

Attitude Towards Schooling, Perceived Stress, Anxiety And Coping Strategies Of Btled Students Amid The Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to determine the profile, attitude towards school, perceived stress, anxiety level and coping mechanisms of BTLED students in Eastern Samar State University – Maydolong Campus during this pandemic. Sixty-nine (69) respondents were included in the study which utilized the descriptive survey method. Adopting a five-part questionnaire from Baloran and Cohen, the results revealed that 43 were female and 26 were male, 17 are first year, 26 are second year and 26 are third year students. 49 students see themselves as poor. Most of the students agree to the stoppage of school due to pandemic, the extension of the second semester but not to the utilization of blended online learning. The respondents feel stress sometimes and moderately anxious, fearing for their health and their families. The most coping mechanism they use is following personal health measures.

Key words: pandemic, BTLED students, attitude, stress, coping mechanism.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

One of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is the educational sector. Sudden changes were required of educational institutions to continue operating. Class

disruptions, shifting of learning modalities, changes in academic calendars, school closure, are some of the changes that both students and educators are currently facing. Many considerations have to be addressed in imposing new guidelines for the operations of educational institutions which are all geared towards the practice of the new normal (Tria, 2020).

These new normal practices affect not only the educational institutions but most importantly the students. As COVID-19 is the first pandemic to have had a profound impact in the country, there are many enthralling stories of learners being distressed by the deadly virus while schools were closed across the country. Students are rendered helpless since they can only respond reactively to the imposition and implementation of new policies which only adds to their distress (Malindog-Uy, 2020).

Since most universities in the Philippines have already opened and started their classes and considering the relevance of all the above conditions, this study attempted to assess the attitudes towards schooling, stress, anxiety and coping strategies of the BTLED students of ESSU Maydolong during the pandemic that may be used in formulating strategies and in understanding the contexts of the students during this time of crisis.

Objectives

To better understand the students, extend possible help and craft/improve strategies in delivering educational services to them, this survey aimed to explore on how the BTLEd students of ESSU Maydolong fare during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this study aimed to:

1. identify the sociodemographic profile of the BTLEd Students in terms of sex, year level, and socio-economic status.
2. determine the attitudes towards schooling of the respondents.
3. determine the perceived levels of stress of the respondents.
4. determine the levels of anxiety the respondents are experiencing.
5. determine the personal coping strategies of the respondents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will provide or shed light to the current status of the students that can be very useful to the different stakeholders and offices of the Eastern Samar State University Maydolong.

Students. Students' issues and concerns will be raised to proper authorities which may lead to formulation of policies and guidelines that will enable the students to adjust slowly and smoothly to the new normal as applicable in the education sector. Students with existing stress and anxiety conditions may be given help by the Guidance office of the university.

BTLEd Program. The program head, faculty members of the program and those who handle the subjects of BTLEd students will be informed of the current situation of their students, thus, enabling them to further understand them and develop strategic ways of communicating and addressing learning deficiencies and instruction related challenges currently being faced by the students of the program. Results of this study may also aid in developing more appropriate methodologies in delivering instruction to the students.

Office of the Students and Alumni Affairs. Findings of this study may serve as inputs in formulating strategies and developing mechanisms in reaching out and addressing student concerns. This may also help the guidance counselling office to identify students who are potentially at risk of mental distress thereby allowing the office to perform interventions that are deemed appropriate to such concerns.

Curriculum Developers. This study may also aid curriculum developers in drafting better approaches or strategizing in delivering the curricular needs of the students. Likewise, results of this study may also help in redefining academic goals, and evaluating the appropriateness of the learning materials being distributed to the learners.

Other Higher Educations Institutions (HEIs). Results of this study may help other colleges and universities in understanding their students and in formulating better strategies and

approaches relevant to their mission and goals that will benefit both their institution and students and their families.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused only on determining the attitude of the BTLEd students towards schooling, their perceived stress, anxiety levels and coping strategies that they adopted in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. This study only involved the students who are officially enrolled during the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined operationally in this study:

Anxiety – This refers to the levels of anxiety BTLEd students felt in the last seven days during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attitude – This refers to the way students feel and think about schooling, in general, and the blended learning approach as primary mode of the teaching and learning during the academic year 2020-2021.

BTLEd Students – This pertains to the officially enrolled students of the Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLEd) program of Eastern Samar State University Maydolong Campus during the academic year 2020-2021.

Coping Strategies – Coping strategies refer to the activities done or avoided by the BTLEd students during the imposition of community quarantines in order to minimize or avoid negative feelings and thoughts due to the pandemic issues.

Perceived Stress – In this study, perceived stress refers to the feelings or thoughts about how much stress the respondents are experiencing in the last month during the pandemic.

