



ARE YOU STRESSED: PHENOMENOLOGIZING MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OF STUDENTS IN THE NEW NORMAL

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdowns have taken the whole world by storm. Thus, this phenomenological study sought to explore and understand the lived experiences of college students affecting their mental health status during pandemic. It specifically sought to identify the potential mental stressors and the coping mechanisms employed by students during the pandemic. A total of 20 participants were purposively chosen to take part in the investigation. To qualify the students as participants in the study, the following were the criteria: 1) a student must enrolled at Quirino State University, Cabarroguis Campus for Academic Year 2020-2021; 2) belong to the top 20 students with a high degree of stress, according to a study conducted by the university's Guidance Office; and 3) voluntary participation in the audio/video interview. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the Phenomenological Interpretative Analysis. The thickness and richness of the field texts gathered afforded the identification of the emerging five interesting themes relative to the stressors of students during pandemic. These are as follows: 1) financial struggle; 2) academic related stress; 3) health issues; 4) social isolation; and 5) relationship issues. Further, students were able to apply coping strategies to alleviate their mental stress during the pandemic: These are as follows: 1) seeking support; 2) Maintaining positive behavior; 3) utilizing social media for communication; and 4) self-management. Finally, proper dissemination of the result of the study and presentation of the proposed intervention program to the administration, deans, program chairs, and all faculty members for evaluation and proper implementation could be done to address the mental health issues of students during the pandemic.

Keywords: *Mental Health Status; New Normal; Stress; Pandemic*