

The Role of Stress Management in responding to COVID-19: Students' perspective from Faculty of International Studies, UFLS, The UD.

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Abstract

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have spread terribly around the world. We struggle against “the shadow pandemic”, such as social protection, job loss, stressful pressure, particularly in students from Faculty of International Studies (FIS), UFLS, The UD. Because universities are closed, students join online classes without face to face interactions. They also bear the brunt of expanded psychological problems, including depression, anxiety disorders, stress.

The target of this study is to investigate the sign and current situation of stress management skills of FIS students. Finally, some suggestions will be given to help educational administrators deal with these problems and support the youth in response to the ongoing pandemic.

Keywords: stress management; Covid-19; Faculty of International Studies; suggestion.

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1. Introduction

With the current trend of integration and globalization, The Faculty of International Studies, University of Foreign Languages Studies, The University of Danang aims to meet the demand for high-quality students in Central Vietnam [1]. Due to Covid-19, the new normal in education is an additional challenge for teachers and students. Hybrid learning is a combination of both online and offline methodologies with the innovation of technology. Actually, universities in Southeast Asian countries has a weak performance in applied technology for learning and teaching. All-of-educational system effort is necessary to adjust this current situation work better and keep the students engaged academically. However, the sudden shift from in-person to online learning and changes in life make students suffer more difficulties in both physical and mental health. Especially, stress has become one of the most popular psychological problems in schools. This paper, studying the role of stress management, analyzes the current circumstance of stress in FIS students to propose some suggestions for students as well as other educational institutions in the years to come.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 To identify the statistics of stress at FIS students , UFLs, The UD.
- 2.2 To find out the solutions for students in new normal education to reduce stress in schools during this tough time.

3. Literature Review

Approaches to Stress Management

In general, there are three common approaches to define stress

a. The Medical Approach:

An original term of stress as "the emergency response" or "the militaristic response" [2] is discovered by Walter B Cannon- an American physiologist, professor, and chairman of the Department of Physiology at Harvard Medical School. Cannon defined the root of stress is from an external environmental demand that upsets the person's natural steady-state balance referred to as "homeostasis". He compared stress as "fight- or -flight response"[2]. It means stress is a buildup of hormones that make tension, strain, or pressure and that is initially a positive response readying the person to react such as: fight, flee, or defence. Cannon accepted the body was planned with natural defense instruments to keep it in homeostasis. Besides, Holme và Rahe (1967) used to Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) argue life changes link to stress. The life event scales include Death, Divorce, Marriage, Change in society, Change in living conditions,... [3].

b. The Cognitive Approach

Richard Lazarus (1977) strong supported that "stress is a situation that someone regards as threatening and as possibly exceeding his or her resources" [4]. Lazarus indicated the stress occurs by an event depends on how individuals think about the event and how they react. For instance, women are much more likely to report symptoms of stress than men. Married women report higher levels of stress than single women, with 33 percent reporting that they have experienced a great deal of stress compared with 22 percent of single women [5].

c. The Person-Environment Fit Approach

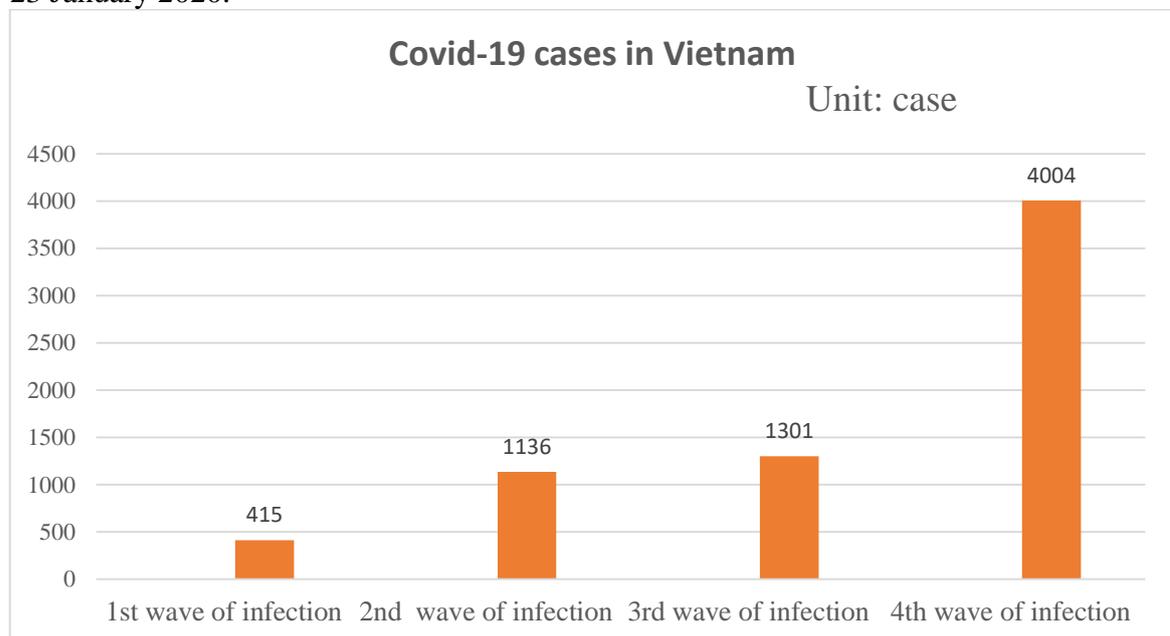
Robert Kahn argued that "the stressful nature of confusing and conflicting role demand" (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Stress happens when the role expectations are confusing and conflicting or when an individual's abilities and capacities can't satisfy the needs of the social job [2]. Contradictory role expectations give rise to opposing role

