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Stress and Coping Strategies of High Performing and Low Performing Students in Hyblend Space: Basis for Psychosocial Support Program

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Abstract

This study examined the stress levels and coping mechanisms of high-achieving and low-achieving students in a hybrid learning modality, with the goal of establishing a foundation for the development of a psychosocial support program. Data were gathered from a varied group of 300 college students from National University (NU) using a mixed-methods technique that involved questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that student who perform well academically face increased levels of stress, mostly as a result of feelings of powerlessness and a lack of belief in their own abilities. In contrast, high-performing students utilize a greater number of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping techniques, whereas low-performing individuals tend to rely more heavily on avoidant coping mechanisms. The study revealed no statistically significant disparity in stress levels or coping mechanisms between the two groups. This implies that variables other than academic achievement, such as individual characteristics and contextual influences, may have a substantial impact on students' experiences of stress and their reactions to it. These findings emphasize the necessity of implementing comprehensive psychosocial therapies specifically designed to address the unique difficulties encountered by kids who perform at both high and low levels. A need to develop more specific support measures and further investigation on the root causes of stress and coping mechanisms in academic environments. This study enhances comprehension of the intricate correlation among academic achievement, stress, and coping strategies, calling for a comprehensive approach to student support services.

Keywords: *mental health, student welfare, psychological wellbeing, hybrid learning, blended learning*

Introduction

Before the pandemic, one of the biggest concerns of a student enrolling or moving to college was preparing for and dealing with the problems that were ahead. As different challenges present itself, the sudden shift from the old system to the new normal had significantly affected everyone especially the students. This rapid transition to an online class is uncommon in the Philippine education system and undeniably affected how students, regardless of their status and profile, take leaning on a new perspective. Due to the lockdown, lessons have been rescheduled. Schools worldwide are utilizing online learning to combat the consequences of the pandemic. The new normal has brought a number of changes to students' lives off campus, wherever they are now, and their learning environment in a virtual classroom, and they have been working to adjust to it. There is no substitute for a social connection, but virtual classes are a logical progression from traditional classes. If a student is struggling in class, how much more so in an online conversation? What are their methods for virtual survival? Even if the online course isn't perfect, it's still preferable to no course at all. There is no denying that technology played a significant role in our lives in 2020 (Collins & Halverson, 2018). It shouldn't be surprising that technology has had a significant impact on education immediately after. While many schools around the world use technology in the classroom, other institutions are less fortunate. On the other hand, gamification proved its existence as beneficial to language learning. An internet-based learning method is known as online schooling.

At the moment, learning outside of the classroom is a common option for students, but they can still learn and study from anywhere as long as they have access to the internet. College students may benefit from the use of online learning activities during these unprecedented shifts, including flexibility and learning security. Because online learning activities require students to be able to participate in the learning process more independently and actively, teachers and college students may still run into some challenges despite these benefits (Repo et al., 2022). This is a result of the absence of in-person interactions between classmates, teachers, and students. Students must self-regulate their learning, be responsible for their studies, and develop tenacious habits to continue pursuing their academic goals, as highlighted by the quick adoption of online learning (Ramos-Salazar & Meador, 2022). The fact that the crisis brought on by COVID-19 will cause all structures created up to this point to be reconfigured, but we are unsure to what extent, makes this situation even more dreadful. With so many stressors, it was important for the majority of guidance offices and school counselors to discuss the students' coping mechanisms.

Due to COVID-19, approximately 1.2 billion students worldwide who are currently taking classes online through digital platforms are affected. In order to assist institutions in overcoming this unanticipated crisis, UNESCO is collaborating with ministries and departments of education from different countries to ensure that students continue to learn using alternative channels and to provide support in a variety of ways, including technical assistance, the choice of digital learning tools, the organization of webinars, and the development of national learning platforms (UNESCO, 2020). According to a report by the World Economic Forum (Li & Che, 2020), modern online learning has improved students' ability to retain information and comprehend it quickly. Online courses—many of which are free and some of which have a very low cost—have been introduced by numerous educational institutions, governmental agencies, and technology-driven start-ups. These courses are assisting students and educators in temporarily coping with the stress brought on

by the lockdown and shutdown of all workspaces. Researchers and educators from all over the world are working hard to develop improved learning methods based on the current situation. Researchers have found that using self-efficacy tools in a range of academic and technological courses has a positive impact on students' achievement and perseverance in particular activities (Frifti, 2020). According to a report by Xue (2022), the practical benefits of distance learning have been acknowledged as a supplement to improve learning in Utopian possibilities of classroom instruction utilizing technology-based teaching. These methods of learning are referred to by various terms, including "e-learning," "online learning," "web-based learning," "internet-based learning," and "computer-assisted learning" (Siregar, 2022). The rapid growth, use, and platforms that are readily accessible have enabled educational institutions to reach out and provide education to students who are geographically dispersed.

These methods of learning are referred to by various terms, including "e-learning," "online learning," "web-based learning," "internet-based learning," and "computer-assisted learning" (Siregar, 2022). The rapid growth, use, and platforms that are readily accessible have enabled educational institutions to reach out and provide education to students who are geographically dispersed. We are not unfamiliar with online education, distance learning, or remote learning. The only difference is that because of social alienation and the nationwide lockdown brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has eliminated all other sources of education. The COVID-19 epidemic is attributed to strict adherence to isolation protocols that have caused students and educators to restrict their time at home.

This has made it challenging for students and educators to learn and maintain their social lives. Group classroom activities, which are the pure essence of group learning, are disregarded by both teachers and students. Both students and teachers have reported feeling stressed as a result of all these.

Additionally, because of the extreme stress brought on by the unprecedented academic pressure, most students report having low self-esteem and having trouble concentrating, both of which have an effect on their academic performance (Khan, Altaf, & Kausar, 2013). The perception of academic stress is having a very negative impact on students' health, decision-making regarding their career options, ability to manage course workload, sleeping issues, psychosomatic complaints, worrying about the future, and other factors (Ali, et al., 2022). This study constructed the impression of the academic stress scale on 100 students (men and women) in the age range of 19–26 years who were pursuing undergraduate degrees. This scale evaluated students' overall confidence in their academic performance and academic success potential.

