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### Depression and Interpersonal Communication Skills of Senior High School Students

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**Abstract** – The study focused on determining and describing the level of depression and the correlation to the profile variables and the interpersonal communication skills of the senior high school students of Pangasinan State University – Bayambang Campus (PSU-BC) during the second semester, S.Y. 2017-2018. The study made use of the Stratified Random Sampling to 240 students using the Slovin's formula. The descriptive-correlational research design was used. The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) was adopted in finding the level and severity of depression of the respondents. Their interpersonal communication skills was measured using the researcher-made structured questionnaire which was

validated by five (5) experts/professionals from the languages department of PSU-BC. The results showed that the level of depression of the senior high school students fall within the very high level/severe depression with 110 (45.8%) respondents; followed by 103 (42.9%) respondents with high level/moderately severe depression. Results further showed that there was a significant relationship between the level of depression and strand ( $X^2 = 396.620$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.013$ ); and between the level of depression and religion ( $X^2 = 141.274$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.002$ ).

**Keywords** – Depression, Interpersonal communication skills, Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9).

## INTRODUCTION

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how people feel, the way they think and how they act. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities a person once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and at home. Fortunately, it is treatable [1].

Nowadays, depression is a common case in the nation. More than 3.29 million people in the Philippines are living with depression and an almost equal number of individuals are suffering from anxiety [2].

Adolescents are very vulnerable to various mental disorders. During adolescence, the teen's brain goes through dramatic changes which scientists are just beginning to better understand. Parents, teachers, and anyone who cares for a teenager, often finds it difficult to help them navigate the broad range of challenges that accompany the complex changes occurring in their body, mind, and brain [3].

Meanwhile, communication is the transmission of meaning from one person to another or to many people, whether verbally or non-verbally [4]. It can be classified into two major categories: interpersonal and intrapersonal. *Interpersonal communication* is the process by which two or more people exchange information, feeling and meaning through verbal and non-verbal messages; it is a face to face communication. *Intrapersonal communication* is defined as communicating with oneself or exclusively within a person. It refers to the internal processes of communication [5].

Depressed people often get into situations that are difficult because their depressive behavior are really off-putting to other people; thus, depression is an emotional problem that has negative effects on the mind, feelings, and behavior of a person [6].

One of the researchers have a first-hand experience about depression and has been diagnosed with severe depression before; thus, the researchers considered conducting such a study to help other people, especially the senior high school students of Pangasinan State University-Bayambang Campus who can be affected by depression.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to answer the following research questions: (1) What is the profile of the respondents in terms of their: 1.1) strand, 1.2) sex, 1.3) socioeconomic status, and 1.4) religion?; (2) What is the level of depression of the Senior High School students in PSU-BC?; (3) How many students are diagnosed with the following severity of depression: 3.1) low level/mild depression; 3.2) moderate depression; 3.3) high level/moderately severe depression; and 3.4) very high level/ severe depression?; (4) Is there a significant relationship between the level of depression to the profile variables and the interpersonal communication skills of the respondents?

This hypothesis was tested in its null form at 0.05 level of significance: There is no significant relationship between the level of depression to the profile variables and the interpersonal communication skills of the respondents.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The study utilized the descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship of two or more variables and describe certain parts of the data gathered. This was a descriptive correlational study designed to describe the level and severity of depression experienced by the senior high school students; and examine the relationship between the level of depression to the interpersonal communication skills and the profile variables of the said respondents.

### SAMPLING DESIGN

The study used the stratified random sampling, a kind of probability sampling done by dividing the population of senior high school students into homogenous subgroups, and then making use of the simple random sampling for each strand, and the Slovin's formula: 
$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

The sample size of 240 respondents from a total of 602 senior high school students of PSU-BC enrolled during the second semester, 2017-2018 was determined and presented in the table 1 below.

Table 1. The Population and Sample Size of Respondents per Section/Strand

Sections / Strands	Population size per Section/Strand	Sample size per section/strand
STEM 1	42	17
STEM 2	39	16
STEM 3	40	16
HUMSS 1	42	17
HUMSS 2	42	17
HUMSS 3	41	16
HUMSS 4	43	17
HUMSS 5	41	16
ABM 1	39	16
ABM 2	36	14
ABM 3	36	14
ABM 4	37	15
ICT	45	18
HE	22	9
Grade 11 STEM	57	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>240</b>

#### INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA GATHERING

The study utilized two instruments: the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) used to determine the level and severity of depression of the respondents; and the researcher-made structured questionnaires used to determine the level of interpersonal communication skills of the respondents.

The PHQ-9 is a 9-item psychological diagnosis test that measures the severity, and at the same time, detect depression. It is a multipurpose instrument for screening, diagnosing, monitoring, and measuring the severity of depression, made by Pfizer, Inc., and can be downloaded.

The researcher-made structured questionnaire, initially presented 10 traits that should, hypothetically, measure the interpersonal communication skills of the respondents. They were given four (4) choices: (4) always, (3) frequently, (2) sometimes, and (1) never, which shall be checked based on their self-introspection. This was validated by five (5) experts/professionals from the Languages Department of the PSU-BC.

