

COPING STRATEGIES AND ACADEMIC EMOTION REGULATION AMONG NURSING STUDENTS IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHERN LEYTE, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the perceived level of coping strategies and academic emotion regulation among nursing students in private higher education institution in Southern Leyte, Philippines, specifically at The College of Maasin, Maasin City, Southern Leyte during the school year 2025-2026. The investigation utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationships among the study variables, with participants being randomly selected through a simple random sampling method. A total of 306 nursing students from first year to third year levels served as respondents. Data were gathered using the Academic Emotion Regulation Questionnaire and Filipino Coping Strategies Scale. The collected data were statistically analyzed using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, and Person Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Results revealed that most respondents were 18 to 19 years old, female, living with complete families, and had an average combined family income. In terms of academic emotion regulation, the respondents showed a very high level of respiration, high levels of developing competencies, suppression, redirecting attention, and reappraisal, a moderate level of seeking social support, and very low levels of avoiding situations and venting. Regarding coping strategies, they showed very high level of religiosity and problem-solving, high levels of relaxation, cognitive reappraisal, tolerance, social support, and overactivity, and low level of emotional release, and a very low level of substance use. The correlation test revealed that the academic emotion regulation was not significantly related to coping strategies. The study concludes that nursing students demonstrated generally a positive academic emotion regulation and coping strategies, despite the absence of a significant relationship between the two variables. Based on the findings, the adoption of an Academic Emotion Regulation and Coping Enhancement Program is recommended to further strengthen students' emotional management and coping abilities.

Keywords: Guidance and Counseling, Academic Emotion Regulation, Coping Strategies, Descriptive-Correlational, The College of Maasin, Maasin City, Southern Leyte, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing education is a rigorous program that requires students to meet both academic and clinical responsibilities. Nursing students are expected to study complex concepts, pass examinations, perform return demonstrations, complete clinical duties, and interact with patients in actual healthcare settings. Because of

these responsibilities, they are often exposed to academic pressure, emotional stress, and clinical challenges that may affect their learning experience, well-being, and preparation for future nursing practice.

In higher education, students are expected to adjust to academic demands while maintaining emotional stability and motivation. This becomes more challenging in nursing programs because students are not only evaluated through written outputs and examinations but also through their ability to perform clinical skills and demonstrate professional behavior. The pressure to meet these expectations may cause stress, anxiety, fear of failure, and difficulty in handling academic-related emotions. Previous research confirms that navigating high stress levels and emotional hurdles is a universal experience for future nursing professionals. These persistent difficulties are largely catalyzed by the exceptionally intense burdens imposed by both classroom coursework and hands-on hospital training (Alkharj et al., 2024; Balideh et al., 2025).

These concerns show the need to examine how nursing students respond to academic and clinical pressures. When students are unable to manage stress properly, they may experience difficulty concentrating, reduced motivation, emotional exhaustion, and decreased academic engagement. Nursing students may also encounter situations that test their confidence, such as return demonstrations, clinical exposure, interactions with patients, and fear of committing mistakes. These experiences may affect how they manage their emotions and continue performing their academic responsibilities.

The problem becomes more significant when academic and clinical demands exceed the students' capacity to adjust. The dual pressures of rigorous classroom assignments and hands-on hospital obligations frequently expose future nursing practitioners to debilitating levels of stress (Dias et al., 2024). If these concerns are not addressed, students may become more vulnerable to emotional difficulties and poor academic functioning. Espulgar (2024) also noted that ineffective responses to stress may worsen emotional challenges among students. These issues justify the need to better understand the emotional and coping-related experiences of nursing students.

Unmanaged stress may also create long-term effects on nursing students. Students who continuously struggle with academic pressure may find it difficult to sustain motivation, participate actively in learning activities, and remain confident in their program. Destructive academic strain directly compromises classroom success, diminishes student engagement, and drives up institutional departure rates (Pascoe et al., 2020). These observations demonstrate that unchecked emotional distress heavily underpins subpar performance metrics and student attrition (Pascoe et al., 2020). Moreover, emotional difficulties among nursing students may later affect their professional readiness and ability to function effectively in healthcare settings (Balideh et al., 2025). This shows that the concern is not limited to academic performance alone but may also influence the future quality of nursing practice.

As students progress in their nursing education, their responsibilities become more complex. Academic requirements increase, clinical exposure becomes more demanding, and expectations from instructors, families, and the institution become stronger. Tsai et al. (2024) noted that stress may intensify during critical stages of nursing training, particularly during clinical practicum. Given these potential risks, exploring the day-to-day realities of student nurses becomes crucial before these underlying pressures begin to erode their grades, compromise their emotional wellness, and stunt their professional growth.