A growing topic in educational, psychological, and managerial research is emotional intelligence. The idea is based on self-awareness of emotions, which enables one to control emotional reactions, identify the experiences of various emotions, and help others to comprehend and support people in controlling their emotions (Basri et al., 2022). Additionally, it refers to addressing emotional disturbances, building the capacity to prevent emotional exhaustion from things like stress, emotional self-control, and burnout, and learning to avoid the negative effects of emotions as well as dealing with egoism (Tariq et al., 2022).

Inevitably, one cannot deny the reality of the present day: online classes have become a natural progression from traditional ones. Nevertheless, there remains no substitute for direct social interaction. Despite these advantages, the rapid transition to an online class is uncommon in the Philippine education system and drastically affected how students, regardless of their status and profile, take leaning on a new perspective. With all the evident challenges piling up, coping strategies employed by the students had been a significant topic for most of guidance offices and school counselors.

Online learning, distance education and remote learning is very new to us, and emotional intelligence is a developing issue for educational, psychological and managerial studies as the topic seems to be relevant in confronting emotional disturbances, developing strategies and capacity to prevent emotional exhaustion such as stress, emotional self-control, burnout and learning to avoid the negativity of emotions and in dealing with egoism.

This complex reality motivated the researcher to study the coping strategies of high performing and low performing students in a fully online space. The National University and other nearby colleges and universities will be the researcher's focus area. For more than 120 years, National University has been recognized for academic excellence, producing many of the most influential people in the nation. Advancing the future of the nation through Education That Works while continuing to evolve and grow as an institution by making education more accessible and committed to securing a better future. Management is concerned about the welfare of current and future Nationalians, which they are all too eager to pursue, along with National University's ten-year expansion goal.

The research's main concern is with the coping strategies used by both high-performing and low-performing students in a hybrid learning modality. Coping mechanisms, including but not limited to constantly evolving cognitive and behavioral attempts to manage particular external and/or internal demands that are deemed to be taxing or exceeding the resources of the learners, have been identified as being used by students (Friedman, 2016). This was clear to many students because everyone has a different way of handling stress related to their academic journey. The researcher sees the potential for creating a comprehensive spectrum of techniques for reducing various forms of stress, which would then address the students' issues with stress management. The study determined the different coping strategies of high performing and low performing students. High performing students are seen in this study as an academic achiever and those who have garnered an above average rating on their evaluation.

Moreover, high academic achieving students also possess a diverse set of interests, abilities and passions. Others are characterized to have heightened sensitivity and emotional depth. Some have high expectations of self and others. This also includes strong self-

awareness, high energy and enthusiasm, intellectual risk-taking and curiosity, tendency to compare self with peers and a desire to positively change the world. Such characteristics are deep and powerful and may take a toll to the emotional wellbeing of the aforesaid cluster of students.

But how high achievers experience stress can depend on where their motivation comes from, explained Shelagh Gallagher, a lifelong educator in gifted education, fellow at the Institute of Educational Advancement External. High performing students are diligently pursuing their true passions and pacing self-determined goals, a healthy amount of stress can serve as a vehicle for self-fulfillment. But if they push themselves too hard, stress has the potential to overwhelm and become difficult to cope with (Lipson et al., 2022).

On the other hand, low performing students are identified in the study as those who have performed poorly or below average on majority of their courses. There are limited studies that pertains to the methods of this cluster of students but the present research sees that comparison of high performing and low performing students will benefit the students regardless of their status and demographic profile. As online educational system is introduced in the local academic setting. With this, it is evident that students are experiencing stress and needs guidance and relevant psychological support for their mental health. It is also clear that there is a need for an established and collective coping strategy that may benefit students. It was discovered that as the students successfully cope with academic demands and constantly conquer personal challenges, better academic achievement is attained.

Coping methods has a direct impact on the academic achievement of the students and vice versa. It was evident then that there is a relationship between academic achievement and coping techniques. Crafting a manual on how to face varied stress via the lens of primary sources and first-hand experience may be an effective and efficient means of aiding those students who are having challenges with their academic performance. It is also suggested that signs of mental health challenges, as well as social constraints such as uncertainty due to COVID-19, degrade the coping ability of the students as revealed in the studies aforementioned.

Lastly, it is a reality that there are social and emotional changes connected to the online education and coronavirus pandemic, specifically in the domain of higher education. With this, it is apparent that students are experiencing stress and therefore needs advice and suitable psychological help for their mental health which means that there is a need for an established and collective coping strategy that may be implied for the benefit of the students. With this, it is timely and relevant to propose research which aims to analyze the coping strategy of high performing and low performing students in a fully online space.

Research Questions

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate the coping stress of high and low performing students. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. How does the stress level of high performing students differ from low performing students?
2. How does the coping strategy of high performing students differ from low performing students?
3. What Psychosocial Program will be recommended based on the outcomes and findings?

Methodology

Participants

Participants in this research were selected using a purposive sample approach, which required them to satisfy specific criteria in order to be classified based on their academic achievement. For the survey and interview, the purposive sampling technique utilized by the researcher in this study. According to Patton (2017), entails selecting examples that fulfill a preset criterion of importance. The research then adapted a checklist to filter the respondents suitable for each classification.

Participants came from different backgrounds, academic courses, and demographic traits. The criterion explicitly seeks out potential participants who are qualified to respond to questions about their coping strategies.

Student respondents with high academic performance inclusion criteria:

- Must be enrolled in any NU Campuses
- Have consistently academically performed with a GWA not lower than 3.00
- Have academic recognition or awards
- Student respondents with low academic performance inclusion criteria:
 - Must be enrolled in selected NU Campuses
 - Struggle to perform in academics (poor attendance, low quizzes and exams)
 - Student under probation status

Participants provided their informed consent after freely agreeing to take part in the research. They understand the objectives of the study, the role that they play as participants, as well as the possible risks and rewards associated with their involvement. To guarantee that the participants' privacy and confidentiality are maintained during the course of the study, researchers take precautions.

