



Factors That Affect the Mental Well-Being of Cadets While Inside the Academy

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ABSTRACT

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), has spread at an alarming rate and has become a major challenging public health problem around the world. Cadets have been identified as a vulnerable group experiencing significant levels of stress, anxiety, and depression affecting their mental well-being. This study sought to assess the prevalence of impaired self-perceived mental well-being and identify associated factors among MOL Magsaysay Academy cadets while inside the academy. The researcher studied the 82 cadets that are currently enrolled in MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy taking up BSME and BSMT. The researcher used interviews, qualitative research methods, and thematic analysis to identify the thoughts that bother the cadets while inside the academy in relation to personal, family, social, and academic life, understand their academic performance, and determine how the cadets deal with all the issues bothering them, the recommendations they can give to other cadets to cope with all these issues, and administrators and faculty of the academy to assist the cadets while inside the academy.

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1. Introduction.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), first identified in Wuhan in the east of China in December 2019 (Zhu et.al, 2020), has spread at an alarming rate and has become a major challenging public health problem around the world (Phelan, et. al, 2020). Students have been identified as a vulnerable group experiencing significant levels of stress, anxiety and depression affecting their mental health (Wang, et. al, 2020). The academic years are considered an essential element in building a foundation of positive health behaviors that promote well-being into adulthood (Snedden, 2019). During this period of life, young adults face a variety of challenges and are exposed to significant risks affecting their health status (Ye, et. al (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted most countries to opt for population containment and social distancing measures to control the spread of the virus. However,

significant psychological effects have been reported in previous containment experiments (Hawryluck L,et. al, 2020) This pandemic has already shown significant psychological symptoms related to anxiety, stress, and depression (Bédès S. et al, 2021 and Wang et. al, 2020) The COVID-19 epidemic has sent students around the world into lockdown. The research gaps were as follows, no identifiable literature addresses the risks to students' mental well-being, although physical wellness checks exist. This study does not show that impaired mental health was associated with the students, reduced learning time, reduced access to the outside, and other difficulties with the living situation. The combined effects of the pandemic and the lockdown on the quality of life of students have not previously been assessed and the ways in which health students experience trauma/distress while conducting health fieldwork are understudied. This study sought to assess the prevalence of impaired self-perceived mental health and identify associated factors among MOL Magsaysay Academy students during the lockdown.

1.1. Research Objectives.

The research objectives were as follows:

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RO 1. To identify the thoughts that bother the cadets while inside the academy in relation to personal, family, social, and academic life.

RO 2. To understand the academic performance affected by these thoughts.

RO 3. To determine how the cadets deal with all the issues bothering them, the recommendations they can give to other cadets to be able to cope with all these issues, and administrators and faculty of the academy to assist the cadets in dealing with the issues or challenges cadets encounter while inside the academy.

1.2. Research Statement of Problem.

The research statement of the problem was as follows:

SOP 1. What are the thoughts that bother you while inside the academy in relation to personal, family, social, and academic life?

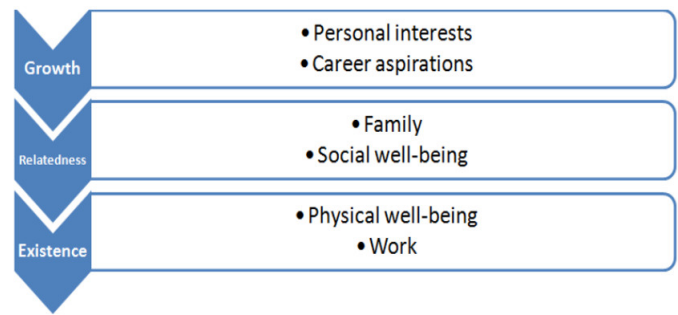
SOP 2. How is your academic performance affected by these thoughts?

SOP 3. How did you deal with all the issues bothering you and what recommendations can you give to other cadets to be able to cope with all these issues and to the administrators and faculty of the academy to assist the cadets in dealing with the issues or challenges cadets encounter while inside the academy?