Several personal and environmental conditions may also contribute to the way nursing students handle academic and clinical pressure. These include academic workload, clinical learning environment, family expectations, financial concerns, support from instructors, and peer relationships. Liu et al. (2022) and Zafra et al. (2020) emphasized that responses to stress are influenced by different personal and academic factors.

In addition, Dias et al. (2024) noted that the clinical learning environment can either support or challenge students' adjustment. These conditions show that the issue must be examined within the actual academic environment where students experience these demands.

Although studies have already explored stress and coping among nursing students, there remains a need to examine these concerns in relation to academic emotion regulation, particularly in a specific local setting. Existing studies have often focused on general stress, anxiety, and well-being, but fewer have examined how nursing students' coping strategies are related to the way they manage academic emotions (Espulgar et al., 2024; Zafra et al., 2020). Ghattas and El-Ashry (2024) also highlighted the importance of studying emotional concerns in relation to students' academic experiences. This indicates the need for further investigation, especially in localized nursing education settings.

There is also limited local evidence on this topic among nursing students in private higher education institutions in Southern Leyte. Students in this setting may experience unique academic, social, and environmental conditions that influence how they respond to academic and clinical demands. These may include provincial learning conditions, varying clinical exposure, socio-economic concerns, family expectations, and community influences. Given that previous investigations were predominantly carried out in foreign or distinct locales, their conclusions might not accurately mirror the distinct pressures and trials encountered by student nurses at a private higher education provider here in Southern Leyte.

Conducting this study is therefore necessary to provide context-specific evidence on the coping strategies and academic emotion regulation of nursing students in a private higher education institution in Southern Leyte. The findings may help identify student needs and provide a basis for developing support programs, academic interventions, and mental health initiatives. These efforts may help nursing students manage academic and clinical demands more effectively, strengthen their emotional well-being, and improve their readiness for future professional practice.

Therefore, this research was designed to explore the specific coping responses and classroom affect management strategies utilized by student nurses within a private college environment in Southern Leyte throughout the 2025–2026 academic year. By uncovering these behavioral trends, this project strives to deliver valuable data that administrators and counselors can leverage to design targeted guidance programs and mental wellness resources for the student body.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using descriptive-correlational methods. The descriptive component was utilized to determine the respondents' demographic profile and assess their perceived levels of academic emotion regulation and coping strategies. Descriptive research facilitates the systematic observation and description of phenomena, providing valuable insights into individuals' experiences and characteristics. The correlational component was used to examine the relationship between academic emotion regulation and coping strategies without manipulating the variables. This design was selected because it enabled the researcher to determine whether a significant association existed between the study variables while preserving the natural conditions in which they occurred.

2.2. Research Locale and Respondents

The study was conducted in a private higher education institution in Southern Leyte, Philippines, during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The institution offers a nursing program that exposes students to both academic and clinical learning experiences, making it an appropriate setting for investigating academic emotion regulation and coping strategies among nursing students.

2.3. Research Participants

The participants of the study consisted of first-year, second-year, and third-year nursing students enrolled in the private higher education institution during the Academic Year 2025–2026. A total of 306 nursing students participated in the study. The inclusion criteria were: (1) officially enrolled first-year, second-year, or third-year nursing students during the Academic Year 2025–2026, and (2) willingness to participate in the study. These students were selected because they were actively engaged in academic and clinical requirements such as examinations, laboratory exercises, return demonstrations, clinical exposures, and other nursing-related learning activities. Their experiences provided valuable insights into how nursing students regulate emotions and cope with academic and clinical stressors.

Fourth-year nursing students were excluded from the study because their longer exposure to the nursing program may have enabled them to develop greater academic resilience and more stable coping strategies. Including them could potentially influence the comparability and homogeneity of the data.

Simple random sampling was employed to select the respondents. This sampling technique was chosen to minimize selection bias and ensure that every eligible nursing student had an equal opportunity to be included in the study. Consequently, the representativeness of the sample was enhanced, thereby improving the validity and generalizability of the findings.

3. Research Instrument

Data were collected using a three-part survey questionnaire. The first part gathered the respondents' demographic information, including age, sex, family background, and socioeconomic status. The second part utilized the 37-item Academic Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (AERQ), which measures eight dimensions of academic emotion regulation—situation avoidance, competency development, attention redirection, reappraisal, suppression, respiration, venting, and seeking social support—using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The third part employed the 37-item Filipino Coping Strategies Scale (FCSS), which assesses nine coping dimensions: cognitive reappraisal, social support, problem-solving, religiosity, tolerance, emotional release, overactivity, relaxation/recreation, and substance use, using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Always). Both instruments have demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability in measuring their respective constructs.

