



The Effects of DEAL-Based Intervention on Freshman Students' Academic Stress, Self-Efficacy, Coping Strategies and Perceived Stressors

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ABSTRACT

College students, especially freshmen are prone to stress due to the transitional nature of college life. They have to adjust to being away from their family for the first time. They maintain higher academic performance and adjust to a new social environment. A study suggests that university students often view stress as a negative experience, tend to adopt ineffective coping strategies, and struggle to access resources that could assist them in managing challenges.

Stress has been increasing in number among adolescents and students in the Philippines which may cause psychological disorder. However, these may or may not show signs or symptoms at early stages of onset. Apart from the visible nature of symptoms, the lack of awareness regarding the disorder and lack of coping mechanisms and intervention worsens the problem of the students.

Thus, this study aimed to determine the effects of DEAL-Based intervention on freshman students' academic stress, self-efficacy, coping strategies and perceived stressors. The DEAL model is a four (4) hour educational workshop which consist of four components which are the detection of stressors, evaluation of stressors, action towards stressors and learning from stressors through self-reflection. The four guiding principles of the model are set to teach students to detect problems early and have a positive perception towards the problem; teach students to appraise problems positively and appropriately, teach students to cope with problems positively; and teach students to learn from problems for future self-improvement. This study on the effects of DEAL -

based intervention on freshman students academic stress, self-efficacy, coping strategies and perceived stressors generally aimed to evaluate how academic stress, self efficacy, coping strategies and perceived stressors affected with the DEAL based intervention. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions: 1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of: 1.1. academic stress, 1.2. self -efficacy, 1.3. coping strategies, 1.4. perceived stressors? 2. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and the 4-time interval post intervention assessments of the respondents in terms of: 2.1. academic stress. 2. 2. self-efficacy, 2.3. coping strategies, 2.4. perceived stressors? 3.

What is the effect of the DEAL-Based intervention on the profile of the respondents across situation or environment to become less stressful rather than try to improve their coping abilities? The self-change approach involved self-regulation to cope with stressors while environmental-change approach involved system regulation to prevent and avoid potential stressors. The data were analyzed using SPSS software at the CEU Center for Research and Evaluation and t-test was used to determine the effects of the intervention.

KEYWORDS: *Academic stress, self-efficacy, coping strategies, DEAL-based intervention and perceived stressors*

METHODS AND PROCEDURE

A quasi-experimental design was adopted using the quantitative method at five different intervals; the baseline measurement was performed at one (1) week

before the intervention, and the post-intervention measurements were performed at the 1-week interval for four consecutive weeks on the freshman students of Northern Samar.

A clustered of freshman students from among the state universities and colleges in the province of Northern Samar was invited to participate in this study. Data were collected between November to December after obtaining approval from the ethics committee and the School Administrators. The researcher obtained a written informed consent from all the participants and carried out the recruitment procedure keeping their identities confidential. The pre-test was conducted first among the freshman students of the clustered school to determine who among the freshman students were experiencing moderate to severe level of stress, practicing negative or avoidant coping strategies, one week prior to the intervention.

A total of 96 freshman students qualified the inclusion criteria and were subjected to a 4-hour educational workshop on stress management using the DEAL-based intervention program: however, only 91 freshman students completed the 4-time post-intervention assessments. Academic stress, self-efficacy, coping strategies, and perceived stressors were measured by Students Stress Inventory, General Self-efficacy Scale, and Brief Coping Orientation of Problem Experienced (Brief COPE), respectively.

The Intervention is a 4-hour educational workshop based on the DEAL model which consist of four components which are the detection of stressors, evaluation of stressors, action towards stressors and learning from stressors through self-reflection. The DEAL model was developed based on the interrelationship of stress, stressors, and coping strategies in relation to affective, cognitive and psychomotor learning taxonomy. Stress management intervention according to this model can be categorized into two major groups based on its approach which are self-change and environmental change.