1.3. Theoretical Framework.

Work and life have different connotations for different people, while work predominantly refers to job tasks that offer remuneration or career growth prospects, life has many subsets. Job tasks indicate direct on-the-job activities and assigned responsibilities. Learning and development programs, skill upgradation and job-related knowledge-enhancing tasks are covered under career progression. Components of life can be classified into personal and social well-being. Organizations usually refer to the social component of life, particularly immediate family responsibilities, whenever work-life balance is considered. Flextime, telecommuting, leave benefits, childcare, medical insurance for dependents and family get-togethers proposed by organizations to integrate work-life substantiates the previous claim. Although the family is supposed to be an individual's first social circle, the importance of belongingness to peer group or friends circle cannot be undermined. To a certain extent, organizations fulfill these needs through teamwork and training programs. Also, social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp help individuals stay connected virtually with their people. One significant aspect that is severely affected in work-life integration is personal well-being, including physical and mental health (Griffin & Moorhead, 2013).

Figure 1: Ignored aspect of Personal Life in Work-Life Integration a comparison between Alderfer's ERG Theory .



Source: J.R.Vaishnavi Prasad (2017).

Figure I show that little care is given to an individual's physical and emotional health. In spite of the spacious office campuses and state-of-the-art gym facilities made available to employees, organizations fail to recognize the need to give their human resources private time to relax and rejuvenate themselves. Every cadet while inside the Academy may possess a unique interest out of the academy which cadets may want to pursue but are unable to do so for various reasons. It may range from anything as simple as reading a book to an ambitious activity. A cadet's monotonous over-packed routine drains their energy and enthusiasm. The individual's inability to pursue interests reflects in decreased performance levels. As indicated in Alderfer's ERG Theory, existence such as work and physical well-being, in this case, relatedness such as family and social well-being, and growth such as career aspirations and personal interests motivate employees across levels at different points of time (Griffin & Moorhead, 2013).

Unlike ERG Theory where individuals if frustrated in attaining higher order needs return to lower order needs, current human capital does not hesitate to completely denounce the bare minimum need satisfiable by the job i.e. existence, to fend for themselves. Mid-life crisis is a result of such frustration where cadets feel dissatisfied with their work. They may either quit starting something that excites them or divert attention towards means of achieving inner peace through spirituality or other modes. Millennials, on the other hand, prefer work-life balance over financial security concerns as they believe in living in the present. And life according to millennials refers to personal freedom (Griffin & Moorhead, 2013). Therefore, they are wary of committing themselves to higher responsibilities. Although friends and peers compensate for family life in their early days, life seems lonely in the long run wherein the researcher seeks the factors that affect the mental health of cadets while inside the Academy.

1.4. Research Literature.

1.4.1. Cadets' Personal.

The relationship between cadets' personal well-being and their learning achievement during university study, and whether such relationship would be mediated or moderated by university engagement. Under this paradigm, personal well-being in

terms of psychosocial competencies, such as emotional competence, resilience, and moral competence has been increasingly emphasized in recent years (Lu, et.al, 2018). For example, self-efficacy, social competence, and emotional skills are positively related to school performance and negatively associated with problem behaviors among adolescents and university students (Polan et al., 2015). Limitations exist in the extant literature regarding the relationship between personal well-being and cadets' learning achievement. First, most of the findings were obtained from cross-sectional studies, which could not provide a full picture of how personal well-being may contribute to their learning effectiveness over time. Second, most research was conducted among secondary school students, while few studies focused on university students. This gap is particularly important when we realize that there are growing developmental issues and mental health problems in university students (Lu, et.al, 2018).

1.4.2. Cadets' Family.

Family plays a fundamental role in forming the values of children. A family pediatrics report (2013) explained that the development of children is significantly influenced by interpersonal relationships within the family. Affection and protection are evidently crucial for the development and growth of the child. The kind of care and attention children receive during their early years of life affect the way they handle important issues. The family remains a strong social structure within the society. It is a social unit where people learn important life skills and beliefs. Moreover, the family is a group of people affiliated either by consanguinity or by marriage describes family as the first unit with which children have continuous contact and the first context in which socialization patterns develop. This ability equips children for establishing later ties with people outside the family (Sakirudeen, 2018).

