
5. Researchers must do future research to determine what other factors influence the emotional and mental reactions aspect of students.

Qualitative Phase

This study aimed to explore and understand the Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Emotional and Mental Reactions of College Students through in-depth interviews. ***Mental and emotional challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic in the lives of the students.***

From the data collected on the experiences of the participants, three main themes emerged as presented. These themes helped me determine which core ideas to report. These themes are 1) Lonely and Stress; 2) Stress; and 3) Anxiety and Depression.

Lonely and Stress

One major theme in this study is loneliness and Stress; due to the pandemic, students suffer from loneliness because of increased isolation. Students tend to stay at home, which exalibrates loneliness and Stress among student, stressed by participants. There was less socialization and interaction with other people, such as friends, due to the covid-19 safety protocols affecting students emotionally and mentally.

A pandemic, such as COVID-19, where living conditions are at stake, is an example of a crisis that presents significant challenges for learners (Maloney &

Kim, 2020). Covid-19 has greatly impacted everything in society. These force countries to make difficult choices on how to best meet the needs of their people. This is when people are forced to stay at home and cannot even go out and do anything in their homes to support their needs (World Health Organization, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic has forced individuals to face a potentially terrifying reality of isolation (Banerjee D., and Rai M., 2020).

According to Porcelli P. Fear (2020), isolation and limitations brought on by quarantine exacerbated loneliness and anxiety in both older and younger groups. Ellis et al. (2020) found that stress related to COVID-19 was associated with more loneliness and higher symptoms of mental health disorders (e.g., depression), while those who spent more time with family and were more focused on schoolwork had fewer self-reported mental health symptoms.

Stress

Most of the participants revealed that they were experiencing massive stress due to the abrupt adaptation to a new learning modality, which is done through virtual or online classes. Participants stressed that they have problems with internet connectivity which falls them to get stressed in terms of sending tasks and activities on time as well as attending online classes. Exams, grade-level competition, and cramming a lot of information into a short amount of time are all common sources of academic pressure (Abouserie R, 1994). When college students face excessive or harmful stress, they suffer negative physical and psychological effects.

Moreover, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2020) revealed that transitioning and adapting to this new way of living and receiving an education were emotionally distressing to many families, especially children. On the other hand, children and youth may experience increased stress and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Orgilles et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020).

Anxiety and Depression

The majority of the participants stressed that the covid-19 pandemic caused them to experience anxiety and depression, wherein students could not be able to handle themselves. Pentaraki and Burkholder (2017) found that frustration is the predominant negative emotion that bubbles up for students during online learning.

The COVID-19 epidemic causes people to become anxious and stressed, especially because of the unknowns it poses (Achenbach J.2021). The three mental diseases most frequently affect young people are

depression, anxiety, and stress (DAS) (T. Hicks and S. Heastie, 2008).

Indeed, anxiety and chronic stress have been linked specifically to perceived sensations of loneliness (McHugh JE, Lawlor BA. 2013). This claim is supported by Rajkumar, (2020) that preliminary analyses revealed anxiety, depression, and distress to be the most commonly noted responses by the general population.

Mechanisms used to cope with the challenges encountered during this pandemic in dealing with emotional and mental reactions.

There were two main themes that emerged from the data collected from the responses of the participants namely: 1) Communicate to Family; and 2) talk to friends.

Communicate to Family

All participants stated that having a connection, interaction, and verbal communication with family becomes an effective coping mechanism. Through communication with their families, students gain support and advice, which help them to over the challenges. Social support from loved ones, friends, and the academic community can have a direct impact on how students perceive school, positively affecting their well-being and academic success (Brailovskaia et al., 2018; Maymon et al., 2019; McCoy et al., 2014; Scanlon et al., 2020).

In addition, adolescents require a sense of love, accomplishment, independence, and purpose in life, according to Oklahoma State University (2020), for healthy growth and development. It has regularly been shown that having more social support is linked to lower levels of stress and a better ability to cope with stressors (Jun et al., 2018; Yildirim et al., 2017; Mishra, 2020). The quality of family relationships is extremely important to individuals' well-being and sense of life satisfaction (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976).

Talk to Friends

Talk to friends was identified as one coping mechanism used by the participants as they experienced mental and emotional challenges encountered during the pandemic. Wherein students can share hard feelings. And also, the presence of their closest friends helps them to experience happiness, share laughter, and forget their problems.

Batchelor et al. (2020) said that peer support, in addition, has the potential to normalize experiences and promote

a sense of belonging. To be with friends, students can share feelings to alleviate loneliness. Research shows that support from peers, family, and health care resources aids their life satisfaction, self-esteem, perceived social acceptance, and well-being (Munsey C, 2018).

Additionally, peer and family support is critical in offering students a sense of belonging (Hoffman M, Richmond J, Morrow J, Salomone K. 2002). These benefits may include enhanced mental and physical wellbeing, a better quality of life, higher self-esteem and feeling of purpose, more social support, and a reduction in stress (see Casiday, Kinsman, Fisher & Bamba, 2008 for review; Oarga, Stavrova, & Fetchenhauer, 2015).

Learning insights gained during the COVID-19 pandemic in dealing with emotional and mental reactions

There were two themes that emerged as a result of the responses of the participants generated from the question above, namely: 1) Think Positive, and 2) communication is important.

