



STRESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE WELL-BEING OF COLLEGE STUDENTS: BASIS FOR A MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

College students are increasingly exposed to academic, environmental, financial, and personal stressors that adversely affect their overall well-being and academic functioning. This study examined the stress management practices of college students at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. and determined their effects on students' physiological, psychological, and behavioral well-being as the basis for developing a mental health intervention program. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design, the study employed a descriptive-correlational approach for the quantitative phase and semi-structured interviews for the qualitative phase. A total of 293 college students selected through proportionate stratified random sampling participated in the quantitative survey, while 15 participants were purposively selected for the qualitative interviews. Findings revealed that respondents oftentimes experienced stress, with physical environmental and non-work stressors emerging as the most prevalent sources. Despite these challenges, respondents demonstrated a high level of stress management practices, particularly in withdrawing from stressors and controlling stress consequences, although social support was the least utilized coping strategy. Stress exerted a high extent of physiological, psychological, and behavioral effects, with psychological effects being the most pronounced. Statistical analysis further revealed significant positive relationships between stressors and stress effects, while stress management practices were significantly and negatively associated with stress effects, indicating that effective coping strategies reduced the adverse impact of stress on students' well-being. Qualitative findings corroborated the quantitative results by highlighting academic and financial stressors, adaptive coping strategies, barriers to stress management, and the need for stronger institutional mental health support. Based on these findings, a

comprehensive intervention program was proposed to strengthen stress management competencies, resilience, and holistic well-being among college students.

Keywords: *stress management, stressors, coping strategies, college students, student well-being, mixed-methods research, mental health intervention program*

INTRODUCTION

Stress has become one of the most prevalent challenges affecting college students worldwide, influencing not only their academic performance but also their physical, psychological, and social well-being. The transition to higher education exposes students to increased academic workloads, financial responsibilities, interpersonal demands, and career-related uncertainties that often exceed their coping capacities. When left unmanaged, chronic stress may result in anxiety, emotional exhaustion, decreased academic engagement, and diminished quality of life. Consequently, higher education institutions are increasingly recognizing the importance of implementing evidence-based stress management programs that foster resilience, adaptive coping, and holistic student development. Juniar et al. (2025) emphasized that structured stress management interventions significantly reduce psychological distress and improve emotional well-being among university students, particularly when integrated into institutional support systems.

In higher education, stress management has become a critical component of student support services because effective coping strategies enable students to adapt to academic pressures while maintaining positive mental health. Universities have increasingly promoted interventions such as mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral approaches, peer support, and resilience-building programs to enhance students' coping abilities and academic success. Similarly, Pascoe et al. (2025) reported that institutional support, accessible mental health services, and positive learning environments substantially reduce students' stress levels while improving psychological well-being and academic persistence. Their findings underscore the vital role of higher education institutions in creating supportive environments that encourage healthy coping behaviors and emotional resilience.

In the Philippines, stress among college students has likewise emerged as an important educational and public health concern. Filipino students continue to experience significant academic, financial, and personal pressures that affect their overall well-being, particularly following the educational adjustments brought about by evolving learning modalities. Although students employ various coping mechanisms, the effectiveness of these strategies varies depending on the availability of institutional support and personal resilience. Labrague and De los Santos (2024) found that Filipino college students commonly experience moderate to high levels of academic stress, with time management difficulties, academic workload, and emotional exhaustion serving as major stressors. Their study further highlighted that adaptive coping strategies and comprehensive

institutional mental health programs contribute significantly to improving students' psychological well-being and academic adjustment.

Recent Philippine evidence also indicates that students continue to rely primarily on individual coping mechanisms despite increasing awareness of mental health concerns. While adaptive strategies such as planning, emotional regulation, and positive thinking are commonly practiced, many students remain hesitant to seek professional or institutional support because of stigma, limited awareness, or insufficient access to counseling services. Mantaring et al. (2023) observed that although university students recognize the importance of mental health support, many prefer self-managed coping strategies over formal psychological services, emphasizing the need for colleges and universities to strengthen accessible, student-centered mental health initiatives and promote help-seeking behaviors.

At Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc., college students are likewise confronted with various academic, environmental, interpersonal, and non-academic stressors that may influence their physical, psychological, and behavioral well-being. However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the specific stress management practices employed by students within the institution and how these practices relate to their overall well-being. Based on the findings of the present study, respondents frequently experienced stress arising primarily from physical environmental and non-work stressors while demonstrating generally high stress management practices, particularly in withdrawing from stressors and controlling stress consequences. Significant relationships were likewise established between stressors, stress management practices, and students' well-being, indicating the importance of effective coping strategies in mitigating the adverse effects of stress. These findings provided the basis for developing a comprehensive intervention program designed to strengthen stress management competencies, resilience, and mental well-being among college students at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of stress experienced by college students in terms of:
 - work-related stressors;
 - physical environmental stressors; and
 - non-work stressors?
2. What is the extent of stress management practices employed by college students in terms of:
 - withdrawing from stressors;
 - controlling stress consequences; and
 - seeking social support?
3. What is the extent of the effects of stress on the well-being of college students in terms of:
 - physiological effects;
 - psychological effects; and

- behavioral effects?
- 4. Is there a significant relationship between students' stress levels and the effects of stress on their well-being?
- 5. Is there a significant relationship between students' stress management practices and the effects of stress on their well-being?
- 6. Based on the findings, what mental health intervention program may be proposed to strengthen the stress management practices and well-being of college students?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine the stress management practices of college students and their effects on students' well-being. The quantitative phase utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the common stressors experienced by students, assess their stress management practices, evaluate the physiological, psychological, and behavioral effects of stress, and examine the relationships among these variables. The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews to provide a deeper understanding of students' lived experiences, coping strategies, barriers to stress management, and perceived institutional support, allowing the qualitative findings to explain and corroborate the quantitative results. The study was conducted at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. (STCTI) during the Academic Year 2025–2026. A total of 293 college students from the institution's four academic colleges participated in the quantitative phase and were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, while 15 participants were purposively selected for the qualitative interviews based on their willingness and ability to provide rich information regarding their stress experiences. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire that underwent expert validation prior to administration. The instrument consisted of four sections covering respondents' demographic characteristics, common stressors, stress management practices, and the physiological, psychological, and behavioral effects of stress. For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview guide was used to explore participants' stress experiences and coping mechanisms in greater depth. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the institutional authorities, and informed consent was secured from all participants. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to describe the variables and determine the significant relationships among them at the 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, and the findings were integrated with the quantitative results during the interpretation stage to develop a comprehensive understanding of students' stress management practices and to serve as the basis for the proposed mental health intervention program.

RESULTS

Table 1. Common Stressors Experienced by College Students

Stressor	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Physical Environment	4.07	Oftentimes	1
Non-Work Stressors	3.96	Oftentimes	2
Organizational Stressors	3.70	Oftentimes	3
Interpersonal Stressors	3.66	Oftentimes	4
Role-Related Stressors	3.61	Oftentimes	5
Overall Mean	3.80	Oftentimes	

Table 2. Stress Management Practices of College Students

Stress Management Practice	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Withdrawal from Stressors	3.94	High	1
Control Stress Consequences	3.90	High	2
Change Stress Perception	3.87	High	3
Removal of Stressors	3.84	High	4
Social Support	3.61	High	5
Overall Mean	3.84	High	

Table 3. Effects of Stress on the Well-Being of College Students

Effect of Stress	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Behavioral	3.81	High Extent	1
Psychological	3.77	High Extent	2
Physiological	3.69	High Extent	3
Overall Mean	3.76	High Extent	

Table 4. Relationship Between Stressors and the Effects of Stress on Students' Well-Being

Stressor	Overall <i>r</i>-value	Decision	Interpretation
Physical Environment	0.68*	Reject H_0	Significant
Role-Related Stressors	0.68*	Reject H_0	Significant
Interpersonal Stressors	0.68*	Reject H_0	Significant
Organizational Stressors	0.68*	Reject H_0	Significant
Non-Work Stressors	0.68*	Reject H_0	Significant

Table 5. Relationship Between Stress Management Practices and the Effects of Stress on Students' Well-Being

Stress Management Practice	Overall <i>r</i> -value	Decision	Interpretation
Removal of Stressors	-0.58	Reject H_0	Significant
Withdrawal from Stressors	-0.45	Reject H_0	Significant
Change Stress Perception	-0.63	Reject H_0	Significant
Control Stress Consequences	-0.66	Reject H_0	Significant
Social Support	-0.52	Reject H_0	Significant
Overall	-0.62	Reject H_0	Significant

