Personal Problems and Coping Mechanisms of NIMASA Scholars in Lyceum International Maritime Academy

Ekiokenegha O. Lucky[1], Fagbohunka A. Olaniyi[1], Kpanghan Y. Norris[1], Ogundola P. Olalekan[1], Yusuf A. Ayodeji[1], Beverly T. Caiga[2]

[1]*Lyceum International Maritime Academy, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Batangas City, Philippines*

[2]*College of Education, Arts and Sciences, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Batangas City, Philippines*

[2]*beverlycaiga@yahoo.com*

Abstract - *This study aimed to determine the personal problems encountered by NIMASA scholars in Lyceum International Maritime Academy. Descriptive type of research method was used in the study. Results showed that Most of the respondents were often affected by the cultural differences of the Philippines and Nigeria. In terms of the effects of the problems in their studies, all the indicators obtained, the inadequate student - professor relationship is typical. Most of the respondents make use of social networks as a coping mechanism, these networks engage students; they bring a very large world together in a simple and easy way which helps them connect with friends, family and long lost college friends.*

Keywords: *Personal Problems, coping mechanisms, NIMASA, Cultural differences*

INTRODUCTION

Coping mechanisms can be defined as 'survival skills', strategies that people use to deal with stresses, pain, and natural changes that we experience in life. (www.qualicare.com/coping-mechanisms *2015*) Coping mechanisms are also remedial actions taken by people whose survival and livelihood are compromised or threatened. When the coping skills are not adequate the stress may lead to illness (Cruzat, 2014).

Each year, numerous students embark on the adventure of studying abroad. Many universities are now encouraging students to take a semester or two abroad. This encouragement is shown in such ways as providing information about exchange programs, sending out emails about the possibilities for foreign studies and by hosting lectures on the topic of specific foreign universities/colleges or courses. Most universities also welcome international students, some because they believe it fosters -global understanding, others because of the financial boost international students provide. This is especially the case in universities where there is a high tuition fee (Gunn, 2009). Increasingly more students, including those in

the field of Education, seize opportunities to improve their qualifications and expertise at tertiary institutions in countries other than their own. Studying and living in another country for a period enable international students to explore new cultures and to broaden their life experiences through exposure to these cultures and foreign places. At the same time, international learners have the opportunity to improve their qualifications and expertise in empowering themselves to cope with the increasingly high demand for excellence and specialization in all sectors of life. In addition, studying at tertiary institutions and living in a country other than their own might contribute to international learners obtaining different perspectives and deeper understanding of contemporary societal conditions of their countries. In fact, it might even contribute to a deeper understanding and acceptance of themselves.

There is an influx of foreign students from different parts of the world to the Philippines. Since 2005, Lyceum of the Philippines University – Batangas has been accepting foreign students from different parts of the world such as Africa, South America and Asia. Presently, LIMA has about 325

NIMASA scholars enrolled in marine transportation and marine engineering courses (Buted et al., 2014).

The importance of this study to both local and international students cannot be over emphasized. Since cadets in LIMA are trained to become competent and globally competitive seafarers, they will work with officers of different nationalities. This research will be beneficial to them on how to survive amidst challenges of living in a new environment (the ship), working with new people and homesickness problems. The researchers were motivated to study the said topic because they could contribute solutions to the physical and emotional problems faced by students studying abroad and Mariners since they spent most of their time onboard ship. It is a part of the mission of LPU to provide the students with an equal growth and opportunity more than what the other universities and colleges can offer to their students (Orence & Laguador, 2013). In line with the vision of LPU-Batangas in 2022, this research will give more enlightenment to the administration on the problems encountered by foreign students and how to better serve them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the personal problems encountered by NIMASA scholars in LIMA; to determine how these problems affect their studies, and to identify the coping mechanisms of NIMASA scholars.

Specifically, the study is aimed to identify the coping mechanism of NIMASA scholars in LIMA and give proposals to the school administration on how to help foreign students adapt.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Culture defines the beliefs and traditions of a given society. Lack of universality in cultural practices means that a practice that is common in one region may be discouraged in another region. This may bring about emotional and physical discomfort to individuals deciding to live in a place different from their home (Armstrong, 2014). Mushibwe (2009) argues that by the time the individual arrives at this stage, he/she would be stable and accepted in the new social community, but would also be expected to behave according to local norms and ethical standards.

International students who are new in a different environment would always feel helpless to establish the social networks as in their home countries at first (Armstrong, 2014). It is a common belief that once a student is in America, money will no longer be an issue. According to most African cultures, the relative who has more is expected to share with others in the family—an expectation that can create incredible pressures (Irungu, 2013).

