Optimizing Students' Workload and its Effects on their Mental Health during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The utmost goal of the researchers was to evaluate the students' workload and how it affects their mental health. To achieve this aim, the researchers will use the random sampling technique to consider a target population of 100 respondents. The primary data gathering tools used in the study are questionnaire and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Sheldon Cohen. The PSS is a psychological instrument used for measuring the perception of stress. The results revealed that the workloads does not significantly affects the students' mental health. .

Keywords—Optimizing Students' Workload, Mental Health, Pandemic, Descriptive-correlational study

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 took the world by surprise. All has stopped globally. Projects were postponed, offices were closed and schools were shut down. Students, however, continue their education through online learning and video calls with their teachers. As holding schools open poses a safety risk to students, the model is currently the best choice [1].

Online learning uses several technologies to provide education, such as the world wide web, email, chat, new groups and messages, audio and video conferencing, distributed over computer networks. This encourages the learner, at their speed, to learn according to their convenience. [2].

Students are not getting nearly as much instruction and support as they did in person as schools around the nation switch to online platforms. When their workload remains the same as before classes went online, this lack of in-person support causes issues. Many students and staff have less familiarity with and access to technology, in particular with public schools in low-income communities, so teachers are unable to stream their lessons for students to learn face-to-face. Instead, students are left to teach themselves through assigned readings which can't compare to the effectiveness of a teacher's verbal instruction [3].

Due to the amount of academic workload they carry, students have often been viewed as stressed citizens. Stress is an emotional feeling that makes the person feel insecure and dissatisfied with the situation he or she must resolve [4].

In this case, assignment, tutorial, classes, test or examination, quizzes, report, and practical are under academic workloads where students, especially university students need to fulfill in order to graduate [5].

Heavy academic workloads can create a feeling of nervousness and anxiety that can cause stress and can affect students' mental health if it lasts for a longer period of time [6].

2. RELATED WORKS

The online classes have made a huge commitment during Rapid Transition to Remote Learning because of the pandemic. This new standard has changed the instructing cycle to staff as 'Educating without Students' and to a Student as 'Learning without Pressure' [7]. The pandemic has had a significant effect on the behaviours of higher education students regarding academic work and life (e.g. transitioning to online lectures/tutorials, closed libraries, modified instructor and administrative support contact networks, new assessment processes, different workloads and performance levels, etc.) and social life (closed dorms and thus going back home, no friendship meetings, etc.) as well as their personal financial situation (loss of student job, worries about their own financial situation, future education, and career) and emotional health (fears, frustrations, anxiety, anger, boredom, etc.) [8].

According to the study of Aleksander, A. (2020), Students were ultimately worried about issues relating to their potential vocation as an expert and investigated, exhaustion, uneasiness, and frustration endured. The pandemic stimulated the introduction of particular clean activities and prevented rehearsals from day to day. In addition, the results indicate that students with preferred socio-segment characteristics were typically more emphatically affected by the pandemic because they were essentially less pleased with their academic work/life [9]. Despite the number of students experiencing mental health issues, higher education faculty are not confident in their ability to detect concerns or recognize what issues require referral to a counseling center [10]. Students failing to finish assignments on time, a lack of presence in online conversations, and inability to respond to emails/phone calls are the major academic concerns that create anxiety for students in online courses [11]. As stated by Izaak, D. et. al. (2020), One out of three college understudies encounter psychological wellness issues during their examination. A comparative rate leaves advanced education without getting the degree for which they enlisted. Examination proposes that both emotional wellness issues and scholarly

underperformance could be brought about by understudies lacking control and reason while they are acclimating to tertiary instruction. Inside the writing pointed toward forestalling emotional wellness issues among understudies, advanced types of treatment as of late have been proposed as possibly adaptable answers to address these issues. Integrative mental computerized reasoning as a chatbot, for instance, shows incredible potential as a proof-based arrangement. However, life-making comes up short on the methods for development or the intuitiveness that online AI-guided treatment can offer. In this story survey, we propose to incorporate the momentum writing on chatbot mediations focused on the emotional wellness of understudies with research about a day to day existence creating intercession that utilizes a comprehensive educational program-wide methodology [12].

