



The Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Hospitality Management Working Students

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of Hospitality Management working students in Dipolog City. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through focus group discussions with ten (10) participants who were all female and employed in hospitality-related jobs while pursuing their studies. The findings revealed that working students faced multiple and interconnected challenges, particularly in balancing academic and work responsibilities. The results showed that students commonly experienced difficulties related to academic workload and overlapping tasks, financial constraints, and family expectations. These challenges often led to stress, fatigue, reduced motivation, and decreased self-confidence. Many participants reported struggling to focus on their studies due to work demands, while financial pressures such as tuition and school expenses further intensified their situation. Additionally, family expectations placed emotional strain on students, who felt responsible for supporting their families in the future. The study also found that these challenges had significant effects on students' academic and personal lives. Participants described feeling mentally drained, overwhelmed, and emotionally exhausted, sometimes experiencing anxiety, self-doubt, and physical symptoms like headaches and lack of sleep. Despite these difficulties, working students demonstrated resilience by adopting various coping strategies. These strategies included effective time management, task prioritization, and engaging in self-care activities such as walking, socializing, and taking breaks. Furthermore, strong support systems, particularly from family and friends, provided emotional encouragement and practical assistance. Faith and spiritual practices also played an important role in helping students remain hopeful and motivated. Overall, the study highlighted that while working students encountered significant challenges, they could cope through resilience, support systems, and adaptive strategies, underscoring the need for institutional support to improve their well-being and academic success.

Keywords: working students, challenges, coping mechanisms



Introduction

Working while studying was prevalent among tertiary students. Employment while studying provided important financial support and workplace learning, yet it also introduced competing demands on time, energy, and emotional resources. Some students opted for part-time employment to help them afford their education and other expenses to achieve their goals. Furthermore, studying was not the only expense students incurred; others faced financial difficulties, such as becoming the family's breadwinner. Thus, students may have had physical and mental health issues because of this. These were some of the reasons and factors that led students to work while studying (Aldaba, 2023).

Local Philippine studies likewise documented the double burden faced by working students: time-management conflicts, missed academic requirements, physical and emotional exhaustion, and reliance on peer or family support as primary coping resources (Canet et al., 2023). These studies reported that working students often relied on structured planning, social support, and self-care routines to persist in both roles, strategies that provided resilience but did not fully remove the strains of simultaneous study and employment. Moreover, the impact of part-time employment on full-time students was examined in several studies. Taking a part-time job, for instance, according to Gilmore (2022), took away from studying. While it was expected that students who worked part-time would miss lectures to catch up on their coursework, they might have received better grades if they hadn't been employed (Shani, 2022).

Internationally, hospitality education research examined coping during internships and practicum placements, finding that students adopted both problem-focused (e.g., scheduling, task prioritization) and emotion-focused (e.g., relaxation, peer support) strategies to manage job-related stress and preserve academic performance (Wang et al., 2023). These mixed-methods and qualitative accounts highlighted that coping was multi-dimensional and shaped by individual resources and organizational contexts.

Although numerous national and international studies examined the challenges faced by hospitality and tourism students, most focused on larger urban institutions and general student populations. They've remained limited empirical research specifically centered on working Hospitality Management students in smaller urban areas such as Dipolog City. The socio-economic conditions, employment opportunities, and academic environments in smaller cities might have presented distinct circumstances that differed significantly from those in metropolitan settings. Furthermore, existing literature tended to emphasize the identification of problems, stressors, and academic difficulties encountered by working students, with comparatively less attention given to the processes through which these students adapted, adjusted, and coped with their dual responsibilities. The coping mechanisms, resilience strategies, and support systems utilized by working Hospitality Management students remained underexplored, particularly in localized contexts.

Therefore, this study sought to address this gap by not only identifying the challenges experienced by working Hospitality Management students in Dipolog City but also by deeply exploring the coping mechanisms they employed to balance academic demands and work responsibilities. By doing so, the research aimed to contribute context-specific insights that might inform institutional policies, student support programs, and future research focused on working students in similar small urban settings.

Thus, this qualitative study aimed to describe the experiences of hospitality management students in Dipolog City. Beyond theoretical interest, this research mattered because working students were real people juggling bills, family expectations, late shifts, and deadlines. Understanding their stories could help the faculty of the schools in Dipolog City that offered the hospitality management program design more compassionate timetables, assist employers in



offering flexible practicum arrangements, and highlight practical support (peer mentoring, mental-health resources) that could keep students healthy and on track to graduate.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explained how individuals perceived and responded to stress. The model was particularly relevant to Hospitality Management working students because it viewed stress as the result of an imbalance between perceived demands and available coping resources. It guided the study in exploring the lived experiences of students as they balanced academic, work, and personal responsibilities. The theory emphasized three stages: primary appraisal (evaluating stressors), secondary appraisal (assessing available resources), and coping (using problem-focused or emotion-focused strategies). Overall, the framework provided a strong basis for understanding students' challenges, perceptions of stress, and coping mechanisms in managing their dual roles.