1.4.3. Cadets' Social.

During February and March 2020, following guidance from the World Health Organization, governments around the world responded to the coronavirus pandemic by imposing restrictions on social contact. Due to concerns about the rapid spread of the virus, universities around the world very quickly postponed or canceled all campus-related activities, including teaching, lab-based research, examinations, sports, recreational and conference activities (UN DESA, 2020). These measures were taken to prevent or reduce the threat of the infection spreading at institutions in order to protect staff and students from the virus (Filho, et.al 2021). Since the onset of COVID-19 and its ongoing prevalence and related lockdowns, HEIs around the world have assessed the financial impact as new and continuing student attendance on campus and in residential accommodations seems increasingly unlikely.

1.4.4. Cadets' Academic Life.

Cadet life can be stressful and for some students, it may cause mental distress. Besides being a major public health challenge, mental distress can influence academic achievement. According to Groten K. (2019), prospective studies should eval-

uate whether improved help-seeking and psychological treatment can promote students' mental health and ultimately improve academic self-efficacy and study progress. The transition from adolescence into young adulthood involves major changes in several areas financial, housing, social, and emotional and this transition period can cause relational challenges that some young adults experience as stressful. It has also been maintained that the proportion of students who experience their student life as mentally stressful is increasing (Nedregård and Olsen, 2014). Internationally, students' mental well-being is highlighted as a major public health challenge. A systematic review found that half of the students who reported mental distress symptoms also had experienced these symptoms before they began their studies, while the remaining half developed symptoms during their studies (Groten K., 2019).

1.4.5. Cadets Academic Performance.

Mental well-being is an essential component of cadets' success. Cadets struggling with poor mental health will face overall poor academic outcomes. According to the report of School Health and Wellness (2023), mental well-being challenges affect every facet of student life. Low self-esteem leads to decreased motivation and a lack of confidence when completing tasks or taking tests. It was also supported by Youth Truth Survey (2022) that, anxiety can make it difficult for students to study or attend classes. Depression can lead to decreased focus and concentration, making it hard for a student to remain engaged or complete work on time. According to American Medical Association (2016), as sleep deprivation continues to negatively impact the health and well-being of adolescents in the United States, the American Medical Association (AMA) today adopted policy during its Annual Meeting to encourage reasonable school start times that allow students to get sufficient sleep. The new policy specifically calls on school districts across the United States to implement middle and high school start times no earlier than 8:30 a.m. The new policy also encourages physicians to actively educate parents, school administrators, teachers and other community members about the importance of sleep for adolescent mental and physical health based on their proven biological needs. It is abundantly clear mental health and academic performance are intertwined. Schools must take action if they intend to maintain their commitment to their students' overall well-being and academic excellence.

2. Research Methodology.

The researcher used qualitative research and thematic analysis. The data-generated method starts on May to July 2022 with 82 cadets that are currently enrolled at MOL Magsaysay Academy. The primary data collection method was participant interviews. Participants completed one interview, the length of which ranged from approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Interviews data and transcribed. A semi-structured format was used in the current research allowing participants and the researcher the flexibility to expand upon the specific questions proposed in the interview protocol. Data are collected anonymously, including in instances of participant observation where the identity of

those being observed is concealed in the subsequent analysis and writing-up of the study. Participants responses with the researcher are kept confidential and the identity of participants is protected.

3. Development.

The following results were presented and analyzed in Table 1.

Theme A shows that in terms of personal life, the students in MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMMA) can handle their academic tasks, and which their personal life was not affected. However, most of the respondents shared that they are worried about their future, health, financial aspects, mentoring, and on how they can improve their life. The researcher believed that MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMMA) focuses on the bright sides of the cadet trainees where resources are required to be developed. According to Lu et. al (2018), states that personal well-being in terms of psychosocial competencies, such as emotional competence, resilience, and moral competence has been increasingly emphasized in recent years, particularly for its relationship with cadet academic achievement. For example, self-efficacy, social competence, and emotional skills are positively related to school performance and negatively associated with problem behaviors among adolescents and university students (Polan et al., 2015). The researchers presume that personality development for the cadets is important in developing multiple psychosocial competencies such as cognitive competence, social-emotional competence, and spirituality in constructing a good life among the cadets inside the academy.