Socioeconomic Status – This study will be utilizing the clustering developed by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) as means of measuring the respondents' perceived sociodemographic income status of their families. The clusters are composed of: upper income,

upper middle income, middle income, low middle income, low income and poor (Albert, Santos, & Vizmanos, 2018)

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Since the study only delved on the attitude towards schooling, perceived levels of stress and anxiety, and the students' coping strategies during the pandemic, this study used the descriptive research design. This method of research design helps provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem. Furthermore, this design is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena and to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Anastas, n.d.).

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the province of Eastern Samar, regardless of the service area of ESSU Maydolong. This is due to the distribution of BTLEd students residing as far as Arteche down to Balangiga, Eastern Samar.

Respondents

All officially enrolled students of the BTLEd program of ESSU Maydolong during the academic year 2020-2021 the respondents of this study.

Instrument and Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the conduct of the study, the researchers requested an official data from the university registrar's office pertaining to the number of the enrolled BTLEd students and their respective place of residences. This is to determine the total number of instruments required in gathering the data for this study.

The instrument used is composed of five (5) parts: Socio-demographic profile of the students, attitudes of students towards schooling, levels of perceived stress, anxiety and coping strategies used by the respondents. This study adopted the instruments made by Baloran (2020) with some modifications for contextualization purposes and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen in 1983.

To gauge the attitude, anxiety and coping strategies, Baloran's instrument was used. On the other hand, the PSS was used to gauge the levels of perceived stress experienced by the students. The PSS is a standardized instrument that is used to measure the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. It is composed of ten (10) items with reversed items—4, 5, 7, 8 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983).

Due to community quarantine restrictions and to ensure the safety of the researchers and the respondents, both online and printed modes of survey delivery will be employed. Students with access to the internet and with appropriate gadgets were given a link or QR code that will lead them to the Google form where they can answer the survey. The said link was sent to them through a text message and personal message through the Facebook messenger application.

As for those students who live in upstream barangays and have no access to the internet, printed survey questionnaires were provided to them during the distribution of modules. The questionnaires were retrieved the same day to minimize physical or face-to-face interactions. This is especially important since it is recommended that answering the Perceived Stress Scale must be done as quickly as possible to avoid clouding of the minds of the respondents that may lead to inaccurate responses.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and weighted mean computation.

A frequency distribution is a tabular representation of a survey data set used to organize and summarize the data. It consists of a list of either qualitative or quantitative values that a variable takes in a data set and the associated number of times each value occurs (Sage, 2008). Percentage, on the other hand, is used to show the relationship of a part to its whole (Ariola, 2006).

Frequency counts and percentages were used in determining the socio-demographic profiles of the students and attitudes towards schooling. Weighted mean, on the other hand, was used in analyzing the respondents' level of perceived stress, anxiety and coping strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aimed to find out the attitude towards schooling, perceived level of stress, level of anxiety and the coping mechanisms of BTLED students enrolled during the first semester in Eastern Samar State University. A total of 69 students were included as respondents of the study. These respondents answered a five-part questionnaire survey which were sent to them through a personal message on Facebook messenger. The respondents living in areas with no internet were handed the questionnaires personally.

Students' Profile

Table 1. Sex

Sex	No.	Percentage
Female	43	62.3
Male	26	37.7
Total	69	100

Of the 69 student respondents, 62.3 percent or 43 were female. On the other hand, 26 were male composing 37.7 percent of the population of respondents

Table 2. Year Level

Year Level	No.	Percentage
First Year	17	24.6
Second Year	26	37.7
Third Year	26	37.7
Total	69	100

Among the respondents, 17 or 24.6 percent are first year students, 26 or 37.7 percent are second year students and another 26 or 37.7 percent are third year students. Since the BTLED program was just recently included in the curriculum of the campus, the students have yet to reach the fourth-year level.

Table 3. Socio-economic Status

Year Level	No.	Percentage
Upper Income	1	1.4
Upper Middle Income	1	1.4

Middle Income	3	4.3
Low Middle Income	1	1.4
Low Income	14	20.3
Poor	49	71
Total	69	100

Most of the respondents classified themselves as poor composing 71 percent of the total respondents or a total of 49 students. Only one student belongs to each of the upper income and upper middle-income status. Three students belong to the middle-income status, one to the low middle-income status and 14 deemed themselves belonging to the low-income status.

