ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 10| Issue: 6| June 2024|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2024: 8.402 || ISI Value: 1.188

COPING STRATEGIES AMONG CRIMINOLOGY STUDENTS: BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUPPORT PROGRAM

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra17565
DOI No: 10.36713/epra17565

ABSTRACT

Criminology students face a range of academic and non-academic stressors that can significantly impact their well-being. These stressors include maintaining academic success, poor sleep schedules, and financial burdens. This study aims to identify the primary challenges faced by criminology students and the coping strategies they employ, providing a foundation for developing a comprehensive support program to enhance their well-being and academic success. The descriptive design was used in this study. Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. The respondents of this study were 200 Criminology students. A questionnaire-checklist was used. The statistical used were frequency and percentage distribution. The study identified key stressors, including upcoming tests and exams, maintaining academic success, homesickness, excessive homework, balancing social life, managing financial burdens, and poor sleep schedules. Among these, maintaining academic success, poor sleep schedules, and managing financial burdens were the most significant stressors. Effective coping strategies included making time for relaxation, positive thinking, avoiding procrastination, engaging in self-care, building resilience, learning to say "no," planning breaks, limiting technology and social media use, connecting with campus resources, and seeking help when needed. It can be concluded that, College students face significant stressors related to academic success, poor sleep schedules and financial burdens. These stressors impact their overall well-being and academic performance. Effective coping strategies include making time for relaxation, positive thinking, engaging in self-care and time management. Understanding these effective coping strategies can help educational institutions develop better support systems to enhance students' well-being and academic success. The necessity for educational institutions to provide comprehensive support systems to assist students in managing these stressors effectively is very important.

KEYWORDS: *Coping strategies, Criminology Students, Support Programs, Challenges*

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress and coping are both complex processes that develop and change through all phases of life because of biological changes, individuals' personal skills and behaviors, personal adaptations, and social influences (Aldwin, 2004). Stress is a very familiar condition faced by the students when they are unable to bear the risks involved in higher education (Ramya & Parthasarathy, 2009). College students are not exempt from this scenario. College is a stressful time for many students as they go through the process of adapting to new educational and social environments (Yazon et al. 2018). Majority of the College students strive and try to handle the stress in a positive way. Whereas some of the students do not know the ways to cope with their problems and therefore adopt unhealthy ways (Ramya & Parthasarathy, 2009). Students who can handle stress well have effective stress coping skills. According to Earnest & Dwyer (2010), Stress coping skills are defined as the ability to apply strategies that minimize and manage the stress response. Likewise, coping skills are factors that determine how a person responds to a task and how well they succeed (Pajares, 2002).

Moreover, Criminology students often find themselves engaged in the study of Criminal Behavior, Law Enforcement, and Justice System. This academic quest can be intellectually stimulating and fulfilling but it also bears challenges. In their daily lives, students have faced a wide variety of demands, both academic and non-academic, that could affect their well-being. Coping with the demands of Criminology education requires flexibility and effective strategies to cope with their difficulties and eventually succeed in life. In the study of Donkoh & Yelkpieri (2011), stress was made up of many things including the most related experiences, pathways, responses and outcomes caused by a range of different events or circumstances. Further, Criminology discipline engages in the examination of crime, criminal behavior, societies responses and comprehensive criminal justice system. This multifarious field can significantly intensify stress levels and emotional exhaustion.

This research study aims to determine the coping strategies that criminology students adopt in response to the challenges they encounter in life. This study aims to determine the Coping strategies among criminology students as a basis for the development of a support program. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following: (1) What are the primary challenges that criminology students encounter? (2) What coping strategies do criminology students employ to manage the challenges they encounter in life? (3) Proposed support program that will contribute to the well-being of criminology students.

Further, the researcher, as a faculty from the College of Criminology and currently assigned as the Guidance Coordinator believes that the outcome of this study will serve as the foundation for the development of a comprehensive support program that can empower criminology students holistically.

II. MEHODOLOGY

Descriptive research is used in this study. It describes characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred. Rather it addresses the "what" question. The respondents of this study were 200 Criminology students. A questionnaire-checklist was used. The statistical used were frequency and percentage distribution.