Theme B shows that in terms of family life as their source of strength, the majority of the cadets inside the academy shared that their family is important, especially in financial support and problems. The cadets shared that they missed out the family gatherings, and little felt homesick. Communication with their family is the best way to ease their longing. The researcher understood that the family remains a strong social structure within the society. It is a social unit where the cadets inside the academy learn important life skills and could strengthen their family relationships. A family pediatrics report (2013) explained that the development of children is significantly influenced by interpersonal relationships within the family. Affection and protection are evidently crucial for the development and growth of the child, the kind of care and attention children receive during their early years of life affect the way they handle important issues. This ability equips children for establishing later ties with people outside the family (Sakirudeen, 2018). The researcher believed that the cadets learn their attitudes primarily from their parents. Family plays a fundamental role in forming the values of cadets. Going inside the MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMMA) can help the cadets with their ability to cope with and adjust to the life problems and demands of the society.

Theme C shows that in terms of social life, the majority of the cadets inside the academy believed that social events, celebrations, mentors, friends, and communication are important to their mental health. Most of the cadets shared that they

need exposure to strengthen their relations with their family and friends. The researchers understood that social life is quite difficult during pandemic where practical assessments and activities that require the use of laboratories or involve fieldwork have been unable to continue during this time. According to global data for March 2020, schools and universities were closed for 87% of enrolled students and for more than 60 million teachers. Due to concerns about the rapid spread of the virus, universities around the world very quickly postponed or canceled all campus-related activities, including teaching, lab-based research, examinations, sports, recreational and conference activities (UN DESA, 2020). These measures were taken to prevent or reduce the threat of the infection spreading at institutions in order to protect staff and students from the virus (Filho, et. al 2021). The researchers believed that through online communication and activities to cope with the cadet's social life, will not feel lonely because they'll have friends, family, or mentors to talk to and listen to.

Theme D shows that in terms of academic life, the cadets inside the MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMMA) state that they felt pressure with the instructor's treatment, technical subjects, activities, grades, and academic pressures. Some of the cadets believed that they need to acquire knowledge, focus on how to do things, and time management. The researcher understood that a cadet's life inside the academy can be stressful and for some cadets may cause mental distress. Besides being a major public health challenge, mental distress can influence academic achievement. According to Groten K. (2019), prospective studies should evaluate whether improved help-seeking and psychological treatment can promote students' mental health and ultimately improve academic self-efficacy and study progress. The transition from adolescence into young adulthood involves major changes in several areas financial, housing, social, and emotional and this transition period can cause relational challenges that some young adults experience as stressful. It has also been maintained that the proportion of students who experience their student life as mentally stressful is increasing (Nedregård and Olsen, 2014). The researcher believed MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMMA) focuses on interactive learning, grades, and achievement of degree objectives, and produces cadet graduates that can make a contribution to others and to society and can lead a healthy, happy life.

Table 2 shows that in terms of cadets academic performance inside the MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMMA) shares that they are affected by financial situations where they can't focus on their studies. Cadets find their academic tasks hard and pressured because of the pandemic where they find it difficult to grasp the lesson, concentrate, function well in their activities, and be a consistent Dean lister. Some cadets say that they need to learn how to do well with their time management to cope with their lessons and grades. The researchers believed that mental health is an essential component of cadets' success where struggling with poor mental health will face overall poor academic outcomes. According to the report of School Health and Wellness (2023), mental health challenges affect every facet of student life. Low self-esteem leads to decreased motivation and a

Table 1: Cadet Personal, Family, Social, and Academic Life.