The researcher made use of convenience sampling to pick the participants in this study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability

sampling method that involves selecting participants based on their accessibility and desire to participate in the study, rather than randomly selecting them from the overall population (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). People frequently employ this approach due to its practicality and straightforward execution, especially in educational research scenarios where time and money constraints may exist.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that convenience sampling might potentially introduce bias since the selected sample may not accurately reflect the larger population (Bornstein, Jager, & Putnick, 2013). However, despite this drawback, it might offer significant observations, especially when the study goal is to investigate certain patterns or behaviors within an easily available population.

A total of 309 respondents participated in the research and mostly came from the Fairview campus comprising of 169 or 54.69% followed by Baliwag with 131 or 42.39%. The rest of the students came from two other different campuses, and they belong to courses and mixed genders.

Table 1. *Campus distribution of respondents*

<i>Campus</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>
Baliwag	131
Dasma	2
Fairview	169
MOA	7
Total	309

Instruments

Part I displays a copy of the information sheet or profile of the respondents, which is prepared with the aim to elicit information on the profile variables of the respondents. The researcher assured that all information gathered will be represented by codes to insure confidentiality.

Part II displays a copy of standardized tools to assess the stress and coping strategies of the respondents. The Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Inventory (Brief-COPE). Brief COPE is a 28-item self-report survey intended to gauge both effective and ineffective methods to handle a difficult life event. A general definition of "coping" is an effort made to reduce distress connected to unpleasant life experiences. The scale is frequently used in medical settings to gauge patients' emotional reactions to a serious situation. It can be used to gauge how well someone is coping with a variety of difficulties, including a heart failure diagnosis, a cancer diagnosis, an injury, an assault, a natural disaster, financial stress, or mental health issues illness. In counseling settings, the scale is helpful for determining the helpful and unhelpful ways someone can react to pressure points.

Procedure

The researcher secured permission from NU Campuses Administrators to administer the questionnaires and conduct interviews based on the study's specific challenge. Standardized tests were employed in conjunction with validated structured interviews, profile, and content validation, to determine whether it is correct and should be used in the future.

The tabulated data will be given, and data analysis will be included. Data collection and coding, as well as the usage of appropriate technologies for quantitative data, are all required. The collecting of data is well-organized. Make a list of your observations, conclusions, and suggestions.

For quantitative analysis, the researcher used thematic analysis. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. SPSS is a Windows-based program that is used to perform data entry and analysis to create tables and graphs that perform highly complex data manipulation and analysis with simple instructions.

The statistical tools that will be used in the study are the following:

Frequency and Percentage Distribution. This will be used to determine how a part relates to its whole, percentage statistical measure will be used extensively in describing the profile of the respondents.

Weighted Mean. Since the options of the items of the questionnaires are assigned with points, the weighted mean is used as the measure of central tendency. This will be used by the researcher to describe the stress and coping strategies of the respondents.

Standard Deviation. The researcher will use this because it's the most used indicator of the degree of dispersion and the most dependable measure to estimate the variability in a total population from which the sample came.

T-test for independent sample. This will be used in the study in order to determine the differences in the coping strategies of the high and low-performing students.

Data Analysis

The study employed an in-depth interview through the Google form to gather qualitative data, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of

students' experiences. This methodology enabled the identification of shared patterns and themes, providing a deeper understanding of the students' experiences and corroborating the quantitative data results.

The survey form included open-ended questions for both SOP1 and SOP 2 designed to enrich the understanding of the quantitative data. These questions were carefully crafted to elicit detailed and vivid comments from participants about their experiences. It was effective in reaching a large number of participants and enhancing the overall analysis and findings of the study.

Theme analysis evaluated the survey's qualitative findings. This approach comprises a series of methodical procedures: becoming acquainted with the data, identifying patterns, evaluating the patterns, defining and labeling them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although the in-depth interview used open-ended questions, they were structured and geared towards further understanding the problem statement for this research.

Thematic analysis is a reliable approach that qualitative researchers use to gain a deep understanding of experiences particularly of large data, viewpoints, and meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It as a flexible methodology that allows researchers to go beyond simple description by identifying, evaluating recurring patterns and synthesizing over a large data. Document analysis like student record is a method of evaluating documents in order to obtain empirical information and better comprehension.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher presented the informed consent to the respondents to ensure that minimal to no harm will be done during the research process. The informed consent stated the nature and purpose of the study, data gathering procedure, potential risks and benefits, incentives, permission for publication, the confidentiality of data, respondents' responsibilities, and voluntary agreement to participate in the study. The organization reviewed and agreed with the research's informed consent, data gathering procedure and set implementation guidelines with the researcher, involved personnel, and participants.

Results and Discussion

This section discussed the analysis, presentation, and interpretation of the gathered data of the study.

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate the coping and stress of high and low performing college students. Specifically, this present study sought to answer the following questions.

Question 1. How does the stress level of high performing students differ from low performing students?

Table 2. *Stress Level of Performing and Low-performing Students as to Helplessness*

Stress Indicator	Mean_High	SD_High	Mean_Low	SD_Low
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	2	1.1	2.62	1.07
In the last month, how often have you felt that difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	1.17	0.98	2.38	1.14
In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	1.33	0.82	2.21	0.97

The data presented in Table 2 reveal significant insights into the stress levels related to feelings of helplessness among performing and non-performing students. Helplessness is characterized by feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to cope with stressors. For the item Unable to Control Important Things, the High Performing Students (HPS) resulted to a mean of 2.00 and $SD = 1.10$ as compared to Low Performing Students (LPS) with a mean of 2.62 and $SD = 1.07$. This shows that LPS feel unable to control important things more frequently than high performers. This finding suggests that high-performing students might experience greater stress due to elevated expectations and pressures to maintain their performance, aligns with the work of Ramirez & Hinton (2021), found that high-achieving students often face intense pressure to excel, potentially leading to increased stress levels.

