Stress nowadays, is a very common issue among people who are under a lot of pressure. Many people including but not limited to college students, experience stress due to academic-related reasons. In line with this matter, college students tend to have diversely related reactions towards the stress they are experiencing. By developing their own coping mechanisms or following already established strategies, or both, students can lessen their stress and carry on with their tasks.  
 Although students have coping mechanisms, not all of them follow a single method. On top of that, not all methods they use are effective, while those that are indeed effective are not always applicable to all other students. Other researches have managed to group coping strategies into various categories based on different focuses, which are then used to measure each of their capabilities to lessen the effect of stress on different aspects of the students’ well-being.

# Life of College Students

Coomes and DeBard (2004) illustrated the point that the most sheltered generation to date are the students of the 21st century, but as described by Angell (2007), college students in the early 1900s reflect the post-modern college students (as cited in Crosby & Dalton, 2009, p. 3). To obtain reputation, a good income, and a prosperous life are a few of the important goals in life of college students. Like the students of the 1920’s receiving tertiary-level education, these “millennials” are similar about being self-centered, aspiring, and yet academically capable in general. But in contrast, the culture in which they are educated to thrive is subject to alteration due to their standards and long-term goals being challenged by unforeseen financial conditions (Crosby & Dalton, 2009, p. 3).

## Challenges

Eisenberg (1997) & Harris (2006) stated that the current students addresses for higher grades or higher quality of teaching. According to Crage & Fairchild (2007), the desire for higher grades is akin to student consumerism, wherein students assume to obtain better grades and other academic incentives from institutional instructors as exchange for the financial burden of tuition within the business value of privatized education (as cited in Thomas, 2012, p. 3).

## Experiences

A strong social network is the most strongly related factor among several aspects that affect stress tolerance in which coping strategies, genetics, and lifestyle habits are a few (Graf & Welle, 2011, p. 97). Students experience more stress with more time spent in laboratories, classes, and home-works (Kausar, 2010, pp. 37-38).

Academic stress is one of the main reason why students feel sadness and anxiety as well as thinking of injuring themselves. Furr et al., (2001) conducted a study on 1,455 United States university students were asked, and about 750 of them are identified to have a rise in symptoms in sudden feeling of sadness since start of college, which causes the academic stress to be strengthened because depression is an influence. Today, academic stress is amplified by expecting high grades, an enormous difference between our expected events and actual events, and the improper abilities of the millennials to cope with failure (Flatt, 2013, para. 5).

## Motivations

Defining objectives, adopting positive beliefs in accordance to academic performance, and preserving such beliefs even during facing distractions, experiencing failure occasionally, and periodically having interpersonal conflicts, are necessary to moderate one’s motivation. However, doubting one’s capacity to succeed will cause difficulties in managing one’s behavior (Dembo & Seli, 2011, p. 13).

Understanding one’s own motivation begins by evaluating one’s choice of behavior, the level of active involvement, and efforts in managing their persistence. Among students, the majority chooses to expound on a topic outside class whereas others limit their involvement to class designation. Students that spend significant amounts of energy outside class to utilize numerous learning techniques in consideration of their subjects, display the level of active involvement. Motivated behavior also includes managing one’s persistence despite occasions when learning environments become uninteresting (Dembo & Seli, 2011, pp. 54-55).

## Perceptions

Counseling experts help students to control their stressful lives. According to Aherne (2001), Hicks, and Miller (2006), the students’ outlook towards school life is a stressful and bothersome work that affects how they emotionally and cognitively respond to stress, primarily because of pressure and expectations (as cited in Chinaveh et al., 2010, p. 311).