Theme A. Personal Life

Responses	Code	Theme	Frequency
None so far.	Worry in the Future Health Conscious Financial Aspects Need of Mentoring Improvement of Life	Effects on Personal Life	36
Personal life struggles such as future, money, family, friends and mentors			43
My future as a seafarer, what shall I do to become more prepared and get promoted faster.			2
Personal Life - with regards to my weight. I'm not underweight or obese but it's hard for me to gain weight while inside the Academy maybe because of the taste of our foods.			1

Theme B. Family Life

Responses	Code	Theme	Frequency
None so far.	Financial Support Family Gatherings Homesickness Source of Strength Family's Health Communication Problems	Effects on Family Life	35
Homesickness missed family occasions, and family health.			44
Family Life - While I am here inside the Academy, I was thinking with my family since they are my source of strength. I need to fulfill my dreams and help them in the future.			1
My family life because sometimes I can't communicate with my family because we have many things to do in the academy			1

Theme C. Social Life

Responses	Code	Theme	Frequency
None so far.	Social Events Celebrations Relationships Exposure Need more mentors Need more friends Communication	Effects on Social Life	41
I am missing out on class events and partying.			37
Social Life - For me, since I am friendly, I value my fellowship with my co-cadets. One thing that I don't want with a person is unsociable and no one cares around him.			1
I expected that I will have lesser social life ever since I entered the academy because we are isolated from the outside.			1
Social Life- I need more mentors, I need more friends because we are limited in socialization in the bubble area. We need more exposure to more people.			1
social life- I feel like my relationship with others/friends outside the academy is drifting apart due to lack of communication etc.			1

Theme D. Academic Life

Responses	Code	Theme	Frequency
None so far.	Treatment Knowledge Technical Subjects Storage Area Grades Activities Academics Felt Pressure Focus Time Management	Effects on Academic Life	32
Certain professors, the way FO treats cadets			17
Scoring is not clear, and too difficult to pass.			8
Things that were stolen from me in the storage area (academy jacket, field uniform, running shoes, athletic shorts, coverall, ball cap, belt buckles, and charol). At first, I was really dismayed. The storage area where our things were kept was in total disorder. My things were all over the place and we were given a short amount of time to recover our things			1
Too many tasks to submit and the deadlines are too close.			18
Poor time management of the cadets leads to pressure.			6

Table 2: Academic Performance.

Responses	Code	Theme	Frequency
None so far			10
I was affected by constantly thinking of my family and loved ones.			4
I can't focus sometimes. Cannot focus on my goals. It is affecting me in a way that sometimes I lose focus in my studies and drive to do my tasks.			7
Definitely yes. Sometimes, I cannot focus because I am distraught about our financial situation. After all, the total value of what was stolen from me is very big. It's a hassle that we have to purchase again the same items at the same price.	Can't focus		
	Financial situations		
	Stress		1
When stress occurs sometimes, I feel unmotivated to do work.	Too many activities		8
Too many activities put a lot of pressure.	School work pressure		14
Sometimes feel sad	Hard		1
I think my academic performance is doing better because there is nothing bothering me.	Feeling sad		
Because of the pandemic	Difficult to concentrate	Academic Performance	1
My personal life, it affects my academic performance by making me not focused because of the things I always think about my personal life. Such as the insecurities about myself and my personal life.	Pandemic		11
It affected my productivity and proactiveness	Fail to grasp the lesson		
	To be a consistent Dean		6
	Lister		1
	Complacent		
	A family member is sick		
	Can't function well		
	Time management		
Time management. I am okay with academic performance, but there's a limit. Too much schoolwork takes toll on our time and mental health, being able to isolate schoolwork in academic times only will give us			18

Source: Authors.

lack of confidence when completing tasks or taking tests. It was also supported by Youth Truth Survey (2022) that, anxiety can make it difficult for students to study or attend classes. Depression can lead to decreased focus and concentration, making it hard for a student to remain engaged or complete work on time. But those are just a few of the complex challenges students face when managing their mental health and academic performance. The researcher understood that cadets' unique needs are recognized, understood, and supported, and they can showcase their strengths and reach their true potential. Cadets inside the MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMA) have mental health needs that are part of them, and instructors understand mental health implications in their learning.