Navigating Work and Academic Demands: Student Stress, Coping, and Work–Life Balance

Dine and Kaoud (2023) found that students who worked while studying experienced difficulties maintaining work–life balance, which negatively affected their academic performance despite gains in efficiency and responsibility. Similarly, according to the study of the Higher Education Policy Institute (2025), a large-scale survey of data from the United Kingdom revealed that over two-thirds of full-time university students engaged in paid work during term time, leading to a decline in independent learning hours and increased academic strain. Additionally, several international studies showed that students juggling academic and work responsibilities often experienced heightened stress due to conflicting roles and demands. For example, Reichenberger and Raymond (2021) examined tourism and hospitality students during COVID-19 disruptions and found that students' stress responses were shaped by their cognitive evaluations of career uncertainty and workload pressures. Those who appraised their circumstances as threatening reported emotional strain and engaged in both problem-focused strategies (e.g., schedule restructuring, peer collaboration) and emotion-focused strategies (e.g., reflection, relaxation) to manage stress. Similarly, in a local setting, studies indicated that more than 40% of graduate students in the Philippines balanced work and academic commitments (Dela Cruz et al., 2023), highlighting the growing number of working learners. This reflected the transactional model of stress, illustrating how students' interpretations of challenges influenced the coping mechanisms they adopted.

Factors and Effects of Working While Studying Among College Students

Recent evidence from the Philippines confirmed that working while studying remained a significant reality for many students, driven largely by financial needs and economic pressures. A nationwide report found that more than half (56%) of Filipino working students juggled school and employment with the primary motivation of achieving financial independence, while time constraints (56%), physical health concerns (36%), and mental health issues (33%) were cited as major challenges in balancing these dual roles (Lazarus, 2025).

According to Gutierrez et al. (2013), the study found that working students performed comparably or even slightly better academically than non-working students; however, they tended to experience poorer health conditions due to increased workload and stress. This suggested that while employment might have enhanced discipline and motivation, it also negatively affected students' physical and emotional well-being.

In contrast, a prior study by Attewell (2023) indicated that undergraduates who worked throughout the school year were less likely to graduate. Several studies highlighted the multifaceted challenges that working students faced as they attempted to reconcile academic responsibilities with job demands. Canet et al. (2023) found that working tourism students commonly experienced difficulty fulfilling academic requirements due to demanding schedules.



The literature consistently portrayed the life of a working student as a complex negotiation between academic rigor and professional responsibility. While the dual role offered pathways for career resilience and personal growth, it often led to significant exhaustion, role strain, and the perpetual depletion of personal resources (Santos, 2022). A central theme throughout the research was the critical role of time management, which shifted from a mere skill to a survival necessity as students struggled to allocate sufficient hours to academic tasks amid rigid work schedules. While some critics argued that low-level employment might have hindered psychological maturity, other findings suggested that part-time work fostered essential soft skills like punctuality and self-confidence. To navigate these pressures, students employed a mix of problem-focused strategies, such as time-blocking and routine adjustments, and emotion-focused strategies, such as seeking social support and reframing stress as motivation (Agbayani et al., 2025).

The Importance of Coping Strategies

Coping strategies were broadly categorized as problem-focused, which aimed to directly address the stressor or manage task demands (e.g., prioritizing tasks, seeking academic assistance, adjusting schedules), and emotion-focused, which aimed to regulate emotional responses to stress through activities such as relaxation, cognitive reframing, or seeking emotional support. Recent empirical studies indicated that problem-focused coping was associated with improved academic adaptation and reduced psychological distress, while emotion-focused coping helped buffer stress when the stressors were beyond students' control. For example, Zhou et al. (2021) found that Chinese college students who applied problem-focused strategies reported lower perceived stress during the COVID19 pandemic, whereas emotion-focused strategies helped regulate negative emotions.

Lim et al. (2024) reported that Filipino college students used a combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies to cope with post-pandemic academic burnout. Similarly, Espulgar et al. (2024) observed that nursing students who balanced both coping types maintained better emotional well-being, highlighting the effectiveness of contemporary coping strategies in managing academic and psychological stress. Recent studies also highlighted the role of meaning-based coping, which leveraged personal beliefs, goal realignment, or spirituality to sustain positive affect and motivation under sustained stress conditions (Harc, 2023).