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III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

PART I: Challenges that criminology students encounter

INDICATOR	WM
1. Upcoming Test/Exam Worry about getting a good grade or simply making time to study if there is more than one upcoming test/examination	3.24
2. Maintaining academic Success - Trying to maintain a healthy GPA through graduation.	3.86
3. Dealing with Homesickness - Going to college is getting used to the idea of being away from home for an extended period of time.	3.29
4. Too much homework - Overwhelmed or frustrated by homework, like unable to complete assignments.	3.10
5. Building new friendships - Learning how to make new friends can be a difficult, uncomfortable process. Being exposed to people from different backgrounds can make things more challenging because it may force a student to associate with people outside of their normal comfort zone.	3.08
6. Balancing social Life - Parties, late nights, road trips, concerts and sporting events. These things are often all college students' dreams, but if they are not kept under control, they can become a nightmare.	3.24
7. Handling Roommate Drama - Some people come to college without any experience sharing a room or possessions with anyone else. Being suddenly tossed into a living arrangement. It can even more stressful when the two individuals do not get along as the semester goes on.	3.10
8. Lack of organization -Poor organizational skills tend to experience more stress in school.	3.16
9. **Managing Financial Burden** - Some students take it upon themselves to get jobs during the school year to help offset some of costs associated with going to college.	3.43
10. **Too little "Down time"** - Students with busy schedules can quickly become overwhelmed because they are left with no free time.	3.43
11. **Poor sleep schedule** - Not getting enough sleep makes it difficult for students to concentrate and learn effectively.	4
12. Participation in class - The thought of being called on in class and speaking in front of their classmates can be very terrifying.	2.97
13. **Lack of Support** - Lack of support from parents or teachers, even if it's only perceived. They may feel that a lot is expected of them, but that they don't have a strong enough support system to achieve their goals.	2.78
14. **Transitioning to a new environment** - Making a major move can be a stressful time for many students, whether it's starting at a new school, new classes, new teachers and new routines can all be stressful.	3.08
15. **Classes that are too hard** - Taking subjects that can increase difficulty. It can cause stress for students.	3.27
16. **Difficulties with personal relationships** - (Ex. Splitting up/broken hearted)	2.54

As can be inferred from the table, (1) Upcoming test/exam obtained a weighted mean of 3.24. It shows that students are concerned about achieving good grades and managing study time, especially with multiple exams. (2) Maintaining Academic success obtained a weighted mean of 3.86. This implies that a high level of stress is associated with trying to maintain a healthy GPA (Grade Point Average) until graduation. (3) Dealing with homesickness obtained a weighted mean of 3.29. This signifies that students experience stress due to being away from home for extended periods. (4) Too much homework obtained a weighted mean of 3.10. This reveals that overwhelming homework leads to frustration and difficulty in completing assignments. (5) Building New Friendships obtained a weighted mean of 3.08. This indicates that making new friends and interacting with people from diverge backgrounds can be challenging and stressful. (6) Balancing Social Life obtained a weighted mean of 3.24. It presents that managing social activities and ensuring they do not interfere with academic responsibilities is a significant stressor. (7) Handling Roommate drama obtained a weighted mean of 3.10. This shows that sharing living spaces and possessions, especially with incompatible roommates, adds to stress. (8) Lack of organization obtained a weighted mean of 3.16. This establishes that poor organizational skills correlate with higher stress levels. (9) Managing Financial Burden obtained a weighted mean of 3.43. It implies that financial pressures, including working part-time jobs to offset college cost, are significant stress factors. (10) Too little "Down Time" obtained a weighted mean of 3.43. This indicates that busy schedules and lack of free time contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed. (11) Poor Sleep schedule obtained a weighted mean of 4.0. This reveals that not getting enough sleep is a major stressor, affecting concentration and learning effectiveness. (12) Participation in class obtained a weighted mean of 2.97. This implies that fear of speaking in front of classmates causes stress for many students. (13) Lack of Support obtained a weighted mean of 2.78. This explains that perceived lack of support from parents or teachers adds to stress,

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especially when expectations are high. (14) Transforming to a new environment obtained a weighted mean of 3.08. It signifies that adjusting to new schools, classes, teachers, and routines is a stressful process. (15) Classes that are too hard obtained a weighted mean of 3.27. This proves that difficult subjects and heavy coursework cause significant stress. (16) Difficulties with personal relationships obtained a weighted mean of 2.54. This indicates that personal relationship issues, such as breakups, are among the less intense stressors.