The self-change approach is usually referred to personalized or individual stress management where individuals will learn on how to adapt and cope effectively with stressful situations through positive perception, positive ways of thinking, appropriate action and self-reflection. The environmental change approach is referred to as situational or organizational

stress management where individuals try to change the stressful.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The result of the study showed that 87 or 95.6 percent or almost all of the freshman students experienced a moderate level of academic stress and 4 or 4.4 percent had severe level of stress. After the DEAL-based intervention, 36 or 39.6 percent had a mild level of academic stress and 55 or 60.4 had moderate stress, which means that the freshmen student's level of academic stress had lowered after being subjected to a stress management seminar workshop.

This implies that the transition from pre-university life needs a period of adjustment as it has many challenges and difficulties. Forty-one (41) or 45.1 percent had high self-efficacy and 50 or 54.9 percent had low self-efficacy during the pre-test. After the intervention, 34 or 37.4 percent had low self-efficacy and 57 or 62.6 percent had high self-efficacy. Majority of the respondents practiced multiple coping strategies, such as planning, acceptance, and positive reinterpretation and active coping strategies during the pre-test. After the intervention, the respondents coping strategies became more concentrated and focused on planning and positive reinterpretation.

Academic was considered as the number one perceived stressor of the respondents with a weighted mean of 29.91 which means that the freshman students feel stressed as submission deadline neared, feel nervous delivering class presentations and feel stressed in dealing with difficult subjects. The environment ranked second with a mean score of 29.25 which means that the respondents feel scared being in an unsecured place, feel stressed waiting in a very long queue and feel stressed by the surrounding noise. The physical stressors ranked third with a mean score of 25.77 which means that the respondent frequently experienced sleep problem, excessive worry, constant tiredness or fatigue and headaches. Interpersonal Relationship ranked fourth with a mean score of 23.54 which means that the respondents feel guilty when they failed to fulfill their parents' dream of success. The academic stress and the perceived stressors of the respondents revealed a very significant difference after the intervention.

The result on academic stress revealed that the 1-computed value of 17.14, 17.54, 19.51, and 17.55, was greater than the p value of 01. It shows that the posttest results across 4-time interval were lower than the pretest. It indicates that the given realment or

intervention was very effective. The academic stress, coping strategies and the perceived stressors of the respondents revealed a very significant difference after the intervention. However, t-test had found that the intervention failed to demonstrate a significant effect on self-efficacy of the respondents. It implies that the self-efficacy of the students were not affected or influenced by the given treatment.

The findings also showed a very significant difference on all of the respondents' perceived stressors which include the physical, interpersonal relationships, academics, and environment, that were measured repeatedly at four intervals post-intervention assessments. DEAL-Based intervention is very effective in lessening the academic stress of the freshman students. in enhancing the positive or adaptive coping strategies and in determining or identifying the respondents' perceived stressors. However, the intervention failed to demonstrate a significant effect on self-efficacy of the respondents.

CONCLUSION

The results support the effectiveness of the brief stress management intervention on freshman students' psychological wellbeing. The findings of this study affirm the findings of other studies demonstrating that intervention programs on stress management help the students deal with stress effectively. DEAL-based

intervention is a promising psychoeducation intervention to be adopted by higher educational institutions because it is simple and economical. This consumes only a minimal amount of time and money. It does not require rigorous training and manpower as well as simple to be implemented and could easily be integrated into the academic schedule.

RECOMMENDATION

Considering these results, several recommendations are proposed: 1) The DEAL-based intervention should be adopted by the higher educational institutions; 2) this intervention is recommended to be part of the guidance program as preventive intervention in universities and colleges; 3) this study should be replicated at other schools in the urban to verify the effects of the intervention in other educational settings; 4) future study should include any other interventions to compare with the DEAL-based to support its effectiveness; 5) Future research should include qualitative methods so that more data could be explored to support its validity; 6) The qualitative research methods such as focus group discussion and in-depth interview should be included in the future study to explore the respondents' view about the impact of the intervention on their daily lives in school.