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Anxiety Level of City College of Angeles Students and Music as Their Coping Mechanism

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative-descriptive research aims to describe the anxiety levels of students from CCA and the music-related coping mechanisms to alleviate said anxiety. The respondents of this study are students of CCA, of any year level, and any gender. The Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) questionnaire was used to gauge the level of anxiety that the respondents were enduring, and two more questions were used to determine the source of their anxiety and their coping mechanisms. The questions used to determine the source of their anxiety and their coping mechanisms had undergone pilot testing on non-CCA students, confirming the instrument's validity for use in this study. After the data had been gathered and processed, the results showed that personal and academic problems were among the top cause of their anxiety and that music positively impacted said anxiety, especially listening to music. Most respondents answered that listening to music was their preferred method of alleviating their anxieties. From the results obtained, it is recommended that the administration use this information to create an environment in school that would help students with anxiety perform better academically. Further investigation is also recommended to find better ways to utilize music to alleviate anxiety.

INTRODUCTION

Mental illness is often either forgotten about or looked down upon in Philippine society as the average person has only a superficial understanding of the goings-on inside the human mind and, even more so, a negative impression of those suffering from mental illnesses from media, which portray them as a violent, dangerous, disturbed and deranged source. According to Tanaka et. al. (2018), the stigma of mental health problems is known to impact the lives of the people who experience it negatively. A common occurrence within the populace's minds is that mental illness is something visible and intense, but this is not always the case.

Mental illnesses are not always visible to others in the same way that regular illnesses are, and this leads people to underestimate the impact it has on a person and write off what that person with the mental illness has as something that's only in their mind and therefore minor in comparison to visible wounds and scars. Mental illness has been known for years as the silent killer as it has taken more than its fair share of people who seemed, on the outside, to be completely normal and enjoying their life until it was too late for the people around them to do anything to help them anymore. This is supported by Stack (2014), who stated that two or more mental disorders mark most suicides, with 87% of suicides involving at least one.

American Psychiatric Association physician-reviewed by Muskin (2021a) stated that anxiety disorders are a group of mental health problems that include generalized anxiety disorders, phobias, panic disorders, social anxiety disorder, and more. In addition, they are such disorders that can be confused with everyday emotions

but could prove lethal if unchecked. It is also common for depression to arise at the same time or because of anxiety, which is a deadly combination, this is supported by Sawchuk (n.d.) stating that depression and anxiety commonly occur together and that it is common to have depression triggered by an anxiety disorder.

According to Yasin & Dzulkifli (2011), depression, anxiety, and stress are among the common psychological problems among students. Many students suffer from psychological problems, which affect their academic performance. Many students experience these afflictions due to the rising number of tasks given to them by teachers and professors, but hide their symptoms in order not to be looked down upon by those around them and would rather choose to explore coping mechanisms which can be cleverly disguised as a normal hobby or entirely hidden altogether.

According to Yehuda (2011), music has the power to change a person's emotional state. There are many ways that music is used as a coping mechanism, such as simply through listening to different or specific genres, whichever fit their mood the most, composing their songs for themselves or for others, and dancing and moving to the music in whichever way their body feels best towards. Depending on the person, music can be used in different ways and with different levels of effectiveness.

A person who prefers listening to music to drown out their stress may not get the same result when he composes music, even though composing would be effective to some people. A person can also receive stress relief from both dancing and listening or, conversely from neither at the same time. Similar personalities might also find enjoyment in the same activity or from differing ones.

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As students of CCA, the researchers had observed that classmates, peers, schoolmates, and even they experience stress that could lead to anxiety. The researchers witness and hear students' complaints about academic pressure added by personal problems making anxiety possibly present; with this, they want to research how music could help students reduce negative emotions. As students from the Bachelor of Performing Arts, the researchers are very well aware of the impact of music on emotions and feelings, which is why they chose this topic. It is unknown which song or which form of music appreciation directly corresponds to the greatest number of people. There is no singular solution that will cure each student of their anxieties, but being able to reduce said anxieties as much as possible through sharing information about music and its impact on emotion is the goal. With those said, this is why it is appropriate to research the anxiety level of CCA students and music as their coping mechanism.