4. Statistical Treatment

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 with the assistance of a statistician. Frequency count and percentage were employed to summarize and describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was used to determine the levels of academic emotion regulation and coping strategies based on the established descriptive rating scales. To

examine the relationship between academic emotion regulation and coping strategies, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was applied. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level of significance ($p < .05$).

5. RESULTS

The respondents were predominantly aged 18–19 years (50.00%), followed by those aged 20–21 years (42.81%). The majority were female (75.16%), came from complete families (78.76%), and belonged to households with average family income (68.95%). These findings indicate that the respondents largely represent young female nursing students from relatively stable family backgrounds and middle-income households.

The respondents demonstrated a moderate level of academic emotion regulation ($WM = 3.20$, $SD = 0.95$). Among the emotion regulation strategies, respiration obtained the highest rating and was described as very high ($WM = 4.34$), followed by developing competencies ($WM = 4.02$), suppression ($WM = 3.67$), redirecting attention ($WM = 3.55$), and reappraisal ($WM = 3.46$), all of which were rated high. Seeking social support was rated moderate ($WM = 3.31$), while avoiding situations ($WM = 1.58$) and venting ($WM = 1.63$) received very low ratings. The findings indicate that the respondents primarily regulated their academic emotions through adaptive strategies such as breathing techniques, competency development, attentional control, and positive cognitive reframing, while showing minimal reliance on avoidance and venting behaviors.

The respondents demonstrated a high level of coping strategies ($WM = 2.79$, $SD = 0.93$), primarily characterized by very high levels of religiosity ($WM = 3.45$) and problem-solving ($WM = 3.26$). High levels were likewise observed in relaxation/recreation ($WM = 3.16$), cognitive reappraisal ($WM = 2.97$), tolerance ($WM = 2.95$), social support ($WM = 2.79$), and overactivity ($WM = 2.56$). In contrast, emotional release was rated low ($WM = 2.33$), while substance use obtained a very low rating ($WM = 1.61$). These findings indicate that the respondents predominantly relied on adaptive and constructive coping strategies, particularly faith-based and problem-focused approaches, while showing minimal reliance on maladaptive coping behaviors such as substance use.

There was a negligible positive relationship between academic emotion regulation and coping strategies ($r = 0.036$), which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.535$). This indicates that the respondents' coping strategies were generally independent of their level of academic emotion regulation. Although both variables were present at adaptive levels, variations in students' ability to regulate academic emotions did not correspond to meaningful differences in their coping behaviors. The findings suggest that coping strategies may be influenced by other personal, social, and contextual factors beyond academic emotion regulation.

6. DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of the respondents reflects characteristics commonly observed among undergraduate nursing students. The predominance of individuals in late adolescence and early adulthood suggests that many respondents are navigating a developmental stage marked by increasing independence, emotional changes, and heightened academic responsibilities. Previous studies have identified younger nursing students as particularly vulnerable to academic stress due to adjustment-related challenges and exposure to clinical demands, whereas older students tend to demonstrate greater emotional maturity and adaptive coping capacities (Labrague, 2021; Savitsky et al., 2020; Yazon et al., 2018). The predominance of female respondents likewise mirrors the traditional gender composition of nursing programs and may have implications for emotional functioning, given evidence linking female nursing students with higher

emotional intelligence, empathy, and greater reliance on interpersonal forms of coping (Graves et al., 2021; Tung & Rong, 2022). Furthermore, the prevalence of respondents from complete families and households with average income levels highlights the potential influence of family support and socioeconomic resources on students' psychological adjustment. Family cohesion and financial stability have consistently been associated with emotional well-being, resilience, and effective coping among college students (Ellen et al., 2023; Kumari, 2025; Parker et al., 2021; Shengyao et al., 2024).

The findings further demonstrate that respondents generally employ adaptive academic emotion regulation strategies when confronted with academic and clinical stressors. Their tendency to confront rather than avoid academic demands reflects a level of emotional engagement that is conducive to learning and professional development. Frequent use of competency development, attentional control, cognitive reappraisal, and respiration techniques suggests that students actively regulate emotions through preparation, self-improvement, positive reframing, and relaxation. These strategies have been consistently associated with improved psychological adjustment, self-regulated learning, academic achievement, and resilience (Gross & Gross, 2015; McRae & Gross, 2020; Panadero, 2017; Teixeira et al., 2022). At the same time, the moderate use of suppression and social support indicates that while students strive to maintain composure and seek assistance, when necessary, some may still hesitate to openly express emotional difficulties. Such a pattern reflects the complex emotional demands of nursing education, where professionalism and emotional control are often highly valued (Chen et al., 2025; Ye et al., 2020).