The large proportion of the respondents belonging to the poor status could only reflect the poverty situation in Eastern Visayas where three in every ten families are poor (PSA, 2018) and Eastern Samar showing the highest poverty incident at 43.0 among all the

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Attitude Towards Schooling During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Table 4. Attitude Towards Schooling During COVID-19 Pandemic

	Yes	No	I don't know
Do you agree with the stoppage of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic?	43 (62.3%)	19 (27.5%)	7 (10.1%)
Do you agree with the extension of the opening of classes for the next semester?	48 (69.6%)	14 (20.3%)	7 (10.1%)

Do you agree with the conduct of the Online-Blended Learning Approach during the community quarantine?	28 (40.6%)	29 (42%)	12 (17.4%)
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Table 5. BTLEd Students' Reasons for Saying YES to Online-Blended Learning

Reasons for saying "YES" to Online-Blended Learning	
I want to finish my academic requirements	28 (100%)
I don't want to quit school	26 (92.9%)
I am bored at home, and I miss doing academic tasks	21 (75%)
Online classes and modules are more convenient and practical than going to school	13 (46.4%)
It is about time to use online-blended education in college especially during a crisis like this	20 (71.4%)
It would be safe to study at home than to go to school	25 (89.3%)

Table 6. BTLEd Students' Reasons for Saying NO to Online-Blended Learning

Reasons for saying "NO" to Online-Blended Learning	
I don't have an internet connection	20 (69%)
I don't have personal computers and smartphones	17 (58.6%)
I find online class and modules challenging to do	27 (93.1%)
I would still prefer learning inside the classroom	24 (82.7%)
I find online classes and modules boring	15 (51.7%)
I cannot learn through online class and modules	22 (75.9%)
I don't have a personal interaction with my teacher and classmates	27 (93.1%)
I don't have budget or finances for an online class and online submissions of requirements/ tasks	27 (93.1%)

Forty-three students or 62.3 percent agreed to the stoppage of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic while 19 students or 27.5 percent did not agree and seven students or 10.1 percent were unsure. Of the 69 student respondents, 48 students agreed to the extension of the opening of classes for the second semester comprising 69.6 percent of the population. Whereas, 14 students or 20.3 percent does not want to extend the opening of classes for the second semester, only seven students or 10.1 percent are unsure. Twenty-eight students or 40.6 percent wanted the Blended Learning Approach, twenty-nine or 42 percent of the respondents did not agree to it and twelve students or 17.4 percent were also unsure. Of those who assented to the Blended

Learning Approach to be utilized, all of them reasoned that they wanted to finish their studies.

Of those who said no to the said approach, 27 students or 93.1 percent reasoned that they find the online learning challenging, they feel that they don't interact with their teachers and classmates and they don't have the budget for an online class.

Online learning has been deemed as the ideal pedagogy of the future as contrary to the traditional classroom setting (O'Malley, 2018). Few studies reveal that although the learners are satisfied with the delivery of online or blended learning, they have a hard time submitting their outputs because of fewer interaction with their teacher and slow internet connection (Smart & Kappel, 2016).

Despite the pandemic, the students show a positive attitude towards school and finishing their studies. Student engagement and positive attitude towards learning play a vital role in their academic performance and well-being (Watson, 2016). Interest in learning and attitude towards it are important factors that are to be considered in the improvement of their academic performance (Candeias & Rebelo, 2010).

Level of Perceived Stress

To measure the level of perceived stress among the respondents, the following scale was used to interpret the results:

Range of Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating
1.0-1.5	Never
1.51-2.5	Almost Never
2.51-3.5	Sometimes
3.51-4.5	Fairly Often
4.51-5.0	Very Often

Table 7. Levels of Perceived Stress During the Pandemic

	Weighted Mean
In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	3.14
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	3.17
In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	3.45
In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	3.16

In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	3.03
In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	3.17
In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	3.25
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	2.81
In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	3.12
In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	3.17
Grand Mean	3.15

The respondents feel that they sometimes feel nervous and stressed with a weighted mean of 3.45. Similarly, the respondents also sometimes feel that they were on top of things or in control with a weighted mean of 2.81. In total, the respondents feel stress only sometimes with a grand mean of 3.15.

The COVID-19 pandemic has induced stress and change in the learners' educational attitude and strategy (Abdhulgani & Akram, 2020). Their level of stress has worsened compared to before the pandemic as lack of interaction, physical isolation and lack of emotional support were identified as factors that add up to their stress (Elmer, Mepham, & Stadfeld, 2020).

Anxiety Levels

To measure the anxiety level of the respondents, the following scale was used to interpret the results:

<u>Range of Weighted Mean</u>	<u>Descriptive Rating</u>
1.0-1.5	Not at All
1.51-2.5	Slight
2.51-3.5	Moderate
3.51-4.0	Very Much

Table 8. Levels of Anxiety Experienced During the Pandemic

For the last week	Weighted Mean
I often think about COVID-19 pandemic	2.67
I often feel paranoid about contacting the novel Corona Virus infection	2.54
I usually avoid social contact	2.81
I usually avoid doing physical exercise outside the home	2.48
I often avoid ordering food online	2.35
I usually avoid buying food in public markets and foodservice establishments	2.28