pressures (role conflict), which generally have the following effects on the emotional experience of the focal person: intensified internal conflicts, increased tension associated with various aspects of the job, reduced satisfaction with the job and its various components, and decreased confidence in superiors and organization. The strain experienced by those in conflict situations leads to various coping responses, social and psychological withdrawal (reduction in communication and attributed influence) among them.

Thus, stress is a natural response to a challenge or a threat. External factors play the primary sources of information that can induce a physiological stress response. Stress management is a range of therapies based on concepts and principles derived from psychological models of human emotion- behavior- cognitive [3].

Overview of Covid-19 in Vietnam

Vietnam is a part of the ongoing global pandemic of COVID-19 spreading since 23 January 2020.



1st wave of infection: Jan 23 - July 24, 2020

2nd wave of infection: July 25, 2020 - Jan 27, 2021

3rd wave of infection: Jan 28 - April 26, 2021

4th wave of infection: April 27 - May 2021

Chart 1: Covid-19 cases in Vietnam (Date: May 28, 2021)

Sources: Vietnam Ministry of Health [4]

At the end of April 2021, Vietnam experienced "a fast-spreading outbreak". Vietnam's Ministry of Health has confirmed over 4,000 new cases of community transmission in 30 cities and provinces. There are more than 140,000 people who had close contact with confirmed patients and Vietnamese overseas patients under quarantine at hospitals, concentrated quarantine facilities [5]. COVID-19 has rapidly affected our life in Health care, Economic ,and Social. It can be seen clearly that COVID-19 has resulted in Education shut all across a worldwide. Because of social distancing, most universities in Vietnam have provided online and distance teaching. Postponement of examinations, cancellation of services, financial pressure, closure of places for entertainment ... have had negative impacts for students.

4. Research Methodology

Subjects

The participants of this study include 200 students from FIS. They are all Vietnamese undergraduate degree from Bachelor of International Studies and Bachelor of Oriental Studies.

The distribution of the respondents belongs to the age group of 18-25 years. In the present study 85% were females and 15% were males.

Questionnaire Design

Questionnaire is a tool used to collect information about a particular topic. Students who fill in the questionnaire must have a definite purpose that is related to the objectives of the research.

Sample and Data Collecting

A sampling plan is developed to ensure that certain types of respondents are included in this study. The target respondents choose current students because they are likely to be representative and most knowledgeable about the topics in the questionnaire. As posting Google Form's link on Facebook, particular groups or individuals can answer online questionnaires. Besides, the author collects data through online interviews through MS Teams in April 2021.

