Social Support And Psychological Well-Being Among Omsc Cte Students During The Pandemic

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Abstract.
This study was conducted to examine the relationship between social support and psychological well-being among the College of Teacher Education students enrolled in Occidental Mindoro State College during the academic year 2021-22. A total of 150 undergraduate students participated in the study who were selected using simple random sampling. The instruments used to gather the data needed were the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) which were disseminated through the online platform to reach the target audience.. The data were subjected to calculations using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression and analysis. The study found that the social support from the family, friends and significant others during the pandemic was low while the psychological distress is high. Moreover, there is a significant and negative correlation between social support and depression, anxiety and stress among students. The higher the social support, the lower the psychological distress will be. The regression analysis revealed that social support offered by the family, peers and significant others predict the psychological distress of students especially during this time of pandemic when several psychosocial stressors affect the students.

Keywords: *social support, psychological distress, pandemic*

I.   INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought so much changes in many areas such as politics, economy, health, and even in the academe. Drastic measures were initiated which affected social interaction and the way people deal with each other. Many countries have introduced drastic measures to reduce physical contacts and physical distancing was made mandatory (Anderson et al. (2020) In addition,   quarantines, curfews and closing of non-essential stores, schools, and universities were implemented. As many universities were forced to suspend face-to-face classroom teaching and switched to online learning modality, the lives of students have drastically changed. While social distancing may successfully hinder the spread of the infection and relieve the public health systems (Glass, et. al.,2020) these measures may eventually escalate the social isolation of learners affecting their psychological well-being and mental health (Bavel, et al., 2020). Being under a lot of pressure to perform academically, students are prone to developing mental health problems (Maxwell, et al., 2020). The social networks of students have been argued to be an essential factor in combatting stress and helping them to be more effective (Stadfel, et al. 2020). Limited social interactions, inadequate social support, and the rise of new stressors connected with the COVID-19 crisis could potentially affect students' mental health negatively.

Research has shown that social support plays an important role in managing psychological distress. Lack of social support has been found to be one of the factors that lead to many psychological problems among students. A growing number of literature and empirical research have indicated the relationship between social support and psychological problems among students. . In line with other ongoing research studies conducted across the globe, the proponent would like to examine the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the College of Teacher Education students and to what extent of social support are afforded to this group of learners.Social support is imperative for an individual as a social being . Lack of social support has been shown to be linked to many psychological problems such as depression, loneliness, and anxiety (Eskin, 2013). Moreover, Elliot and Gramling (2010) found that social support helps the college students to lessen depression, anxiety, and stress. They also found that social support could help the students manage and

lessen their psychological problems. Thus, this study is to understand how social support could play its role in dealing depression, anxiety, and stress is essential. Second, social support has also been recognized to have significant impact on the achievement of the students. Since family and friends are the individuals' first source of reference, supports from these two sources have been found to give a significant influence on academic achievement (Cutrona, 2014). The support received by the students could help to decrease their psychological problems since they feel that someone is there to help them, thus helping them to perform well in academic life.

By having knowledge on how social support could help students to cope with their and combat any psychological problems, much information could be derived to enhance the amount of support provided. Third, this study also hopes to contribute to the research on how to help and manage students' academic achievement. By having better understanding and knowledge about social support in relation to psychological condition of the students, it could help us to design and organize proper development program to help them. Since social support is very much important to students, this study will also help family, especially parents, understand their roles in helping their children so that they can help the students decrease their psychological problems. Behavioral theories of psychological distress points out that when access to environmental or social rewards are reduced, reward-limiting stimuli increase and this scenario is a risk factor in for developing psychological distress (McPhee et al.,2020). A study conducted in China during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that the disease increased psychological distress among college students such as anxiety about the academic setback, economic effects and impact in their daily life (Anderson,et al.,2020). This study was conceived to investigate the effect of the pandemic to the college students.

II.   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between social support and psychological distress among CTE students during the pandemic.

Specifically, it sought to:
1.   Determine the level of social support extended to the CTE students by the following:
a.   Family
b.   Friends
c.   Significant Others
2.   Assess the respondents' psychologicalwell-being in terms of:
a.   Depression
b.   Anxiety
c.   Stress
3. Determine if there is a significant relationship between social support and psychological well-being of the students
4. Evaluate which of the social support areas predict the psychological distress of the respondents

III.   METHOD

Study participants and survey design

This study made use of an online-based survey using the standardized questionnaire.The researcher used Google Forms which were disseminated through group chats of CTE students across different campuses of the Occidental Mindoro State College. A total of 150 students participated in the study.The descriptive-correlational research design was used in the study and the variables included were Social Support and Psychological well-being.