In academic settings, students demonstrated greater stress adaptation when they integrated both problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies—for example, structuring effective study schedules while simultaneously practicing mindfulness or relaxation techniques—underscoring the transactional nature of coping, where the perception of resources and situational demands jointly shaped behavioral and emotional responses (StudyGuideToday, 2023).

Collectively, this literature underscored that stress was not merely a response to external pressures but a function of individual cognitive appraisal and the strategic deployment of coping resources that dynamically interacted to influence psychological and academic outcomes.

Spiritual Support in Coping with Stress

According to Ekwonye's (2020) study, spirituality served as a psychological resource for dealing with academic-related stressors. Students who engaged in spiritual practices were better able to cope with anxiety, fear, and academic pressure. The study found that spirituality helped shape students' values, identity, and life purpose, thereby strengthening their ability to handle stress effectively. Similarly, spiritual coping was associated with improved well-being and life satisfaction among university students (Graca et al., 2024). It was explained that spiritual coping involved cognitive and behavioral strategies grounded in personal beliefs, which positively influenced emotional regulation and overall mental health. Prayer, one of the most common spiritual practices among students, played a significant role in stress reduction, according to Wnuk (2023). Students who engaged in spiritual practices such as prayer, positive thinking, and faith-based reflection were better able to adapt to stressful situations. These practices allowed them to maintain optimism and continue functioning effectively despite challenges.

Family and Peer Support in Coping with Stress



Family played a central role in shaping students' mental well-being (Felipe et al., 2023). The study highlighted that students who perceived strong family support tended to experience better emotional stability and lower stress levels. Family health and functioning were also found to indirectly improve mental well-being by fostering self-care practices, suggesting that supportive family environments encouraged healthier coping behaviors among students. According to Parungao (2024), students who felt emotionally supported by their families were more likely to use positive coping strategies, such as problem-solving and emotional regulation, rather than engage in avoidance behaviors.

Similarly, according to Idris (2024), peer interaction through study groups, mentoring, and peer review had a significant positive relationship with students' academic engagement and emotional well-being. Students who actively engaged with peers experienced a better understanding of lessons and lower academic stress through shared learning experiences and emotional encouragement. Additionally, the study by Padilla et al. (2024) on Filipino college students' stress and coping mechanisms revealed that peer support was one of the most used coping strategies. Students relied on friends and classmates for emotional reassurance, academic assistance, and shared problem-solving, especially during high-pressure academic periods. The study emphasized that coping effectiveness improved when students felt understood by their peers who were experiencing similar challenges.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive research design to provide a comprehensive description of the lived experiences of Hospitality Management working students in their natural settings. The approach was appropriate because it enabled the researchers to explore participants' challenges, perceptions, and coping mechanisms without manipulating variables. Data were collected through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) using a semi-structured discussion guide, allowing participants to openly share and reflect on their experiences. The group interaction generated rich qualitative data, helping identify common themes related to balancing academic responsibilities, work demands, stress, coping strategies, and overall well-being.

This study was conducted during the School Year 2025–2026 in two higher education institutions in Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte—Dipolog City Institute of Technology and Saint Vincent's College—which offer Hospitality Management programs. These institutions were selected because they have working Hospitality Management students, making them suitable for the study. Dipolog City's growing tourism and hospitality industry provided employment opportunities that enabled students to balance work and academic responsibilities. This setting offered a relevant and diverse context for exploring the lived experiences of working Hospitality Management students during the second semester of the academic year.

The participants of this study were Hospitality Management students in Dipolog City who were employed part-time or full-time while pursuing their studies. Eligible participants were at least 18 years old, officially enrolled during SY 2025–2026, had a minimum of three months of work experience, and voluntarily provided informed consent. Students who were not working, enrolled in other programs, had less than three months of work experience, or were not officially enrolled were excluded. Participants were drawn from Dipolog City Institute of Technology (DCIT) and Saint Vincent's College, Inc. (SVCI), which had a number of working Hospitality Management students. They were purposively selected because their firsthand experiences of balancing work and academics provided rich and meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with working Hospitality Management students in Dipolog City to explore their lived experiences of balancing academic and work responsibilities. The research began by securing institutional approval and ethical clearance, followed by the purposive recruitment of participants who met the established inclusion criteria. A validated semi-structured FGD guide, anchored on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, was used to ensure that the discussions remained aligned with the study objectives while allowing participants to freely express their experiences. Prior to the discussions, participants received an orientation and provided informed consent, with confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation clearly emphasized.



