Research Article

Perceived Stress and Employment Readiness Among Filipino Young Adults in Selected Higher Education Institutions in the Province of Cavite

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ABSTRACT

Youths of working age often experience stress that may influence their preparedness to enter the workforce. This study aimed to examine the relationship between perceived stress and employment readiness among Filipino young adults enrolled in selected higher education institutions in the Province of Cavite. Understanding this relationship is important in identifying areas where students may require support as they transition from academic life to employment. The study employed a quantitative, descriptive correlational research design involving 555 participants determined through G*Power analysis. The respondents were Filipino young adults aged 18 to 24 who were full-time fourth- and fifth-year bachelor's degree students enrolled during the first semester of Academic Year 2025–2026 in six selected higher education institutions located in Bacoor, Dasmariñas, and Imus, Cavite, and were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using standardized instruments, namely the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) developed by Sheldon Cohen to measure perceived stress and the Work Readiness Scale (WRS) developed by Caballero et al. (2011) to assess employment readiness. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, tests of normality, and correlational analysis to determine the association between the variables. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents exhibited moderate levels of perceived stress and moderate levels of employment readiness. Students demonstrated strengths in organizational skills and social competencies, while lower levels were observed in personal characteristics and practical work competencies. The results further indicated that perceived stress had a significant negative relationship with personal characteristics and a positive relationship with work-related skills and social competencies. These findings suggest that stress plays a complex role in shaping employment readiness among young adults. The study highlights the need for

interventions focusing on stress management, personal development, career guidance, and interpersonal skills training. The development and implementation of enhancement programs and modules are therefore recommended to strengthen the psychological, social, and professional competencies of students and to facilitate a more confident and competent transition into the workforce.

Keywords: Career Guidance, Employment Readiness, Filipino Young Adults, Perceived Stress, Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Background

Higher education to employment is a critical development in the life of the young adults. To the students, as they move towards graduation the pressure on them academically, the expectations placed on them professionally and even the influence of social life on them increases and this can lead to increased stress. Philippine society perceives higher education as one of the most significant avenues on the road to economic security and social progress and so, increases the pressure on students who are graduating to be work ready. Employment readiness is not only a technical skill but also a set of personal traits, company knowledge, and social ability that allow one to perform properly in the workplace. Although the institutions of higher learning have been trying to equip the students with skills that would enable them to secure jobs, there are still gaps in the content of graduates and the demands of the job market. This research paper looks at the perceived stress levels and employment readiness among Filipino young adults in the sampled institutions of higher learning in Cavite and reports the relationship between the two variables to guide in program development and student support programs.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to determine the relationship between perceived stress and employment readiness among Filipino young adults in selected higher education institutions in the Province of Cavite. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:
1. What is the level of perceived stress of the respondents?
2. What is the level of employment readiness of the respondents?
3. Is there a significant relationship between perceived stress and employment readiness in terms of:
   a. Personal Characteristics
   b. Work Competence
   c. Organizational Acumen
   d. Social Intelligence
   e. Overall Employment Readiness
4. What possible programs can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

Methods

This explains the research methods involved in the study and it covers the research design, research participants, data sources, sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection, data statistical tests, and ethical issues. The relationship between perceived stress and work readiness of Filipino young adults attending higher education institutions in Cavite was studied under a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to determine the level of stress and work readiness of the respondents.

Two standardized scales, the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) by Sheldon Cohen and Work Readiness Scale (WRS) by Caballero et al. (2011), were used to collect primary data. Information on the secondary sources came in the form of related literature such as journals, theses, books and credible online sources. The study involved a total of 555 participants, which were identified through the G*Power analysis. They were Filipino young adults aged 18-24 who are full-time fourth- and fifth-year bachelors degree students in the first semester of A.Y. 2025-2026, and studying in Cavite. Six institutions of higher learning were selected to recruit the respondents who were based in the area of Bacoor, Dasmarinas, and Imus.

Purposive sampling was employed to sample the participants who qualified according to the inclusion criteria and snowball sampling helped to reach more respondents who qualified. Both PSS-10 and WRS were found to be very valid and reliable, and were conducted in English and it took approximately five to ten minutes to complete the test. The data was gathered via face-to-face and online administration and distribution with the use of Google Forms and coded and processed with the help of SPSS and Jamovi as well as Microsoft Excel.

