

Level of Awareness on Proactive Approaches to Academic Stress Management among Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the level of awareness of proactive approaches to academic stress management among Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) students of Samar Colleges, Inc. Using a descriptive design, data were collected from 40 students through a validated survey covering five dimensions: time management, academic planning, emotional regulation, physical wellness, and social support. Results indicated a generally high level of awareness, with stronger emphasis on social and academic strategies, while emotional regulation and physical wellness were only moderately recognized. No significant differences were found across demographic variables. These findings suggest that although students possess foundational knowledge of proactive coping, gaps remain in holistic stress management. The study highlights the need for interventions that strengthen emotional and physical dimensions of coping to support overall student well-being.

Keywords: academic stress management, proactive coping, awareness level, college students, stress management strategies

INTRODUCTION

Academic stress has become a prevalent concern among college students, significantly affecting their mental well-being, academic performance, and overall quality of life. In higher education, students are often exposed to multiple academic demands such as examinations, deadlines, classroom participation, and performance expectations, which may lead to increased stress levels. Studies indicate that academic stress is one of the most dominant stressors experienced by college students and is closely associated with psychological distress, including anxiety and burnout (Barbayannis et al., 2022). Proactive coping refers to anticipatory and goal-oriented strategies aimed at preventing stress before it occurs, such as planning, goal setting, and resource accumulation. In contrast, reactive coping involves responses applied after stress has already been experienced. In this study, the five dimensions—time management, study planning, emotional regulation, physical wellness, and social support—are conceptualized as proactive mechanisms. Time management and academic planning reflect goal-setting and preparation, while emotional regulation and physical wellness represent internal resource development. Social support and help-seeking behaviors, on the other hand, demonstrate external resource accumulation. This framework ensures that the study focuses specifically on proactive, rather than general, stress management approaches.

Moreover, recent data in the Philippines reveal a growing concern, as reports show increasing levels of stress and burnout among college students, with thousands seeking help through mental health hotlines (Well-being of Students in Higher Educational Institutions, 2023).

In the context of teacher education, particularly among Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) students, academic stress is further intensified by the nature of their program. BEEd students are required to manage

academic coursework alongside teaching demonstrations, lesson planning, field study requirements, and internship preparation. A study involving BEEd students revealed that academic pressure significantly affects students regardless of age or background, highlighting the need to understand how they cope with stress (Dejano et al., 2025). Similarly, research on Filipino college students shows that academic stress is influenced by workload, expectations, and time constraints, which may hinder students' academic performance and well-being (Austria-Cruz, 2019).

At Samar Colleges, Inc., preliminary observations among BEEd students indicate that many learners experience difficulties in managing academic demands, particularly in balancing coursework and practicum-related responsibilities. Students often report feeling overwhelmed during peak academic periods such as examinations, teaching demonstrations, and submission deadlines. In addition, limited awareness of proactive stress management strategies—such as time management, emotional regulation, and help-seeking behaviors—may contribute to ineffective coping mechanisms. This situation is consistent with broader findings that college students often experience moderate to high levels of academic stress due to academic workload and institutional expectations (Agar, 2024).

Given these challenges, there is a growing need to promote proactive approaches to academic stress management. Proactive strategies focus on prevention rather than reaction, enabling students to anticipate stressors and apply effective coping mechanisms before stress becomes overwhelming. Research suggests that students who develop awareness and practice proactive stress management strategies demonstrate better academic adjustment, improved mental health, and higher resilience (Gobena, 2024).

Despite the increasing recognition of academic stress among college students, limited studies have examined the level of awareness of proactive stress management approaches, particularly among BEEd students in local institutions such as Samar Colleges, Inc. Understanding students' awareness is essential in designing appropriate interventions and support systems that can enhance their well-being and academic success.

Thus, this study aims to determine the level of awareness on proactive approaches to academic stress management among BEEd students of Samar Colleges, Inc., providing a basis for the development of targeted programs and strategies to support students in effectively managing academic stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic stress is a significant concern among college students, particularly in higher education where academic demands are increasingly complex. It is defined as the psychological and emotional strain resulting from academic-related pressures such as examinations, workload, and performance expectations. Recent studies have shown that academic stress is strongly associated with anxiety, burnout, and decreased academic performance among students (Barbayannis et al., 2022). In addition, research indicates that prolonged exposure to academic stress can negatively affect students' mental health, leading to reduced motivation and poor learning outcomes (Pascoe et al., 2020). These findings highlight the importance of addressing academic stress as a critical factor influencing students' overall well-being and academic success.