The data emphasizes that the most significant stressors for students are maintaining academic success, poor sleep schedules and managing financial burdens. These stressors are closely tied to academic performance and overall well-being.

According to the study of Khan (2023) he found a relationship in the college academic setting among academic self-efficacy, stress-coping skills, and academic performance. These findings emphasize the crucial nature of nurturing students' self-confidence to maximize their learning potential and academic success. Likewise, poor sleep quality was significantly associated with elevated levels of stress (Alotaibi et al. 2020). In the study of Herawati & Gayatri (2019), students with poor sleep quality have a higher risk of experiencing moderate to severe levels of stress compared to students who have a good sleep quality. Further, research regarding sources of stress confirms the influential role that personal financial problems play in the lives of college students. Financial difficulties are often cited among college students as sources of stress (Heckman et al. 2014).

PART II. Coping Strategies Criminology Students employ to manage the challenges they encounter in life

INDICATOR	WM
1. Build Resilience - Develop resilience by learning from setbacks and challenges, which can help you bounce back from stressors more effectively.	3.37
2. Learn to say "No" - Avoid overcommitting to extracurricular activities or social obligations	3.21
3. Plan Breaks and Vacations - Schedule regular breaks throughout the semester and plan vacations to recharge.	3.25
4. Limit Technology and social media - Reduce screen time, especially before bedtime, to improve sleep quality and reduce stress associated with social media.	3.51
5. Connect with Campus Resources - Utilize resources like tutoring centers, writing labs, or academic advisors to get support in your studies.	3
6. Avoid Procrastination - Create a to do list and tackle tasks one at a time.	3.56
7. Time for relaxation - Make time for hobbies and activities that you enjoy. - Engage in activities that help you relax and take your mind off stressors.	3.78
8. Positive Thinking - Challenge negative thoughts and replace them with more positive and constructive ones.	3.62
9. Break task into smaller steps - Divide overwhelming tasks into smaller, manageable steps to prevent feeling overwhelmed.	3.51
10. Seek help - Don't hesitate to seek help from college counselling services or mental health professionals if you're struggling with stress or emotional issues. - Talk to professors or academic advisors about academic concerns or workload.	3.24
11. Self-Care - Take time for self-care activities, such as reading, taking baths, or pursuing hobbies you enjoy.	3.67
12. Social Support - Connect with friends, family, and peers to share your feelings and experiences. - Join support groups or counseling services on campus if needed.	3.43
13. Healthy Lifestyle Choices - Get a regular exercise to boost endorphins and reduce stress - Maintain a balanced diet and stay hydrated. - Ensure you get enough sleep to support overall well-being.	3.35
14. Stress Reduction Techniques - Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation. - Engage in yoga, tai chi, or mindfulness exercises to reduce stress and improve mental well-being.	3.29
15. Time Management - Create a schedule of use a planner to manage your time effectively. - Prioritize tasks and allocate sufficient time for studying, relaxation and socializing.	3.62

It can be deduced from the table the coping strategies used by students to manage stress. (1) **Build Resilience** obtained a weighted mean of 3.37**.** This explains that Developing resilience through learning from setbacks helps in coping with stress effectively. (2) **Learn to Say "No"** obtained a weighted mean of 3.21. It reveals that Avoiding overcommitment to activities helps manage time and reduce stress. (3) **Plan Breaks and Vacations** obtained a weighted mean of **3.25.** It signifies that Scheduling regular breaks and vacations aids in recharging and managing stress. (4) **Limit Technology and social media** obtained a weighted mean of 3.51. It indicates that Reducing screen time, particularly before bed, improves sleep and reduces stress linked