Participant characteristics and perceived stress and work readiness levels were summarized using descriptive statistics including mean, frequency and percentages. Shapiro Wilk test was used to test the normality of the data and Spearman Rho correlation was used to test the relationship between the two variables. The ethical standards were also rigorously followed with references to the Philippine Psychology Act of 2009, the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and the Cavite State University policies of research. Those who participated had to do so voluntarily, anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, and all data were removed and deleted within the framework of the research.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection exercise was completed all the questionnaires that were filled in were scrutinized to check on completeness and accuracy of the answers. The data gathered in the face-to-face administration as well as online surveys were coded, tabulated and merged into one set to be analyzed. The answers on the Perceived Stress Scale and the Work Readiness Scale were rated based on the standard scoring systems. The data have been summarized using descriptive statistical tools. Mean scores, percentage and frequency counts were calculated in order to establish the level of perceived stress and level of employment preparedness among the respondents, which include the four dimensions of employment preparedness; personal characteristics, work competence, organizational acumen, and social intelligence. Tests of normality were conducted to identify the suitable statistical tests before correlational

analysis was done by use of ShapiroWilk test. According to the distribution of the data, correlational analyses were performed with the help of the rank correlation coefficient of Spearman and Pearson to investigate the correlation between perceived stress and the employment readiness and its dimensions. All statistical data analyses were done with the help of the right statistical software. The interpretation was done at the level of significance of 0.05 to indicate whether the relationships between the variables were significant.

Participants of the Study

The G-Power analysis was used to determine the sample size needed to achieve the targeted correlational study; the G-Power was calculated using an expected effect size (r) of 0.30, a significance level (a) of 0.05 (two-tailed), and a statistical power (1-b) of 0.95; thus, the researcher found that the sample size required to complete the study was 138 participants, but due to the four dimensions of work readiness, the sample size was decided to be 552, and a total of 55 The participants were Filipino young adults aged 18-24 who had enrolled in the first semester of AY 2025-2026 as a full-time fourth or fifth-year bachelor student and lived in the Cavite Province. They were sampled in 6 institutions of higher learning based in Bacoor, Dasmarinas and Imus: Kolehiyo ng Dasmarinas (48), Emilio Aguinaldo College (60), STI Bacoor (138), Cavite State University-Bacoor (68), St. Dominic College of Asia (119), Imus Institute of science and technology (52) and Cavite State University-Imus (70) with all data collected using completed survey questionnaires.

Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling was used to select the participants purposely to fit the inclusion criteria of the study and to be able to offer information that is relevant concerning the study focus (Ahmed, 2024). The recruitment was done by distributing a face to face survey and also via the internet to expand the area of coverage without narrowing eligibility. Snowballing was also applied; according to which the preliminary respondents were advised to send the online questionnaire to individuals who also met the qualification requirements. The

referral method was useful in facilitating the inclusion of the potentially more difficult-to-reach participants and has been identified as a valid way to increase sample diversity (Ting, Memon, Ramayah, and Cheah, 2025). The mixed sampling procedures enhanced the suitability and expansiveness of the sample that helped to enhance the rigor of the collected data.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers did not compromise the ethical standards as provided in the Philippine Psychology Act of 2009 (RA 10029), Code of Ethics for Research Practice, Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), and the research policies of Cavite State University to avoid ethical violation and unlawful treatment of all the participants.

Informed Consent was provided before participation and the purpose of the study, the procedures, risks, and benefits were clearly explained in order to maintain autonomy and free will.

The risk of confidentiality and Privacy was addressed by gathering no identifiable information, giving numerical codes, and reporting only aggregated data and digitally protecting all files using passwords, and deleting data after the study to avoid unauthorized usage.

Right to Withdraw was stressed, which meant that the participants could refuse or drop-out of the study at any time without penalty.

Benefits and Fair Participation were upheld through avoiding coercion, giving the participants a chance to self-introspect, and the results will be utilized in the academic knowledge and student support programs.

Utilization of Data was ethically sound, as data was used only in academic context and could only be available to authorized researchers, which adhered to requirements of legal and ethical research.