For HPS are able to manage their stressors to some extent but still experience a significant level of helplessness, possibly due to the fear of failure or a decline in performance. The concept of "fear of failure" in high achievers (Sand & Blom, 2021) supports this interpretation, suggesting that the anxiety associated with failing to meet one's own or others' expectations can contribute to feelings

of helplessness.

On the item of Difficulties Piling Up, HPS Mean = 1.17, SD = 0.98 while those LPS got a Mean = 2.38, SD = 1.14. This shows that LPS are more often feel that difficulties are piling up too high to overcome compared to high performers. On the item inability to Cope: HPS got a Mean = 1.33, SD = 0.82 while LPS got a Mean = 2.21, SD = 0.97. This can be interpreted as LPS would frequently feel that they cannot cope with all the things they have to do.

The data could also imply that feelings of helplessness, to some degree, are common among students, regardless of their academic performance. The disparity in the levels of helplessness between HPS and LPS raises questions about the sources of stress and the coping mechanisms employed by each group. Labrague (2024) research highlighted the role of coping strategies in managing academic stress, suggesting that students who employ more effective coping mechanisms may experience lower levels of helplessness. Therefore, educational institutions may consider implementing targeted interventions that focus on teaching effective stress management and coping strategies, particularly for high-performing students who appear to be more susceptible to feelings of helplessness.

In conclusion, the findings from Table 2 underscore the complex relationship between academic performance and stress levels related to helplessness. While HPS exhibit higher levels of helplessness, suggesting a significant burden of stress, meanwhile, LPS would frequently feel that they cannot cope with all the things they have to do.

Table 3. *Stress Level of Performing and Low-performing Students as to Lack of Self Efficacy*

Stress Indicator	Mean High	SD High	Mean Low	SD Low
In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?	2.17	1.33	3.11	0.97
In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	1.83	0.98	2.66	0.99
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	1.33	1.03	2.18	1.04

Lack of self-efficacy is characterized by a lack of confidence in one's ability to handle stress and manage situations effectively. One of the items on stress indicator include : Feeling Nervous and Stressed where HPS got Mean = 2.17, SD = 1.33, and LPS received a Mean = 3.11, SD = 0.97. This showed that LPS feel nervous and stressed more frequently than HPS. While on the stress indicator Confidence in Handling Personal Problems: HPS showed a Mean = 1.83, SD = 0.98 and the LPS scored a Mean = 2.66, SD = 0.99. It can be deduced that LPS feel less confident about their ability to handle personal problems compared to high performers. Also on the item Feeling on Top of Things: HPS got a Mean = 1.33, SD = 1.03 as compared to LPS who got a Mean = 2.18, SD = 1.04. This showed that LPS less frequently feel that they are on top of things compared to high performers.

The data presented in Table 3 offer a nuanced view of the stress levels associated with lack of self-efficacy among performing and non-performing students. The disparity could suggest HPS may grapple with some self-doubt about their abilities, despite their academic success. This phenomenon, often referred to as the "impostor syndrome," where individuals doubt their accomplishments and fear being exposed as a "fraud," has been well-documented in the literature (Gallegos, et al, 2020).

Notably, in the LPS group lack of self-efficacy might reflect a critical issue where they lack confidence in their academic capabilities, potentially perpetuating a cycle of poor performance and low self-efficacy. This aligns with research by (Olivier, et al 2019), who found that self-efficacy is closely linked to motivation and learning, indicating that enhancing self-efficacy could be key to improving academic outcomes for struggling students. Also there remains a considerable portion who still experience doubt, which could hinder their academic and personal growth. Bandura's work on self-efficacy emphasizes the role of self-belief in achieving success, suggesting that students who perceive themselves as capable are more likely to persevere through challenges.

The significant difference in the stress levels related to lack of self-efficacy between HPS and LPS underscores the complexity of academic stress and its impact on student well-being. Educational institutions should consider implementing strategies aimed at boosting students' self-efficacy, such as providing positive feedback, setting achievable goals, and fostering a supportive learning environment. Such interventions could help alleviate the stress associated with self-doubt and promote a more positive academic experience for all students.

The results presented in Table 3 shed light on the stress levels experienced by HPS and LPS, with a significant distinction observed between the two groups. The observed disparity may initially seem counterintuitive, as one might expect non-performing students to exhibit higher stress due to academic underachievement. However, this finding aligns with the notion that high-achieving students

often face immense pressure to maintain their performance, leading to elevated stress levels (Pojanapotha, et al, 2022).

Even when stress levels are not at their peak, performing students are more likely to experience stress than their non-performing counterparts. The pressure to sustain high performance, fear of failure, and high expectations from teachers and parents can contribute to this heightened stress level among performing students (Pojanapotha, et al, 2022). The significant difference in stress levels between performing and non-performing students highlights the critical role of academic pressure and expectations in student stress. Strategies such as promoting a balanced approach to academic achievement, providing emotional and psychological support, and fostering a positive and supportive learning environment can be instrumental in mitigating stress among performing students (Hughes & Coplan, 2018).

Table 4. *The significant difference between the stress of high performing and low-performing college students*

Stress	Type of Students	Median Scores	p-value	Interpretation	Hypothesis testing
Helplessness	High performing student	15.00	0.67	Not significant	Failed to reject HO
	Low performing student	15.00			
Lack of self-efficacy	High performing student	15.00	0.651	Not significant	Failed to reject HO
	Low performing student	15.00			
Total	High performing student	29.00	0.763	Not significant	Failed to reject HO
	Low performing student	29.00			

The analysis presented in Table 4 explores the relationship between academic performance and stress, particularly focusing on feelings of helplessness and lack of self-efficacy among college students. Intriguingly, the median scores for both helplessness and lack of self-efficacy were identical (15.00) for both performing and non-performing students. This uniformity suggests that the experience of stress, as measured by these specific dimensions, does not significantly differ between students of varying academic performances. The p-values obtained for helplessness (0.67), lack of self-efficacy (0.651), and the total stress score (0.763) further corroborate the absence of a statistically significant difference, leading to the failure to reject the null hypothesis in each instance.