I usually have talked with friends about the corona pandemic	2.45
I often had difficulty sleeping by being worried about the Corona Virus pandemic	2.03
I often feel affected by the posts on social media about Corona Virus infection including those published on newspaper and news channels	2.65
I often feel the need to buy and stock all essentials at home	2.43
I often get afraid if anyone in my social circle or friends reports of being sick	2.64
I often feel the need to use the sanitizer/gloves and wash my hands constantly	3.20
I often feel worried about myself and my family regarding the spread of COVID-19 Viral Infection	3.51
I usually use a mask without any apparent signs and symptoms of the infection	3.41
The Idea of Novel Corona Viral Infection often makes me nervous leading to inappropriate behavior with anyone and/or post on social media	2.49
I often consider anybody I encounter as positive of the virus	1.75
I am usually worried about my studies because of the lockdown	3.36
I am often concerned about our food and financial resources during the lockdown	3.36
Grand Mean	2.69

The respondents feel that that they are very much worried about themselves and their families regarding the spread of the COVID-19 viral infection. On the other hand, they slightly feel that they consider anybody they encounter is positive of the virus. Overall, the level of anxiety of the respondents is moderate with a grand mean of 2.69.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought anxiety to all people because of their fear of being infected with the virus. Surprisingly, in a recent study in England, teenagers feel that they are less anxious during this pandemic raising questions about how school environment affects some teenagers' mental health (BBC, 2020).

Coping Strategies

To measure the most utilized coping strategies adopted by the respondents, the following scale was used to interpret the results:

<u>Range of Weighted Mean</u>	<u>Descriptive Rating</u>
1.0-1.5	Never
1.51-2.5	Sometimes
2.51-3.5	Often
3.51-4.0	Always

Table 9. Coping Strategies Applied by BTLEd Students

During the community quarantine	Weighted Mean
Follow strict personal protective measures (e.g., mask, handwashing, etc.)	3.51
Read about COVID-19, its prevention and mechanism of transmission	3.01
Avoid going out in public places to minimize exposure from COVID-19	2.91
Do relaxation activities, for example, involved in meditation, sports, exercise, music, etc.	2.67
Praying, worshipping and Bible study	3.01
Chat with family and friends to relieve stress and obtain support	2.97
Use social media and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, Youtube, etc. and/or play online games and computer games	2.68
Talk and motivate myself to face the COVID-19 outbreak with a positive attitude	3.10
Get help from family physicians or other doctors to reduce my stress and get reassurance	1.59
Try to be busy at home in activities that would keep my mind away from COVID-19	2.87
Avoid media news about COVID-19 and related fatalities	1.99
Vent emotions by crying, screaming, etc.	1.88

The respondents' most common coping strategy is to follow strict personal protective measures such as wearing of mask, handwashing and physical distancing with a weighted mean of 3.51 and a descriptive rating of always. On the other hand, the least used coping strategy is to get help from family physicians or other doctors to reduce stress and get reassurance with a weighted mean of 1.59 and its descriptive rating of sometimes.

Following health protocols set by the IATF and other health organizations are one way to combat the disease (WHO,2020). According to an article, obedience is the only response that can be used against the disease for now (Morato, 2020). This is a typical trait of Filipinos as it has always been inculcated by parents to their children to obey the rules and laws all the time (Alampay, 2012)

On the other hand, trust in physicians has declined and survey shows poor level of public trust in physician (Huang, Pu, & Huang, 2018). In the Philippines, the low level of trust that Filipinos feel towards doctors may be the result of the different controversies and issues that the healthcare system has (Padilla, 2019).

Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of the data collected, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Of the 69 student respondents, 62.3 percent or 43 were female. On the other hand, 26 were male composing 37.7 percent. 17 or 24.6 percent are first year students, 26 or 37.7 percent are second year students and another 26 or 37.7 percent are third year students. Most of the respondents see themselves as poor.
2. Most of the respondents agree to the stoppage of school due to the pandemic and the extension of the opening of the next semester; there were more students who did not agree to blended-online learning citing that they are challenged. Subsequently, students claim they lack budget and has low interaction with their teacher and peers.
3. The respondents feel stressed only sometimes.
4. The respondents were very much worried for themselves and their families regarding the spread of the virus.
5. Lastly, the most common coping mechanism was following personal health measures such as wearing of face mask, handwashing and social distancing.

Recommendations

Based on the summary of findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The researchers recommend that the opening of the second semester be extended and the learning modality be between a choice of modular learning or online blended learning.
2. The researchers also recommend the creation of a support group for students during the pandemic which can help them to alleviate their level of anxiety and stress.
3. The researchers recommend that an information drive be done for the adherence to health protocols which will include healthcare workers to boost the public's trust for them.
4. The researchers also recommend that this study be published for the purpose of information dissemination to proper bodies and for the results be used in conducting extension activities to address the situations of the students amidst the pandemic.
5. Finally, the researchers recommend that a similar study but wider in scope be made to further contribute to the knowledge regarding this topic.

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