Moreover, several studies have identified common sources of academic stress among college students. These include heavy academic workload, time constraints, high expectations from teachers and parents, and pressure to achieve academic excellence. Among education students, particularly those enrolled in teacher education programs such as Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEE), stress levels tend to be higher due to the additional demands of teaching demonstrations, lesson planning, and practicum requirements. According to a study by Alibudbud (2021), Filipino college students experience moderate to high levels of academic stress, largely influenced by academic responsibilities and institutional expectations. Similarly, Bautista et al. (2022) found that education students often struggle to balance academic and practicum tasks, which contributes to increased stress levels.

In response to these challenges, coping strategies have been widely explored in the literature. Coping strategies refer to the cognitive and behavioral efforts used by individuals to manage stress. These strategies are generally categorized into reactive and proactive approaches. Reactive coping focuses on managing stress after

it occurs, while proactive coping emphasizes anticipating potential stressors and taking preventive actions (Greenglass & Fiksenbaum, 2021). Research suggests that proactive coping is more effective in reducing stress and promoting long-term well-being, as it enables individuals to prepare for challenges and maintain control over stressful situations (Schwarzer & Knoll, 2021).

Furthermore, awareness plays a crucial role in the adoption of proactive stress management strategies. Students who are aware of effective stress management techniques are more likely to apply them in their daily academic activities. According to Rahman et al. (2022), awareness of stress management practices such as time management, relaxation techniques, and seeking social support significantly improves students' ability to cope with academic stress. In addition, students with higher awareness levels tend to demonstrate better emotional regulation and resilience, which are essential for academic success.

In the context of higher education, proactive approaches to academic stress management include strategies such as effective time management, goal setting, study planning, physical wellness practices, and seeking support from peers and mentors. Studies have shown that students who actively engage in these practices experience lower levels of stress and improved academic performance (Labrague, 2021). Moreover, integrating stress management programs into academic institutions has been found to enhance students' coping skills and promote a healthier learning environment.

However, despite the growing body of literature on academic stress and coping strategies, there remains a gap in understanding students' level of awareness of proactive approaches to stress management, particularly in specific local contexts. Most studies focus on stress levels and coping mechanisms rather than assessing awareness as a key factor influencing behavior. This gap is evident among BEEEd students in local institutions, where academic demands are high but structured interventions on stress management awareness are limited.

In summary, the reviewed literature emphasizes that academic stress is a prevalent issue among college students and that proactive coping strategies are effective in managing stress and promoting well-being. However, the effectiveness of these strategies largely depends on students' level of awareness. Thus, there is a need to assess the level of awareness on proactive approaches to academic stress management, particularly among BEEEd students, in order to develop appropriate interventions and support systems that can enhance their academic and personal well-being.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the level of awareness on proactive approaches to academic stress management among Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEEd) students of Samar Colleges, Inc. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age;
 - 1.2 Sex;
 - 1.3 Year level; and
 - 1.4 Academic status (e.g., regular/irregular)?
2. What is the level of awareness of BEEEd students on proactive approaches to academic stress management in terms of:
 - 2.1 Time management strategies;
 - 2.2 Study habits and academic planning;
 - 2.3 Emotional regulation techniques;

2.4 Physical wellness practices; and

2.5 Social support and help-seeking behaviors?

3. Is there a significant difference in the level of awareness on proactive academic stress management when respondents are grouped according to their demographic profile?

Scope And Limitation

This study focused on determining the level of awareness on proactive approaches to academic stress management among Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) students of Samar Colleges, Inc. Specifically, it examined students' awareness in terms of key dimensions, including time management strategies, study habits and academic planning, emotional regulation techniques, physical wellness practices, and social support and help-seeking behaviors. The study also described the respondents' demographic profile in terms of age, sex, year level, and academic status, and analyzed possible differences in awareness when grouped according to these variables.

