

Preservice Teachers' Spirituality, Level of Stress, and Academic Performance in the Context of Outcome-Based Teacher Education Curriculum (OBTEC): Are they Related?

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Abstract – Many students are stressed due to combining busy life with the responsibilities of studies and/or work while also making time for friends and family. These observations motivated the researcher to determine whether a relationship existed between preservice teachers' spirituality, level of stress, and academic performance. To address the problem, the researcher used a quantitative correlation method utilizing the adopted research instruments administered to the randomly selected 125 participants. The study results show that preservice teachers' spirituality is high while their stress level is low with average academic performance. Results also show that spirituality is related negatively to preservice teachers' stress levels. Further, preservice teachers' spirituality and stress levels are unrelated to their academic performance. This means that preservice teachers' spirituality influences their stress levels while managing their academic performance. Thus, this study suggests strengthening programs related to spirituality. Stress is inevitable. Every second, every minute, stress is experienced. Managing stress will enable preservice teachers to do better in their studies.

Keywords – Academic Performance, Level of Stress, OBTEC Curriculum, Preservice Teachers, Spirituality

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INTRODUCTION

A shift in the classroom discourse and the teaching approach calls much attention to students. Implementing the Outcome-Based Teacher Education Curriculum (OBTEC) in the system of the Philippine Normal University posed challenges to preservice teachers. They describe the curriculum as a problem but a challenge for

them. It needs to be solved because of its new platform and set-up where students are responsible for their learning. This is because, according to Rajae et al. [1], learning is assessed based on outcomes rather than on the contents being taught. This is quite difficult for the students because they are accustomed to traditional tertiary-level classes.

Abellar [2], on the problems and challenges in implementing the OBTEC observed that preservice teachers need help with flexible learning activities, teaching strategies, and workload. They also need help with the learning outcomes, instructional materials, use of teaching strategies, time element, and assessment and evaluation. Also, Manno cited in Abellar [2] proposed whether Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is more of an affliction than a cure. The same study noted uncertainty about OBE's beneficial influence on students' success in the classroom and school. However, he still believes that the challenges of OBE can turn into opportunities.

Accordingly, this new learning situation brought by the OBTEC curriculum has challenged preservice teachers in moving forward to the accomplishment of their degrees. The delivery of instruction, the flexible learning delivery, etc., are stressors that influence their performance in school. Lian [3] supported the claim by stating that students suffer from stress because of the academic pressure they are involved in tackling a difficult assignment. Teachers exert a lot of pressure on students to perform better. This makes them work tirelessly in a situation that ends up creating stress.

According to research, stress is frequent among college students for a variety of reasons, and it has an impact on their academic performance and retention [4], [5], [6]. Poor retention and performance limit students' intellectual and economic potential while reflecting poorly on universities. Likewise, the stress experienced by students can affect learning (acquisition, application, and processing of knowledge), which hinders academic performance [7].

Along this line, Veena and Shastri [8] expressed that

when education is seen as a threat, students may experience feelings of helplessness and a foreboding sense of loss. They also pointed out that most students perceived education as more stressful. A critical issue concerning stress among students is its effect on learning. The Yerkes-Dodson law (1908) postulates that individuals under low and high stress learn the least and those under moderate learn the most.

On the other hand, Northern, O'Brien, and Goetz [9] argue that college is a unique developmental moment in one's life span and a time of increased stress. Siraj et al. [10], claimed that students can be stressed for a variety of reasons, including academic, economic, health-related, or the death of close family members or friends. Stress is the body's neurological and physical reaction to a new circumstance. It has a negative impact on students' academic performance. According to their research, academic and social difficulties caused severe and high stress in 84 percent and 49 percent of respondents, respectively, with no significant gender or residency disparities. It was discovered that respondents with high and severe stress levels had higher GPA.

On the other hand, spirituality is a resilient and divisive feature that has been demonstrated to assist people in better coping with stress. Although it has been connected to several other beneficial psychological characteristics, research on its impact on academic achievement is scarce and contradictory [10]. For instance, Willian and Isaac [11] discovered no significant link between student religion and academic performance. Spirituality, they said, was only a source of inspiration for them to focus on their academics and hard work.

However, some studies suggest religiosity is related to academic performance. Walker and Dixon [12] for instance, in their research on spirituality and academic achievement among African American college students, revealed that spiritual ideas and religious practice were positively connected with both groups' academic performance.

This is also supported by Weber's (1905) theory of the Protestant ethic, a philosophy that postulates that the disciplined nature associated with Protestantism, leads to a stronger work principle, and thus generates more material gain (and potentially academic gain).