The FGDs were conducted in a quiet and private setting, facilitated by a trained moderator and supported by a debriefer who documented non-verbal cues and group dynamics. With participants' permission, the discussions were audio-recorded and supplemented by field notes to ensure data accuracy and richness. Finally, all data were securely stored, transcribed, and analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns. Additional FGDs were conducted until data saturation was reached, ensuring that the findings comprehensively reflected the shared experiences of the participants.

The data gathered from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were analyzed using Thematic Analysis following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was selected because it provides a systematic and flexible approach to identifying and interpreting patterns in qualitative data, making it well-suited for describing the lived experiences of Hospitality Management working students. The analysis involved verbatim transcription of the discussions, repeated familiarization with the data, systematic coding of significant responses, and the organization of related codes into emerging themes. These themes were carefully reviewed, refined, defined, and named to ensure they accurately represented participants' experiences. The findings were then presented as a coherent narrative, supported by direct participant quotations to enhance the credibility and richness of the study.

The study strictly adhered to ethical standards for research involving human participants by obtaining Ethical Review Committee (ERC) approval before data collection. Participants provided informed consent, and their confidentiality and anonymity were protected through the use of pseudonyms or codes. All research data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes, while participants were assured of a safe and respectful environment throughout the study. The researchers also properly acknowledged all sources and disclosed the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a supplementary tool for idea generation and language enhancement. Upon completion of the study, all digital and printed research data were securely disposed of in accordance with ethical research standards to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Findings

Emerging Theme 1: **Recognition of Stress Indicators and Life Pressure in Academic, Work, and Personal Contexts**

Table 1

Thematic Table for Recognition of Stress Indicators and Life Pressure in Academic, Work, and Personal Contexts

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Verbatim
Recognition of Stress Indicators and Life Pressure in Academic, Work, and Personal Contexts	Cognitive and Physical Sign of Stress	a) Lack of focus b) Loss of appetite c) Confusion d) Sleep Disturbance	P1, P3, P5
	Time and Academic Pressure	a) Deadlines b) Time pressure c) Overlapping tasks	P6, P10, P1
	Financial Strain	a) Financial Burdens	P5, P1, P6, P8
	Family – Related Stressors	a) Family Problems b) Parents Fighting c) Expectations after graduation	P2, P5, P3, P9, P8
		d) Supporting siblings' education e) Responsibility as a breadwinner	



Emotional Withdrawal and Reservedness	a) Emotional suppression	P5, P4, P7
Initial Coping Awareness	a) Organizing Task	P6, P9, P3, P5

This theme highlighted the point where students began to recognize and make sense of the stress they were already experiencing. It emerged from both internal experiences and the gradual accumulation of external pressures in their daily lives.

Internally, students reported clear signs of strain, including difficulty concentrating, mental exhaustion, trouble sleeping, and, in some cases, a loss of appetite. These experiences reflected how stress affected not only their thoughts but also their physical and emotional well-being.

Externally, the stress became more visible through the demands surrounding them. Students pointed to piling academic requirements, tight deadlines, financial difficulties, and the pressure of meeting family expectations. For working students in particular, balancing school responsibilities with job demands added another layer of pressure, making it harder for them to rest or recover properly.

Overall, this theme captured how stress was both felt internally and triggered externally. It showed that awareness of stress often developed gradually, once its effects began to interfere with their focus, health, and daily functioning, highlighting the complex reality of students managing multiple life demands simultaneously.

Emerging Theme 2: **Utilization of Social and Personal Support Systems**

Table 2

Thematic Table for Utilization of Social and Personal Support Systems

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Verbatim
Utilization of Social and Personal Support Systems	Family as Support System	a) Talking to parents b) Asking advice from siblings ate/kuya c) Emotional practical help from family	P4, P8, P10
	Peer and Social Support System	a) Talking to friends and Classmates b) Communicating and sharing problems with peers	P1, P2, P9, P8
	Spiritual Support System	a) Praying b) Going to church c) Seeking guidance from faith d) Talking to God	P10, P1, P6

This theme showed that some working students did not handle stress on their own; they naturally reached out to people and beliefs that gave them comfort and strength. When things started to feel overwhelming, they looked for support systems that helped them feel understood, guided, and less alone in their struggles.