Similarly, the respondents exhibited a predominantly adaptive coping profile characterized by strong reliance on problem-solving, cognitive reappraisal, social support, religiosity, relaxation, and tolerance. These findings suggest that students primarily respond to stress through constructive and proactive means rather than through avoidance or maladaptive behaviors. The prominence of problem-focused coping and cognitive restructuring is particularly noteworthy, as these strategies have been linked to resilience, psychological well-being, and successful adaptation to academic challenges (Han et al., 2023; Wackerhagen et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2025). The substantial use of social support and religiosity further underscores the importance of interpersonal relationships and spirituality as sources of emotional strength and psychological protection. Such findings are especially relevant within the Philippine context, where family connectedness and religious faith often serve as important coping resources during times of adversity (Dolcos et al., 2021; Surzykiewicz & Skalski, 2022). Moreover, the very low reliance on substance use reflects a favorable pattern of stress management and indicates that respondents generally avoid maladaptive coping mechanisms associated with poorer mental health outcomes (Romano et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021).

Despite the adaptive nature of both academic emotion regulation and coping strategies, the study found no significant relationship between these variables. This finding suggests that although both constructs contribute to students' adjustment and well-being, they may operate through distinct psychological processes. Academic emotion regulation focuses on the management of emotions arising from academic experiences, whereas coping strategies encompass broader behavioral, cognitive, social, and spiritual responses to stress. Consequently, students who demonstrate effective emotion regulation may not necessarily employ similar coping strategies when managing academic and clinical challenges. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of (Chen-Bouck et al., 2024), who reported that coping strategies and cognitive emotion regulation are differentially associated with academic outcomes, indicating that the two constructs do not always function in tandem.

The absence of a significant relationship also suggests that coping behaviors among nursing students may be shaped by a wider range of contextual and personal influences beyond academic emotion regulation. Previous studies have emphasized the role of family support, peer relationships, resilience, religiosity, personality characteristics, and clinical experiences in shaping students' coping responses (Loureiro et al., 2024). Given the diverse academic and clinical experiences encountered across year levels, these factors

may exert a stronger influence on coping behaviors than emotional regulation alone. This perspective may also explain the discrepancy between the present findings and those of de la Fuente et al. (2020), who reported significant associations between self-regulation and coping. Variations in educational context, sample characteristics, and environmental demands may account for these contrasting results.

Taken together, the findings portray nursing students as generally equipped with adaptive emotional and coping resources that support their ability to navigate the demands of nursing education. Nevertheless, the moderate level of academic emotion regulation and the limited use of emotional expression highlight opportunities for intervention. Strengthening programs that promote emotional awareness, resilience, healthy emotional expression, peer support, cognitive reappraisal, and problem-solving skills may further enhance students' capacity to manage academic and clinical stress. Such initiatives are particularly important in nursing education, where emotional competence and psychological well-being are essential not only for academic success but also for future professional practice (Barbayannis et al., 2022; Cabaluna et al., 2024).

7. CONCLUSION

Nursing students generally demonstrate moderate academic emotion regulation and high levels of adaptive coping strategies. They commonly regulate academic emotions through competency development, attentional control, cognitive reappraisal, and respiration, while relying on problem-solving, religiosity, social support, and positive cognitive restructuring to cope with academic and clinical stressors. Although academic emotion regulation and coping strategies were both evident among the respondents, no significant relationship was found between the two variables, suggesting that they may operate through distinct mechanisms and be influenced by different personal and contextual factors. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening programs that promote emotional regulation, resilience, healthy emotional expression, social support, and adaptive coping to enhance nursing students' well-being, academic adjustment, and readiness for professional practice.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Nursing schools, faculty members, guidance counselors, and student affairs practitioners may utilize the findings to strengthen programs that promote academic emotion regulation, adaptive coping, resilience, and psychological well-being among nursing students. Interventions such as stress management workshops, peer support programs, counseling services, emotional regulation training, and resilience-building activities may be integrated into student development initiatives to enhance students' capacity to manage academic and clinical demands. Future studies may examine other factors influencing academic emotion regulation and coping strategies, including resilience, emotional intelligence, social support, personality traits, and academic stress, using longitudinal, mixed-method, or multi-institutional research designs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of nursing students' psychological adjustment.

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