This finding is particularly noteworthy as it challenges the common assumption that academic performance is directly correlated with stress levels. Previous research has often highlighted that high academic demands and the pressure to succeed can exacerbate stress among high-performing students (Thompson & Green, 2021). Conversely, non-performing students are presumed to experience elevated stress due to potential academic failures and their implications (Pojanapotha, et al, 2022). However, the results from this study suggest a more nuanced relationship, where factors such as helplessness and self-efficacy might not be the primary differentiators of stress between performing and non-performing college students.

This revelation calls for a deeper examination of the sources and types of stress experienced by college students, beyond the dichotomy of academic performance. It emphasizes the need to consider individual differences, coping mechanisms, and the broader socio-emotional context in which students operate. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of providing holistic support systems that address diverse stressors, rather than solely focusing on academic-related interventions (Donaldson, Clough, & Thompson, 2021).

In conclusion, this study contributes to the evolving understanding of stress in the academic context, highlighting the complexity of factors influencing student well-being. It invites educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to adopt a more individualized approach to supporting students, recognizing that the relationship between academic performance and stress is not straightforward and is influenced by a multitude of factors.

Question 2. How does the coping strategy of high performing students differ from low performing students?Table 5. *Problem-focused coping strategies between high and low-performing college students*

Item	Mean_High	SD_High	Mean_Low	SD_Low
I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.	2.66	0.52	3.31	0.79
I've been taking action to try to make the situation better.	2.67	1.03	3.29	0.83
I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.	2.50	0.55	3.36	0.77
I've been thinking hard about what steps to take.	2.33	0.52	3.10	0.89

Problem-Focused Coping Strategies

The data presented in Table 5 delineates the distribution of problem-focused coping mechanisms among high and low-performing college students. These strategies involve actively addressing the problem causing the stress. HPS got a Mean scores range from 2.33 to 2.67, indicating moderate use of problem-focused strategies. The lower standard deviations suggest consistent behavior in this area. The LPS Mean scores range from 3.10 to 3.36, indicating more frequent use of problem-focused strategies compared to high performers. The slightly higher standard deviations indicate more variability. LPS tend to engage more frequently in problem-focused coping strategies, possibly due to facing more significant stressors that require active problem-solving as compared to their HPS counterpart.

A noteworthy observation is that a significant proportion of HPS reported high utilization of problem-focused coping strategies, compared to a slightly smaller number among LPS. This suggests a potential correlation between academic performance and the propensity to engage in problem-focused coping strategies.

Problem-focused coping, characterized by efforts to manage or alter the stressor, is often associated with positive academic outcomes and psychological well-being (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). The higher incidence of such coping mechanisms among performing students may indicate a proactive approach towards academic challenges, enabling these students to effectively address and mitigate stressors related to their studies. This is consistent with findings from previous research which suggest that problem-focused coping is linked to higher academic achievement and less psychological distress (Rathakrishnan, et al, 2022).

Conversely, the lower prevalence of problem-focused coping strategies among non-performing students may reflect a tendency towards more emotion-focused or avoidance coping strategies, which have been associated with less adaptive outcomes, such as increased stress and lower academic performance (Sommerfield & McCrae, 2000). This disparity underscores the importance of coping strategies in academic success and highlights the need for interventions aimed at enhancing problem-focused coping skills among students, particularly those who are struggling academically.

Furthermore, the minimal representation of low problem-focused coping in both groups, particularly among non-performing students (0.3%), suggests that while the absence of effective coping mechanisms is relatively rare, its presence could significantly impact students' academic trajectories.

In summary, this analysis reveals a clear association between problem-focused coping mechanisms and academic performance among college students. It underscores the role of adaptive coping strategies in academic success and psychological resilience, advocating for educational programs that foster these skills to support students' academic and emotional well-being.

Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies

The distribution of emotion-focused coping mechanisms among high and low-performing college students, as depicted in Table 6, offers insightful observations into the psychological strategies employed by students in response to academic stress. These strategies involve managing emotions that come with stress rather than addressing the problem directly. HPS scores range from 2.00 to 2.67, indicating moderate use of emotion-focused strategies. The lower standard deviations indicate more consistent behavior in seeking emotional support and expressing feelings. LPS Mean scores range from 2.50 to 2.99, showing more frequent use of emotion-focused strategies compared to high performers. The higher standard deviations indicate greater variability in these behaviors. LPS are more likely to engage in emotion-focused coping strategies, suggesting they experience higher levels of emotional distress requiring support

and comfort.

Table 6. *Emotion-focused coping strategies between high and low-performing students*

Item	Mean_High	SD_High	Mean_Low	SD_Low
I've been getting emotional support from others.	2.50	0.55	2.86	0.93
I've been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.	2.67	0.52	2.70	1.02
I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.	2.50	0.84	2.99	0.94
I've been expressing my negative feelings	2.50	0.55	2.75	0.98
I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.	2.00	0.63	2.50	1.09
I've been praying or meditating.	2.00	0.89	2.91	1.01

Emotion-focused coping entails managing or regulating emotional responses to stress rather than confronting the stressor directly (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). While often considered less effective than problem-focused strategies in academic contexts, the relatively high incidence of emotion-focused coping among high-performing students challenges this notion, implying that these students might be leveraging these strategies to maintain emotional equilibrium and thus, indirectly support their academic engagement and performance. This aligns with the dual-process model proposed by Cheng (2001), which posits that the adaptiveness of coping strategies is contingent upon the context and perceived controllability of stressors.

Furthermore, the high levels of emotion-focused coping are prevalent among LPS, a balanced or moderate use of these strategies might be characteristic of the broader student population, contributing to a spectrum of academic outcomes. Among HPS a minimal reliance on such strategies, potentially indicating an awareness or perception among students that solely relying on emotional regulation may be insufficient for academic success.