For many working students in Dipolog City, support usually came from three main sources: family, friends, and faith. Some students turned to their parents and siblings for advice or reassurance, especially when they felt confused or pressured. Others relied on friends and classmates who shared similar experiences, making it easier to open up and feel validated. At the same time, many students drew strength from their faith. Through prayer, attending church, or simply talking to God, they found a sense of peace, hope, and emotional relief.

Overall, this theme highlighted that coping was not just an individual process; it was also shaped by relationships and personal beliefs. These sources of support played a significant role in helping working students manage stress and continue moving forward despite the challenges.

Emerging Theme 3: **Adaptive Coping Mechanisms in Stress Management**

Table 3

Thematic Table for Adaptive Coping Mechanisms in Stress Management

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Verbatim
Adaptive Coping Mechanisms in Stress Management	Emotional Coping Strategies	a) Crying b) Releasing of emotions c) Trying to calm yourself d) Self-encouragement	P4, P5, P2, P9
	Behavioral Distraction Strategies	a) Walking / going-out b) Movie marathon c) Eating / emotional eating d) Cooking	P6, P7, P4
	Cognitive Coping Strategies	a) Positive Thinking b) Problem reframing c) Organizing task d) Prioritizing work	P4, P6, P2

This theme explained how working students actively responded to stress by managing their emotions, thoughts, and actions so they could still function despite the demands of school, work, and their personal lives. Rather than allowing stress to fully take over, they gradually developed coping strategies that helped them regain balance, think more clearly, and continue handling their responsibilities.

Based on the experiences shared by the working students, coping occurred in different ways, often combined. Some students tried to calm themselves, stay positive, or cultivate a positive mindset so they could push through difficult situations. Others coped by releasing emotions, such as crying or expressing what they felt, when stress became too heavy to carry alone.

Overall, this theme showed that coping was not a single or fixed action. Instead, it was a combination of emotional expression, mental adjustment, and physical activities that helped students manage stress in their everyday lives and continue moving forward.

Discussion

This study explored how working students experienced stress, recognized its indicators, and coped using available support systems and adaptive strategies. The findings revealed that stress among working students was not a single, isolated experience, but rather a continuous interaction among academic, work, financial, and family-related pressures that accumulated in their daily lives.

Emerging Theme 1: **Recognition of Stress Indicators and Life Pressure in Academic, Work, and Personal Contexts**



As reflected in Theme 1, which related to the primary appraisal of stress, coping, and appraisal by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), students first became aware of stress through both internal and external indicators. Internally, they experienced cognitive and physical symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, mental exhaustion, sleep disturbances, headaches, and changes in appetite. Reichenberger and Raymond (2021) examined the responses of tourism and hospitality students during COVID-19 disruptions and found that students' stress responses were shaped by their cognitive evaluations of career uncertainty and workload pressures. These manifestations showed that stress was not only psychological but also physically embodied, affecting overall well-being and daily functioning. Externally, pressures from academic requirements, strict deadlines, financial limitations, and family expectations intensified their burden, particularly for those who were working and studying simultaneously. Dine and Kaoud (2023) found that students who worked while studying experienced difficulties maintaining work-life balance, which negatively affected their academic performance despite gains in efficiency and responsibility. This aligned with the reality that working students often experienced role conflict, where competing responsibilities limited their time for rest and recovery.

Sub-theme 1.1 Cognitive and Physical Signs of Stress

This sub-theme reflected early signs that appeared when academic, work, and personal demands became overwhelming. Cognitively, students reported difficulty concentrating and reduced focus on tasks. These experiences often led to lower productivity and made it harder for them to manage school and work responsibilities. Physically, the students shared disrupted sleep patterns and changes in appetite. These symptoms showed how stress affected not only the mind but also the body.

Overall, this sub-theme showed that stress was first recognized through both mental and physical signs, serving as early indicators that students were already under pressure, as cited: *"I can't focus because at the same time I am studying and working. I also don't like to eat, and I feel a tight chest, and I can't sleep"* (Participant 1)

Similarly, Participant 3 shared, *"In my case, I really get headaches when there are many stressful things to think about, like work responsibilities, while also studying. It feels overwhelming when I must think about both work and school at the same time."* Additionally, Participant 10 said, *"You really end up worrying, ma'am, about how you are going to solve or manage those responsibilities"*.

Sub-theme 1.2 Time and Academic Pressure

This sub-theme reflected how students experienced stress due to limited time and the heavy demands of academic requirements. It showed how managing school tasks, deadlines, and workload became challenging, especially when combined with other responsibilities such as work and school.

Students described feeling pressured by piling responsibilities, meeting deadlines, and the constant need to catch up with other requirements. Many shared that there was often not enough time to complete tasks properly, leading to a sense of rushing and a loss of focus.