Lee and Opio (2011) also found that African students did not want to draw attention to their struggles. It seems that not only do students not discuss their problems with the University, they also appear not to want to share their troubles with their family back home.

The culture of education differs from country to country. Foreign students may lack knowledge of how to find and use the information to accomplish their purposes (Fangfang Gao, 2008).

A certain amount of nervous tension probably helps students perform to the best of their ability, producing a rush of adrenaline that helps them to feel alert and focused. But too much anxiety can block thoughts, create a negative frame of mind, and lead to panic and potentially poor exam performance. (Gillian & Tony, 2012). Attendance in LPU is very important part of the class performance. Teachers must always check the presence of their students and ask them the reasons for those absences (Laguador & Alcantara, 2013).

Pritchard et al. (2007) also conducted a study and explored the relationship between coping strategies of students and their college adaptation. The data showed declines in students' psychological and physical health at the end of the year. Negative coping styles and perfectionism were found to be predictive of poorer psychological health and alcohol use of students at the end of the year. Perfectionism, low optimism, extroversion, and low self-esteem accounted for the decreases in the physical and psychological health of students. However, high optimism and self-esteem predicted better physical and psychological outcomes for students.

Positive emotions of hope, faith, optimism, and catharsis emerge from beliefs and rituals, including the process of forgiveness and the hope of healing and redemption. Religious affiliation links one with a network or community of believers that provides a feeling of belonging, family, and social support in times of need, as well as a steady flow of opportunities to serve other people (Kumar 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research Design

Descriptive research is intended to obtain data and information about the present prevailing circumstances. Moreover, this method allows collecting information that will demonstrate

relationships and a phenomenon that is occurring at the specific condition. Shuttleworth (2008) described it as an illustration of what already exists in a group or population. This permits observation without affecting the normal behavior of the respondents. Accordingly, the subject is being observed in an entirely natural and unchanged natural environment. Since this study was focused on the perception or evaluation of the NIMASA Scholars in Lyceum International Maritime Academy, the descriptive method was used.

Participants of the Study

The respondents of the study were sixty-five (65) NIMASA Scholars residing in Lyceum International Dormitory, LIMA. To determining the respondents accurately, the researchers used a stratified random sampling, where samples were taken randomly from the present Senior one (S1) NIMASA Scholars in Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering.

Instruments

The survey questionnaire that was validated by the adviser and some experts was used as the primary data-gathering instrument for this study. The survey proper explored the perceptions of NIMASA Scholars in LIMA. The first part of the questionnaire was in a form of checklist where the respondent selected the problems faced by foreign students, specifically, the NIMASA Scholars. The second part of the questionnaire determined the effects of these problems in their studies while the third part of the questionnaire were a list of coping mechanisms. The study used a five-point like scale to clearly analyze the results. The researchers adapted various questions and modified them, according to the purpose of the study.

Procedures

The researchers selected a topic first to assess the problems faced by NIMASA Scholars in LIMA, the effects of these problems to their studies, and the coping mechanisms used by the respondents. After the approval of the questionnaire, it was distributed proportionally to sixty-five (65) respondents. The content of the questionnaire was explained first to the respondents before answering. Accomplished questionnaires were collected; answers to the questionnaire were tallied and interpreted.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were presented in tabular form to interpret the results and descriptive statistics such as weighted mean was utilized to evaluate the problems encountered, effects of the problems in their studies and the Coping Mechanisms of NIMASA Scholars. Ranking was used to determine the order of the items.

The given scale was used to interpret the results of the data gathered: 4.50 - 5.00: Always; 3.50 - 4.49: Often; 2.50 - 3.49: Seldom; 1.50 - 2.49: Rarely; 1.00 - 1.49: Never

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Problems encountered by NIMASA Scholars

Emotional	WM	VI	Rank
1. Homesickness	3.03	Seldom	5
2. Social isolation	2.26	Rarely	8
3. Loneliness	2.38	Rarely	7
4. Depression	2.17	Rarely	9
5. Lack of ties with host society	2.74	Seldom	6
Physical			
6. Language barriers	3.65	Often	3
7.Cultural differences	3.82	Often	1
8. Financial and legal concerns	3.52	Often	4
9. Racial discrimination	3.71	Often	2
Composite Mean	**3.03**	**Seldom**	

Table 1 presents the problems encountered by NIMASA Scholars. Most of the respondents were often affected by the cultural differences of the Philippines and Nigeria, as first rank with a weighted mean of 3.82. This is because most of the respondents lacked universality in cultural practices, which means that a practice that is common in one region may be discouraged in another region. This may bring about emotional and physical discomfort to individuals deciding to live in a place different from their home. A good example of cultural changes may be experienced in the type of food offered. For instance, the Chinese take different foods from the Americans. Foreign students may, therefore, find it difficult to adopt (Armstrong, 2014).