In sum, the findings from Table 6 elucidate the complex relationship between emotion-focused coping mechanisms and academic performance. The data suggest that while emotion-focused coping is more prevalent among LPS, the effectiveness and adaptiveness of such strategies are likely influenced by a multitude of factors, including the nature of academic stressors and individual differences in stress perception and emotional regulation. These insights underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of coping strategies in educational settings, advocating for interventions that promote adaptive coping skills tailored to individual needs and contexts.

Avoidant Coping Strategies

As illustrated in Table 7, offers significant insights into the coping strategies employed by students under academic stress. These strategies involve avoiding the problem or denying its existence. HPS: Mean scores range from 1.67 to 3.00, indicating moderate use of avoidant strategies with a relatively high consistency as indicated by the standard deviations. LPS: Mean scores range from 1.27 to 2.90, showing slightly lower use of avoidant strategies compared to high performers. The variability in standard deviations indicates diverse behaviors within this group. High performing students are more likely to use avoidant coping strategies, potentially as a mechanism to maintain their performance by temporarily distancing themselves from stress.

The table reveals a predominant reliance on average avoidant coping mechanisms among performing students with a notable presence among low performing students. This finding suggests a prevalent tendency among students to engage in avoidant behaviors when confronted with academic challenges.

Avoidant coping is characterized by efforts to evade or disengage from stressors, rather than confronting them directly (Roth & Cohen, 1986). While such strategies may offer short-term relief from stress, they are often associated with negative outcomes in the long term, including reduced academic achievement (Spicer & Smith, 2006). The high frequency of average avoidant coping among performing

students is particularly intriguing, as it challenges the conventional understanding that high-performing students predominantly employ adaptive coping strategies. This discrepancy may indicate that even high-performing students resort to avoidance in certain stressful academic situations, possibly due to perceived uncontrollability or a temporary respite from academic demands.

Table 7. *Avoidant coping strategies between high and low-performing students*

Item	Mean_High	SD_High	Mean_Low	SD_Low
I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.	3.00	0.89	2.90	0.85
I've been saying to myself "this isn't real".	2.00	0.89	1.94	0.90
I've been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.	1.67	0.82	1.27	0.65
I've been refusing to believe that it has happened.	2.33	0.82	1.97	0.81
I've been using alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.	1.83	0.98	1.24	0.63
I've been giving up the attempt to cope.	2.17	0.98	2.21	0.99
I've been making jokes about it.	2.83	0.98	2.83	1.11

Conversely, the lower incidence of high avoidant coping among LPS compared to average avoidant coping suggests that while avoidance is employed, it is not typically at extreme levels. This could imply a nuanced use of avoidant strategies, possibly employed in conjunction with more adaptive coping mechanisms to manage stress effectively. It may also underscore a general tendency among students to avoid minimal engagement with stressors, possibly reflecting a common perception that some level of engagement, whether direct or indirect, is necessary in academic contexts.

The findings from Table 7 highlight the complex role of avoidant coping strategies in academic settings. They suggest that while avoidant coping is prevalent among college students, its impact on academic performance is nuanced, potentially moderated by factors such as the nature of academic stressors, individual resilience, and the concurrent use of other coping strategies. These insights emphasize the need for educational interventions that promote adaptive coping mechanisms while recognizing the context-dependent utility of avoidant coping strategies.

The analysis presented in Table 8 explores the coping mechanisms employed by high and low-performing college students, focusing on problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused strategies. The statistical analysis, employing median scores and significance testing, reveals no significant differences between the coping strategies of high and low-performing students across all three coping mechanisms.

The lack of significant differences in problem-focused coping strategies, with both performing and non-performing students having a median score of 24, suggests that the capacity to engage in active problem-solving in the face of stressors is not distinctly different between these two groups. Problem-focused coping, which involves taking direct action to address the source of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), is often associated with positive academic outcomes (Parker & Endler, 1992). The similarity in scores may indicate that academic performance in college students is influenced by factors beyond their problem-solving capabilities, such as the nature of academic challenges, individual resilience, and external support systems.

Similarly, the emotion-focused coping mechanism, characterized by efforts to manage the emotional response to stress rather than changing the stressor itself (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), showed no significant difference between high and low performers. The median scores of 33 for performing students and 34 for non-performing students suggest that both groups similarly engage in emotion-focused strategies, such as seeking emotional support, venting, or engaging in relaxation activities. This finding challenges the notion that high-performing students predominantly use more adaptive coping mechanisms and underscores the complexity of the relationship between coping strategies and academic performance.

Avoidance-focused coping, involving disengagement from the stressor or the emotional response to it (Roth & Cohen, 1986), also showed no significant difference between the two student groups, with both displaying a median score of 17. Avoidance coping is often considered maladaptive in the context of academic stress, as it can lead to procrastination, denial, and disengagement from academic tasks (Sirois & Pychyl, 2021). The lack of significant differences suggests that both high and low-performing students may resort to avoidance in certain stressful situations, possibly due to perceived uncontrollability or a desire for temporary relief from academic demands. In conclusion, the findings from Table 8 suggest that the coping strategies of high and low-performing college students are more similar than previously assumed. This challenges the simplistic dichotomy of adaptive versus maladaptive coping in relation to academic performance and highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how students navigate academic stressors. Future research should explore the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of different coping strategies and the role of individual differences in shaping students' responses to academic challenges.

Table 8. *The significant difference between the coping strategies of high and low-performing students*

Coping Strategies	Type of Students	Median Scores	p-value	Interpretation	Hypothesis testing
Problem - focused	High performing student	24	0.928	Not significant	Failed to reject HO
	Low performing student	24			
Emotion - focused	High performing student	33	0.613	Not significant	Failed to reject HO
	Low performing student	34			
Avoidant- focused	High performing student	17	0.806	Not significant	Failed to reject HO
	Low performing student	17			

In summary, Problem-Focused Coping: More prevalent among low performing students, possibly due to facing more severe stressors that need active problem-solving. Emotion-Focused Coping: Also more common in low performing students, reflecting higher emotional distress and a need for support. Avoidant Coping: Slightly more common among high performing students, possibly as a way to manage stress without letting it interfere with their performance. These insights suggest that low performing students may benefit from interventions that enhance problem-solving and emotional resilience, while high performing students might need strategies to address avoidant behaviors and promote proactive stress management.