Overall, this sub-theme highlighted how time constraints and academic demands created continuous pressure for students. This pressure often affected their emotional well-being and ability to balance both academic and personal responsibilities, as shared: *"The activities feel very rushed and difficult, especially when they happen at the same time. For example, during exams you still need to study and focus, but at the same time you also have work."* (Participant 1)

Similarly, Participant 6 shared *"I can't even understand what I'm thinking anymore, or what I'm supposed to do next."*

Sub-theme 1.3 Financial Strain



This sub-theme reflected the financial difficulties faced by working students as they balanced their education and daily expenses. It showed how limited financial resources could become a major source of stress, affecting both their academic and personal lives. Students shared that money was often insufficient to cover school-related expenses, such as tuition fees, projects, and daily allowances. Because of this, many were required to work while studying, which added more pressure to their time and energy. Some also mentioned that financial struggles affected their ability to focus; they were constantly worried about how to manage their needs and support their studies.

Overall, this sub-theme highlighted how financial strain significantly contributed to students' stress, influencing their concentration, emotional well-being, and ability to fully engage in both academic and employment activities.

Participant 6 shared, *"There are a lot of expenses, and many activities and other school requirements as a student"*, similarly, Participant 5 said *"I am working just to pay for my tuition"* additionally, Participant 8 said *"there are times my father and my mother argues about money"*.

Sub-theme 1.4 Family – Related Stressors

This sub-theme highlighted how family dynamics and responsibilities contributed to students' stress. It showed that, aside from academic and work demands, family issues also played a significant role in their emotional burden. Students described situations such as family expectations and the pressure to help support siblings' education. Some also shared that witnessing conflict at home, especially about money, affected their emotional stability and focus on studies. These experiences often made them feel very worried and mentally distracted, as they tried to balance being a student while also being sensitive to family struggles.

Overall, this sub-theme emphasized that family-related stressors added another layer of pressure on working students. These challenges influenced their emotional well-being, concentration, and ability to fully focus on both academic and work responsibilities, as cited:

"Right now, I feel pressured because I am the youngest and I am about to graduate soon. They have expectations from me that I should be able to help them" (Participant 2)

Similarly, Participant 5 shared, *"I feel pressured on how to give back to my parents"*, additionally, Participant 3 also shared, *"My mother would often tell me about her arguments with my father, and I would wonder why she tells me these things instead of dealing with them between themselves."*

Sub-theme 1.5 Emotional Withdrawal and Reservedness

This sub-theme reflected how some working students tended to become emotionally distant and more reserved in response to ongoing stress. Instead of openly expressing what they felt, they often chose to keep their emotions to themselves to cope with pressure from school, work, and family.

Students described moments where they preferred to stay quiet, isolate themselves, or avoid sharing their problems with others. Some mentioned that they felt emotionally tired, leading them to withdraw from social interactions and internalize their struggles. This emotional restraint often stemmed from the belief that sharing their burden might add to others' concerns or that they needed to remain strong despite difficulties.

Overall, this sub-theme showed that emotional withdrawal became a coping response among working students facing multiple stressors. While it helped them temporarily manage their feelings, it might also have limited emotional expression and support-seeking, which were important for their overall well-being.

According to Participant 4, *"I don't really open up to my family or other people about my problems because I don't like talking about it."*, Similarly, Participant 7 also shared, *"I don't really want to share, I prefer to keep things to myself."* Additionally, Participant 9 also said, *"I'm not really an expressive person, and I also feel shy about sharing."*

Sub-theme 1.6 Initial Coping Awareness



This sub-theme reflected how students began to recognize simple ways of managing stress, even if these strategies were not yet fully developed. It showed their early efforts to stay in control despite multiple demands from school, work, and family.

Students described trying to become more organized by listing tasks, managing their time, and prioritizing responsibilities. Some shared that they coped by doing easier tasks first, then moving on to more difficult ones, to reduce pressure and feel a sense of accomplishment. These small strategies helped them regain focus and gradually handle their workload.

Overall, this sub-theme highlighted that working students were not only aware of their stress but were also taking practical steps to manage it.