Excessive levels of academic stress can lead to an increased prevalence of disorders related to psychological and physical problems such as depression, anxiety, nervousness, and stress, which can in turn affect their academic outcomes. Students ' mental health, particularly in terms of academic stress and its impact, has become a serious problem for schools and policymakers due to the increasing incidence of suicides among students worldwide. It is found that academic and exam stress is positively correlated with parental pressure and psychiatric issues. Children with poor coping abilities are therefore more susceptible to anxiety, depression, and fear of academic failure, and this shows us that one student should not be compared to another [13].

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many school locales have shut for the rest of the scholarly year. These terminations are tragic because, for some, students, schools are their lone wellspring of injury-educated consideration and supports. At the point when schools return, they should build up an extensive arrangement to address the potential emotional well-being needs of their students [14].

The flare-up of the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted far-reaching school closures, and numerous schools have decided on training utilizing web-based learning stages. Utilizing regulatory information from three center schools in China, this paper gauges the causal impacts of web-based learning on understudy execution. Utilizing the distinction in-contrasts approach, we show that online instruction improves understudies' scholarly accomplishment by 0.22 of a standard deviation, comparative with the individuals who quit getting taking in help from their school during the COVID-19 lockdown [15].

This investigation expects to investigate whether internet learning affects correspondence among teachers and understudies in a negative manner, regardless of whether web-based learning influences understudies' profitability levels and to assess and recommend methods of improving successful online correspondence among educators and understudies [16].

The researcher's overview investigates the changing patterns in social connection and its consequences for psychological wellness among GCSE and A-level understudies during the lockdown as it is the critical long periods of instruction, moulding their future. This overview was done utilizing Google Forms. Results have been auto breaking down with namelessness [17].

Coronavirus is a worldwide concern influencing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This pandemic prompted a solid response among students' who encounter anxiety. This cross-sectional examination is expected to look at students' information, perspectives, tension, and adapting procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Results demonstrated that students had adequate information and high-hazard observations [18].

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study focuses on the effects of students' workload on their mental health during a pandemic. Specifically, the study will seek answers to the following questions:

1.How may the level of the students' workload be described in terms of?

    1.1 Online quizzes;

    1.2 Paper works (reflection papers, reaction paper, essays, etc.);

    1.3 Modules; and,

    1.4 Visual designs

2.What is the status of students' mental health?

3.Does the students' workload significantly affect their mental health?

4.What implications may be drawn from the findings of the study?

4. METHODOLOGY

As this concerns the description of the independent and dependent variables, the researchers made use of the descriptive-correlational research method. The research followed a quantitative approach. Objective measurements, statistical, mathematical, and numerical analysis of data obtained by surveys, questionnaires, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques are emphasized by quantitative research methods. The said approach focuses more on statistical, numerical, and analytical techniques that will be beneficial to explain a particular phenomenon [19].

In order to address the problem of the study, the following instruments that the researchers utilized are the questionnaire for the students' workload and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Sheldon Cohen for their mental health.

There is a total of 148 Senior High School students who are currently enrolled at a private school in Marilao, Bulacan for the Academic Year 2020-2021. The researchers will use the random sampling technique to consider a target population of 100 respondents.

For the independent variable, the researchers will be using a questionnaire. For the dependent variable, the questionnaire used is the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Sheldon Cohen. The PSS is a psychological instrument used for measuring the perception of stress. A variety of direct questions about current levels of experienced stress are also included in the scale [20].

In data gathering, the researchers must follow these procedures:

The first step before going to the proper test is to submit a letter of inquiry to the principal or administrators of the selected private school in Marilao, Bulacan.