5. Results of the research paper

Stress Statistics

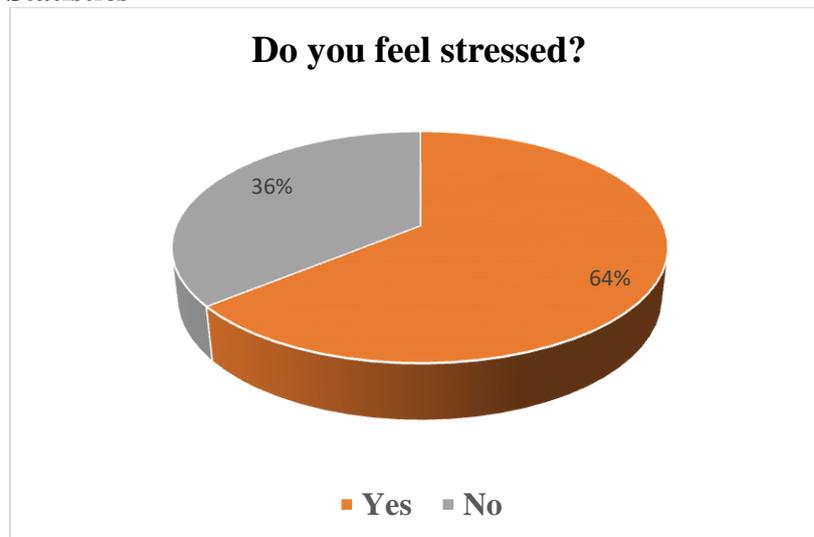


Chart 2: Current FIS students Stress Distribution

At FIS, more than half of students (64 percent) surveyed said they experienced stress during Covid-19. The pandemic has affected the majority of FIS students as well as the young generation in in many countries and territories.

Understanding of Stress

Most FIS students believed that stress symptoms are more likely to manifest by chronic stress (such as having had a headache, fatigue, lower resistance) than acute stress (82.5 percent vs. 34 percent). In fact, chronic stress is a biological experience by these hormones (cortisol and adrenaline) that prepare the body to react through the heartbeats and breath rates. Signs of acute stress include Arousal, Avoidance, Dissociation, Negative mood. Without a doubt, chronic stress occurs more visible and popular signs. In contrast, it is not possible to self-diagnose with acute stress.

