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Amidst the Online Learning Modality: The Social Support and Its Relationship to the Anxiety of Senior High School Students

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Abstract

Senior high school is known to be part of the newly implemented K-12 program in the Philippines' educational system. Hence, this program added two years to the academic learning program of students, which mainly focuses on different theoretical and vocational strands that aim to prepare and fully furnish the students for education and employment in the future. Due to adjustments to new online learning amidst the pandemic, students begin to experience various challenges, primarily social support and mental well-being. Hence, this study investigates the relationship between social support and anxiety with 160 respondents from private schools. The findings revealed that social support and anxiety have a significant relationship ($r=0.126$).

Keywords: Anxiety, Social Support, Online Learning, COVID-19 Pandemic, K-12 Program

Introduction

As the Philippines implemented the K-12 program in the current educational system, it added two years to the academic learning of students, which is known as the Senior High School. This program mainly focuses on theoretical and vocational strands aiming to prepare and fully furnish students for further education and employment (Development Asia, 2019).

Furthermore, students may face different challenges along their senior high school journey during the academic year, such as having a lot of homework, quizzes, and activities that need to be done before the deadline. Meanwhile, the new online learning adjustment adds to the dilemma of every senior high school student because of the drastic changes such as online meetings that most students need to spend 8-10 hours and above to complete their tasks (Balram, 2020).

It was stated that students experience academic challenges, which significantly affect their performance. As per the study, those with higher anxiety levels were most likely to have behavioral and social issues, along with poor cognitive and performance, poor personal hygiene, low level of motivation, and low self-esteem (IBCCES, 2020).

According to Taylor (2018), a good and established relationship with their loved ones and other significant adults greatly helps the student build strong motivation and resilience. Therefore, social support from their families and friends can help the student lessen the

effects of anxiety. This will create a positive impact directly on the students who experience such a higher level of anxiety.

The increasing levels of anxiety, stress, and depression of nursing students can affect their physical, psychological, and academic performance (Samson, 2020). Later on, it is explained in this study that social support can act as a barrier against life stressors which can help improve the psychological well-being of an individual. Based on the findings, there is an essential link between anxiety and social support. On the other hand, Hesler (2016) discussed a connection between social anxiety and socially mandated perfectionism mediated by social support. However, the correlation of the two variables was found to have a negative significance.

Moreover, this study sought to determine the relationship between social support and anxiety among senior high school students. Thus, this study can help enlighten society to understand better the effects of anxiety on academic performances among senior high school students and provide information and knowledge as to how levels of social support impact the students' anxiety.

Research Question

This study investigates the relationship between social support and anxiety among senior high school students. Thus, it sought to answer the question:

1. Is there a significant relationship between social support and anxiety among senior high school students?

Literature Review

Evans et al. (2021) define anxiety as various physiological and mental occurrences, such as an individual's weariness about unexpected events or fear of current circumstances. It can be caused by the condition of a person's psychological and physical state, it can be an effect of drugs, stressful events, and experiences in life, or it can be a combination of all of these (Casarella 2021). However, it requires treatment if it arises without stress, threat, or fear (Ströhle et al., 2018). Based on the study, anxiety was also identified as an immediate reaction of an individual which arises due to unexpected situations and trait anxiety, which means that it is already a part of an individual's characteristic (Saviola et al., 2020).

According to Villani et al. (2021), the current pandemic negatively affects the condition of individuals' psychological and physiological well-being worldwide, which caused similar reactions in terms of emotions and concerns. It serves as a threat to society's psychological and physiological well-being (Tee et al., 2020).

Due to consecutive lockdowns and the sudden change in the learning system of education, from face-to-face to online modality, this pandemic negatively impacts students' overall well-being (Cordero, 2022). According to Mirna and Samaha (2020), a turnaround of learning methods to online modality amidst the pandemic tends to affect students' anxieties.

Several studies revealed that the pandemic contributed to the increased anxiety of the students. A study conducted by Cordero (2022) revealed that among the 1,879 respondents, 28.8% had severe down to moderate levels of anxiety. Similarly, based on Khoshaim et al. (2020), 35% of the 400 respondents from university students in Saudi Arabia had experienced moderate to higher levels of anxiety during the pandemic.

To maintain one's physical health and mental well-being, it was found that social support was relevant (Ozbay et al. 2007) because positive social support can help people to cope actively, adaptably, and efficiently. (Mokh, 2021)

According to Alsubaie et al. (2018), a lack of social support for the students can lead to mental health problems. The result of their study revealed that social

support could protect the emotional well-being of the students, which will help them live an improved quality of life.

Ip, Zhuang, and Zhu (2021) stated that children and young adults are far more likely to suffer from mental distress due to the pandemic. As the study investigates how people's lifestyles and support systems have twisted due to the pandemic's detrimental consequences, according to this study, positive changes in social support and lifestyle could help people cope with the adverse effects of a pandemic.

