Mental Health and Academic Performance in the New Normal

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Abstract

Mental health is still relatively new concern, in recent years there has been a shift toward a more socially acceptable attitude toward discussing it. Concerns about college students' mental health are the subject of an ever-expanding body of research, which is currently being conducted in increasing numbers. The purpose was to assess the mental health status and its impact on the academic performance of students in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) specifically in Santiago City, Isabela, Philippines for proper interventions to succeed in their studies. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used in the study and analytical sample used was purposive sampling which composed of 356 respondents. Data collected using the General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28). The result revealed that there is a significant relationship on the mental status and academic performance. The study concludes that mental health awareness is a necessity especially for the college students to succeed in their chosen career. According to the results of our research, there is a statistically substantial connection between a person's mental health and their academic performance, which was measured by their overall weighted grade point average. (GWA).

Keywords: Mental Health, Academic Performance, College Students

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Introduction

The Covid-19 had a significant influence on the daily lives of people all over the globe. The new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak was declared a worldwide pandemic by the globe Health Organization on March 11, 2020. As of September 10, 2021, the total number of individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 was 219,456,675, with 4,547,782 million fatalities in the globe (Claro & Munar, 2022).

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has had widespread psychological and societal repercussions, and it is possible that these repercussions will have a negative impact on people's well-being in the present and in the future (Lorca, et al, 2021; Claro & Munar, 2022). After an epidemic caused by a coronavirus, people may experience long-term psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and a decline in their quality of life. (e.g., 2002 severe acute respiratory syndrome) (Stuijfzand, S., Deforges, C., Sandoz, V. *et al.*, 2020; Lorca, et al, 2021).

Problems with a student's mental health can have repercussions in many different aspects of their lives, such as their quality of life, academic performance (Makhal et al., 2015), physical health, level of contentment with the college experience, and the quality of their relationships with their friends, family, and other members of their social networks. These repercussions can have a negative impact on a student's ability to thrive in college and in their future careers (Sharif, & Armitage, 2004; Lorca, et al, 2021). These facets of a student's existence are susceptible to having a negative impact when mental health problems are present. These problems can also have long-term repercussions for the students, including having an impact on the students' future employment possibilities, earning potential, and overall health.

Despite the fact that mental health is still a relatively new concern, there has been a change in recent years toward an attitude that is more socially acceptable toward addressing it. Concerns regarding the mental health of college students have been the focus of an ever-expanding body of research, which is presently being carried out in an increasing number of studies.

People are now accustomed to the new standard. After being confined to the property for nearly two years, they are attempting to readjust to life outside of it. Students who have participated in online learning for the past two years are now adjusting to the new standard operating procedures that are being implemented in traditional educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities. Due to the fact that mental illness can get in the way of a student's ability to achieve in their studies (Mehrabian, et al, 2022), it is absolutely necessary that this be done.

Research Questions

The purpose was to assess the mental health status and its impact on the academic performance of students in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) specifically in Santiago City, Isabela, Philippines for proper interventions to succeed in their studies. Specifically, it sought to answer the following:
  1. What is the demographic profile of the participants in terms of:
     a. Age
     b. Sex
     c. General Weighted Average (GWA)?

2. What is the mental health status of the participants?
3. What is the academic status of the participants?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the mental health status and the academic status of the participants when grouped according to their profile?

Null Hypothesis

The following is the null hypothesis to be considered:
1. There is no significant relationship between the mental health status and the academic status of the participants when grouped according to their profile.

Methods

This study made use descriptive quantitative methods. The descriptive quantitative approach is recommended by McCombes (2022) to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, and groups. The research was conducted using a descriptive cross-sectional survey methodology, and the analytical sample consisted of 356 people chosen randomly from the population using purposive sampling.

Students enrolled in an undergraduate program during the academic year 2022-2023 at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Santiago City, Isabela, Philippines were the subjects of this research. The administration of the institution gave its stamp of approval for this research before it could proceed. The participants had their questions about the study's purpose answered, their written consent was acquired, and they were given the assurance that the confidentiality of their personal information would be maintained. The data were collected through the use of a self-administered form that was standardized and semi-structured. The students' socio-demographic characteristics, scholastic achievements, and scores on the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) were the aspects of their lives that were investigated for this study.

The primary instrument that was utilized was a questionnaire in the form of a survey. The General Health Questionnaire-28 (also known as the GHQ-28) was utilized in order to determine the participants' levels of mental health (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979). The GHQ-28 is a screening tool that can be self-administered and can identify common non-psychotic psychiatric morbidity that is found in the community. These conditions include anxiety and depression. The symptoms that have been experienced in the most recent few weeks are referred to in the questionnaire. As a result, the questionnaire is an indication of state rather than trait characteristics at a particular moment in time. Although it is not possible to diagnose particular psychiatric disorders with the GHQ, it is capable of determining the presence of potential psychiatric morbidity. When screening for signs of psychological stress, we utilized the GHQ-28 variation of the questionnaire (Sterling, 2011). The GHQ-28 contained four different sub scales that were used to evaluate somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction, and depression in that order. The scoring system uses a Likert scale that ranges from 0 to 3, which results in an overall score range that can go anywhere from 0 to 84. After that, the cumulative grade point averages of the participants will be taken into consideration in order to establish the participants' scholastic standing.