# Academic Stress

Generally, adult students are stressed personally of school and work. Butler’s resource scarcity theory in 2007 argued that school takes part of the students’ limited financial, physical, and time resources. Sandler’s research in 2002 focused on students’ academic persistence as a result of perceived stress. It turns out that grade point average (GPA) relates stress as a necessity (as cited in Giancola et al., 2009, pp. 246-247),

## Causes of Academic Stress

A study showed that compressed schoolwork activity, many exams, money problems, family or relationship problems are the main cause of stress in the students. There are significant differences statistically between married and unmarried students, having the married students have money problems and family and relationship problems that students who are unmarried. Students use multiple tactics, like religious actions like praying, or considering meditation to cope up in stress. Emotional and presence support is also considered in stress coping (Dr. Kwaah & Essilifie, 2017, p. 120).

Ineffective time management can be reasons for stress. Effective time management on the other hand, includes setting and working on priorities. Rogers and Yassin argued in 2003 that to manage stressful encounters, it is important for students to develop different coping strategies (as cited in O’Brien, 2014, p. 11).

Various types of stressors, like pressure from school, vague outcomes, and societal dynamics greatly affect the life of college student and their cognitive capacity to perform in academics (Dr. Matthew, 2017, p. 40).

Each student experiences stressors of many types but possesses improper ways of dealing with them. Fear of failure, time pressure, financial, and academic problems as well as imposing guardians are some of the other major sources of students stress (Dr. Matthew, 2017, p. 43).

## Stress Level

Personal, academic, financial, and employment conditions are four sources of stress. Mental stress has a noticeably good correlation with employment and academic situations of college students. There also exists economic and personal factors are positively associated with mental stress, but they vary across different individuals (Ji & Zhang, 2011, p. 1).

Most students determine the main reason for stress is academic pressure and studies recorded rising accounts of lack of sleep, academic dishonesty, depression, drug abuse, and self-injury. Although struggling students are expected to be the most vulnerable school-related stress, researches imply that high achievers are also highly susceptible to academic stress (Blazer, 2010, p. 13).

# Coping Mechanisms

Like Pearlin and Schooler (1978, p. 2) said, coping means the ways that people defend themselves against behavioral and interaction issues that affect the society. It can be improved by (1) altering situations that might end up as problems, (2) search for better perspectives towards the problem, and (3) lessening the emotional toll when addressing the problem. These are the standards used for discovering that they are effective when they are facing the challenges in personal aspects of marriage and parenting and not applicable to work. Different factors like societal, patriarchal, educational and financial aspects make the distribution of effectivity in coping strategies.

A range of emotions, thoughts, and actions are highlighted by Baquyatan, Shadiya, & Mohemed in 2012 regarding coping strategies that indicate how well each person reacts to stress, judges occurrences, and wants to attain certain results. Social and interpersonal contexts are the foundation of coping strategies utilized by adolescents including seeking support and distractions or solving the problem autonomously. Fear of failure, career decisions, and academic competitiveness, and the perceived necessity to excel in performance are the major concerns of college students (as cited in Dr. Matthew, 2017, p. 41).

## Strategies of Coping with Academic Stress

Some have the ability to handle the same level of stress, while others have a hard time dealing with it because different people react differently according to their innate psychological, and biological characteristics, which defines their stress tolerance (Graf & Welle, 2011, p. 97).

Covington & Beery (1976) stated that the self-worth theory is a standard of a person’s perceived value by their recognition of their own helplessness that causes them to be ashamed or embarrassed. In their current state, they avert themselves by changing the definition of failure by secretly ignoring their real capacity. Cantor & Norem (1989) outlined one major plan for coping named *defense pessimism* which students use to protect themselves from anxiousness from different tasks. Another scheme is *self-handicapping*, explained by Midgley & Urdan (2001) where students modify their perception of failure as an alternative (O’Brien, 2014, p. 93).

