

Effects of the Resiliency-Booster Program on the Level of Resiliency and Mental Wellness among College Students in a University during Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The study is anchored on the theory of Wagnild and Gantner (2020) that improving the level of resilience is an effective therapy of depression. This implies that depression can be prevented by strengthening resilience. It is also anchored on Rutter's Resilience Theory that it is not the nature of adversity that is most important, it's on how one deals with it. Likewise, the study has employed a Pre Test-Post Test Design which assessed and explored the levels of resiliency among the respondent-students from five (5) Colleges of Mindanao State University at Naawan through a Stratified Random sampling method, gathering a total of 216 respondents. A standardized, psychological test-questionnaire on Resiliency, adapted from Buot (2020) study, was also used to gather data in the conduct of Pre- and Post Assessments where a special intervention, called Resiliency Booster (or Ipatigbabao Roa Kit) was applied. Findings have revealed that the students' levels of resilience (from 5 Colleges) were generally at the Low level or Somewhat Resilient at 2.33 (within the range of 1.75-2.49 as Low/ Somewhat Resilient) during the Pre-Assessment. However, after the conduct of a 3-Day intervention, using the prototype of the Resiliency Booster Kit, with special habit-tasks/ exercises, there was a significant increase of their resiliency levels, spiking up at 2.98 (within 2.50-3.24 range of Moderately Resilient). And At 0.01 level of significance, and all Ps < .01, signifying that the differences between their levels of significance before and after the intervention were considered all-Significant. Thus, the adoption or implementation of the Resiliency Booster Self-Management Intervention Plan (locally named as "Ipatigbabao-Roa Kit") is highly recommended to be employed in the Strategic Planning on Mental Health Intervention Program to both students, and faculty, including other employees in non-academic agencies or departments in order to help them improve their resiliency, and mental health, as well.

Keywords: resiliency, level of resiliency, depression, mental wellness, mental health, resiliency booster, resiliency intervention program

INTRODUCTION

The spread and impact of Covid-19 virus has been felt by almost everyone else around the globe and has brought rapid changes in many aspects of peoples' lives in economic, social, political, among others. Along with it are individual's experiences on various stresses attributed by this pandemic. When one fails to cope and adjust to the pressures of this new normal, it may lead to depression. The Department of Health (2020) reported that in many places of the country, the number of cases of suicide, associated with depression has been rising in number regardless of age, gender, or professions. At worst, recent cases on suicide and self-harm committed by either students or teachers due to depression have been circulating in the social media (*Adviento, 2018*).

Wagnild and Gantner (2020) affirmed that resilience is an effective therapy to depression. This implies that depression can be prevented by strengthening the level resilience. Resilience refers to the ability of an individual, family, group, community or organization to recover from adversity and resume functioning even when suffering serious trouble, confusion or hardship. Hence, individuals, with low level of resilience are likely to have difficulties in dealing with various stresses and will eventually experience psychological distress.

This concept is paralleled with the theory of Aaron Beck on depression. Failure to cope and adjust with various stressors in life may lead to frustrations and eventually, end up with symptoms of depression. He added that irrational thoughts were also determined to have been attributes of low level of resiliency which consequently made the individuals view themselves as helpless, worthless, and inadequate. They usually interpret situations in a negative and defeatist way and the obstacles they encountered cannot be handled (*Tuliao, 2017*). Social psychologists assert that an individual's thoughts and mental processes affect one's feelings and behaviors. Essentially, people can possibly change their behavior by changing their set of beliefs and principles to align with the social situation at hand, and adjust to outside pressures. Otherwise, overly negative thoughts can develop into a negative trait emotion and can have difficulty in dealing with various stresses in life (*Steer, 2016*).

Furthermore, having a strong positive mental attitude in life can provide a much stronger ability to deal with stressors. Researchers suspect that people who are more positive may be better protected against the inflammatory damage of stress, help them make better health and life decisions in older them to focus more on long-term goals. Studies also find that negative emotions can weaken immune response. What is clear, however, is that there is definitely a strong link between positivity and health. Indeed, positive attitude improves resiliency, outcomes and life satisfaction across a spectrum of conditions, including serious illness (*Yanek, 2018*).