To supplement the interpretation of the researcher-made structured questionnaire and the PHQ-9, each test paper was number coded from 1-240 for every respondent.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 below shows the frequency distribution of the respondents in terms of their strands. As gleaned in the table, the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand have the highest number with 83 (34.6%) of the respondents, as this strand has the most number with five

(5) sections; while there were only 9 (3.8%) of the respondents selected randomly from the sole section of the Home Economics (HE) strand.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents in terms of Strand

Strand	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
STEM	71	29.6
HUMSS	83	34.6
ABM	59	24.6
ICT	18	7.5
HE	9	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

The distribution of respondents in terms of sex is presented in the table 3 below.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents in terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	67	27.9
Female	173	72.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

This data shows that the respondents are dominated by females with a total of 173 (72.1%) respondents, as compared with only 67 (27.9%) males. This may be attributed to the fact that most of the students who choose to take the HUMSS and the other strands offered in PSU-BC senior high school are females.

Table 4 below presents the distribution in terms of the socioeconomic status of the respondents.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents in terms of Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic Status	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Php 150,000 and below annual family income	189	78.8
Php 150,001 and above annual family income	51	21.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

The data gathered shows that there are 189 (78.9%) respondents who have an annual family income of Php150,000 or lower; while only 51 (21.2%) respondents have an annual family income of Php150,001 or higher. This indicates that the majority of the respondents come from a family classified under the category *poor* or either *below or within the poverty line*.

The next table presents the distribution in terms of religion.

**Table 5. Distribution of Respondents in terms of Religion**

Religion	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Roman Catholicism	187	77.9
Baptism	9	3.8
Mormonism	6	2.5
Islam	1	0.4
Others	37	15.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

This result shows that the religion of the respondents is dominated by Roman Catholicism with 187 (77.9%); and only 1 (0.4%) believes in Islam. However, there are 37 (15.4%) of the respondents whose religions are not specified in the questionnaire.

The level or severity of depression is presented in the table below.

**Table 6. Distribution of Respondents in terms of the Level/Severity of Depression they are in**

Level/Severity of Depression	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Low / mild *	4	1.7
Moderate	23	9.6
High / Moderately Severe	103	42.9
Very High / Severe	110	45.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

The table shows that 110 (45.8%) of the respondents have *very high level/ severe depression*; 103 (42.9%) have *high level/moderately severe depression*; and only 4 (1.7%) respondents have *low level/mild depression*. This can be an alarming result that needs to be addressed by the proper authority.

The variables with a significant relationship with the Level of Depression are shown in table 7 below.

**Table 7. The Correlation of the Level of Depression to the Interpersonal Communication Skills and the Profile Variables**

Profile Variable	Statistical Test	Level of Depression
Sex	Chi-Square	24.654
	p- value	0.425
Strand	Chi-Square	396.620

	p- value	<b>0.013*</b>
Religion	Chi- Square	141.274
	p-value	<b>0.002**</b>
Socioeconomic Status	Spearman-Rho	-0.062
	p- value	0.341
Level of Interpersonal Communication	Pearson r	-0.057
	p-value	0.378

This result shows that among the profile variables tested, only the strand ( $X^2 = 396.620$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.013$ ); and the religion ( $X^2 = 141.274$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.002$ ) are found to have a significant relationship with the level of depression of the respondents.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The HUMSS strand have the highest number with 83 (34.6%) of the respondents, while the HE strand have the least with only 9 (3.8%) of the respondents. They are dominated by females with 173 (72.1%) respondents, hence, focus should be geared towards females. Their socioeconomic status shows that 189 (78.9%) respondents have an annual family income of Php150, 000 or lower and therefore considered *poor*. A majority of them belongs to the Roman Catholicism with 187 (77.9%) respondents.

The level of depression of the senior high school students was determined to be *very high level/ severe depression*, with 110 (45.8%) respondents; followed by *high level/moderately severe depression* with 103 (42.9%) respondents. This result shows that the level of depression of these students is alarming; thus, needing attention and intervention.

It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the level of depression and the strand, as well as the religion of the respondents. A similar study conducted on the level of awareness of senior high school students regarding depression recommends that there must be more expositions regarding mental health, or depression in particular, since, many of the respondents who were diagnosed with a certain degree of depression are not aware of their condition and are not seeking help from professionals.

The researchers further recommend that the institution must conduct additional researches and studies to shed necessary light on depression. Hence, the researchers propose to create an Information Campaign posters and brochures that will highlight the different dimensions of Depression.

Since the findings state that there is a very high level/severe depression among senior high school students, the researchers assert that an awareness program be held annually in order to completely orient the students regarding

mental health and its necessary interventions. Additionally, the researchers shall present a copy of the present study to the Office of the Student Services in order to encourage actions that are to be done in accordance to the level or severity of the problem.

The researchers further recommend that the advisers of each section of the Senior High School Department must socially interact with the students and individually communicate with them, or invite the students to seek advice. In addition, the guidance counselor is highly recommended to conduct preventive measures like counseling, social meetings and the like in order to prevent possible problems from happening. Spiritual awakening programs may also be used to raise awareness on the significant relationship of depression to the choice of religion of the respondents. Similarly, the office of admission should conduct empirical exams that predict the appropriate strand that a student should take that is in line with their capabilities or their multiple intelligences.

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