These are studies conducted without any consideration of OBE and are more focused on college students in general. However, establishing the relationship between spirituality, stress level, and OBTEC preservice teachers' academic performance has yet to be clarified. Thus, this study examining the

relationship among preservice teachers' spirituality, level of stress, and academic performance was conducted with high hopes that the results of this research will provide colleges and universities with baseline information on how these variables influence each other.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this research was to determine whether preservice teachers' spirituality, level of stress, and academic performance are related to each other. Specifically, this study wanted to assess the level of spirituality, stress, and academic performance of the preservice teachers when grouped according to sex, number of siblings, allowance per week, the status of stay, and academic loads.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlation research method because OBTEC preservice teachers' spirituality, level of stress, and academic performance were determined and described. Likewise, it is a correlation because the relationship between OBTEC preservice teachers' spirituality, level of stress, and academic performance was also determined.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 125 randomly selected preservice teachers from the 182 population of OBTEC preservice teachers of the Philippine Normal University Visayas during the academic year 2018-2019. Participants were grouped according to sex, number of siblings, allowance per week, the status of stay, and academic loads (number of subjects enrolled). Table 1 below shows the profile of the participants.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

| Profile | f | % |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 46 | 36.8 |
| Female | 79 | 63.2 |
| No. of Siblings | | |
| 1 – 3 siblings | 33 | 26.4 |
| 4 – 6 siblings | 92 | 73.6 |
| Allowance per week | | |
| 500 pesos & below | 45 | 36.0 |
| Above 500 pesos | 80 | 64.0 |
| Status of Stay | | |
| Within the city | 78 | 62.4 |
| Outside the city | 47 | 37.6 |
| Academic Loads | | |
| Regular | 102 | 81.6 |
| Irregular | 23 | 18.4 |

Research Instrument

The research instruments utilized in this study consisted of four parts. Part I deals with the profile of the participants. The second part was the questionnaire on the spirituality of the students. This questionnaire was adopted from the study of Hyland and Wheeler [13]. This part consisted of 48 items where the alternatives were modified to strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree for the participants to choose from. The third portion of the research instrument was the perceived stress scale, which determined the stress level experienced by the preservice teachers during the last first and second trimesters. This 10-item initially developed in 1983 and under the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The alternatives in this portion of the research instrument were never, almost never, sometimes, often, and very often for the participants to choose from. The last part of the research instrument was the sources of stress scale. This consists of 20 identified sources of stress from which the participants determine the extent to which the recognized sources contributed to the academic achievement of the OBTEC preservice teachers during the last trimesters.

The questionnaires used in this study were subjected to validity and reliability testing using expert validation and Cronbach alpha. Results of validation and reliability testing show that the research instrument was valid and reliable to a very high degree, as indicated by the validity index of 4.76 and the reliability coefficient of 0.93.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The following are the different phases of data gathering and analysis:

Phase 1 Preparation of the Research Instrument

This phase involves developing the research instrument, which was then subjected to validity and reliability testing.

Phase 2 The Conduct of the Research Instrument to the Target Participants

The second phase included preparing letters asking permission to conduct the study. This phase also included the conduct and retrieving instrument for the target participants.

Phase 3 Statistical Data Analysis

This phase deals with sorting out data for statistical analysis. The data in this regard were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, and Pearson *r* was used in this research.

Ethical Consideration

Knowing that research is carefully done, the information must be objective and critical. In this undertaking, the present study hopes to observe the ethical principles of honesty, objectivity, integrity, openness, recognition of intellectual property rights, anonymity, responsible publication, societal responsibility, legality, and ethics in conducting and administrating the research instrument.

In any research undertaking, honesty is one of the researcher's primary concerns regarding the data and results by ensuring no willful omission of any significant findings or manipulation to favor a specific interest. The objectives of the study were answered by following ethical principles. The potential issue in the data gathering was considered; thus, permits to utilize the data for research purposes were asked by the researcher to the study participants.

Waiver of consent to participate in this study was also asked by the researcher to the preservice teachers of the identified university as a form of respect. This was done before administering the research instrument in their respective classroom.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, intellectual property rights was observed, and citation of relevant information was quoted in this research to give credit to the original author or references, especially on the use of the data. The researcher further recognized the societal impact of this research, especially if the research findings were to be shared using presentations in conferences or publications. The researcher also recognizes issues on legality and thus observes ethics for publication and the like.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Spirituality of the Preservice Teachers

Table 2. Preservice Teachers' Level of Spirituality, Stress, and Academic Performance

| Variables | M | SD | Interpretation |
|----------------------|-------|------|----------------|
| Spirituality | 3.78 | 0.29 | High |
| Stress | 2.53 | 0.41 | Low |
| Academic Performance | 87.64 | 2.63 | Average |

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of preservice teachers' spirituality, stress, and academic performance levels. As reflected, the level of spirituality of the preservice teachers is high ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.29$), while the level of stress ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.41$) and academic performance ($M = 87.64$, $SD = 2.63$) is low and average, respectively.

Table 3. Preservice Teachers' Level of Spirituality, Stress, and Academic Performance when Grouped According to Sex

| Variables | Male | | | Female | | |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> |
| Spirituality | 3.76 | 0.30 | High | 3.79 | 0.28 | High |
| Stress | 2.34 | 0.52 | Low | 2.59 | 0.35 | Low |
| Academic Performance | 87.75 | 2.87 | Average | 87.60 | 2.57 | Average |

Table 3 reflects the mean and standard deviation of the preservice teachers' level of spirituality, stress, and academic performance when grouped according to sex. The result in this regard reveals that the level of spirituality of male ($M = 3.76, SD = 0.30$) and female ($M = 3.79, SD = 0.28$) preservice teachers is high. On the other hand, male ($M = 2.34, SD = 0.52$) and female ($M = 2.59, SD = 0.35$) preservice teachers' stress levels are low while their academic performance is both average.

Table 4. Preservice Teachers' Level of Spirituality, Stress, and Academic Performance when Grouped According to the Number of Siblings

| Variables | 1 - 3 Siblings | | | 4 - 6 Siblings | | |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> |
| Spirituality | 3.78 | 0.29 | High | 3.76 | 0.88 | High |
| Stress | 2.54 | 0.42 | Low | 2.38 | 0.33 | Low |
| Academic Performance | 87.72 | 2.55 | Average | 86.36 | 3.78 | Average |

When grouped according to the number of siblings, Table 4 indicates the level of spirituality of preservice teachers with 1-3 siblings ($M = 3.78, SD = 0.29$) and 4-6 siblings ($M = 3.76, SD = 0.88$) is high. However, in terms of the level of stress, preservice teachers with 1-3 ($M = 2.54, SD = 0.42$) and with 4-6 siblings ($M = 2.38, SD = 0.33$) is low. On the other hand, the level of academic performance of preservice teachers with 1-3 siblings and 4-6 siblings is both averages. This is supported by the obtained GPAs of 87.75 and 87.60 at standard deviations of 2.87 and 2.57, respectively.

Table 5. Preservice Teachers' Level of Spirituality, Stress, and Academic Performance when Grouped According to Allowance per Week

| Variables | 500 Pesos & below | | | Above 500 Pesos | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> |
| Spirituality | 3.76 | 0.84 | High | 3.84 | 0.27 | High |
| Stress | 2.51 | 0.43 | Low | 2.58 | 0.36 | Low |
| Academic Performance | 87.55 | 2.73 | Average | 87.84 | 2.40 | Average |

Table 5 reflects preservice teachers' level of spirituality, stress, and academic performance when

grouped according to allowance per week. As shown in this table, the level of spirituality of preservice teachers with a weekly allowance of 500 pesos and below ($M = 3.76, SD = 0.84$) and above 500 pesos per week ($M = 3.84, SD = 0.27$) is high. However, the level of stress they experienced is both low as reflected by the obtained means of 2.51 and 2.58 at standard deviations of 0.43 and 0.36, respectively. On the other hand, when grouped according to their allowance per week, preservice teachers' level of academic performance is both average with the obtained GPA of 87.55 and 87.84 at standard deviations of 2.73 and 2.40, respectively.

Table 6. Preservice Teachers' Level of Spirituality, Stress, and Academic Performance when Grouped According to the Status of Stay

| Variables | Within the City | | | Outside of the City | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> |
| Spirituality | 3.80 | 0.30 | High | 3.76 | 0.27 | High |
| Stress | 2.60 | 0.35 | Low | 2.44 | 0.47 | Low |
| Academic Performance | 87.71 | 2.68 | Average | 87.55 | 2.60 | Average |

Reflected in Table 6 were preservice teachers' levels of spirituality, stress, and academic performance when grouped according to the status of stay. As revealed in this table, preservice teachers living within the city ($M = 3.80, SD = 0.30$) and outside of the city ($M = 3.76, SD = 0.27$) level of spirituality is high. However, the level of stress they have experienced is almost the same as reflected by the obtained means of 2.60 and 2.44 at standard deviations of 0.35 and 2.44, respectively. On the other hand, considering their academic performance level, preservice teachers living outside and within the city level of academic performance is average. This is supported by the obtained GPA of 87.71 and 87.55 at standard deviations of 2.68 and 2.60, respectively.

Table 7. Preservice Teachers' Level of Spirituality, Stress, and Academic Performance when Grouped According to Academic Loads

| Variables | Regular | | | Irregular | | |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>VI</i> |
| Spirituality | 3.78 | 0.29 | High | 3.76 | 0.22 | High |
| Stress | 2.53 | 0.41 | Low | 2.43 | 0.71 | Low |
| Academic Performance | 87.64 | 2.63 | Average | 87.75 | 3.89 | Average |

As shown in Table 7, the level of spirituality of preservice teachers who have a regular status of schooling ($M = 3.78, SD = 0.29$) and those who have an irregular status of schooling ($M = 3.76, SD = 0.22$) is high. On the other hand, in terms of the stress level,

preservice teachers' levels are both low. This is supported by the obtained means of 2.53 and 2.43 at standard deviations of 0.41 and 0.71, respectively. However, their academic performance reflected both averages as indicated by the obtained GPA of 87.64 and 87.75 at standard deviations of 2.63 and 3.89, respectively.

Correlation Among Preservice Teachers' Level of Spirituality, Stress, and Academic Performance

Table 8. Correlations among Preservice Teachers' Level of Spirituality, Stress, and Academic Performance

| Variables Correlated | N | r | ρ |
|--|-----|-------|--------|
| Spirituality and level of stress | 135 | -0.25 | 0.00 |
| Spirituality and academic performance | 135 | 0.08 | 0.33 |
| Level of stress and academic performance | 135 | 0.14 | 0.10 |

Note: *r* is significant at $\rho \leq 0.05$

Table 8 presents a correlation between preservice teachers' level of spirituality, stress, and academic performance. As shown in this table, preservice teachers' level of spirituality negatively correlates to their stress level ($r = -0.25$, $\rho = 0.00$). On the other hand, no evidence of a significant correlation existed between preservice teachers' level of spirituality and academic performance ($r = 0.08$, $\rho = 0.33$) and between the level of stress and preservice teacher academic performance ($r = 0.14$, $\rho = 0.10$).

Discussion

This study aimed to describe the relationship between preservice teachers' level of spirituality, stress, and academic performance. It was reflected from the results that preservice teachers have a high level of spirituality, even when grouped according to the selected variables. This means that preservice teachers are spiritually inclined. They recognize God's omnipotent presence and live by His love and teachings. They believed that their spiritual inclination has something to do with the values that they hold and likewise with their beliefs of where they come from. As HERI [14] explains, "spirituality has to do with the values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here".

Furthermore, the study results reflected that even though spirituality level is almost the same across selected variables, considering their religious affiliation obtained means and standard deviation indicate that one group has better spirituality than the other group. This means that one group's sense of connection to something

bigger than themselves and their search for meaning in life is better than the other group's. The findings on sex, for example, suggest that females have better spirituality than males. In a study on the relationships between spirituality, gender, and drug use among students at one university in Barbados, Jules et al. [15] found that females exhibited significantly higher levels of spirituality than their male counterparts.

Although Bryant [16] did not say which gender's spirituality is superior to the other, her research found significant gender differences in spiritual qualities and gender patterns of spiritual development, indicating that male and female preservice teachers have different spiritual orientations. This may be due to their religious beliefs, peer interactions, and science exposure.

On the other hand, the level of academic stress experienced by the preservice teachers is low even when grouped according to the selected variables such as sex, number of siblings, allowance per week, and stay and load status. This result reflects that even though their curriculum is new, they surpassed it and know how to adjust to the set-up of the new curriculum. However, some have experienced difficulties with the new curriculum, as revealed in Abellar's [2] study, but they still know how to manage their problems and challenges. Preservice teachers know how to strategize and cope with the demands of the OBTEC curriculum.

They are stressed, even though it is at a modest level. According to the National Health Ministries [17], stressors in college include (1) increased academic demands, (2) being on one's own in a new environment – with new responsibilities, (3) changes in family relations and one's social life, (4) financial responsibilities, (5) exposure to new people, ideas, and temptations, (6) being away from home, often for the first time, (7) making decisions on a higher level than one is used to, (8) substance abuse, and (9) awareness of one's sexual identity and orientation, (10) preparing for life after graduation, and (11) psychological make-up. According to Siraj et al. [10], students can be stressed for various reasons, including academic, financial, health-related, or loss of close family members or friends.

Furthermore, the level of academic performance of the preservice teachers considering their GPAs is average. Although there are preservice teachers that excel, generally, their performance is only average. This means that their mastery level is only satisfactory. According to Li, students' performance in this regard may be influenced by factors like teachers' teaching capability, psychological well-being, and work-life conflict [18]. Though these elements significantly

impact students' performance, they vary from person to person. Similarly, earlier research on student academic performance examined characteristics such as teacher education, class atmosphere, gender differences, teaching style, family educational history, and socioeconomic considerations.

However, when the three variables of spirituality, stress, and academic performance were correlated, the results showed that spirituality and stress did not influence preservice teachers' academic performance. This is backed up by William and Isaac's [11] study on student spirituality and academic achievement, which found no substantial link. On the other hand, spirituality provided motivation to focus on education and hard work. However, Siraj et al. [10] refute this, finding that academic and social pressures generate severe and high stress. GPAs were shown to be higher in respondents with high and severe stress levels.

Cox [7], on the other hand, contributed to the body of knowledge about spirituality by exploring its link to stress and college academic achievement. Stress is common among college students for various reasons, according to studies, and it impacts their academic performance and college retention. Low retention and poor performance limit students' intellectual and economic potential and reflect negatively on universities.

According to the Cox results, there were no significant associations between stress and academic achievement or stress and spirituality. Several characteristics, including demographic data, religious denomination, and current grade satisfaction, predicted academic achievement. Furthermore, spirituality correlates with the stress level experienced by the preservice teachers. This means that level of spirituality of the OBTEC preservice teachers is related to the level of stress they experienced at the university. Since the correlation coefficient is negative, the more spiritually inclined they are, the less stress they have participated in the university or vice versa. Fabricatore, Handal, and Fenze's [19] research have proposed a link between stress and the controversial variable spirituality, with some studies suggesting that spirituality helps people better cope with stress. Likewise, findings of the survey conducted by Pourfarokh [20] disclosed that spiritual intelligence and self-esteem and the variable correlation between spiritual intelligence and ways of coping with stress are positive on one level.

In this regard, Yadav and Khanna [21] replicate the findings, suggesting that students' spirituality and stress are negatively associated, indicating a significant

association between spirituality and stress. Furthermore, it implies that when students' spirituality is high in whatever form, whether religious, non-religious, or poisonous, their stress will be reduced. In other words, as students' spirituality grows, so does their stress level.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Previous research has found that college students endure various pressures, ranging from financial obligations to adulthood transitions to social and academic difficulties. These pressures can harm mental health and, as a result, academic accomplishment. According to the literature, spirituality is a variable that helps people cope with various conditions.

In this study, spirituality plays an essential role in the lives of preservice teachers. Preservice teachers have a high level of spirituality, which means they believe their spirituality has helped them adjust to the demands of the new teacher education curriculum, the OBTEC. Even since then, when they are grouped as to sex, the number of siblings, allowance per week, stay, and load status, preservice teachers are spiritually inclined.

Considering the stress they have experienced while in school, preservice teachers were less stressed; they know how to cope with the stress they have participated in the university considering OBTEC. They experience less stress because they have a level of spirituality which can be inferred that knowing the values of life and others and with God in them, they tend to be strong in facing challenges in the environment, in the family, in their financial concerns, and more importantly the challenges of their academic life.

Concerning academic performance, preservice teachers were able to master some. Still, not all, the difficulties that they have experienced with the new curriculum and other factors influencing their academic life thwarted them from performing better in their academic class. Their allowance, their status of stay, and even their study load bear relevance in their academic life. These are reflected in some studies concerning students' level of academic performance.

Lastly, the interrelationship of the three variables, namely spirituality, stress, and academic performance, reflects that the academic performance of the preservice teachers relates only to a small degree to the level of their spirituality and level of stress. Still, the stress they have experienced in the university is negatively related to their spirituality, which means that the more spiritual they are, they will experience less stress and cope with stress easily.

Along with the study findings, the university is encouraged to continually support the spiritual well-being of the students by encouraging them to attend activities in and outside of the university that would enhance and maintain their spiritual well-being. On the other hand, preservice teachers are encouraged to participate in related organizations that will boost their spiritual well-being. Although the stress level they have experienced while attending their academic life is low, they are encouraged to maintain and keep abreast of trends in managing stress, especially academic stress. Furthermore, preservice teachers' academic performance was revealed to be average. In this regard, preservice teachers are encouraged to exert extra effort in their academics, considering this is one of their entry data when applying for a teaching opportunity. Lastly, a similar study should be conducted utilizing other variables not mentioned in this study and other universities, considering the different areas of specialization.

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