On Anxiety

Anxiety can be a dangerous thing. According to the American Psychiatric Association, physician-reviewed by (Muskin, 2021b), anxiety can be a normal reaction to stress and be beneficial for the person experiencing it. However, these emotions can also lead to excessive fear and nervousness, leading to an inability to function in society. According to Kalin (2020), those with anxiety are also more likely to be depressed and to have more suicidal ideation. Anxiety can also become a vicious cycle. When one is affected by anxiety, this could hinder their performance in academics or work, which would build up even more anxiety. This loop makes anxiety hard to escape from without the proper coping mechanisms in place.

Anxiety can also be triggered by environmental changes such as the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Özdin & Bayrak Özdin (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has negative effects on people's mental health. Both the pandemic and the governments of the world taken to combat it can affect individuals' mental health. With people stuck inside and fearing for their lives against a useable threat, anxiety with certainly be on the rise among the populous, leading to higher rates of depression and risk of suicide. Even when those affected with anxiety do not commit suicide, the majority are still shackled permanently with lasting effects, such as heightened fear and sensitivity.

In schools, stress and anxiety are commonplace for students. According to Duffy et al. (2019), unfortunately, there has been a worsening in mental health among college students over the past decade, which is extremely concerning. While this study was limited to U.S. colleges, this can still be extrapolated to show a concerning trend for the youth of today all around the world, including the Philippines. Combining this with the impact of COVID-19 and online learning, it can be said that students are facing higher amounts of stress and anxiety. Moreover, as was previously stated, this leads to increased depression and suicidal ideation rates.

According to Davidson et al. (2011), anxiety and depression lead to an increased risk of suicide. According to Hill et al. (2011), there is consistent evidence associating anxiety and suicide-related behaviors in children and adolescents. Hill et al. also stated that anxiety is a risk maker for suicidal behavior. More and more young adults wind up with anxiety and this creates a greater need for awareness for mental illness and suicide prevention. A source of anxiety for most young adults would be school, and while many schools already implement countermeasures such as guidance counselors, many students are unable to take advantage of them and are left struggling. According to Das et al. (2014), academic anxiety is a deliberating factor which impacts a student's academic achievements and performance. Also, according to Shakir (2014), there were significant differences between the academic achievements of high and low academic anxiety groups of students. This means that anxiety plays a big role in students' academic performance while also potentially endangering them mentally and physically.

On Coping using Music

According to Kasi et al. (2012), Different individuals use different coping mechanisms to deal with their problems. In people with anxiety, these have important implications. According to Negi et al. (2019), one of the many coping techniques used by students is listening to music. They also found that out of all their respondents 37% of male and 40% of female students listen to music as their coping mechanism. Listening is not the only way to use music as a coping technique. Within music, students can listen to songs, dance to them, compose their own, play an instrument, and/or sing. Even within listening to music, there are many different genres available from Classical to Heavy Metal, and different reactions to each. Within dancing, there are numerous different styles from Ballet to Jazz. What comforts a student the most depends on their taste and preferences.

According to Ramesh (2020), music has evolved as a coping strategy for stress during psychological trauma in people's lives. The current situation of online learning students and the pandemic have created a perfect storm of stress and anxiety, which has increased the need for adequate coping methods to deal with the circumstances. According to Van den Tol et al. (2016), sad music is often listened to when experiencing sad situations. The most common reason people give for this is "to be in touch with or express feelings of sadness." This reason is one of many that people give as to why they use music to cope with similar situations in their life. Being able to express pent-up emotions gives the person listening to a sense of release and calms their mind down over time. Music has this sort of power over a person's mood and emotions. It can help express complex feelings or lift up spirits and increase adrenaline flow, making music versatile as a coping mechanism depending on how a person uses it.

On different forms of Music-based Coping

Music as a coping mechanism can take on different forms such as listening, dancing, composing/songwriting,

playing an instrument, and/or singing. The efficacy of each method depends on the compatibility with the user. An avid listener may not be well versed in composing and so on.

Lee et al. (2012) concluded that listening to music significantly lowers patients' anxiety before surgery. Before this, they assumed that music could be used as an alternative to medication to relieve fear and anxiety. According to Ince & Çevik (2017), their results showed that listening to music reduced the anxiety felt by the nursing students during their first blood draw experience. Listening to music has shown to reduce anxiety in people in stressful situations. This can be applied to anxiety induced by the current schooling climate.