According to Participant 6, *"I make a schedule so that when the time comes, I can do the tasks one by one and finish them accordingly."* Similarly, Participant 5 shared, *"I keep notes on my phone where I track and monitor my deadlines."* Additionally, Participant 9 said, *"I start with the easiest tasks firsts."*

Emerging Theme 2: Utilization of Social and Personal Support Systems

Theme 2, which related to the secondary appraisal, further emphasized that coping was not done in isolation. Students actively utilized social and personal support systems to manage stress. Family remains a primary source of emotional and practical support, providing guidance, reassurance, and motivation, even amidst internal family pressures. According to Felipe et al. (2024), family played a central role in shaping students' mental well-being. The study highlighted that students who perceived strong family support tended to experience better emotional stability and lower stress levels. Peers also played a crucial role by offering understanding, shared experience, and emotional comfort, creating a safe space where working students could express themselves without judgment. Peer interaction through study groups, mentoring, and peer review had a significant positive relationship with students' academic engagement and emotional well-being. Students who actively engaged with peers experienced a better understanding of lessons and lower academic stress due to shared learning experience and emotional encouragement (Idris, 2024). In addition, faith served as a strong spiritual anchor, where prayer, church attendance, and personal reflection provided hope, peace, and emotional relief. According to Ekwonye (2020), students who engaged in spiritual practices were better able to cope with anxiety, fear, and academic pressure. These findings highlighted that support systems were essential protective factors that helped students sustain their academic journey despite multiple stressors.

Sub-theme 2.1 Family as Support System

This sub-theme highlighted the important role of family as a source of support for working students dealing with stress. Despite the challenges they experienced at home, many students still turned to their family members for comfort, guidance, and emotional reassurance. Students shared that they relied on their parents and siblings for advice or someone to talk to. In moments of pressure, family became a space where they could feel understood and supported. Even simple conversations or words of encouragement from family members could help ease their worries and give them the strength to continue.

According to Participant 8, *"For me, I ask advice from my parents."* Similarly, Participant 10 shared, *"I do open up to my parents because they are like my friends at home."* Additionally, Participant 4 said, *"I ask help from my older siblings."*

Sub-theme 2.2 Peer and Social Support System

This sub-theme highlighted how students relied on their friends and classmates as an important source of support when dealing with stress. Peers often served as a "safe space" where students could openly share their experiences, challenges, and emotions without fear of judgment. Students shared that talking to friends helped them feel lighter and less alone, especially when facing academic pressure, work demands, or personal struggles.



Since peers were also experiencing similar situations, they could understand and relate to each other's difficulties. In some cases, simple conversations, shared laughter, or even studying together helped reduce stress and improve their mood.

Participant 2 shared, *"I message my friends, the ones I can always rely on."* Similarly, Participant 9 said, *"I seek comfort to my friends."* Additionally, Participant 8 also shared, *"For me, I'm also happy that I have friends because we really help each other whenever we have problems."*

Sub-theme 2.3 Faith as a Support System

This sub-theme highlighted how working students relied on their faith and spirituality as sources of strength when facing stress and life challenges. When academic, financial, or personal pressures became overwhelming, many working students turned to prayer and their relationship with God to find comfort and peace of mind.

Working students shared that praying helped them feel calmer, especially during difficult situations. Some also found strength in attending church or simply taking quiet moments to reflect and talk to God about their struggles. This practice gave them hope, reassurance, and the belief that they were not alone in facing their challenges.

Participant 10 shared, *"Prayer is always powerful, because of course, we can always rely on the Lord."* Similarly, Participant 1 said, *"I just pray or light a candle. Then when I go home, I feel like my burden has become lighter."* Additionally, Participant 6 shared, *"I really go to church, especially when things feel too heavy and I can't take it anymore."*

Emerging Theme 3: Adaptive Coping Mechanisms in Stress Management

Theme 3, which related to the coping strategy, revealed that students also engaged in adaptive coping mechanisms to manage their stress more actively. Emotional coping strategies such as crying, self-motivation, and emotional release allowed students to process overwhelming feelings and regain emotional balance. Similarly, Espulgar et al. (2024) observed that nursing students who balanced both coping types maintained better emotional well-being, highlighting the effectiveness of contemporary coping strategies in managing academic and psychological stress. Behavioral distraction strategies, including walking, traveling, going to the beach, visiting public places, and engaging in leisure activities, provided temporary relief by shifting attention away from stressors and allowing mental recovery. Zhou et al. (2021) found that emotion-focused strategies helped regulate negative emotions. Cognitive coping strategies, on the other hand, involved reshaping thoughts through humor, positivity, and self-encouragement, enabling students to maintain resilience and motivation despite difficulties.

Sub-theme 3.1 Emotional Coping Strategies

This sub-theme highlighted how students managed stress by dealing with their emotions in different ways. When academic, work, or personal problems became overwhelming, working students tried to regulate their emotions so they could still function and continue their daily responsibilities.