The importance of resilience to combat psychological distress is strengthened by the Resilience Theory of Michael Rutter. He explained that when one faces adversity, misfortune, or frustrations, resilience helps that person to bounce back and that not the nature of adversity that is most important, but how an individual deals with it. With this perspective, it implies that by increasing the level of resiliency of an individual one can be able to overcome any psychological distress. Nevertheless, having said resiliency, one can have an instinctive ability to learn to create coping strategies in order to persist and survive amidst distress (*Ignacio, 2018*). Hence, being part of a school management system, this study is the answer on what needs to be done, and what special intervention to provide with in order to help our co-employees and students improve their coping mechanisms, and resiliency to deal with stresses in this pandemic, and thereby maintain their mental health.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the Action Research *with Pre Test-Post Test Design* in which the same variables were measured among the participants before (pre-assessment) and after (post-assessment) a treatment were administered. It aimed to determine the level of resiliency, then administer the intervention, and evaluate its effectiveness if there's improvement in their resiliency level. The respondents were college students in a university by which a *Stratified Random Sampling method* was employed with the use of Krejcie Table, and D. Morgan Formula, supported with G-power apps to arrive into an appropriate sample size that was computed is 216 respondents from 5 College Departments in a University. It utilized a standardized, psychological test instrument on Resiliency Assessment used to assess the level of resiliency of the respondents which is adapted from Buot (2020). In assessing its test-retest reliability, the survey-assessment has (Pearson $r = +.87$) which indicates a good reliability. Furthermore, it has also an internal consistency of $+0.89$ which is generally considered having a good level of internal consistency. As far as with other standardized *Resilience Test*, like Nicholson-McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ), it has a high convergent validity, having a correlational coefficient of $+0.82$. Hence, the *Resiliency Assessment* used in this study has exhibited acceptable levels of reliability and validity, which measures the Resiliency level of the respondents which comprises with following areas: 1) *Optimism / Positive Mental Attitude*; 2) *Goal-Oriented / Purpose*; 3) *Flexibility/ Acceptance/Control*; 4) *Taking Challenges / Ingenuity*; 5) *Openness/ Expression/ Relationship*; and 6) *Adopting Self-Motivational Activities/ Spiritual Enhancement Exercises* forming as level-indicators of their resiliency.

A pre-assessment was administered to the respondents to determine their level of resiliency. Then a special intervention was employed, to test if it is effective, providing each respondent with a Resiliency Booster Kit originally called, *Ipatigbabao-Roa Kit* (3D Variant) containing a specially designed therapeutic exercises for 3 Days. The respondents were closely monitored, with constant follow ups and communications to assure they had performed the recommended exercises provided in the Kit for a given period, including *mindfulness* exercises. Thereafter, a post-assessment was administered to determine the positive effects and changes that they had experienced, with qualitative support through follow ups, including the conduct of informal or structured interviews to clarify, verify, and affirm certain matters, gathering personal feedbacks and testimonies based on their experiences with the intervention program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Level of Resiliency

Table 1 displays a clear margin of difference of the students' resiliency before and after the intervention in all areas: the weighted mean for *Optimism Positive Mental Attitude* before the intervention was 2.10 with an interpretation of low resilience. After the intervention, it increases to highly resistant with a weighted mean of 3.25. The weighted mean for *Goal Oriented/Purpose-Driven* before the intervention was 2.20 which means low resilience, and 3.40 after the intervention which revealed high resistance. *Flexibility/ Control* was found low before the intervention with a weighted mean of 1.81 and 2.80 or moderately resistant after the intervention. *Ingenuity/ Taking Challenges* before the intervention had a weighted mean of 2.31 and 3.10 after the intervention which means they have become moderately resilient. The weighted mean for *Relationship / Openness* was 2.81 (before intervention) and 3.50 (after intervention) which means that there was an improved resiliency from moderately to highly resilient.

Table 1**Students' Level of Resiliency Before and After the Intervention**

Areas	Before the Intervention		After the Intervention	
	Weighted mean	Interpretation	Weighted mean	Interpretation
<i>Optimism / Positive Mental Attitude</i>	2.1	Low/Somewhat Resilient	3.25	Highly resilient
<i>Goal-Oriented / Purpose</i>	2.20	Low/Somewhat Resilient	3.4	Highly Resilient
<i>Flexibility/ Acceptance/Control</i>	1.81	Low/Somewhat Resilient	2.8	Moderately resilient
<i>Challenges / Ingenuity</i>	2.31	Low/Somewhat Resilient	3.1	Moderately resilient
<i>Openness/ Expression/ Relationship</i>	2.81	Moderately resilient	3.5	Highly Resilient
<i>Adopting Self-Motivational Activities/ Spiritual Enhancement Exercises</i>	1.76	Low/Somewhat Resilient	2.70	Moderately resilient
Average Mean	2.16	Low/ Somewhat Resilient	3.12	Moderately Resilient

Legend:	<u>Range</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
	3.26 -4.0	Highly Resilient
	2.51-3.25	Moderately resilient
	1.76-2.50	Low/Somewhat Resilient
	1.0-1.75	Not Resilient

Self-Motivation/Spiritual Practice yielded a weighted mean of 1.76 which means low resilience before the intervention and 2.70 (moderately resilient) after the intervention. The average weighted mean before the intervention was 2.16 which is low or somewhat resilient to moderately resilient (3.12) after the intervention. From a lower level to a higher level of resiliency reflects a great difference, and it implies that the given intervention has an impressive efficacy. At this high level of resiliency, majority if not all, student-respondents are likely to have the ability to bounce back from distressful circumstances, and have the perseverance to continue doing things through hard times. Though it does not mean that they have the immunity from falling or not to get down emotionally or mentally, yet they have this sufficient strength to get back, re-organize, and put up those broken pieces again. They learn from bad experiences, overcome hard things, and grow stronger. High resilient individuals have stability to sustain their strength and persistence, and can able to renew it from time to time (Hechanova, 2015).

Building good relationship, communication and openness with other people provides a stronger, social support system, and thereby helps maintain individual's resiliency (Nicdao E, 2015). Likewise, the ability and confidence to face the problems and other obstacles in life, with

focused goals and purpose in mind have also greatly attributed the resiliency level of a person (Conde, 2017).

Furthermore, with the follow-up interview and feedbacking with one of the respondents named, Princess (a 2nd Year College student), wrote about the positive effect that she had experienced with the intervention:

“Indeed the challenge and exercises in the Kit were very effective for me. It gave me a lot of new ideas on how I should maintain and take care of my mental health. If it was effective for me, it will be effective for the others too! From now on I will be adding these activities in my daily routine for further improvements in my life.”

Another one named, Katie shared her personal experiences with the intervention exercises:

“The 3-Days challenge did help me improve a lot where I got to do things that isn't my habit and it really helped improve my health. Where I get to see the change in my face and weight as well as the way I think. Now I get to discipline myself to do things in healthy way because in that way I get to see improvements for myself being genuinely happy and being okay. Where I wake up feeling okay, with the mood to do something good and yes I feel relieved. As I grow I get to experience hard life. Life helps me grow the way I think, act and talk and this Kit exercises help me a lot.”

They're just few of the many respondents who testified personally (from written and formal/informal interview) during the follow-ups, verification, and validation process of the study.

Significant Difference in Resiliency Level

Table 2 shows the mean analysis of the variables using the applied statistical T-test which yields a $p=.0421$ at $\alpha=.05$. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, which suggests that there is indeed a significant difference in the students' level of resilience before and after the intervention.

Table 2
Significant Difference on Students' Level of Resiliency
Before and After the Intervention

AREAS	Mean Difference	P Value at $\alpha=.05$	Interpretation
<i>Optimism/ Positive Mental Attitude</i>	+1.1		
<i>Goal-Oriented/ Purpose Driven</i>	+1.0		
<i>Flexibility / Acceptance /Control</i>	+.8		
<i>Taking Challenges / Ingenuity</i>	+.8		
<i>Openness/ Expression/ Relationship</i>	+.7		
<i>Adopting Self-Motivational Activities/ Spiritual Enhancement Exercises</i>	+1.01		
Weighted Mean	+.9	.0421	<i>Significant</i>

This is another clear implication that the gap of difference reflecting an increase on their level of resiliency on various sub-areas during the pre and post intervention affirms a certain degree of efficacy of the provided intervention. Hence, a sustainable exercise of effective coping strategies will help assure the individuals' preparedness to battle against any distress that may arise anytime (Waelde, 2016).

Likewise, an increase level of resiliency implies an improved mental and emotional agility, adjustment, and flexibility in dealing with adversity (Rutherford, 2013). Hence, individuals who are resilient are said to be of sound mind amidst academic stress (George, 2018).