According to Akandere & Demir (2011), dance has shown effectiveness against the depression levels of university students in a positive manner. Dancing can be an intense physical activity, which perhaps leads to anxiety relief. Being able to focus on the rhythm the music provides can distract from the stressors that cause anxiety and can be the reason why dance is a viable coping mechanism against anxiety.

Levihnn-Coon (2015) stated that songwriting is able to act as an adaptive distractor and emotion regulator. It also positively impacts the self-esteem and self-compassion of the individual partaking in it. Like dancing, composing and songwriting are able to distract the person from their stressor. Instead of physical activity, composing and songwriting distract the mind directly by diverting thought to focus on the lyrics and notes.

Another way to cope with one's anxiety is by playing a musical instrument. According to Jasemi et al. (2016), rhythm, tonality, intensity, and melody help patients recover or discover positive feelings through pleasure and develop their social abilities. Instruments are also a great anxiety relief because hard work can be experienced audibly, which can be a cathartic feeling and therefore relieve stress and anxiety from the musician playing the instrument.

According to Boyd et al. (2020), evidence shows that singing may have physiological benefits. Among such benefits are a reduction in cortisol levels and an increase in secretory immunoglobulin (SIgA) production, which when combined are used as indicators of immunosuppression or stress reduction and an endorphin release, which can reduce physical pain. In a study done by (Lopez, 2018), the stress levels of college students were examined before and after singing. A significant decrease in stress levels was found. Singing might be done more by those who have more talent but anyone of any level of skill can use singing to reduce anxiety, either while alone or with trusted companions.

The overall purpose of this quantitative research is to measure the anxiety level of CCA students and music as their coping mechanism, and aims to answer the following questions:

1. How may the level of students' anxiety be described based on GAD-7 screening?

2. What contributes to the anxiety experienced by the students?

3. How may the coping mechanism which students use related to music be described?

4. What is the implication of the study?

METHODS

The entire research is quantitative in design and is a descriptive study which describes the Anxiety Level of City College of Angeles' Students and Music as their Coping Mechanism. Researchers recruited participants through random sampling. The subjects were drawn from CCA students. Inclusion criteria has been set by the researchers. The selection criteria are as follows: (1) Must be a CCA college student, (2) must be 18 years old and above, (3) any gender or sexual orientation, and (4) any course and year level. Participants that were not able to meet the criteria were disqualified, and their data were not included in the study.

This study has adopted a questionnaire to gather information. Scaling type questionnaire was utilized. For this, the authors have used the Generalized Anxiety Disorders (GAD-7) screening tool; GAD-7 is, according to Jordan et al. (2017), one of the most frequently used diagnostic self-report scales for screening, diagnosis, and severity assessment of anxiety disorder. It works by calculating how many common symptoms the person has, and base on his/her answers, it will suggest where he/she might be on a scale, from mild to severe anxiety. The GAD-7 has a sensitivity of 89%, It has been compared with other anxiety questionnaires such as the Penn State Worry Questionnaire for Measuring Response (PSWQMR) during Treatment of Generalized Anxiety Disorders, which is widely used in the USA. The GAD-7 was found, when compared with the PSWQMR to be more sensitive in detecting a change in status, in the clinical setting. The next part of the survey asked the participants of the anxiety contributors, including financial, familial, academic, personal, and social relationship variety problems. After that, the survey asked about which music related activities, such as singing, song writing/composing, playing instruments, listening to music, and dancing to music, helps the subject cope with anxiety. The questionnaire that was used for the study was a mix of GAD-7 questionnaire to gauge the students' levels of anxiety and questions formulated by the researchers. The instrument aims to gauge the level of anxiety in CCA students, the sources of said anxiety, and the students' music-related coping methods. The GAD-7 has seven questions, while the questions created by the researchers amounts to 2. Responses are then recorded on google forms. The formulated questionnaire underwent pilot testing on non-CCA students (N=50), where Cronbach's Alpha is 0.927 with a mean of 10.45, variance of 29.314, and standard deviation of 5.414 therefore, the tool can be used for conduct of the study. Frequency (f) and Percentage (%) will be used to describe what contributes to the students' anxiety and music-related activities that

respondents use to cope with anxiety.