The study employed a quantitative descriptive research design, utilizing a structured survey questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument. Data were collected from a selected group of BEEd students enrolled during the School Year 2024–2025. The analysis was limited to descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, and tests of difference, depending on the variables involved.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the respondents were limited only to BEEd students of Samar Colleges, Inc., which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other programs or institutions. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by respondents' personal perceptions, honesty, or level of understanding of the survey items. Third, the study measured only the level of awareness and did not assess the actual application or effectiveness of proactive stress management strategies in real-life situations. Additionally, external factors such as personal experiences, family background, and environmental influences that may affect students' stress levels were not controlled in this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design, sampling procedure, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used in the study to determine the level of awareness on proactive approaches to academic stress management among BEEd students of Samar Colleges, Inc.

a. Sampling

This study employed a simple random sampling technique to select the respondents. This method was chosen to ensure that every Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) student enrolled at Samar Colleges, Inc. had an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

The respondents of the study consisted of BEEd students from different year levels enrolled during the School Year 2024–2025. Simple random sampling is considered appropriate for studies involving relatively homogeneous populations, as it promotes fairness in selection and increases the reliability of the findings (Etikan & Bala, 2020). This approach strengthens the validity of the results and allows for unbiased estimation of students' level of awareness regarding proactive academic stress management.

While the sample size consisted of 40 respondents, future studies may employ an a priori power analysis to determine the optimal sample size required to detect statistically significant effects. Expanding the sample to include participants from multiple institutions or incorporating a control group may further enhance the generalizability and robustness of the findings.

b. Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure the level of awareness on proactive approaches to academic stress management. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts: (1) demographic profile of the respondents, and (2) items measuring awareness across key dimensions, including time management strategies, study habits and academic planning, emotional regulation techniques, physical wellness practices, and social support and help-seeking behaviors.

Prior to the actual data collection, the instrument underwent validation by experts and pilot testing to ensure clarity, reliability, and appropriateness of the items. Necessary revisions were made based on feedback to improve the quality of the instrument.

To ensure reliability, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients should be computed for each subscale, with a target value of at least 0.70 to establish internal consistency. In addition, content validity may be strengthened through expert evaluation using structured rating forms. Future studies may also include a behavioral checklist to validate self-reported awareness and reduce potential response bias.

After securing permission from the school administration, the researchers administered the questionnaire to the selected respondents. The participants were given clear instructions and sufficient time to answer the survey. Ethical considerations were observed by informing the respondents about the purpose of the study, ensuring confidentiality of their responses, and emphasizing voluntary participation.

All completed questionnaires were collected, organized, and prepared for analysis. The data collection process ensured that respondents were able to provide accurate and honest responses regarding their level of awareness of proactive stress management strategies.

c. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents, while mean scores were computed to determine the level of awareness on proactive approaches to academic stress management.

Furthermore, inferential statistics such as t-test and/or Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to determine significant differences in awareness when respondents were grouped according to their demographic variables.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 1. Respondents’ Demographic Profile

Category	Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	18 years old	12	30.0%
	19 years old	10	25.0%
	20 years old	9	22.5%
	21 years old	6	15.0%
	22 years old	3	7.5%
Sex	Male	14	35.0%
	Female	26	65.0%

Year Level	1st Year	11	27.5%
	2nd Year	10	25.0%
	3rd Year	9	22.5%
	4th Year	10	25.0%
Academic Status	Regular	32	80.0%
	Irregular	8	20.0%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, year level, and academic status. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents were within the 18 to 20 years old age range, which corresponds to the typical developmental stage of college students. At this stage, learners are often transitioning into adulthood and are exposed to increased academic and personal responsibilities, making them more vulnerable to academic stress. According to Pascoe et al. (2020), students in this age group are particularly susceptible to stress due to academic workload, performance expectations, and adjustment to higher education demands. This suggests that the respondents are at a critical stage where awareness of proactive stress management strategies is essential.

In terms of sex, the results showed that a higher proportion of respondents were female, which is consistent with the typical composition of teacher education programs. Previous studies have indicated that female students tend to report higher levels of academic stress compared to their male counterparts due to greater emotional sensitivity and academic expectations (Barbayannis et al., 2022). However, female students are also more likely to engage in coping strategies and seek social support when dealing with stress (Labrague, 2021). This implies that sex differences may influence not only stress levels but also awareness and utilization of proactive stress management approaches.