The descriptive analysis was computed in terms of mean and standard deviation, and for ordinal and nominal variables, the analysis was computed in terms of frequency and

percentage. Pearson's product-moment correlation was utilized to conduct correlation research between the total GHQ score and a variety of independent variables.

All of the statistical tests that were performed used the cutoff of $p < 0.05$ with two tails to determine statistical significance. To investigate the impact that some independent factors, such as age, gender, and general weighted average, have on the GHQ total score, a correlation analysis was performed, which was then followed by a multivariate linear regression analysis using the "enter" technique. To perform an analysis of the data obtained from this research, the statistical package for social sciences, version 28.0 (SPSS), was utilized.

Results

Table 1: *Profile of the Respondents*
n=356

AGE		f	%
	17.00	2	0.6
	18.00	289	81.2
	19.00	51	14.3
	20.00	7	2.0
	21.00	3	0.8
	22.00	1	0.3
	24.00	1	0.3
	29.00	2	0.6
SEX		f	%
	Male	118	33.1
	Female	238	66.9
GWA		f	%
	94-96	3	0.8
	91-93	13	3.7
	88-90	47	13.2
	85-87	92	25.8
	83-84	66	18.5
	80-82	79	22.2
	78-79	12	3.4
	75-77	12	3.4
	BELOW 75	32	9.0

As shown in the table, there were 356 students who participated in the study. Majority of the students were aged 18 years old with 289 or 81.20%, female with 238 or 66.90% and with a General Weighted Average of 85-87 with 92 or 25.80%.

Table 2: *Independent Sample t-test on Mental Status and GWA*

Mental Status		f	%	t	df	p-value
	<23	99	27.8	2.874	354	0.004
	≥24	257	72.2			
Total		356	100			
Mean GHQ = 31.52, Median = 33.00, SD = 12.67						
Mean GWA (<23 = 84.81 ; ≥24 = 83.16)						

The table revealed that 27.8% of the students whose scores are <23 are classified as non-psychiatric, while 72.2% of students with scores ≥24 are classified as psychiatric. Independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the GWA of the respondents in terms of their mental health status. The test result revealed that the Non-psychiatric respondents have higher GWA compared to the psychiatric respondents.

Table 3: *GHQ-28 Scores of participants*

GHQ Subscale	M	SD
Somatic Symptoms	0.82	1.20
Anxiety and Insomnia	1.33	1.48
Social Dysfunction	1.52	1.35
Severe Depression	1.82	2.14
Total Score	5.33	4.86

The study population had an overall mean GHQ-28 total score of 5.33, with a standard deviation of 4.86; both of these scores were higher than the cutoff number (>4). The subscale that measured severe depression (1.82 ± 2.14 SD) yielded the greatest mean score, followed by the subscale that measured social dysfunction (1.52 ± 1.35 SD), then Anxiety and Insomnia (1.33 ±1.48, then the category of "somatic symptoms" had the GHQ score that was the lowest overall, with a mean of 0.82 ± 1.20.

Table 4: *Pearson's Correlations*

Factors/Subscales		Age	Sex	GWA
Somatic Symptoms	r	-0.011	0.061	-.213[**]
	p-value	0.836	0.249	<0.001
Anxiety and Insomnia	r	-0.029	0.055	-.309[**]
	p-value	0.586	0.299	<0.001
Social Dysfunction	r	-0.036	0.071	-.294[**]
	p-value	0.493	0.183	<0.001
Severe Depression	r	0.016	0.024	-.325[**]
	p-value	0.769	0.646	<0.001
OVERALL	r	-0.018	0.063	-.353[**]
	p-value	0.737	0.235	<0.001

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted to determine if and how strongly the four factors/subscales and the profile of respondents are related. The test result revealed a significant relationship between GWA of the respondents with Somatic Symptoms *(r=-0.213, p<0.001),* Anxiety and Insomnia (r=-0.309, p<0.001), Social Dysfunction (r=-0.294, p=0.001), Severe Depression (r=-0.325, p<0.001), and with the four subscales (r=-0.353, p<0.001). It implies that the higher GWA scores indicate lower levels of distress.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the mental health of students attending a higher education institution and determine how their mental health affects their academic performance. There were 356 willing participants who came from different colleges inside the same higher education institution in Santiago City. According to the findings, the individuals all suffered from issues related to their mental health. When the participants were categorized according to age and sex, the researchers found no significant correlation between the participants' mental health status and their academic performance. This is similar to the studies of Makhal et al. (2015) and Farahangiz et al. (2016), which found no significant difference between mental health and academic performance in terms of sex. However, the researchers did find a correlation between mental health and the general weighted average that was statistically significant.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the past few years, there has been a slow but steady rise in the number of college students who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health. The study concludes that mental health awareness is a necessity, especially for college students to succeed in their chosen careers. The findings of this study demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between a person's overall weighted grade point average (GWA), which serves as a proxy for academic performance, and their mental health.

One of the things that the researchers can point to as a shortcoming of this study is the fact that they did not compare students from which college and what years of college based on their GHQ scores. According to the findings of this research, academic performance is the most important element that determines a student's overall psychological health. According to the findings of this study, it is recommended that further research be done into other variables that may have a significant influence on the likelihood of a student developing mental health issues.

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