RESULTS

A professional and experienced statistician processed all the gathered data from the survey we conducted, done through google forms and exported into an excel file, with the respondents' identities hidden for the sake of data privacy. The survey was answered by eighty (80) students.

Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all		Several days		More than half the days every day		Nearly		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	7	8.75	39	48.75	23	28.75	11	13.75	80	100
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying	9	11.25	35	43.75	22	27.50	14	17.50	80	100
3. Worrying too much about different things	6	7.50	32	40.00	22	27.50	20	25.00	80	100
4. Trouble relaxing	15	18.75	33	41.25	22	27.50	10	12.50	80	100
5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still	21	26.25	31	38.75	21	26.25	7	8.75	80	100
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	6	7.50	31	38.75	21	26.25	22	27.50	80	100
7. Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen	12	15.00	32	40.00	19	23.75	17	21.25	80	100

Table 1 shows the frequency of each level of anxiety in the CCA students according to the GAD-7 scale out of the eighty (80) respondents and the percentage of student in each level of anxiety. Based on the GAD-7 survey, the highest percentage of students, 33.75%, was found to have mild anxiety and the second-highest, 32.50%, was found to have moderate anxiety. This showcases that more than half of the respondents were experiencing a non-insignificant amount of anxiety. The survey also shows that 21.25% of the respondents were found to have been experiencing a level of anxiety which is considered by the GAD-7 survey to be severe.

Table 2. Causes that Contribute to the Anxiety Experienced by the Students

Causes	f	%
Financial Problem(s)	45	56.25
Family Problem(s)	36	45.00
Academic Problem(s)	50	62.50
Social Relationship Problem(s)	23	28.75
Personal Problem(s)	57	71.25

In table 2, the causes that contribute to the anxiety levels of the students is shown. Since students can experience anxiety from multiple stressors, the respondents were given a choice to choose multiple answers, whichever applied to them. The largest percentage, at 71.25%, was the personal problem(s), which is universal to all people. Therefore, it is understandable for it to be the highest. The second highest at 62.50% was academic problem(s), showing that school cause a significant amount of anxiety in students. Financial problem(s) is third with 56.25%. School should be a place for students to focus their energy on their studies, but more than half of the respondents are concerned with finances to the point it induces anxiety in them. Family and social relationship problem(s) are fourth and fifth, with 45% and 28.75% respectively.

Table 1. Level of Anxiety of Students based on GAD-7 Anxiety Severity

Levels of Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Minimal Anxiety	10	12.50
Mild Anxiety	27	33.75
Moderate Anxiety	26	32.50
Severe Anxiety	17	21.25
Total	80	100

Table 3. Coping Mechanisms used by the Students Related to Music

Mechanisms	f	%
Singing	34	42.50
Composing/ Song Writing	4	5.00
Playing Instruments	13	16.25
Listening to Music	70	87.50
Dancing to/ with Music	40	50.00

In table 3, the music-related coping mechanisms used to alleviate the students' anxieties are shown. Since students can use different coping mechanisms, the respondents were given the choice to choose multiple answers, whichever applied to them. The largest percentage, at 87.50%, was listening to music. Since listening to music requires no skill, this can be done by the majority of people who can hear, which makes its high percentage understandable compared to the other coping mechanisms which require more at least conscious effort. The second highest percentage was dancing at 50%, with the percentage decreasing with the increase in skill required to accomplish each mechanism at a comparable level.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to determine the anxiety levels of CCA students and which music-related coping mechanism they employed to alleviate said anxiety. It can be noted that according to Kasi et al. (2012), different individuals use different coping mechanisms to deal with their problems which means different students facing the same kind of anxiety may not use the same methods to cope. Apart from its main objective, the researchers would also like to come up with recommendations that the administration of CCA could utilize in order to decrease anxiety levels in their students. This study has found that the majority of the respondents

faced anxiety levels above that of minimal anxiety. This is a significant portion and shows how many students are dealing with anxiety and how serious it should be treated. This is in line with Yasin and Dzulkifli (2011) that depression, anxiety, and stress are among the psychological problems common among students. Worryingly, according to Yasin & Dzulkifli (2011), there has been a worsening of mental health among college students over the past decade, consistent with this study's results. The highest percentage of the total respondents were found to have mild anxiety, the second-highest were found to have moderate anxiety, and almost a quarter of the respondents were found to have severe anxiety. This is a serious issue as these numbers shows that the majority of students are dealing with anxiety that could possibly be lethal if left unchecked, this is supported by Kalin, (2020), stating that those with anxiety are also more likely to be depressed and to have more suicidal ideation. In addition, dealing with anxiety may hinder their ability to focus on academics, ultimately leading to lowered performance of a significant number of the students.