Most respondents were also affected by racial discrimination that is ranked second with a weighted mean of 3.71. However, in a study of Ghanaian students, Fischer (2011) reports that before departure to the United States, the students did anticipate the emotional impact of discrimination and racism. Boafo (2014) claims that racial discrimination is the area that causes the most concern for Black-African students studying in America as they found themselves being

connected with often unfamiliar negative stereotypes associated with African Americans (Lee & Opio, 2011).

Language barriers ranked third with a weighted mean of 3.65 which also denotes that most NIMASA Scholars were 'rarely' affect. This challenge is commonly experienced by students moving to countries where a different language is used.

On the other hand, the respondents were 'rarely' affected with depression with a weighted mean of 2.17. This result suggests that although most of the respondents had other emotional problems depression was not typical amongst others because they live together, and most international students only hang out with people from their home countries (Armstrong, 2014). Second in the least rank is social isolation with a weighted mean of 2.26 which implies that most of the respondents were 'rarely' affected by social isolation. This is also in connection with the fact that NIMASA Scholars are pretty much in number, and they live together.

Table 2 illustrates that in terms of the effects of the problems in their studies, all the indicators obtained 'rarely' as shown by a composite mean of 2.08, Inadequate student - professor relationship ranked first with a weighted mean of 2.80. Language issues are immediately apparent. Because of the language limitations, it is not easy for the international student to fully understand what the professors say or what the professors want at the beginning, not to mention participating in class discussions. And professors may not be able to understand the needs of international students if they do not speak of themselves (Fangfang 2008).

Accordingly, the respondents' responses to the issue of constantly feeling threatened were ranked second with a weighted mean of 2.34 which indicates that most students were 'rarely' affected. This may be attributed to the fact that NIMASA Scholars are being sponsored by their government, as such, they are not threatened like being withdrawn from school as a result of financial pressures.

Table 2. Effects of the problems on their studies

	WM	VI	Rank
1.Poor academic performance	1.95	Rarely	6
2.Anxiety during lectures and examinations	2.25	Rarely	4
3.Anger channeled towards classmates and professors over little issues	2.31	Rarely	3
4. Inadequate student - professor relationship	2.80	Seldom	1
5. Lack of concentration	2.00	Rarely	5
6. Feeling constantly threatened	2.34	Rarely	2
7. Addiction to smoking and alcoholism	1.29	Never	8
8. Inferiority complex	1.68	Rarely	7
Composite mean	**2.08**	**Seldom**	

However, any act of gross indiscipline could result in their withdrawal. Also, the host community is not hostile in nature; they are hospitable and friendly. Hence, NIMASA Scholars are always feeling at ease and relaxed despite the fact that they are far from home.

Addiction to smoking and alcoholism was ranked 8th with a weighted mean of 1.29 which indicates that most of the students never had issues with addiction and alcoholism because of the religious and cultural background of most NIMASA scholars that vehemently discourage smoking and alcoholism.

Table 3 presents that among the variables presented in this table, the " use of social networks like Facebook, Badoo, Twitter and Instagram " ranks first among the respondents' responses with a weighted mean of 4.23. This result suggests that among the variables, this particular variable takes the 'often' assessment among the respondents.

Table 3. Coping mechanisms of NIMASA scholars in LIMA

Coping Mechanisms	WM	VI	Rank
1. Reading novels, inspirational books and news bulletins	3.63	Often	6
2. Viewing action, fictional movies, documentaries and football matches	3.85	Often	5
3. Playing computer games	3.15	Seldom	8
4. Listening to music	4.08	Often	3
5. Playing musical instruments like guitars, keyboard, violin and saxophone	2.60	Seldom	10
6. The use of social networks like Facebook, Badoo, Twitter and Instagram	4.23	Often	1
7. Sports like soccer, basketball, volleyball, badminton and table tennis	4.06	Often	4
8. Attending birthday parties, wedding ceremonies, and naming ceremonies	3.28	Seldom	7
9. Religion/Spirituality like meditation, Bible study and listening to sermons	4.12	Often	2
10. Travelling and tourism to the beach, amusement parks and volcano sites.	2.83	Seldom	9
Composite Mean	**3.95**	**Often**	