Think Positive

The majority of the participants shared their learning insights gained during the pandemic. Specifically by always thinking positively, most especially in every difficult situation. And also, students must be optimistic about manifesting progress, gaining focus, and attainably achieving goals. Accordingly, when a learner possesses personal well-being, he is assured of attaining overall success and that he is empowered to have better academic and life outcomes, inside and outside the perimeters of the school (Sing Teach, 2018.)

On the other hand, Feelings play a significant role in students' psychological well-being, directly affecting all aspects of their academic lives (C.f.C.M. Health2015).

Moreover, positive feelings (e.g., enjoyment and interest) were found to be associated with students' attention, concentration, engagement, and persistence in learning activities which positively correlate with academic achievements (J. Moeller, M.A. Brackett, Z. Ivcevic, A.E. 2020).

Communication is important

The best coping strategy is communication between family, friends, and other people. Communication becomes the lifeblood for human connections and interaction, wherein it provides the foundation for building closeness and strong relationships in the family and even with friends. We can gain bundles of advice as

well as love and support. The distinction between perceived support from family and from friends is important.

Generally speaking, people with social support are more likely to manage better their challenges and stressors (Wegge et al., 2006). Building trust requires communication and relationships with families. In order to maintain a partnership with families and work together with them to support children in achieving their goals, trust is a crucial component. Trust between a child and a family makes parents feel good about their ability to meet their child's needs. Social support is known to affect variables such as quality of life, life satisfaction, and well-being (Özbay et al., 2007).

Terzi (2008) asserted that social support is an important determinant of the protection of physical and mental health.

Implications of covid-19 pandemic

Exploring and understanding the impact of the covid-19 pandemic is challenging for students. These are the results of the mental and emotional challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic in the lives of the students:

The academic life of the students was vulnerably affected by the covid-19 pandemic. Wherein the abrupt change of the learning modality causes students to encounter challenges such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Moreover, due to the conduct of online classes, students also suffered from unstable internet connectivity, which caused them to have problems submitting their tasks and activities on time.

Aside from this, students also experience loneliness due to the safety protocols of the covid-19 pandemic. Wherein there was no physical contact at all; people were forced to stay at home in order to lessen the covid-19 cases. Because of this, participants stressed that they couldn't be able to socialize with others due to the influence of self-isolation, where they tend to stay at home.

This study found that Social support from family and friends becomes an effective coping mechanism used by many. Communicating with family helps students overcome the challenges of the covid-19 outbreak. Students tend to talk with their family to gain support and bundles of relevant advice, and the presence of friends is also essential wherein; participants revealed that they shared difficult experiences with their friends, which helps them feel relief.

The result of the study implies that communication and support from family and friends play a vital role in

student's lives as they face challenges with emotional and mental reactions in the midst of a pandemic. Moreover, optimism helps them lessen their fear, stress, anxiety, and depression.

The inclusion of students into academic life has been linked to social support (Cox & Naylor, 2018; Maunder, 2018). which in turn may impact academic progress and retention (Gallop & Bastien, 2016; Masserini & Bini, 2021; Reeve et al., 2013).

Recommendations for Further Research

This study explored the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on college student's emotional and mental reactions. Nevertheless, the result of this qualitative exploration is limited only to the experiences of the selected participant, specifically students from Davao de Oro State College, Bachelor of Elementary Education Department.

It is advised to carry out another study with a sizable participant pool and should cover a wider range of the school to obtain more thorough responses to the questions of this study.

This study found out that students were massively affected in terms of emotional and mental aspects due to the conduct of new learning modalities amid a covid-19 pandemic, wherein schools are forced to implement an online learning environment with respect to the safety protocols of the covid-19 outbreak. However, this school closure triggers mental and emotional reactions of college students. Wherein, it arises loneliness, anxiety, and depression among college students. Students have experienced difficulties in terms of online classes, specifically in submitting tasks and other requirements, because of the unstable internet accessibility, which hinders students learning.

Concluding Remarks

Communication with family and friends, as well as manifesting a positive mindset or being optimistic, plays a significant role in dealing with the impact of a covid-19 pandemic on college student's emotional and mental reactions. Social support from family and friends helps students gain support and advice, foster a positive mindset, and help to deal with the difficult situations that cause them to experience loneliness, stress, and depression brought by the pandemic.

The researcher used an in depth-interview to generate the experiences of the selected participants. The primary source of data is the transcript of the participant's answers to the given questions. During the interview, the

researchers were challenged to get and convince the participants to share their experiences, and luckily, they were very much willing to do it.

During the conduct of this study, the researcher really experienced how it feels to be a researcher. With the help of my instructor, we completed all the essential steps to ensure the success of this research. It is indeed a demanding task because it requires too much time, patience, and perseverance to be able to gather quality and relevant data that will support my study.

Participants found themselves suffering from emotional and mental distress during the Covid-19 pandemic because of lockdown and school closure, and they are forced to adapt and cope with the changes in reality, specifically on the implementation of online learning modality. On the other hand, the essential insight the students gained to cope with the challenges is strengthening communication with family and friends, which helps prevent depression and lessen their stress and anxiety. Lastly, foster a positive mindset.

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