In summary, underachieving students are more likely to exhibit problem-focused coping, possibly due to the intense stress they face, which necessitates proactive problem-solving. Emotion-Focused Coping: This coping mechanism is more prevalent among kids who perform poorly academically, indicating a higher level of emotional discomfort and a requirement for assistance. High-achieving students are slightly more likely to use Avoidant Coping as a strategy to effectively manage stress and prevent it from impeding their performance. findings indicate that kids who perform poorly academically may find it helpful to receive therapies that improve their problem-solving skills and emotional resilience. Students who excel academically, on the other hand, may require techniques to address their tendency to avoid challenging tasks and encourage them to actively manage stress.

The investigation uncovers distinct disparities in coping techniques between high-achieving and low-achieving children. Students who perform poorly academically often use more proactive and diverse strategies to deal with stress, probably because they experience more frequent or intense sources of stress. High-achieving kids, although often displaying consistent habits, may have a somewhat higher tendency to rely on self-reassurance and drug usage. These insights can assist in customizing support programs to target the individual requirements of both groups, guaranteeing their access to efficient coping mechanisms to regulate their stress levels.

Survey Interview Results

Table 9 shows the result of the gathered themes from the survey interview. It is further illustrated in Figure 1. In the research study on the stress and coping strategies of students in a hybrid learning environment, several key themes emerged from the interviews with high and low-performing students in selected NU campuses. Respondents experiencing high levels of stress, particularly those performing at lower academic levels, frequently cited financial difficulties, and the challenge of managing numerous academic requirements alongside work commitments as significant stressors. One student articulated the crux of their stress as stemming from "financial issues and time management," describing the confluence of work and academic responsibilities as "overwhelming" (Participant 1, personal communication, 2024).

Table 9. *Emergent Themes from the Survey Interview*

<i>Academic Stressors</i>	<i>Coping Mechanisms</i>	<i>Psychosocial Support</i>
Financial Challenges	• Personal	Tailored Support for High Performers
Balancing Work and Study	Exercise	
	Entertainment	
	Acquiescence	Proactive Coping Strategies for Low Performers
	• Academic	
	Goals	
	Schedule	

Academic Stressors

Numerous parents of the students found themselves unemployed, brought about by the shutdown of many business establishments as well as restrictions on mobility. This situation resulted in significant financial strain for the family. As a result, students faced challenges in purchasing gadgets for their academic purposes, as well as managing the cost of internet access or mobile phone data for their online learning. Some of these students even worked online jobs while simultaneously enrolled in full-time classes. Both high- and low-performing students identified financial difficulties and the challenge of managing academic requirements alongside work commitments as significant stressors. This issue was particularly acute among low-performing students, who described these challenges as "overwhelming." One of the participants said, "It is really overwhelming to both work and study simultaneously; it is so difficult to prioritize. This finding aligns with existing literature that highlights financial strain as a major source of stress for students, often exacerbating academic pressures and affecting performance and well-being (Kossek & Lee, 2021).

Among high-performing students, those with low stress levels often engaged in physical activities to relieve stress, finding that activities like walking or running helped to "reset" their mental state. Another student from the same high-performing group but experiencing higher stress levels mentioned using entertainment, such as watching television series and listening to music, as a means to cope with academic pressure, illustrating a structured approach to stress management that includes scheduling relaxation activities (Participant 2 and 4, personal communication, 2024).

Coping Mechanism

The transition to hybrid or remote learning has brought attention to significant obstacles faced by students, namely the disparity in access to technology and insufficient infrastructure in underdeveloped nations. These problems have increased stress levels, necessitating the use of different coping strategies. Students utilized many coping mechanisms to effectively handle stress. High-achieving students frequently benefit from organized activities such as scheduled physical exercise and carefully planned leisure time, since these activities help to maintain a healthy balance between academic and personal pursuits. In contrast, underperforming students may choose a more impromptu strategy for coping with stress, which, although providing immediate relief, may not contribute to sustained academic achievement in the long run.

Goal setting and achievement was another prominent theme, especially among high-performing, high-stress students. They emphasized the importance of setting realistic goals and adhering to a structured schedule. "I set deadlines for myself. I have a calendar that I follow for activities and projects. It's important for me to stay organized and on track," noted one student, highlighting the strategic planning involved in their academic success (Participant 1, personal communication, 2024).

Conversely, students characterized by low performance, coping, and stress levels showed a more laid-back approach to managing academic pressures. These students often did not set formal goals and handled tasks spontaneously. When confronted with failure or disappointment, one student reflected acceptance as their coping mechanism, recognizing that "failure is part of life," and it's essential to learn from these experiences and move forward (Participant 3, personal communication, 2024).

In contrast, students who were both high-performing and experiencing high levels of stress sometimes faced emotional breakdowns under the pressure to excel academically. Nevertheless, they demonstrated resilience by reflecting on their experiences and seeking support from peers and professors, thus managing the intense demands placed upon them (Participant 4, personal communication, 2024).

These insights into the diverse strategies employed by students to cope with stress underscore the necessity for targeted psychosocial

support programs that cater specifically to the varied needs of students within the academic spectrum. The study reveals distinct differences in how high and low-performing students manage stress and cope with academic pressures. High-performing students tend to employ more structured and proactive strategies such as setting clear goals, maintaining rigorous schedules, and engaging in relaxing activities to manage stress. On the other hand, low-performing students often adopt a more reactive or minimalistic approach to stress and goal management, which might contribute to their performance issues.

Psychosocial Support

These findings suggest the need for tailored psychosocial support programs that address the specific needs of different student groups. For high performers, programs that offer strategies to balance academic excellence with personal well-being could be beneficial. Conversely, low performers might benefit from programs that focus on developing proactive coping strategies, goal-setting skills, and financial planning to manage their academic and personal challenges effectively.