Upon approval, the researchers will retrieve the letter. The questionnaires will be distributed via Messenger or Google Forms. The instruments will be retrieved after they are finished answering.

5. RESULTS

STUDENTS' WORKLOAD

INDICATORS	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
1. Online Quizzes	3.2	Moderate
2. Paper Works	3.7	Heavy
3. Modules	3.8	Heavy
4. Visual Designs	3.3	Moderate
TOTAL:	**3.5**	**MODERATE**

Students' Workload. It is evident that most of the respondents believe that their workload is moderate considering the result and as shown by the average score of 3.5. The Level of the Students' Workload was defined in the following aspects: Online Quizzes (3.2); Paper Works (3.7); Modules (3.8); Visual Designs (3.3).

Nowadays, due to changes in educational traditions, the workload of students is changing. The traditional methodology of teaching, which has been known for centuries and where the acquisition of knowledge is based on information memorization, is gradually changing its approach to skills development and knowledge acquisition by searching for the information needed and selecting information that is reliable, valid and appropriate for problem solving [21].

STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

Table 2. Status of Students' Mental Health

INDICATORS	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	2.8	Sometimes
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	2.7	Sometimes
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stresses?	3.2	Sometimes
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	2.5	Sometimes
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that the things were going your way?	2.2	Almost Never
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?	2.5	Sometimes
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	2.4	Almost Never
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	1.9	Almost Never
9. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	2.7	Sometimes
10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	2.8	Sometimes

TOTAL:	2.6	SOMETIMES

Students' Mental Health. It is clear that the students feel stressed from time to time as shown by the result of 2.6. The Status of Students' Mental Health was introduced in the following aspects: In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? (2.8); In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? (2.7); In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stresses? (3.2); In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? (2.5); In the last month, how often have you felt that the things were going your way? (2.2); In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do? (2.5); In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life? (2.4); In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? (1.9); In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? (2.7); In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? (2.8).

Mental health disorders create a significant burden for their victims. Literature suggests that mental illness can lead to days off work, loss of productivity, financial loss of treatment costs, stress on families and caregivers, and loss of life [22]. Students may experience mental and emotional pressures which can be expressed in deteriorated physical health. Anxiety and stress, subjecting people to illness, can lower immunity [23][24].

EFFECTS OF STUDENTS' WORKLOAD TO THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

The result of the study reveal that the students' workload does not significantly affect their mental health as evidenced by 0.568 correlation coefficient.

6. DISCUSSION

Weighty workloads can affect students' mental health and this research can help the teachers and schools to know the status of their students.

Showing the advantages of investigating students' mental health, this study also determined specific activities which students preferred and loathed. Most students accept that their remaining burden is moderate thinking about the outcomes. Simultaneously, students discovered utilizing computers and different devices to be amazingly disappointing when they were not set up effectively accordingly obstructing their progress.

At the beginning of this research, a larger part of the students were totally against about giving such outstanding tasks or workloads at hand day by day. In any case, this study indicated that the students' outstanding burdens made their performance a substantial and important product, and the way toward creating the works changed a considerable lot of their perspectives and attitude.

The researchers suggest that students should seek for some help from the people around them (e.g. friends, family, co-workers, etc.) and should not be afraid to take a break from everything if heavily burden.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Based from the findings of the study, the researchers drew the following conclusions: first; The level of The Students' Workload were described as "moderate"; second, The Status of the Students' Mental health were outlined as "sometimes" meaning that the workload does not really affect the students' mental health; third, significant implications were drawn out from the study: (1) teachers should limit the students' academic workloads, (2) schools should reduce the number of school days (eg. From 5 days to 3-4 days of school), (3) Schools should have a program discussing mental health care.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from the findings and conclusion, this study focuses on the effects of students' workloads on their mental health in senior high school students. The researchers offer the accompanying extension for the future: (1) understanding disorders and getting help, (2) increase mental awareness, (3) communication among students and teachers, (4) inclusive and supportive campus

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