According to the research conducted by Cao et al. (2020), since the epidemic started, it has heightened the fear of having the COVID-19 virus and affected the students' psychological health. This study aims to assess the students' mental well-being during the pandemic. Hence, social support was correlated negatively with the respondents' level of anxiety.

Adibi et al. (2014) investigate the interrelation linking the social support and mechanism styles related to the different levels of anxiety and depression. This study concluded that perceived social support, particularly family social support, was essential in protecting and reducing one's experience of depression and anxiety.

Methodology

Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive-correlational design to evaluate the relationship between social support and anxiety among senior high school students. Thus, it was used to describe the possible relationship between two variables that occurs naturally among them.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were 160 senior high school students who are currently enrolled in a private school during the school year 2021-2022. As per the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, a convenience sampling method was used by the researchers.

Instruments of the Study

The researchers adopted two standardized instruments to determine the senior high school respondents' social support and anxiety. The Vaux Social Support Scale was created by Vaux (1988); it was used to assess the level of social support received by every individual.

The Vaux Social Support Scale consisted of 9-item questions related to the possible social support provider surrounding the participants. The researchers used it to assess the level of social support that the respondents received. The score collected from the respondents will be the basis of high and low levels of social support. To assess the emotional state, thus, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) was utilized. It is a set of questions consisting of 21 related items divided into three subscales. Hence, only the anxiety scale was employed to evaluate the level of anxiety among the respondents.

Procedures

Each participant was given informed consent and flexible time to answer the said questions. Their participation in the entire study was considered entirely voluntary. The researchers collected only the respondent's email addresses. The participants' responses will be maintained in absolute confidence and protected under the 2012 Data Privacy Act (R.A. 10173). The data was grouped using factual references after the students completed the surveys. The information acquired was utilized to build a basis for factual interpretation and analysis to create the presentation of findings.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical standards were strictly implemented across all internet platforms; due to the latest situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers used Google Forms to distribute the survey questionnaires. The informed consent was included in the first section of the survey form to guarantee that the researchers received full permission from the respondents before proceeding with the questionnaires and that the respondents met the survey's requirements. The research professor also approved of the devices and methods used to gather the data. In addition, this study and the researchers ensured that the respondents' data input was confidential and secured. The language utilized in the survey form was suitable for both Filipino and English speakers, based on the parameters mentioned above.

Result

In this section, the statistical result of the study is revealed through the use of a research question. SPSS

was used to calculate the Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the mean and its relationships between the two variables were factually concluded.

Relationship between Social Support and Anxiety

The study specifically focused on determining the relationship between students' social support and anxiety. As shown in Table 1, statistical analysis revealed that the variables are significantly connected. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1

Relationship between Social Support and Anxiety

CORRELATION		
	<i>Social Support</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>
<i>Social Support</i>	-	.126*
<i>Anxiety</i>	.126*	-

Several researchers have found that the epidemic contributed to the increased anxiety of the students. A study conducted by Cordero (2022) in the Philippines during the pandemic found that of the 1,879 respondents, 28.8 percent had extreme down to moderate levels of anxiety. The study of Boccia et al. (2021) found that 35.33 percent of their respondents reported anxiety symptoms due to the pandemic. While based on a survey by Cao et al. (2020), as the outbreaks began, students' fear of contracting the pandemic increased, affecting the respondents' psychological health. In this study, it was found that social support concludes a negative correlation to the respondents' level of anxiety.

As a result of the pandemic, children and young people are significantly more prone to experience emotional anguish. This research looks into how people's lifestyles and support networks have changed due to the pandemic's adverse effects. According to the study by Zhuang and Zhu (2021), a positive shift in lifestyle and social support could help people cope with the adverse effects of a pandemic. Hence, the study findings concluded a significant relationship between social support and anxiety.

Discussion

This study investigates the relationship between social support and anxiety among senior high school students. The statistical analysis manifested a significant relationship between social support and anxiety. An increase in social support received by the participants has a favorable effect on their anxiety. In addition, it is revealed in this study that the level of anxiety experienced by the participants was heightened amidst the pandemic. Strengthening one's social support amidst the pandemic will help to reduce the high risk of an individual having anxiety. Receiving low social support should be marked as another contributing factor to anxiety.

Conclusion

Students face several obstacles due to the online modality amid the pandemic, specifically in social support and mental well-being. The findings that there is a significant relationship between social support and anxiety imply that the respondent's need for help during this challenging time of the pandemic will mitigate their current anxious experiences. Hence, it will help them achieve their educational goals, especially during this online learning modality. In addition, the researchers strongly recommend that strengthening one's social support network can lower the risk of anxiety during the pandemic. Therefore, educational institutions should establish strong virtualized practices of social assistance among the students. Thus, it will help the students build a strong foundation of social support, enhance their coping ability caused by different challenges, and avoid anxiety. Moreover, this study suggests that parents increase the social support that their children receive from them. The same educational institutions should also show social support to their students.

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