The student academic stress management framework as illustrated in Figure 1 for the visualization of themes incorporates academic stressors, coping strategies, and psychosocial assistance to assist students in effectively managing and reducing stress. The core of this framework revolves around the notion of student academic stress management, which tackles the pressures arising from financial difficulties and the necessity to juggle employment and school. In order to handle these pressures, students utilize personal coping mechanisms such as physical activity, leisure activities, and a relaxed attitude, as well as academic tactics like organizing their time and creating objectives.

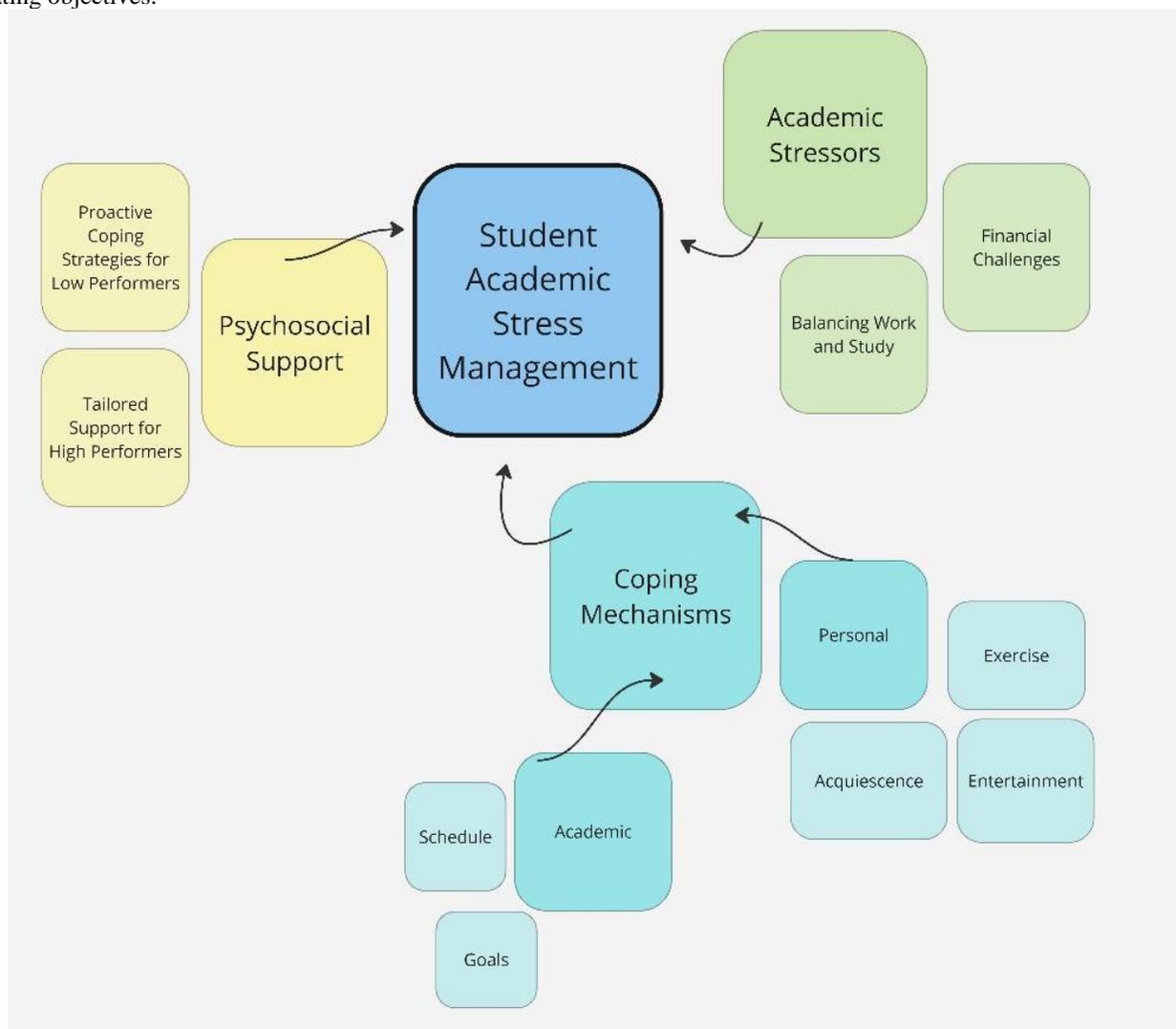


Figure 1. Visualization of Themes

Customized psychosocial support (Al-Oran et al., 2023) significantly enhance the effectiveness of stress management for students. Proactive coping measures, such as individualized study schedules and regular advisor check-ins, are beneficial for low-performing students. On the other hand, high-performing students receive specialized help in the form of advanced courses and stress management seminars. This comprehensive structure guarantees that all students, irrespective of their level of performance, receive the essential

resources and assistance needed to excel academically and preserve their well-being.

Conclusions

High-achieving students experience higher stress levels due to feelings of powerlessness and self-efficacy, highlighting the psychological impact of maintaining high academic standards. They use a mix of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, while low-performing students rely on avoidant coping mechanisms. However, no significant difference in overall stress levels was found, suggesting factors beyond academic performance influence stress levels and coping responses

The study emphasizes the need for psychosocial support programs for high-achieving and low-achieving students, focusing on enhancing coping mechanisms, self-efficacy, and academic stress management. Recognizing individual characteristics and contextual factors is crucial for targeted interventions.

Educational institutions should integrate mental health services, academic advising, and stress management workshops to provide holistic student support. Programs should cater to diverse needs, teach coping strategies, and create a supportive environment. Staff should be trained to recognize stress signs and provide appropriate support.

Study enriches our understanding of the complex relationship between academic performance, stress, and coping strategies in hybrid learning environments. By highlighting the specific challenges faced by high-achieving and low-achieving students, it calls for a comprehensive and tailored approach to student support services. Implementing targeted psychosocial interventions can help mitigate stress, enhance coping skills, and ultimately improve students' academic and psychological well-being.

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