Methods of alleviating/moderating stress according to Campus Mind Works (Managing Stress):

1. Time management techniques like fulfilling responsibilities, accomplishing goals, and relaxing afterwards require a sense of self-control and a well-moderated schedule.
2. Setting up a list of particular objectives will lift the mood for upcoming activities.
3. Avoiding procrastination can positively affect work quality, sleep, motivations, and create less stress.
4. Regular exercise also helps redirect energy to burn stress.
5. Ease the nerves by taking periodic breaks every after structured activities.
6. Write a journal to aid in comprehending one’s emotions as well as keeping track of life choices.
7. Recognize limitations to match intrapersonal and interpersonal expectations.
8. Plan and engage recreational activities between schedules.
9. Search for fun. Stress can be relieved by laughing.
10. Recognize the ideas which may be distressing. Re-evaluate inaccurate personal beliefs like underestimating or overestimating expectations for tasks to create more ‘down-to-earth’ thoughts.
11. Talk to family and friends about stressful circumstances without emphasizing too much on the negative while also thinking of three or more good things that happened.
12. Set a specific goal using a goal-setting worksheet and working towards it gradually using a weekly motivator worksheet to persist will be helpful in ameliorating mood and minimizing stress.

# Effectiveness of Coping Mechanisms

Folkman and Lazarus’ work in 1998, “Ways of Coping Questionnaire” was used to obtain total scores from three different Likert scales, namely the main strategies, supplementary techniques, and applied tactic levels of measurement (as cited in Monteiro et al., 2014, p. 161). The main scale consists of

(a) solving problems through different tactics to handle stress;

(b) cognitive restructuring of mind techniques that emphasizes on rationalizing stress;

(c) social support from intimate relationships to communication emotions;

(d) problem evasion which is the deliberate avoidance of thoughts related to the problem;

(e) wishful thinking and hoping to increase the desirability of the situation, but not altering the essence of the problem;

(f) social withdrawal or leaving people who are close to them or the problem, and;

(g) self-criticism through blaming oneself in the status.

There are also four combinations of problem-based and emotion-based confrontation or avoidance. Problem-based confrontation is an integration of psychological reformation and problem-solving to describe intellect-based responses to tackle the stressful circumstance while emotion-based confrontation quantifies social and emotional support and mediates communication to address and evaluate the person’s emotional response. Moreover, problem-based avoidance encompasses the avoidance of the problem by wishful thinking and behavioral attempts of dodging the issue and emotion-based avoidance is the derivation of both blaming and withdrawing one’s self from others (as cited in Monteiro et al., 2014, p. 161).

Two kinds of coping behaviors are considered: maladaptive and adaptive coping. Adaptive coping leads to positive, active behaviour and vigorous social and physical actions in each person. Contrariwise, maladaptive coping have a bad effect. Giancola et a;., (p. 249, 2009) pointed out four kinds of adaptive coping strategies and four types of maladaptive coping behaviors as detailed below:

*Adaptive strategies against maladaptive behaviors:*

1. Positive reinterpretation vs. Denial
2. Instrumental social support vs. Venting
3. Active coping vs. Substance use
4. Planning vs. Behavioral disengagement

Various researchers (Regehr, Glancy, & Pitts, 2013; Robotham & Julian, 2006) concluded that the living standards and intellectual wellness of college students might be influenced negatively by the escalated psychosocial stress (as cited in Dundas et al., 2016, p. 114).

In 2006, Hunter posited (as cited in Aydin, 2017) that researches from the previous decades imply that the correspondence of grades in school and success in life are inconclusive. However, the multidimensional correlation of success with other factors such as the growth of a student’s intellectual and academic traits have been identified. Society and emotions play necessary roles that affect academic accomplishments, wherein a significant association exists between psychological factors and college life (Pritchard & Wilson, as cited in Aydin 2017, p. 94). The importance of the perceptions, assumptions, and actions of students towards college life is highlighted by Pike and Kuh in 2005 (as cited in Aydin 2017, p. 94). Moreover, finishing college without delay and with considerable remarks define success (Finn & Rock, as cited in Aydin 2017, p. 94), but the thought of Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford & Pifer in 2017 about student consultations with professors arouses the rate of success in the academe. (as cited in Aydin, 2017).