This study has also found which stressors lead to anxiety the most within students. While the highest percentage for causes that contribute to anxiety is personal problem(s), the second highest is academic problem(s). This shows that school is a large contributor to the anxiety students' face. This is in-agreement with Das et al. (2014), who states that academic anxiety is a deliberating factor which impacts a student's academic achievements and performance. According to Shakir (2014), it is also noted that there were significant differences between the academic achievements of high and low academic anxiety groups of students. The third highest is financial problem(s), which is also an issue for academic performance, as school is a place for focusing on learning, this means that students are distracted by finances to the point it induces anxiety and hinders academic success.

This study has also found which music related coping mechanisms students most prefer to utilize, with listening to music the highest in term of percentage, dancing with half the total respondents at second, singing with more than two-fifths at third, playing instruments at fourth, and composing and song writing in last with the fewest. This is congruent with Yehuda (2011) who states that music has the power to change a person's emotional state. In line with the results of the study of Negi et al. (2019), states that one of the many coping mechanisms used by students is listening to music. The highest percentage being listening to music most likely relates to the fact that, among the five, it requires the least amount of conscious skill and effort, with each percentage decreasing as the amount of skill and effort increases. Another reason that listening to music is the highest is that according to Van den Tol et al. (2016), sad music is often listened to when experiencing sad situations. The reason that most people give is "to be in touch with or express feelings of sadness". People use music to cope with different experiences that they go through in life.

CONCLUSION

This study was made to measure the anxiety level of CCA students and determine which music related coping mechanisms they employed. After obtaining the data from the survey, this study found that a large portion of the respondents were experiencing anxiety on the level that could impede their academic performance. It was found out that a large portion of their anxiety stems from related academic problems, at more than half the respondents feeling this way, which defeats the purpose of school as an institute dedicated for education because it is also the cause of the anxiety which hinders said education. The study has also found that listening to music is the method of coping the largest percentage of the students use to alleviate anxiety. Further investigation can be done to determine which music genre can best alleviate anxiety in the greatest number of students.

This quantitative and descriptive research has shown that whatever cause contributes to the anxiety experienced by CCA students can be countered with any form of musical expression. The results proved that music in an important countermeasure to anxiety. It helps greatly in the emotional and mental stability of CCA students – academically and in their household for it affects their overall mood.

This study clearly shows that many students deal with anxiety, which emphasizes the need for a method of coping on an individual or an administrative basis. This study has found that listening to music helps the majority of students with anxiety. The researchers can recommend that the administration add music at the school to ease the students. An example of this could be a study area with soft music playing, or have a constant source of music play throughout the entire school or another possibility would be by playing music during breaks; having more entertainment programs related to music like dances and singing songs; or it could also be through inviting musicians during school events to play for the whole university. Students who have severe anxiety should not think twice about asking for help; they should keep in mind that the school's College Guidance and Formation Office (CGFO) is available and that they should approach the staff whenever they feel anxious. Like many other mental health conditions, anxiety can be harder to treat if they wait. It is bad enough that the researchers found out that they have severe anxiety, it might be worst if left alone. In addition, the Institute of Educations, Arts, and Sciences (IEAS) and College Guidance and Formation Office (CGFO) are recommended to come up with ideas and actions on how to help their students regarding this matter further.

In the households of each student, they may utilize the results from this study to lessen everyone's anxiety levels. If both the school and the respective households of each student can do their part in lessening the anxiety levels, this will positively impact their mental health greatly. It is also recommended that the administration further examine which types and genres of music most help at

easing anxiety and help the most amount of people. The researchers of this paper would greatly recommend to the CCA Administration to utilize the findings of this paper as a guide to help students in their struggle against anxiety. For other researchers, this study can serve as a guide and basis in making their studies by adding new variables for continuing studies regarding this matter.

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