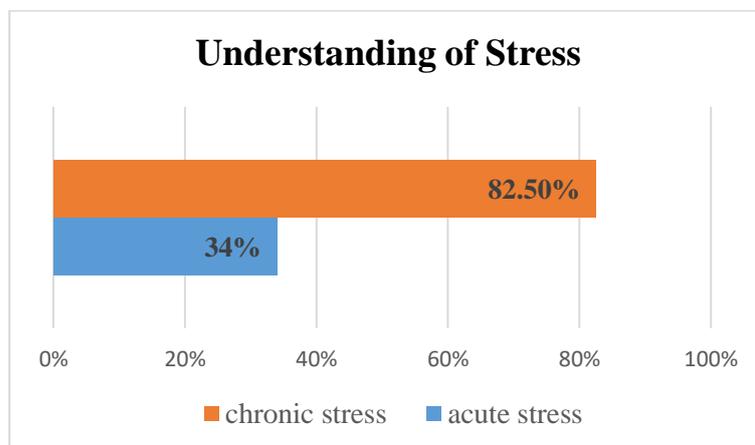


Chart 3: Sign of Stress

Causes of Stress

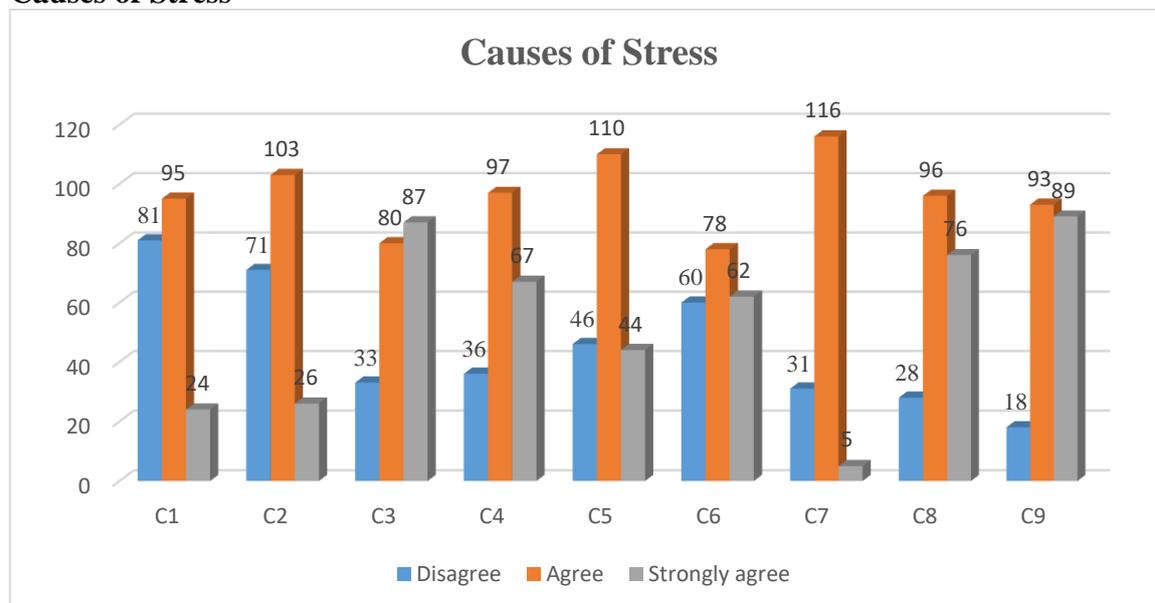


Chart 4: Causes of Stress

- C1: Difficulties in e-learning
- C2: Fear of failure in exams
- C3: Financial problems in accommodations
- C4: Financial problems in foods and drinks
- C5: Lack of social interaction
- C6: Homesick
- C7: High family expectations.
- C8: Health anxiety relating to Covid-19
- C9: Future problems (intership, graduation, job,...)

The causes of stress is shown on the chart 4. Students tend to feel stressed because of C9-Future problems (internships, graduation, job,...) and C3-Financial problems in accommodations. Thus, the support of the Department of Student Affairs is extremely important to advise and assist students forwards. Scholarships, social assistance,

tuition reduction program, and other services help students continue to achieve their educational path.

Besides, C1-Difficulties in e-learning and C2-Fear of failure in exams are not common causes of stress based on student's perspectives. Apparently, well-equipped facilities at schools decrease the obstacles of online- learning. Because of the quality of teaching, students become more confident and engage efficiently in academic exams.

Stress Management activities

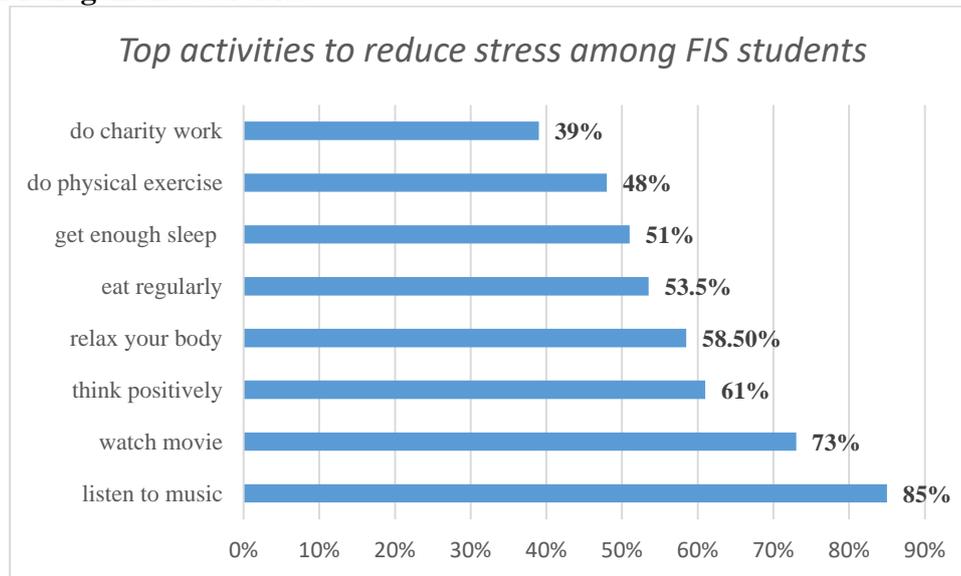


Chart 5: Top activities to reduce stress among FIS students

Two forms of entertainment (music, movies) tend to be more dominant with 85 percent and 73 percent respectively of respondents during this difficult time. Next, more than half of students choose to “Think positively”, “Relax your body”, “Eat regularly” and “Get enough sleep” activities to overcome stress in their daily lives. Indeed, movies and music are beneficial for mental health. Thanks to the Internet, students have more and more opportunities to engage in entertainment faster.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

Stress is a natural psychological condition of human health. Educational administrators are responsible for identifying the factors that can trigger stress in schools during Covid-19 pandemic. This study from FIS students' perspective can be a model for other institutions. However, students are in charge of the key role to solve their own problems. Three possible suggestions how to deal with stress that is conducted from this study are optimism, self-reliance, positive thinking:

First of all, as an individual, optimism has been associated with good mood, wellness, and lifespan. Optimists take part in more active problem-solving types of coping, as opposed to avoidant coping.

Secondly, Merriam Webster (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>) defines self-reliance as “*reliance on one's own efforts and abilities*”. Basically, it includes three features: thinking independently, embracing your individuality, striving towards the goal.

Finally, according to Suzanne Segerstrom, “Setbacks are inherent to almost every worthwhile human activity, and a number of studies show that optimists are in general both psychologically and physiologically healthier” [8]. In stressful situations, positive thinkers work more effectively than those who don't.

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