Table 3 shows that issues were discussed by the cadets inside the MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMA), the long months of separation from the family, monotony, lack of quality rest, diminishing social skills, physical changes affects the lives of the cadets inside the training academy. The majority of the cadets shared that they experience stress and difficulty in their studies inside the academy. One of the cadets shared that they understand that their chosen career is a risky occupation for both physical and mental health where they are exposed to various stressors in their future workplace, including social isolation and exposure to poor physical conditions and long work hours. The researchers understand that the impact of COVID-19 has placed significant obstacles in the path of training plans, with travel restrictions and social distancing having put a halt to classroom-based learning. During these challenges, MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMA) make sure cadet training requirements are fulfilled with virtual train-

ing arrangements around their needs.

In terms of recommendations, the respondents believed that formation officer evaluation would be effective for a fair assessment. To cope with their mental health issues good habits and simple things like regular healthy eating, pleasurable physical activity, constant communication with the family using modern technologies, proper study time management and a positive attitude can improve one's mental well-being. One of the cadets shared that praying or making their spiritual health active can help ease their problems. The respondents believed that too much school works take toll on their time and mental health, and being able to isolate school works in academic times can at least help the cadets to spend time on their physical health, social life, and overall healthy lifestyle. They shared that asking cadets for feedback will help to improve the teacher and student relationships, performance in school exams, class attendance, and good scores from recitations, quizzes and activities. The researcher believed that giving students less homework actually allows them to learn how to better manage their time. By providing them with a limited number of assignments that they must complete, cadets are forced to be more productive and efficient in their studies. By assigning less homework, they'll likely find that cadets will love learning, get more sleep, enjoy themselves more with outside activities, be less overworked, and have more time to spend with family.

The class schedule must start at 9 am in the morning and according to American Medical Association (2016), the body needs 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep every night while cadets shared that most academic time starts at 7 to 8 am which is dangerous because the students don't have the energy to listen, they feel

Table 3: Issues and Recommendations.

Issues	Recommendations
Biased evaluation	Formulation Officer evaluation
Cadets can't focus and destructed	Address mental health issues
Some Instructors are open to grade consultation	Academic consultation and show empathy
Lack of student consultation	Monitor the mental health of the students
Time is limited to submit tasks and activities on time.	Limit the school activities
Strict family visits	Consider the family visits
Few extracurricular activities	Should provide enrichment programs and recreational activities
Cadets can't hardly understand the lesson.	Pre and post-test for retention
Too many academic tasks	Give at least 1-day rest and request the trimestral break
Class schedules are too tight and early.	Revisit the class schedules. Give cadets the time to rest and prepare.
Video links are required to watch	Avoid teaching using YouTube
Curfew lights off	Allow late night for studying
Poor learning materials	Upgrade the tablet for more applications
Tasks deadlines are too many and too soon.	Don't pressure the student's needs to learn time management
The aircon is not open during the daytime	Return the aircon operation

Source: Authors.

sleepy, tired and overworked. In their personal experience, they believe that starting the class earlier 7 to 8 am will not help their learning experience at all. The cadets shared that they wanted the administrators to return to the aircon operations during day time, because not all the time they are in the academic building and they spend most of their time in our dorms. Therefore, having an optimal temperature in their room will really put their minds at ease and this kind of relaxing environment is what they need during our monotonous life inside the academy because it help

Conclusions.

The following conclusions were as follows:

1. This study concludes that cadets have various struggles in terms of their personal, family, social, and academic life.
2. This study concludes that cadets suffered from a lack of social interaction and communication during social distancing or isolation, there were challenges in the reactions to the lockdowns between academic staff and students.
3. The study concludes that the mental health that was associated with the cadets inside the MOL Magsaysay Academy results in reduced learning time, access to the outside, and other difficulties with the living and study situation.
4. The study concludes that the combined effects of the pandemic and the lockdown on the quality of life of cadets inside the MOL Magsaysay Academy have not previously been assessed.
5. The study concludes that mental experiences such as trauma or distress while conducting academic performances, vir-

tual online classes, and other fieldwork activities are understudied.

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