Overall, this sub-theme showed that emotional coping was an important way for students to handle problems. By either managing their emotions internally or expressing them outwardly, they could regain balance and continue coping with their challenges.

"I cry, but its not really intense crying, just a moment where I let myself cry, and then it stops. I just let everything out, and after that, I move forward." (Participant 4)

Similarly, Participant 5 shared, *"I let all my emotions out"*, additionally, Participant 2 said *"I just try to cheer myself up, and tell myself that I can handle it."*

Sub-theme 3.2 Behavioral Distraction Strategies



This sub-theme highlighted how students coped with stress by engaging in activities that helped them temporarily shift their attention away from academic, work, and personal pressures. Instead of focusing on their worries, they chose to distract themselves with simple actions that refreshed their minds and reduced emotional tension. Students shared that they often went for walks, took short trips, or spent time outside their usual environment to relax and clear their thoughts. Others also engaged in leisure activities such as watching movies, eating out, or simply being in a different place to help them momentarily forget their stressors.

Participant 6 shared, *"I just go out, I go somewhere where I can relax, maybe a nature trip or to the beach."* Similarly, Participant 7 also said, *"I go to the sunset boulevard, or to the plaza, usually alone, so I can just think."*

Sub-theme 3.3 Cognitive Coping Strategies

This sub-theme highlighted how students managed stress by changing the way they thought and interpreted difficult situations. Instead of allowing negative thoughts to fully take over, they tried to adjust their mindset to better handle academic, work, and personal pressures. Students shared that they coped by encouraging themselves, thinking positively, laughing it out, and reminding themselves that they could overcome challenges. Overall, this sub-theme showed that cognitive coping strategies helped working students regain mental control during stressful moments. By adjusting their thoughts and mindset, they could reduce anxiety, stay motivated, and continue managing their responsibilities more effectively.

Participant 4 shared, *"I like joking around, I try to handle my problems through laughter."* Similarly, Participant 6 said, *"I just laugh on my problems"* Additionally, Participant 2 shared, *"I just try to cheer myself up, and remind myself I can do it."*

Overall, this study's findings showed that hospitality management students experienced multidimensional stress that affected their cognitive, emotional, physical, and social well-being. However, they also demonstrated resilience through a combination of support systems and coping strategies. Stress was managed through a dynamic process involving self-awareness, external support, emotional regulation, behavioral adjustment, and cognitive reframing. These interconnected responses highlighted the adaptive capacity of working students as they navigated the demands of both academic and work environments. The study underscored the importance of strengthening institutional, familial, and social support systems to further assist working students in managing stress effectively and sustaining their well-being throughout their academic and employment journey.

Conclusion

This study enhanced the understanding of the lived experiences of Hospitality Management working students as they balanced academic and employment responsibilities. The findings revealed that students commonly experienced work-school conflict, emotional and physical strain, and difficulties with time management, concentration, and overall well-being. These challenges were interconnected and reflected the demanding situation of students who simultaneously served as learners and workers.

Consistent with the objectives of the study, "The Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Hospitality Management Working Students," the results showed that their experiences were shaped by the combined pressures of academic requirements, job responsibilities, financial limitations, and family expectations. These factors often resulted in stress, exhaustion, and decreased academic performance, making it difficult for students to maintain a healthy balance between school and work. Despite these challenges, the findings also showed that students demonstrated resilience through various coping strategies, such as effective time management, task prioritization, emotional expression, prayer, and taking short breaks. In addition, support from family, friends, and faith played a significant role in helping them cope with stress and remain motivated.

Moreover, the study found that responsibility had a dual effect on the participants. While it created pressure due to financial needs and family obligations, it also served as a motivation for them to continue pursuing their goals. This



reflected the complexity of their experiences, in which challenges and determination coexisted and influenced how they responded to daily demands.

Overall, the study was relevant because it provided insights into students' real working lives and highlighted the need for stronger support systems from schools, families, and institutions. The findings suggested that improving support and developing appropriate interventions might help reduce stress, strengthen coping mechanisms, and enhance both academic performance and overall well-being.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that educational institutions strengthen support programs for Hospitality Management working students by implementing flexible academic policies and expanding mental health services to help them manage work–school conflicts and stress. Hospitality employers are encouraged to adopt more flexible work arrangements that accommodate students' academic responsibilities. Families and peers should continue providing emotional support and understanding, as strong support systems help students cope with the challenges of balancing work and studies. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct studies with larger samples and examine additional variables, such as academic performance, coping effectiveness, and the long-term effects of working while studying, to further enhance support strategies for working students.

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