It means that most of the respondents make use of social networks as a coping mechanism. These networks engage students; they bring a very large world together in a simple and straightforward way. Social networks can help connect friends, family and long lost college friends. Social networks allow for idea sharing and the creating dialog. Social networking allows people to network with others to find jobs. Online social networks are beneficial in many ways. They remove many of the complexities of the offline world; they are often a very fun pastime. They are often free to use, which makes them ideal for NIMASA scholars to use as a coping mechanism. This is because they are thousands of miles away from home.

Followed by the highest rank is religion/spirituality like meditation, Bible study and listening to sermons with a weighted mean of 4.12. This is because most NIMASA Scholars are from Christian backgrounds that encourage them to be deeply immersed in religious and spiritual activities like meditation, Bible studies, and listening to sermons. Spirituality takes us beyond our current way of thinking, feeling, or acting. Spiritual intelligence helps to grow our level of self to integrate conflicts and become more than we are. Spirituality and psychology share a concern with the quality of human life. Levin (1995), a social scientist suggested that religious belief and affiliation provide a person with a secure sense of identity, which lowers one's average anxiety level and facilitates resilience under stress. Religious conviction may offer a sense of purpose and meaning that enables rational interpretations of life's problems, including death.

Accordingly, the general result of the coping mechanisms of the respondents reveals a composite mean of 3.95, and having the range weighted mean of 2.60 to 4.23 which suggests that most of the above coping mechanisms are 'often' employed and were effective.

Listening to music was ranked third with a weighted mean of 4.08 which implies that it is 'often' used as a coping mechanism. There are profound messages embedded within the fibers of any music, with spoken words or not. If we wish to live a peaceful life, we just cannot pay attention to any form of multi-media (music, videos, and the news) that promotes messages of hate or greed.

On the other hand, among variables presented in the table above, the "playing musical instruments like guitars, keyboard, violin and saxophone" ranked least among the responses of the respondents with weighted mean of 2.60. This is because they need to buy musical instruments to play them and majority of the NIMASA scholars have financial concerns. NIMASA scholars are receiving the same amount of money with different priorities as far expenditures.

Closely followed by the least ranked variable is "travelling and tourism to the beach, amusement parks and volcano sites" with weighted mean of 2.83. Maringe and Carter (2007) pointed out that the financial commitment to studying abroad not only places a strain on the individual but also on their parents and families. Also, attending birthday parties, wedding ceremonies, and naming ceremonies was ranked seven with a weighted mean of 3.28. This is seldom because the NIMASA Scholars are away from home, and these activities are best celebrated or performed with friends and families. It also involves a enormous amount of money to host a birthday party.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the respondents were often affected by the cultural differences of the Philippines and Nigeria. The academic community must learn how to accept individual differences of people (Alcantara, Deligero & Laguador, 2015). In terms of the effects of the problems in their studies, all the indicators obtained, the inadequate student - professor relationship is common. Most of the respondents make use of social networks as a coping mechanism, these networks engage students; they bring a very large world together in a simple and easy way which helps them connect with friends, family and long lost college friends.

To the administration of Lyceum International Maritime Academy, before the main program international students apply for is commenced, they may be made to enroll for the Filipino language for about three to six months so as to solve issues of language barriers to some extent.

Since the negative symptom of culture shock is to a great extent, to remedy this, the school administration may provide brochures about etiquette, social appropriateness and culture of the host country. These brochures may be distributed to students before departure.

To proffer solution to inadequate student – professor relationship, more multi-culturally competent instructors and counsellors may be assigned to teach international students. Curriculum and instruction must be supported by activities which are in the forms of actual experiences outside the classroom that could provide better learning and understanding of the difference between principles and practice (Laguador & Chavez, 2013).

To the international students: They must be willing to compromise their old ways of life, food, environment, educational system as this is a very important factor of incorporating into the host society. They are encouraged to make proper use of the school guidance and counselling unit as it is observed from previous research that foreign students do not like seeking counsel from the counselling department of the school. Many students experience a variety of difficulties including stress, depression, anxiety, and relationship problems during their college years, and find that it is helpful to discuss their personal, educational, or career concerns with a professional (Duran et al., 2015). This is where the role of the Counselling Center comes in to prevent the problems of the students to become unbearable (Laguador & Pesigan, 2013).