With regard to year level, the respondents were distributed across all academic levels, with a slightly higher representation of lower-year students. This distribution is significant because students at different year levels experience varying degrees of academic pressure. Lower-year students often face adjustment challenges as they transition into college life, while upper-year students encounter more complex academic tasks such as research requirements, fieldwork, and practicum (Alibudbud, 2021). These varying academic demands may influence students' awareness and need for proactive stress management strategies.

Table 2. Level of Awareness of BEd Students on Proactive Approaches to Academic Stress Management

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Time Management Strategies	3.45	High Awareness
Study Habits and Academic Planning	3.38	High Awareness
Emotional Regulation Techniques	3.21	Moderate Awareness
Physical Wellness Practices	3.10	Moderate Awareness
Social Support and Help-Seeking Behaviors	3.52	High Awareness
Overall Mean	3.33	High Awareness

Scale Range	Interpretation
3.26 – 4.00	High Awareness
2.51 – 3.25	Moderate Awareness
1.76 – 2.50	Low Awareness
1.00 – 1.75	Very Low Awareness

Awareness Across Coping Dimensions

The findings revealed an overall high level of awareness ($M = 3.33$), indicating that students generally recognize proactive stress management strategies. Social support and help-seeking behaviors obtained the highest mean, followed by time management and academic planning. These results suggest that students are more inclined toward externally observable and academically oriented coping strategies.

Gaps in Emotional and Physical Wellness

While the findings indicate a generally high level of awareness, the relatively lower scores in emotional regulation and physical wellness warrant deeper analysis. One possible explanation is that students tend to prioritize academic and social strategies that produce immediate and observable outcomes, such as completing tasks or seeking help, over internal and long-term coping mechanisms. Emotional regulation requires self-awareness, reflection, and practice, which are often not explicitly taught in academic settings.

Similarly, physical wellness practices may be undervalued due to time constraints and academic workload. Students may perceive activities such as exercise and adequate rest as secondary to academic responsibilities, despite evidence that these significantly contribute to cognitive performance and stress reduction. This imbalance suggests that students' understanding of proactive coping remains academically oriented rather than holistic.

Furthermore, the educational environment may implicitly reinforce productivity-based coping strategies while neglecting emotional and physiological aspects of well-being. This highlights the need for institutional interventions that integrate emotional intelligence and wellness education into academic programs.

Implications for Holistic Stress Management

These findings suggest that proactive stress management should not be limited to academic strategies alone but must include emotional and physical dimensions. Educational institutions should integrate wellness programs, emotional intelligence training, and health-promoting activities into their curriculum to support a more balanced approach to stress management.

Table 3. Test of Difference in the Level of Awareness on Proactive Academic Stress Management When Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Variable	Statistical Test	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	ANOVA	1.24	0.305	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant
Sex	t-test	0.87	0.389	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant
Year Level	ANOVA	1.67	0.182	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant
Academic Status	t-test	1.12	0.269	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant

Legend

$\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance

If $p\text{-value} > 0.05 \rightarrow$ Not Significant (Fail to Reject H_0)

If $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05 \rightarrow$ Significant (Reject H_0)

Table 3 presents the results of the test of difference in the level of awareness on proactive academic stress management when respondents are grouped according to their demographic profile. The findings revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of awareness when grouped according to age, sex, year level, and academic status, as all computed p -values were greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that students, regardless of their demographic characteristics, exhibit relatively similar levels of awareness regarding proactive stress management strategies.

The absence of significant differences suggests that awareness of stress management approaches is generally consistent across different groups of students. This finding supports the study of Rahman et al. (2022), which found that awareness of stress management practices tends to be uniformly distributed among students due to shared academic experiences and similar exposure to stress-related situations. Additionally, Pascoe et al. (2020) emphasized that academic stress is a common experience among college students, regardless of demographic differences, which may explain the similarity in awareness levels.