Instruments

Two standardized instruments were used in the study. The Social Support was measured making use of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). The test consisted of 12 items developed by Zimet et.al (1988) which assesses the individual's social support from three specific areas namely family, friends and significant others.For the assessment of the Psychological Distress of the respondents, the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) was used. The DASS is designed to assess aspects

of depression, anxiety and stress using a multidimensional approach in adolescents and adults (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). It is a 42-item self-report measure. Items fall into three scales; Depression (D), Anxiety (A), and Stress (S) with 14 items per scale.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mean. The correlational analysis was done using the Pearson r. In addition, to examine which of the social support variables predict the psychological well-being, the regression analysis was used.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reveals data on the social support extended by the different people who play important role in the lives of the students. These are the family, friends and significant others. For the Family Support, the indicators "I can talk about my problems with my family" was rated moderate by the respondents b(m=2.50), while the indicators "My family really tries to help me", "I got the emotional help and support I need from my family", and "My family is willing to help me to make decisions" were all rated by the respondents low (mean=2.45, 2.29, and 2.34) respectively.This finding means that the students do not get the necessary support from their families. Focus group discussion among students revealed that this situation can be brought about by preoccupation among the family members of catching the COVID-19 virus which renders most of the people to be worried about their own safety. Also, the pandemic limited the mobility of people which resulted to lose of jobs which add another burden to the parents. This could also be one reason why they could not be able to fulfill their responsibilities to their children fully.

Likewise for the Friend Support, it can be noted that the respondents gave low self-ratings on the different indicators such as "My friends really try to help me", 'I can count on my friends when things go wrong", "I have friends whom I can share my joys and sorrows", and "I can talk about my problems with my friends" (mean=2.21,2.33,2.09 and 2.37 respectively).This implies that even the friends which can be a potent source of psychological and emotional support for the students become dysfunctional because of the pandemic. This is due to large scale restriction and self-isolation which can limit the availability and acceptance of social support (Taylor, 2019). For the Significant Others, all indicators were rated low such as the presence of a special person when they are in need (mean=2.14); having a special person who is a source of comfort (mean=2.33); and having a special person who cares about their feelings (mean=2.25). There was only one indicator which received a "moderate" rating which was "There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows (mean=2.09).

The overall mean of 2.43 (low) reflects that the respondents lack the support of significant persons who, at this time of psychological distress, can assist them in coping. According to McPhee et al.(2020), this pandemic brought large-scale restrictions which reduced access to typical sources of social reinforcement.The low Social Support which is depicted by the grand mean of 2.37 describes the plight of the CTE students. The low social support can lead to psychological imbalance during this difficult situation. Grubic, et.al (2020) underscored that social support is the most vital psychosocial protective resource since it can reduce cortisol response to stress and leads to better immunity.

Table 1. Level of Social Support from Family, Friends and Significant Others

Indicators		Mean	Description
Family			
1.	My family really tries to help me	2.45	Low
2.	I got the emotional help & support I need from my family		
		2.29	Low
3.	I can talk about my problems with my family	2.60	Moderate
4.	My family is willing to help me to make decisions	2.34	Low
	Overall Mean	**2.42**	Low
Friends			
1.	My friends really try to help me	2.21	Low
2.	I can count on my friends when things go wrong	2.33	Low
3.	I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows		
		2.09	Low

4. I can talk about my problems with my friends	2.37	Low
Overall Mean	**2.25**	**Low**
Significant Others		
1. There is special person who is around when I am in need		
	2.14	Low
2. There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows		
	3.01	Moderate
3. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me		
	2.33	Low
4. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings		
	2.25	Low
Overall Mean	**2.43**	Low
Social Support Grand mean	**2.37**	**Low**

Scale: 1.00-1.79 Very Low;   1.80-2.59 Low;   2.60-3.39 Moderate; 3.40-4.19 High   4.20-5.00 Very High

The psychological well-being of the respondents are captured in Table 2. As it can be observed, all the indicators in the Depression Level received high scores. The students could not seem to experience any positive feelings at all, have difficulty in initiating to do things, have nothing to look forward to, lack the enthusiasm about anything and do not feel their worth as a person (mean=3.63,4.02,4.33, 4.07, 3.68 and 3.82 respectively). Moreover, they gave a very high rating to the indicator 'feeling down-hearted and blue' (mean=4.63). The overall mean of 4.03 indicates a high level of depression among the CTE students.It can also be noted from the data that the CTE students experience very high Anxiety level as manifested by their very high self-ratings in the indicators that they feel close to panic (mean=4.63) and they are scared without any good reason (mean=4.73). Also, their perceived self-rating to the other indicators indicated high anxiety level which are experiences on mouth dryness, breathing difficulty, being worried about situations which may cause panic and abnormal physiological reactions (mean=3.85,3.45. 3.75 and 3.85) Overall, the anxiety level of the respondents is high.