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to social media. (5) **Connect with Campus Resources** obtained a weighted mean of 3.00. This establishes Utilizing campus resources like tutoring centers and academic advisors provides academic support. (6) **Avoid Procrastination** obtained a weighted mean of 3.56. This proves that Creating to-do lists and tackling tasks one at a time helps in managing workload efficiently. (7) **Time for Relaxation** obtained a weighted mean of 3.78. It implies that engaging in hobbies and activities that provide relaxation is crucial for stress management. (8) **Positive Thinking** obtained a weighted mean of 3.62. It shows that Challenging negative thoughts and fostering positive ones helps in coping with stress. (9) **Break Tasks into Smaller Steps** obtained a weighted mean of 3.51. This establishes that Dividing tasks into manageable steps prevents feeling overwhelmed. (10) **Seek Help** obtained a weighted mean of 3.24. This reveals that Seeking assistance from counseling services, professors, or advisors is essential for managing stress. (11) **Self-Care** obtained a weighted mean of 3.67. It signifies that engaging in self-care activities supports overall well-being and reduces stress. (12) **Social Support** obtained a weighted mean of 3.43. This explains that connecting with friends, family, and peers provides emotional support. (13) **Healthy Lifestyle Choices** obtained a weighted mean of 3.35. It shows that Regular exercise, balanced diet, and proper hydration are important for reducing stress. (14) **Stress Reduction Techniques** obtained a weighted mean of 3.29. It indicates that Practicing relaxation techniques like meditation and yoga helps in managing stress. (15) **Time Management** obtained a weighted mean of 3.62. This implies that Effective time management through scheduling and prioritizing tasks is crucial for balancing academic and personal life.

Coping strategies that are most effective include making time for relaxation, positive thinking, self-care and time management. These strategies suggest that students benefit greatly from structured and balanced approaches to managing their time and stress.

In the study of Agrawal et al. (2020) practice relaxation techniques, including deep breathing exercises to manage stress effectively, especially in busy individuals with high cognitive load is imperative. Managing academic stress and mental anxiety requires a systematic approach to academic and personal duties. Planning skills help students create realistic plans, schedule enough leaving time and set achievable goals. Likewise, students can rest physically and mentally with planned study breaks. Short breaks during study sessions prevent burnout, improve concentration and boost productivity. Moreover, in the study of Islam & Rabbi (2024), prioritizing self-care through healthier lifestyle choices can help students overcome anxiety. A holistic approach to well-being, including physical and mental health, helps students tackle academic stress with more energy and positivity.

PART III. PROPOSED SUPPORT PROGRAM

The support program proposal is entitled: Empowering Criminology Students: Effective Coping Strategies for success and well-being.

This program aims to provide a holistic support system addressing major stressors and equipping students with effective coping strategies. Components include an academic Excellence program, Sleep and Wellness Workshops, Seminar on Financial Literacy, Mental Health and counselling Services, Social Integration activities and Time Management and Organizational Skills training.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

1. College students face significant stressors related to academic success, poor sleep schedules and financial burdens. These stressors impact their overall well-being and academic performance.
2. Effective coping strategies include making time for relaxation, positive thinking, engaging in self-care and time management. Understanding these effective coping strategies can help educational institutions develop better support systems to enhance students' well-being and academic success.
3. In conclusion, the necessity for educational institutions to provide comprehensive support systems to assist students in managing these stressors effectively is very important.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhanced Academic support by providing tutoring services, study groups and academic advising.
2. Promote Healthy Sleep habits by implementing programs that educate students on the importance of sleep by conducting workshops on sleep techniques and quiet hours in dorms.
3. Offer financial literacy workshops to help students manage their finances.
4. Increase the availability of mental health resources including counseling services, stress management workshops and peer group support.
5. Facilitate programs that help students build new friendships and adjust to college life such as orientation events, social mixers and cultural exchange programs.
6. Provide training on effective time management and organizational skills through workshops.

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