In terms of sex, the results indicate that both male and female students have comparable levels of awareness. This finding contrasts with some studies suggesting gender differences in stress perception but aligns with research indicating that awareness of coping strategies is not necessarily influenced by gender (Barbayannis et al., 2022). Similarly, the lack of significant differences across year levels suggests that students, whether in lower or higher years, are equally exposed to information and experiences related to academic stress management.

Furthermore, the findings imply that institutional factors such as shared curriculum, academic environment, and access to similar resources may contribute to the uniformity of awareness among students. According to Labrague (2021), educational institutions play a key role in shaping students' understanding of stress and coping mechanisms through academic experiences and support systems.

Summary Of Findings

This study aimed to determine the level of awareness on proactive approaches to academic stress management among Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) students of Samar Colleges, Inc. Based on the data gathered and analyzed, the following findings were obtained:

First, in terms of the demographic profile of the respondents, the majority of the students were within the typical college age range of 18 to 20 years old. In terms of sex, a larger proportion of the respondents were female, while a smaller percentage were male. Regarding year level, the respondents were distributed across all year levels, with slightly higher representation from lower-year students. In terms of academic status, most of the respondents were regular students, indicating that they are progressing through the program as expected.

Second, the level of awareness of BEEd students on proactive approaches to academic stress management was found to be High, with an overall mean of 3.33. Among the indicators, social support and help-seeking behaviors obtained the highest mean, followed by time management strategies and study habits and academic planning, all interpreted as high awareness. On the other hand, emotional regulation techniques and physical wellness practices were rated as moderate awareness, indicating areas that may require further enhancement.

Third, the results of the inferential analysis revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of awareness on proactive academic stress management when respondents are grouped according to age, sex, year

level, and academic status. This implies that students share relatively similar levels of awareness regardless of their demographic characteristics.

Overall, the findings indicate that while BEEd students demonstrate a generally high level of awareness of proactive stress management strategies, there is still a need to strengthen their understanding and application of emotional and physical wellness practices to promote a more holistic approach to managing academic stress.

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that while BEEd students demonstrate strong awareness of academically oriented proactive coping strategies, their understanding of emotional and physical dimensions remains limited. This imbalance indicates that students' approach to stress management is predominantly task-driven rather than holistic. The absence of significant differences across demographic variables further implies that this pattern is consistent regardless of student background. These results underscore the need to reframe stress management education by integrating emotional regulation and physical wellness as essential components of proactive coping. Strengthening these areas may lead to more sustainable and effective stress management outcomes among students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. College instructors are encouraged to integrate proactive stress management strategies into their teaching practices, particularly by incorporating activities that enhance students' time management, study planning, and help-seeking behaviors. Embedding these strategies within classroom instruction can further strengthen students' awareness and application of effective coping mechanisms.
2. BEEd students are encouraged to actively practice holistic stress management strategies, not only focusing on academic-related techniques but also on emotional regulation and physical wellness practices such as mindfulness, relaxation techniques, regular exercise, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Developing these habits can improve their overall well-being and academic performance.
3. School administrators may consider designing and implementing structured stress management programs or workshops that focus on proactive approaches to managing academic stress. These programs should emphasize emotional resilience, mental health awareness, and physical well-being to address the areas where students demonstrated moderate awareness.
4. Guidance counselors and student support services are encouraged to strengthen support systems by providing accessible counseling services, peer support programs, and stress management interventions tailored to the needs of BEEd students. This can help students develop more effective coping strategies and seek help when needed.
5. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies that examine not only students' level of awareness but also the actual application and effectiveness of proactive stress management strategies. Experimental or longitudinal studies may be conducted to determine how these strategies influence students' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being across different contexts and populations.
6. Future studies should utilize a priori power analysis to determine appropriate sample sizes and enhance statistical validity.
7. Researchers are encouraged to include participants from multiple institutions or introduce control groups to strengthen comparative analysis.

8. A mixed-methods approach incorporating focus group discussions is recommended to better understand why emotional and physical wellness awareness is comparatively lower.
9. Future instruments should report reliability indices such as Cronbach's alpha and include behavioral validation measures to complement self-reported data.
10. Researchers should consistently report effect sizes alongside significance tests to improve the interpretability of statistical findings.

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