To the local students: they may avail the foreign students the opportunities to maintain a good relationship with them as this will encourage cross-cultural learning.

To the instructors: They need to bear in mind that the international students are from different parts of the world and far from home. Hence, patience is very paramount in executing their professional duties of guiding, counselling, supporting and imparting them. Student-centered teaching and learning is the recommended approach to modern day pedagogy especially in the Outcomes-based Education where the teachers served as the facilitator of learning activities rather than performing the traditional lecture method (Laguador, 2014).

REFERENCES

Alcantara, F., Deligero, J. C. L., & Laguador, J. M. (2015). Profile Aspirations of Maritime Students in one Higher Education in the Philippines, *Asian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences,* 2(2), 24 – 31

Armstrong, A. (2014), URL: http://studentcompetitions.com/posts/problems-that-can-be-faced-by-international-students

Boafo-Arthur, S. (2014). Acculturative experiences of Black African international students. *International Journal of Advanced Counselling*, 36, 115-124.

Buted, D. R. Abiad, J. R. D. Aguba, J. P. D., Ellar, A. J. A., Ilao, D. P., Sales, J. H. D., Caiga, B. T. (2014). Level of Nigerian Cadets' Satisfaction on the Services of Lyceum International Maritime Academy, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences*, 1(2)

Cruzat, M. R. A. (2014). Health, Well-Being and Coping Mechanism of BPO Shift Workers: Basis of a Proposed Development Plan, *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(2), 49-57

Duran, F. A., Codizal, J. D. P., Escapolar, B. E. M., Jaen, N. K. M., Mendoza, J. M. M., Caiga, B. T., (2015). Effectiveness of Intervention Activities Rendered by the Counseling Center to Maritime Students *Asia Pacific Journal of Maritime Education*, 1 (1), 49-56

Fangfang G., (2008), International Students in the U.S http://plaza.ufl.edu/ffgao/mmc5015/final/academic.html

Fischer, N. (2011). Pre- and post-migration attitudes among Ghanaian international students living in the United States: A study of acculturation and psychological wellbeing.

Gillian and Tony (2012), https://www.brookes.ac.uk/student/services/health/exams.html

Gunn I. I. (2009), Social adjustment and friendship patterns of international students. A study of Norwegian students studying abroad. Master thesis in psychology, Det Samfunnsvitenskapelige Fakultet Institutt for psykologi University of Tromsø, Norway.

Irungu, J. (2013). African students in the US higher education system: A window of opportunities and challenges. In H. C. Alberts & H. D. Hazen (Eds.), International students and scholars in the United States: Coming from Abroad (pp. 163-180). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Laguador, J. M. (2014). Cooperative Learning Approach in an Outcomes-Based Environment, *International Journal of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities*, 2(2), 46-55

Laguador, J.M. & Alcantara, F. (2013). An Assessment of Problems and Needs of Maritime Faculty Members Regarding Student-Discipline, *Academic Research International*, 4(4): 65-73

Laguador, J.M., Chavez, N.H. (2013). Assessment of Engineering Students' Acquired Affective Learning from Involvement in Community Extension Services, *Academic Research International*, 4(3): 188- 197

Laguador, J.M. & Pesigan, M. (2013). Academic Performance and Measure of Character and Personality of Engineering Students With and Without Referral from Counselling Center, *Asian Academic Research Journal of Social Science & Humanities*, 1(16): 281-293

Lee, J., & Opio, T. (2011). Coming to America: Challenges and difficulties faced by African

student athletes. *Sport, Education and Society*, 16, 629-644.

Maringe, F., & Carter, S. (2007). International students' motivations for studying in UK HE: Insights into the choice and decision making of African students. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21, 459-475.

Mushibwe, C. P. (2009). What are the effects of cultural traditions on the education of women? The study of the Tumbuka people of Zambia(Doctoral thesis). University of Huddersfield. Retrieved from http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/9090/

Orence, A. & Laguador, J.M. (2013). Employability of Maritime Graduates of Lyceum of the Philippines University from 2007-2011, *International Journal of Research in Social Science*, 3(3): 142-157

Pritchard, M. E., Wilson, G. S., & Yamnitz, B. (2007). What predicts adjustment among college students? A longitudinal panel study. *Journal of American College Health*, 56(1),15 -21.

Shuttleworth, M. (2008). Descriptive Research Design. Retrieved from the website of Explorable: https://explorable.com/descriptive-research-design

Van Gennep, A. (1960). The rites of passage: Anthropology and Ethnography. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul.