

Stress Management Strategies and Work Performance of Graduate Students in Tomas Claudio Colleges

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Abstract

Graduate students face many stressors stemming from academic workload, balancing work and study responsibilities, time constraints, and emotional pressures. This study investigated the relationship between stress management strategies and the work performance of graduate students during the Academic Year 2025–2026 using a descriptive-correlational research design. Data collected from 202 graduate students of Tomas Claudio Colleges through a structured questionnaire revealed that students often employed stress management strategies, with time management and cognitive-emotional regulation being the most frequently used. Social support and physical-recreational activities were also practiced, though to a slightly lesser extent. Work performance was rated very satisfactory overall, with students demonstrating high productivity, commitment, and quality of work. Correlational analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between stress management strategies and work performance, with time management showing the strongest association. These findings suggest that effective coping strategies enable students to maintain both academic and professional responsibilities successfully.

Keywords: Graduate students, Stress management strategies, Time management, Cognitive-Emotional regulation, Work performance, Social support

1. Introduction

Graduate education exposes students to diverse stressors arising from academic demands, professional responsibilities, and personal commitments. Balancing coursework, research, and employment often necessitates significant time, energy, and mental resources, which can adversely impact both well-being and academic performance (Gong et al., 2023). Research indicates that academic workload, stringent deadlines, and role conflicts are substantial contributors to stress among graduate students, particularly those who concurrently engage in employment and academic pursuits (DeCastro et al., 2019). The pressure to fulfill multiple expectations can result in emotional strain, fatigue, and difficulties in maintaining a harmonious work-life balance (Smith, 2018).

Effective stress management strategies, including time management, social support, physical and recreational activities, and cognitive-emotional regulation techniques, have been widely recognized as mechanisms that can ease these pressures. Research indicates that structured time management enhances productivity and reduces perceived stress by allowing students to prioritize tasks and allocate time efficiently (Strategies for Effective Time Management to Reduce Stress in Graduate Studies, 2025). Social support networks, including peers, family, and mentors, have also been found to barrier the effects of stress, emotional resilience and promoting psychological well-being (Williams & Holmes, 2022; Santos, 2024; Agustin et al., 2025; Banzon et al., 2025). Additionally, cognitive-emotional strategies such as positive reframing, mindfulness, and reflective practices have been linked to improved emotional regulation and coping capacity (Smith, 2018).

Despite the benefits of stress management strategies, a research gap exists in linking these strategies directly to measurable work performance outcomes among graduate students. While prior studies have explored stress levels, coping mechanisms, and general academic outcomes, fewer have examined how these strategies influence work performance, particularly in balancing both work and study. Understanding this relationship is important for developing interventions that not only reduce stress but also enhance work and academic performance simultaneously.

Consequently, this study sought to investigate the correlation between stress management strategies and the work performance of graduate students, pinpointing the most commonly utilized coping mechanisms and their association with professional efficacy. By addressing this research gap, the study endeavors to furnish evidence-based recommendations for students, academic institutions, and employers to facilitate the well-being and productivity of graduate students..

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. It was conducted at Tomas Claudio Colleges during Academic Year 2025–2026. A researcher-made questionnaire measured stress management strategies and work performance indicators.

2.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in Tomas Claudio Colleges located at Sitio Taghangin, Morong Rizal. The school offers Master of Arts in Education Program.

2.3 Respondents

Data collected from 202 graduate students of Tomas Claudio Colleges through a structured questionnaire

2.4 Research Instruments

A researcher–made questionnaire checklist was used as the main instrument in gathering the needed data.

2.5 Data Collection

The researcher followed the Gantt Chart of Activities in the conduct of the study. This includes the formulation of the research problem up to the revision of the manuscript and submission of the final copy. After the validation of the instrument, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned authorities. The questionnaire-checklist was administered to the respondents through the Google survey form considering the guidelines in the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Retrieved data were encoded and processed utilizing Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Based from the interpreted data, summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean and Pearson r.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study ensured the protection of the rights and welfare of all respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided were strictly maintained, and data were used solely for research purposes. The researcher ensured that the respondents were treated with respect and that no harm, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, would result from their participation in the study..

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Causes of Stress the Graduate Students Encountered

Table 1 presents the most prevalent sources of stress experienced by graduate students, highlighting academic workload and deadline pressure as the primary contributors. This is followed by the challenge of balancing work and graduate studies, as well as the constraints imposed by time. These findings underscore the significant academic and role-related demands faced by graduate students, necessitating effective prioritization and planning strategies.

The table further reveals that the graduate students experience emotional and psychological pressure, which may be attributed to repeated academic expectations and multiple responsibilities. This explains the frequent use of cognitive and emotional regulation techniques as coping mechanisms. Additionally, stress associated with limited time for physical and recreational activities and social pressures reflects the ongoing challenge of maintaining personal well-being while fulfilling academic and professional obligations.

Conversely, stress related to seeking or accessing professional mental health services was reported by less than half of the respondents. This finding aligns with the relatively low utilization of counseling services observed in the study and may suggest the presence of challenges such as limited access, time constraints, or personal reluctance. This implies that graduate student stress is predominantly driven by academic workload and role conflicts, rather than by a lack of awareness or use of stress management strategies.

Table 1: *Causes of Stress the Graduate Students Encountered*

Causes of Stress	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Rank
Academic Workload and Deadlines	176	87.13	1
Balancing Work and Graduate Studies	168	83.17	2
Time Constraints and Poor Work–Life Balance	162	80.20	3
Emotional and Psychological Pressure (e.g., anxiety, mental fatigue)	155	76.73	4
Limited Time for Physical and Recreational Activities	138	68.32	5
Social and Interpersonal Pressure	131	64.85	6
Limited Use or Access to Professional Mental Health Services	94	46.53	7

3.2. Extent of Stress Management Strategies Employed by the Graduate Students with Respect to Time Management, Social Support, Physical and Recreational Activities and Cognitive and Emotional Regulation Techniques

As shown in the table, all stress management strategies were often employed by graduate students. Time management ranked first, indicating that structured planning is the most dominant coping strategy. Physical and recreational activities ranked last, suggesting that despite their benefits, they are less prioritized due to academic and work commitments. The composite mean of 4.18 confirms that graduate students generally demonstrate effective stress management practices.

The findings imply that time management is the most critical coping mechanism among graduate students, emphasizing the need for detailed planning to effectively manage academic and professional responsibilities. The lower prioritization of physical and recreational activities suggests that, despite their recognized benefits, heavy academic and work demands limit students' ability to engage consistently in wellness-related practices. Although the composite mean indicates that graduate students demonstrate effective stress management skills, continued exposure to many responsibilities may increase the risk of fatigue or burnout if support systems are insufficient.

Table 2: *Extent of Stress Management Strategies Employed by the Graduate Students With Respect to Time Management, Social Support, Physical and Recreational Activities and Cognitive and Emotional Regulation Techniques*

Aspect	Overall Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Time Management	4.36	Often Employed	1
Social Support	4.15	Often Employed	3
Physical and Recreational Activities	4.04	Often Employed	4
Cognitive and Emotional Regulation Techniques	4.18	Often Employed	2
Composite Mean	4.18	Often Employed	

3.3. Level of Work Performance of Graduate Students in Terms of Relevant Performance Indicators

The table indicates that the majority of the 202 graduate students (80.2%) received a Very Satisfactory performance rating, while 10.9% achieved an Outstanding rating. Only a small proportion (8.9%) fell under the Satisfactory category, and none were rated as unsatisfactory. These results suggest that graduate students consistently demonstrate strong work performance despite academic demands. The overall mean of 4.411, verbally interpreted as Very Satisfactory, further implies a high level of competence, commitment, and effectiveness among the respondents, highlighting their ability to manage both professional and academic responsibilities effectively.

Table 3: *Level of Work Performance of Graduate Students in Terms of Relevant Performance Indicators*

Work Performance	Verbal Interpretation	Frequency	Percent	Rank
4.500 – 5.000	Outstanding	22	10.9	2
3.500 – 4.499	Very Satisfactory	162	80.2	1
2.500 – 3.499	Satisfactory	18	8.9	3

1.500 – 2.499	Unsatisfactory	–	–	–
Total		202	100.0	

3.4. Relationship Between Stress Management Strategies and Work Performance of Graduate Students

The table shows that all stress management strategies have a significant positive relationship with the work performance of graduate students. Time management exhibits the strongest correlation, indicating that students who effectively plan, prioritize, and manage their time tend to demonstrate higher levels of productivity, commitment, and task completion.

Cognitive and emotional regulation techniques also show a strong relationship with work performance, suggesting that students who can manage their emotions, maintain optimism, and regulate stress responses perform better in their professional roles. Social support and physical and recreational activities likewise display significant relationships, implying that emotional encouragement, peer interaction, and leisure activities contribute positively to work effectiveness, although to a slightly lesser extent.

Table 4: *Relationship Between Stress Management Strategies and Work Performance of Graduate Students*

Stress Management Strategies	r-values	p-value	Ho	VI
Time Management	.71	.000	Rejected	Significant
Social Support	.64	.001	Rejected	Significant
Physical and Recreational Activities	.58	.000	Rejected	Significant
Cognitive and Emotional Regulation Techniques	.69	.000	Rejected	Significant

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The findings of the study indicate that graduate students experience various sources of stress, primarily arising from heavy academic workload, the challenge of balancing work and study responsibilities, limited time, emotional pressures, and insufficient opportunities for recreation. Despite these challenges, graduate students demonstrate the ability to manage stress effectively by employing strategies such as time management, cognitive and emotional regulation, and seeking social support. These coping mechanisms significantly contribute to sustaining high levels of work performance. Moreover, the results reveal that students who consistently apply effective stress management strategies, particularly structured time management and cognitive-emotional regulation, tend to exhibit greater productivity, stronger commitment, and higher quality outputs in both academic and professional tasks.

In light of the conclusions drawn from the study, it is recommended that graduate students develop structured time management plans that include weekly schedules, clearly prioritized goals, and strategically placed short breaks to help reduce stress while maintaining productivity. They are likewise encouraged to integrate physical and recreational activities into their routines, even for brief periods, such as walking, stretching, or listening to music, to promote well-being and prevent burnout. Actively seeking social support from peers, mentors, and family members is also recommended, as this provides emotional reassurance and practical guidance during stressful periods. Furthermore, graduate students may benefit from applying cognitive and emotional regulation strategies, including positive reframing, mindfulness practices, and reflective activities, to manage stress more effectively. When stress levels become overwhelming, the use of professional counseling services is strongly encouraged to complement personal coping strategies. At the institutional level, academic institutions are advised to offer stress management workshops, wellness programs, and mentoring opportunities to strengthen students' coping skills and social support systems. Employers are likewise encouraged to provide flexible work arrangements, supportive work environments, and employee well-being resources to assist graduate students in balancing professional responsibilities with academic demands. Finally, the proposed action plan may be considered for implementation to further enhance stress management and performance outcomes among graduate students.

Compliance with ethical standards

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