This can be due to the extensive changes that they experience in their daily routines specifically on their academic concerns and prospects. Also, the limited social interaction can have a negative effect on their well-being. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) anxiety in adolescents can be triggered by worrying about their health and that of their family and friends, changes in sleep and eating patterns, difficulty in thinking and worsening chronic health problems.Data on Stress revealed high self-ratings by the respondents. Three indicators received very high ratings. "I found it hard to wind down" (mean=4.60); I found it difficult to relax"(mean=4.74); and "I felt I was rather touchy" (mean=4.67) while all the other indicators were rated "high" by the CTE students.In general, the stress level of the students is high. This pandemic brought distress to students not only because of the demand of the online learning modality but also the limited social interaction and the disruption to their day-to-day activities.This finding confirms the report of the World Health Organization (2020) that this pandemic is associated with several psychosocial stressors such as separation from family and friends, social isolation due to quarantine or other social distancing programs, and school closings.

Table 2. Level of Psychological well-being of CTE students

Depression Level	Mean	Description
1. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all	3.63	High
2. I found it difficult to work up initiative to do things	4.02	High
3. I felt that I have nothing to look forward to	4.33	High
4. I felt down-hearted and blue	4.63	Very High
5. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	4.07	High
6. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person	3.68	High
7. I felt that life was meaningless	3.82	High
Overall Mean	**4.03**	**High**
Anxiety		
1. I was aware of dryness of my mouth	3.85	High
2. I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g. excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion	3.45	High
3. I experienced trembling (e.g. in the hands)	3.71	High

4.   I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself

	4.11	High
5. I felt I was close to panic	4.63	Very High
6. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g. sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)	3.85	High
7. I felt scared without any good reason	4.73	Very High
Overall Mean	**4.04**	**High**

Stress

1. I found it hard to wind down	4.60	Very High
2. I tended to over-react to situations	4.36	High
3. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy	3.78	High
4. I found myself getting agitated	4.65	High
5. I found it difficult to relax	4.74	Very High
6. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing	4.33	High
7. I felt that I was rather touchy	4.67	Very High
Overall Mean	**4.45**	**High**
Psychological Distress Grand Mean	**4.17**	**High**

Scale: : 1.00-1.79 Very Low; 1.80-2.59 Low; 2.60-3.39 Moderate; 3.40-4.19 High   4.20-5.00 Very High

Statistical analysis on the correlation between Social Support and Psychological Distress among respondents revealed that Social support is significantly and negatively correlated with depression (r--0.54, p<0.01) which indicates that the higher the social support, the lower the depression.   Likewise, social support was found to be significantly and negatively related with anxiety (r=-0.60, <0.01) which suggests that the higher the social support, the less anxious the students would feel. On the correlational analysis between Social Support and Stress, it was revealed that Social Support is significantly and negatively related with Stress. This means that the higher the Social Support, the lower the stress level. This finding suggests that the parents, friends and significant others should provide the needed support by the students in these difficult time to reduce depression, anxiety and stress among the students. The provision of good social support can decrease the psychological distress among CTE students.

Table 3. Relationship between social support and psychological distress among CTE students

Variables	1	2	3	4
Social Support	1			
Depression	-0.54*	1		
Anxiety	-0.60*	0.90*	1	
Stress	-0.63*	0.89*	0.96*	1

*Correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed)

Based on the results of multiple regression in Table 4 , all the social support variables significantly predict the psychological well-being of students. The family a (B=..302, p=.003), friends (B=.285, p=.047)and the significant others (B=.140,p=.053). The positive beta coefficients indicate that the higher the social support of the family, friends and significant others, the better will be the psychological well-being of the respondents.These findings support Bokhorst,et al.(2010) whose study found that social support from family, peers and significant others has been recognized as a protective factor for students to maintain their psychological balance. Adolescents are gradually taking on their roles being independent, however they still rely on parental care and the social support from their peers and from the other people whom they consider important to them.

Table 4. Social support which influence the psychological well-being of students

Social Support Variables	Beta Coefficient	Significance	Interpretation
Family	.302	.003	Significant
Friends	.285	.047	Significant
Significant Others	.140	.053	Significant

V.   CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn based from the findings of the study:

1. The social support of the CTE students coming from the family, friends and significant others during the pandemic is inadequate.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about uncertainty and psychological distress to the students.
3. Strong social support specifically from the family, friends and significant others is an important factor to boost the psychological well-being of adolescents..

VI.   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are forwarded by the researcher:

1. The online counselling program of the Guidance Office can be strengthened to be able to reach out to more students specially during this time that they are experiencing psychological distress
2. This study can be replicated to different set of respondents which may be helpful in crafting an institutional program/policy intervention.
3. Further study on psychological distress can be explored including variable not covered by this study such as profile variables which may affect how the students cope with the pandemic.

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