

## Nursing Students ' Anxietyin Returning to School after Lockdown Due to Covid -19 Pandemic in a State University in the Philippines

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### Abstract

After Covid 19 pandemic, which affected people's lives in terms of the economy, health, and educational system for almost two years, lives have turned to normalcy, including the educational system. Many students are now having face-to-face. The study aimed to determine the level of anxiety of nursing students of President Ramon Magsaysay State University Iba-Main Campus regarding Returning back to school and implementing Face-to-Face classes. The study was conducted using a descriptive research design, with an anxiety online questionnaire serving as the primary data collection tool from one hundred twelve (112) student respondents. Several statistical treatments, such as frequency and percentage, weighted mean, Likert Scale, and Analysis of Variance, were used to analyze and interpret the gathered data (ANOVA). Based on the findings, most of the College of Nursing respondents are typically 20 years of age and female. The respondents sometimes felt anxious about returning to school after a lockdown due to Covid -19. The respondents' level of anxiety towards returning back to school after lockdown due to Covid-19 has no significant difference when grouped according to sex, current accommodation, and current staying with but has a significant difference in age and year level.

It is recommended that nursing students may overcome anxiety through regular physical activities/fitness and exercise. As part of the school's health and wellness program, the school/college may provide sample video clips of exercises/physical activities for students to do at home.

Keywords: Anxiety, returning to school, lockdown

### Introduction

The novel coronavirus outbreak has been declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (2020). (PHEIC). The coronavirus (COVID-19) is a pandemic disease that is wreaking havoc on the education systems of various income-level countries (Wajdi et al., 2020). The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) acknowledged that the global education system had been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic outbreak (UNESCO, 2020b). Many pandemics have occurred throughout history, affecting human life, education, and global economic development (Editors, 2020). According to UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020b), COVID-19 school closures affect 87 percent of the world's student population. UNESCO had launched distance learning practices in order to reach the most vulnerable students. Over 1.5 billion people, according to UNESCO,

After nearly two years of gradual control of the pandemic situation, millions of students across the country are preparing to return to school, many of whom face challenges as a result of the pandemic's ongoing health, economic, and social consequences. More colleges, universities,

and specialized schools are offering limited face-to-face classes in the Philippines now that restrictions have been reduced to Alert Level 1 in most cities in Metro Manila and other key provinces. The guidelines of the IATF COVID-19 are being followed. They have initiatives such as handwashing stations, ensuring proper ventilation, and establishing physical barriers, markers and signage, thermal scanners, and air purifiers in addition to enforcing social distancing, temperature checks, and wearing a face mask at all times. After nearly two years of gradual control of the pandemic situation, millions of students across the country are preparing to return to school, many of whom face challenges as a result of the pandemic's ongoing health, economic, and social consequences. More colleges, universities, and specialized schools are offering limited face-to-face classes in the Philippines now that restrictions have been reduced to Alert Level 1 in most cities in Metro Manila and other key provinces. The guidelines of the IATF COVID-19 are being followed. They have initiatives such as handwashing stations, ensuring proper ventilation, and establishing physical barriers, markers and signage, thermal scanners, and air purifiers in addition to enforcing social distancing, temperature checks, and wearing a face mask at all times.

Coronavirus disease has caused physical as well as psychological/mental health issues in the general population. The majority of people were concerned about their own health and the health of their loved ones, especially family members whose occupation increased their risk of COVID-19 exposure, such as essential and health care workers. School and higher education closures have a negative impact on the mental and physical health of children, students, parents, and teachers worldwide, particularly in developing countries (UNESCO, 2020b). Because during school closures, both male and female students in most rural areas may be forced to work full-time in cattle herding and farming. The rapid increase in infected cases has created a sense of anxiety and uncertainty about what will happen (Tiruneh, 2020). The lockdown is the result of

This prompted researchers to study the Level of Anxiety of Nursing students of President Ramon Magsaysay State University Iba, Main Campus, regarding Returning to school and implementing limited Face-to-Face classes.

Keywords: anxiety, nursing students, state university, Philippines

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The descriptive method of research was used in this research study. Descriptive research aims to describe, explain, or validate a hypothesis or objective in relation to a specific group of people (McNeill, 2018). Descriptive statistics employ data collection and analysis techniques to produce reports on central tendency, variation, and correlation measures.

In this study, the profiling of the student's level of anxiety was presented. A cross-sectional study was conducted to determine what they feel most of the time.

The data gathered and analyzed during descriptive research can then be used to conduct additional research using various research techniques (Bhat, 2019). In addition, the data can also point to the types of research methods that were used in subsequent research.

### Respondents

This study examined the anxiety level among nursing students when face-to-face class was conducted, with a total population of 140 respondents. In addition, data on the profile of the students, such as age and sex, were also determined.

### **Location**

The study was conducted at President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU) Iba/Main Campus, Iba, Zambales, Philippines.

### **Research Instrument**

A Questionnaire adopted from Zung's self-rating anxiety scale device was used to determine the anxiety level of nursing students. This instrument has been used and studied and has been shown to have good psychometric properties, including good internal consistency, concurrent validity, convergent validity, and the ability to discriminate between clinical and nonclinical samples. A validated 20-item self-report instrument with reported reliability, Cronbach's alpha of 84%. The instrument uses a four-point Likert scale where: "1 = None or little of the time," "2 = Some of the time," "3 = Good part of the time," and "4 = Most of all the time." For each respondent, the total raw scores for 20 items range from 20 to 80. The sum of scores is then converted to an "Anxiety Index" with values ranging from 25 to 100. An Anxiety Index less than 45 indicates "Anxiety within normal range," a value in the range of 46-59 indicates "Minimal to moderate anxiety," a value in the range of 60-74 indicates "Marked to severe anxiety," and values greater than or equal to 75 indicates "Most extreme anxiety. The Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SAS) is a 20-item self-administered measure that screens people for anxiety symptoms. It screens for anxiety disorders and determines whether someone should seek anxiety counseling. It is to be used in place of a professional diagnosis it helps determine the severity of a person's symptoms.

### **Sampling Technique**

Researchers used simple random sampling.

### **Data Collection**

The researchers requested permission to the Dean of the College of Nursing. Upon approval, the questionnaire was distributed to the students. The nursing student-respondents were informed about the aim of the survey, as well as the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to interpret the collected data, statistical tools such as frequency, weighted mean, and chi square were used to analyze the data.

## **Results and Discussions**

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution on age and sex of the respondents. Out of one hundred twelve (112) respondents, majority were from the age of 20 years old with 40 or equivalent to 35.7%; 27 or 24.1% from age of 21 years old; 20 or 17.9%

from age of 19 years old; 13 or 11.6% from age of 22 years old; 6 or 5.4% from age of 18 years old; 2 or 1.8% from age of 23 years old with the same frequency and percentage for the age of 36; 1 or 0.9% for the age of 29 and 24 years old.

The data revealed that most of the respondents were from the age of 20 years old which is categorized as young adult. The computed mean age of the respondents is 20.64 or 21 years old.

**Table 1**  
**Frequency and Percentage Distribution on Age of the Respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-21	93	83.04
22-25	16	14.29
26-29	1	0.89
30-33	0	0
34-37	2	1.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Mean Age:20.64</b>		
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	15	13.4
Female	90	80.4
LGBTQ+	7	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100.0</b>

On the other hand, out of one hundred twelve (112) respondents, the majority were female with a frequency of 90 or equivalent to 80.4%; 15 or 13.4% were males, and 7 of them, or 6.3% were LGBTQ+.

The data revealed the female respondent's dominance in this study. The survey also found that men represent 9.4% of registered nurses, up from 9.1% in 2017, 8% in 2015, and 6.6% in 2013. The respondents indicate that the nurses say that "they get upset easily or feel panicky" with a weighted mean of 2.45 (Rank 5), "they feel calm and can sit still easily" with a weighted mean of 2.43 (Rank 6), "they can feel their heart beat fast" and "they feel that everything is alright and nothing bad will happen." both has a weighted mean of 2.35 (Rank 7), "they feel like they are falling apart and going to pieces" with a weighted mean of 2.28 (Rank 9), "their hands are usually dry and warm" with a weighted mean of 2.21 (Rank 10), "they have to empty their bladder often." with a weighted mean of 2.17 (Rank 11), "they feel afraid for no reason at all" with a weighted mean of 2.12 (Rank 12), "they fall asleep easily and get a good night's rest" with a weighted mean of 2.07 (Rank 13), "they have nightmares" with a weighted mean of 1.91 (Rank 14), "they are bothered by stomach aches or indigestion" with a weighted

mean of 1.90 (Rank 15), “I get feelings of numbness and tingling in my fingers and toes” with a weighted mean of 1.88 (Rank 16), “they are bothered by dizzy spells” with a weighted mean of 1.87 (Rank 17) and “their face gets hot and blushes” with a weighted mean of 1.81 (Rank 18). The respondents perceived None or little of the time on the indicators; “My arms and legs shake and tremble” with a weighted mean of 1.74 (Rank 19) and I have fainting spells or feel faint” with a weighted mean of 1.50.

**Table 2**  
**Nursing students’ response on their Anxiety experience in returning to school after Lockdown Due to Covid -19**

<b>Learning Strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Descriptive Rating</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. I feel more nervous and anxious than usual	2.58	Good part of the time	<b>3</b>
2. I feel afraid for no reason at all	2.12	Some of the time	<b>12</b>
3. I get upset easily or feel panicky	2.45	Some of the time	<b>5</b>
4. I feel like I’m falling apart and going to pieces	2.28	Some of the time	<b>9</b>
5. I feel that everything is alright and nothing bad will happen	2.35	Some of the time	<b>7</b>
6. My arms and legs shake and tremble	1.74	None or little of the time	<b>19</b>
7. I am bothered by headaches, neck and back pains	2.50	Some of the time	<b>4</b>
8. I feel weak and get tired easily	2.71	Good part of the time	<b>2</b>
9. I feel calm and can sit still easily	2.43	Some of the time	<b>6</b>
10. I can feel my heart beating fast	2.35	Some of the time	<b>7</b>
11. I am bothered by dizzy spells	1.88	Some of the time	<b>17</b>
12. I have fainting spells or feel faint	1.50	None or little of the time	<b>20</b>
13. I can breathe in and out easily	2.72	Good part of the time	<b>1</b>
14. I get feelings of numbness and tingling in my fingers and toes	1.88	Some of the time	<b>16</b>
15. I am bothered by stomach aches or indigestion	1.90	Some of the time	<b>15</b>
16. I have to empty my bladder	2.17	Some of the	<b>11</b>

often.		time	
17. My hands are usually dry and warm	2.21	Some of the time	<b>10</b>
18. My face gets hot and blushes	1.81	Some of the time	<b>18</b>
19. I fall asleep easily and get a good night's rest	2.07	Some of the time	<b>13</b>
20. I have nightmares	1.91	Some of the time	<b>14</b>
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>Some of the time</b>	

Table 2 shows the experiences of the nursing students regarding the level of anxiety towards returning back to school after lockdown due to Covid -19. The respondents perceived Good Part of the Time on the indicators; "I can breathe in and out easily" with a weighted mean of 2.72 (Rank 1), "I feel weak and get tired easily." with a weighted mean of 2.71 (Rank 2), "I feel more nervous and anxious than usual" with a weighted mean of 2.58 (Rank 3) and "I am bothered by headaches, neck and back pains." with a weighted mean of 2.50 (Rank 4).

(Rank 20). The computed weighted mean on the level of anxiety towards returning back to school after lockdown due to Covid -19 of the respondents is 2.18 which is interpreted as some of the time. Jones, Park, and Lefevor (2018) found that academic concerns and financial stress were highly correlated with anxiety among college students. As the cost of college tuition gradually increases in the United States, this stressor may continue to contribute to anxiety among college students. In addition to the stress from the financial obligations of attending college, social interactions may also contribute to mental-health stability among college students. With a diverse student population at most universities, many students may experience different social interactions. Andrews and Wilding (2004) determined that relationship problems, possibly due to feelings of shame or humiliation, could be a reliable predictor of anxiety among college students. College students may experience the need for social acceptance which could cause conformity or withdrawal. Lenny, Doleck, and Bazelais (2019) found that students who have a strong need for social acceptance may actually perform better academically, but when the need for social acceptance is not met, students can experience feelings of isolation. Feelings such as loneliness and anxiety caused by social pressures and financial burdens may be particularly difficult to cope with when accompanied by stressors due to academic expectations.

Loneliness, anxiety, boredom, anger, denial, depression, insomnia, harmful substance use, despair, self-harm, and suicides have all been reported in quarantined individuals, according to studies (Li et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, COVID-19 physical symptoms (such as coughing, hypoxia, and fever) combined with the side effects of recommended medications (corticosteroids) may result in increased psychological distress and anxiety (Wang et al., 2020). Individuals were found to have anxiety disorders, self-blame, guilt, post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive disorders, delirium, somatic symptoms, panic disorder, psychosis, and even suicidal ideation, according to researchers.

Mental health issues, such as anxiety, affect many college students to some degree. However, there may be differences in anxiety levels between students based on a number of factors which include whether they are undergraduate or graduate students, their classification,

their gender, citizenship status, or degree. Wyatt and Oswalt (2013) found that undergraduate students reported higher levels of traumatic experiences compared to graduate students. Undergraduate students also reported feelings or behaviors that are associated with poor mental health at a higher rate than graduate students. Undergraduate students also more frequently reported that their mental health issues had a perceived negative effect on academic performance (Wyatt & Oswalt, 2013). This information suggests that there are potential differences between undergraduate and graduate students that lead to disparities between their mental-health states.

**Table 3 .**  
**Analysis of Variance to test differences on the Level of Anxiety in returning back to school after Lockdown Due to Covid -19 when grouped according to their Profile**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Sig.	Interpretation
<b>Age</b>	Between Groups	4.53	8	0.57	0.02	Reject Ho Significant
	Within Groups	23.38	103	0.23		
	Total	27.91	111			
<b>Sex</b>	Between Groups	1.11	2	0.56	0.11	Accept Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	26.80	109	0.25		
	Total	27.91	111			
	Total	27.91	111			

Table 3 shows the test of significant difference on the level of anxiety towards returning back to school after the lockdown due to Covid -19.

The computed significant value for age is 0.02 and the year level is 0.01 which is less than to 0.05 Alpha Level of Significance, therefore the Null Hypothesis is Rejected, hence there is significant difference in the level of anxiety towards returning back to school after lockdown due to Covid -19 when grouped according to sex and age.

The computed significant value for sex is 0.11, for current accommodation is 0.84 and for current staying with is 0.55 which is greater than 0.05 Alpha Level of Significance, therefore the Null Hypothesis is Accepted, hence there is of significant difference on the level of anxiety towards returning back to school after lockdown due to Covid -19 when grouped according to sex, current accommodation and for current staying with.

Therefore, there is a significant difference in the level of anxiety towards returning back to school after lockdown due to Covid -19 when grouped according to age. According to the findings, nursing students experience significant COVID-19 infection-related anxiety when they return to on-campus learning. Anxiety levels were found to be higher in people who used dysfunctional coping strategies. Female students and students who did not take personal protective measures to avoid virus infection reported higher levels of anxiety than male students and students who were not afraid of infection. Nursing faculties can take the lead in

implementing stress-reduction strategies for nursing students by providing students with the emotional support they require to ensure their mental well-being. Nursing faculties must also take an active role in ensuring the personal safety of their students both in the classroom and in clinical settings, by collaborating with university administrations to secure and provide personal safety measures that ensure students' physical safety and reduce their risk of COVID-19 infection.

According to Guarnotta (2020), anxiety becomes more common with older age and is most common among middle-aged adults. This may be due to a number of factors, including changes in the brain and nervous system as we age, and being more likely to experience stressful life events that can trigger anxiety. Young children can experience anxiety, though it'll be different from anxiety in teens or adults. Children with anxiety can experience worry about the future, fear of being separated from loved ones, and fear of people, places, or things. Anxiety is more common in older children than in younger children. Around 1% of children ages 3 to 5 and 6% of children ages 6 to 11 show signs of an anxiety disorder.

College students face many obligations that can potentially lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety. According to the American College Health Association, 66% of undergraduate students reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety during the 2019 spring semester (American College Health Association (ACHA,2019). Anxiety, when unaddressed, can have detrimental effects on an individual's health. Roest, Martens, Jonge, and Denollet (2010) reported an association between anxiety and a 26% increased risk for incidents of coronary heart disease, and that there is a 48% increased risk for cardiac death among anxious individuals. Given these statistics, it is imperative for universities to seek a better understanding of the mental health needs of students.

Mental health issues may also vary between the classifications of undergraduate students. Wu, Sang, Zhang, and Margraf (2020) found that depression levels were the lowest among freshmen and the highest among seniors, but anxiety levels were the highest for both freshmen and seniors. Juniors were determined to have better mental health compared to the other classifications (Wu et al., 2020). Likewise, Tuncay, Müdüroğlu, and Bulut (2020) found that students in all four undergraduate years reported relatively high levels of academic-related stress.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

Based on the investigation, it can be concluded that the respondents sometimes experienced anxiety in returning to school after lockdown due to Covid -19. The respondents' anxiety about returning to school after lockdown due to Covid-19 has no significant difference when grouped according to sex, but has a significant difference in age.

### Recommendations

The respondents should be aware of the positive effect of regular physical activities/fitness and exercise not only to maintain physical and psychological health but also will help their body to respond to the negative consequences of anxiety. The respondents may give time to do some exercises even with the pandemic even a short break from sitting, doing 3-5 minutes of physical movements, such as walking or stretching, will help ease muscle strain and relieve mental tension because exercise is a powerful stress reducer. The respondents may schedule a routine in physical fitness activities to be consistent and develop a balanced workout



of strength, flexibility, and cardio training (including interval work) each week. The school/college may provide sample video clips of exercises/physical activities for the students to do in their homes, as part of the health and wellness program the school. A follow-up study with an in-depth and wider scope in order to validate the findings obtained in the study may be conducted.

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