The Resiliency level improvement has also attested by another respondent named, April (1st Year College student), based on her personal experience before and after intervention with her statement:

“Sa nakalipas na tatlong araw, maraming pagbabago ang nangyari sa akin na di ko inaakalang sa akin ay mangyayari. Sa pagsunod sa naka saad na mga gagawin ay masasabi ko talagang malaki ang pinagbago sa akin. Nagkakaroon na ako ng desiplina sa sarili, nalilimitahan ko na ang pagiging ma sumpungin. Iyong pakiramdam na masarap gumising sa umaga na wala kang ibang iniisip. Simula palang sa elementarya ay nagkakaroon na ako ng depresyon, ilang beses ko na rin na pagtangkaang patayin sarili ko kung saan may nangyari sa akin na di ko inaasahan kaya ito ang naging daan kung bakit nagkaroon ako ng depresyon sa edad na siyam. Ang pakiramdam ko sa mga panahon na iyon ay hindi ko maipaliwanag yung sakit, poot at pagsumbat sa itaas. Sa pagkakulong sa dilim, masasabi ko na marami talaga akong napansin na pagababago dahil sa kit na ito. Natutulungan niya akong iwasan ang depresyon sa tulong ng mga hakbang.

Isa ang ating kalusugan sa mga pinaka importanteng aspeto sa buhay. Nakaaapekto ito sa ating araw-araw na mga gawain, at dapat natin itong alagaan ng mabuti. Sa naganap na webinar kung saan inilathala ang mga sintomas sa pagkakaroon ng depresyon at kabilang na rin rito ang mga mabisang paraan upang maiwasan ang pagkakalulong sa na sabing suliranin. Hindi ko maipagkakaila na sa lahat ng nabanggit na sintomas ay nararanasan ko rin ang mga iyon kung saan iisa lang ang ibig sabihin na ako nga ay nakakaranas na ng depresyon. Sa pagkakaroon ng depresyon ay hindi madali kasi nagkukusa siyang anino mo na maari kang kainin ano mang oras o segundo, maari kang sumpungin ng depresyon o tinatawag rin na anxiety attack kung saan mas nagiging aktibo ito sa pamamagitan ng biglaang pag-alala sa mga bagay na dapat ng kalimutan. Sa pagsunod sa hakbang sa nasabing “KIT” ay marami akong natutunan. Minsan kasi nalilimutan ko minsan na tumawag at magpasalamat sa kanya pero dahil nga isa ito sa mga hakbang na kapag gigising, kakain, matutulog ay magpasalamat sa kanya ay parang biglang gumaan yung pakiramdam ko. Nakakagaan ng loob sa tuwing na aalala ko siya araw-araw. Medyo natutunan ko rin na kontrolin ang sarili ko sa pagkain ng matatamis at mas kumain ng masustansiyang gulay. Sa pagsunod sa mga hakbang madalang nalang akong mairita kung saan napapansin ko rin talaga ang mga pagbabago sa mga nakagawaian ko simula sa pag gising hanggang sa pagtulog.”

Note: This is just one of the many testimonies recorded from the respondents' shared experiences during the interview and validated assessment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The resiliency level of the college students in most of the areas, to wit: *Optimism / Positive Mental Attitude; Goal-Oriented / Purpose; Flexibility/ Acceptance/Control; Taking Challenges / Ingenuity; Openness/ Expression/ Relationship; and Adopting Self-Motivational Activities/ Spiritual Enhancement Exercises* have improved after the intervention. The gap of difference reflecting an increase on their level of resiliency in said sub-areas between the pre and post intervention affirms a certain degree of efficacy of the intervention. Apparently, the college students' resiliency levels have changed and improved to a higher level, and the difference is significant. The special intervention called, *Ipatigbabao-Roa Kit* has produced a promising result, hence it is effective, as affirmed by another respondent's testimony:

I can say that this Ipatigbabao-Roa Kit is effective for me since the said improvements enlighten my actual being and boosted my resiliency. I recommend this kit for those people who suffer from unstable mental health today, especially this pandemic. This is not only an activity that boosts resilience but also a therapy for cognitive behavior and psycho-spirituality. It will reduce psychological distress and help your mental wellness. Thank you for this challenge, I've learned to care of my self and my total wellness.

Since the intervention program of the study has yielded with positive effects in the respondents' level of resiliency, and presumed, by theoretical implication, to have also improved their mental wellness, the Kit is highly recommended to be used as a special intervention, equivalent to a personal First-Aid/ Self-Care Kit highly intended for those who have been struggling from psychological distress, like symptoms of depression and anxiety. Other agencies, other than academic institutions may also adopt and implement this intervention to help their respective employees and workers cope with various stresses.

This study also recommends future researchers to conduct further validation related to this research, and expand its broader spectrum for more beneficial results.

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