Table 6. Summary of the Proposed Mental Health Intervention Program

Focus Area	Proposed Intervention	Expected Outcome
Stress Management Skills	Conduct seminars and workshops on stress management, emotional regulation, and resilience.	Improved coping strategies and stress management competencies
Mental Health Services	Strengthen counseling, peer support, and mental health awareness programs.	Increased utilization of institutional mental health services
Learning Environment	Improve the physical learning environment and provide stress-free spaces.	Reduced environmental stressors
Student Well-Being	Implement the STRESS CARE Program and regularly monitor students' stress levels.	Enhanced psychological well-being and academic functioning
Faculty Development	Train faculty members to recognize and appropriately respond to students experiencing stress.	Stronger institutional support for student mental health

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that college students at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. frequently experienced stress, with physical environmental and non-work stressors emerging as the most common sources. These results suggest that students' well-being is influenced not only by academic demands but also by environmental conditions and personal circumstances outside the classroom. Such findings underscore the multidimensional nature of stress among university students and highlight the need for institutions to create learning environments that minimize unnecessary stressors. Ruiz-Camacho et al. (2025) reported that academic and external stressors significantly predict students' stress responses, emphasizing that stress management interventions should address both institutional and personal factors to improve students' overall well-being.

Despite frequent exposure to stressors, respondents demonstrated a high level of stress management practices, particularly in withdrawing from stressors, controlling stress consequences, and changing stress perceptions. These findings indicate that students actively employ adaptive coping strategies to manage stressful situations. Supporting this finding, Yuan and Hu (2025) demonstrated that mindfulness training significantly enhances students' academic resilience by improving psychological flexibility, enabling them to respond more effectively to stressful academic situations and maintain better emotional well-being.

The study further showed that stress had a high extent of physiological, psychological, and behavioral effects, with behavioral and psychological manifestations being the most evident. These findings indicate that prolonged exposure to stress affects students' emotional functioning, academic engagement, and daily behaviors. Supporting this finding, Burgstahler and Konrad (2025) emphasized that poor stress management and excessive academic stress adversely affect students' psychological well-being, time management, and overall academic functioning, thereby increasing the risk of burnout and reduced academic performance.

Correlation analysis demonstrated significant positive relationships between stressors and the effects of stress, while stress management practices were significantly and negatively associated with stress effects, indicating that effective coping strategies mitigate the adverse impact of stress on students' well-being. These findings affirm the protective role of adaptive coping mechanisms in promoting resilience among college students. Alshammari et al. (2025) similarly reported that students who consistently practice adaptive coping strategies experience lower psychological distress and better emotional well-being despite exposure to substantial academic and clinical stressors.

The qualitative findings corroborated the quantitative results by revealing that students frequently experience academic and financial stress while relying on adaptive coping strategies such as planning, relaxation, prayer, and positive thinking. Participants likewise emphasized the need for stronger institutional mental health services and supportive learning environments. Consistent with these findings, Lew et al. (2025) demonstrated that institution-supported mindfulness interventions and mental health programs significantly improve students' emotional well-being, sleep quality, and stress management capacities, highlighting the value of comprehensive campus-based mental health initiatives.

Conclusions

The study concludes that college students at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. frequently experience stress arising from various academic, environmental, and personal stressors despite demonstrating a high level of stress management practices. Stress significantly affects their physiological, psychological, and behavioral well-being, while effective coping strategies help mitigate these adverse effects. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening institutional mental health initiatives and student support services through a comprehensive intervention program to promote resilience, effective stress management, and overall student well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the institution should strengthen its mental health and student support services by implementing the proposed STRESS CARE Program, enhancing counseling services, and promoting stress management and resilience-building activities among college students. Faculty members should be encouraged to provide timely academic and emotional support while fostering a supportive learning environment. Students should be encouraged to adopt adaptive coping strategies, including effective time management, emotional regulation, and help-seeking behaviors. Finally, future researchers may replicate the study using larger and more diverse samples and explore additional factors influencing stress management and student well-being to further validate and extend the findings.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles governing educational research. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate authorities of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all participants after they were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as research participants. The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were strictly maintained by ensuring that no personally identifiable information was disclosed throughout the study. All data collected were used solely for academic and research purposes and were stored securely to protect participants' privacy. The researchers adhered to the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, confidentiality, and research integrity throughout the conduct of the study.

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