Result and Discussion

This gives the results attained by the survey on perceived stress and work readiness of the participants. It recaps their reported levels of stress and readiness to work, backed by the use of tables to be clear and orderly. Also, implications of the results and the limitations of the study are briefly brought out in this part of the research.

Table 1. Description of respondents' level of perceived stress

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	187	33.7 %
Moderate	346	62.3 %
Low	22	4.0 %
Total	555	100.0

Legend: 27 to 40 - High Perceived Stress, 14 to 26 - Moderate Perceived Stress, 0 to 13 - Low Perceived Stress

Table 1 reveals that the percentage of perceived stress was moderate in the majority of the respondents, closely followed by a huge proportion of respondents who rated high stress with a small percentage of respondents rating low stress. These findings indicate that a large number of young adults may face academic and personal pressures on a regular basis that will lead to observable stress. The moderate stress prevails, which indicates that students are able to cope with the demands to a certain extent, but the fact that the high stress levels among the students are also large indicates that support of the strategies to cope with it is needed.

Table 2. Description of respondents' level of employment readiness

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	13	2.3 %
High	81	14.6 %

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Average	166	29.9 %
Low	141	25.4 %
Very Low	154	27.7 %
Total	555	100.0

Legend: 541 to 600 - Very High Employment Readiness, 481 to 540 - High Employment Readiness, 421 to 480 - Moderate Employment Readiness, 361 to 420 - Low Employment Readiness, 60 to 360 - Very Low Employment Readiness

Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents exhibited an average level of employment readiness but a significant proportion of the respondents were in the low and very low employment readiness. Very few of them had high or very high readiness. These findings suggest that even though students already have some basic skills which can enable them secure jobs, a number of them still do not have a number of competencies that are vital in job performance. The distribution highlights the fact that the readiness of young adults is not a universal concept.

Table 3.1 Description of respondents' level of employment readiness in terms of personal characteristics

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	4	0.4 %
High	19	3.4 %
Average	39	7.0 %
Low	94	16.9 %
Very Low	399	71.9 %
Total	555	100.0

Legend: 541 to 600 - Very High Employment Readiness, 481 to 540 - High Employment Readiness, 421 to 480 - Moderate Employment Readiness, 361 to 420 - Low Employment Readiness, 60 to 360 - Very Low Employment Readiness

Table 3.1 indicates that most of the respondents scored very low in personal characteristics with only some having average and high scores. This dimension comprises of resilience, motivation, emotional control, and adaptability. The extremely low scores are evidence that most of the students find it difficult to keep motivated and cope with the challenges, which undermines their capacity to meet the expectations of the job. Their resilience was limited and thus contributed towards bringing down the overall personal characters.

Table 3.2 Description of respondents' level of employment readiness in terms of work competence

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	49	8.8 %
High	157	28.3 %
Average	77	13.9 %
Low	114	20.5 %
Very Low	158	28.5 %
Total	555	100.0

Legend: 541 to 600 - Very High Employment Readiness, 481 to 540 - High Employment Readiness, 421 to 480 - Moderate Employment Readiness, 361 to 420 - Low Employment Readiness, 60 to 360 - Very Low Employment Readiness

Table 3.2 is characterized by a broad range of work competence, the highest proportions of which include the very low category and the high one. There are those students who seem to be good at task performance and problem solving whereas there are many students who seem to be lacking these competencies. This is indicated in the uneven distribution implying unequal chances towards developing practical skills such that there are wide differences in job relevant abilities amongst the respondents.

Table 3.3 Description of respondents' level of employment readiness in terms of organizational acumen

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	99	17.83%
High	153	27.56%
Average	46	8.28%
Low	105	18.91%
Very Low	152	27.38%
Total	555	100.0

Legend: 541 to 600 - Very High Employment Readiness, 481 to 540 - High Employment Readiness, 421 to 480 - Moderate Employment Readiness, 361 to 420 - Low Employment Readiness, 60 to 360 - Very Low Employment Readiness

Table 3.3 shows that a significant number of the respondents scored low regarding organizational acumen, which represents an awareness of workplace norms, expectations, and roles. Such outcomes indicate that the students are not very aware of the way organizations operate and what is expected in the workplace. Poor exposure to real life working settings could also lead to low exposure to organizational processes.

Table 3.4 Description of respondents' level of employment readiness in terms of social intelligence

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	50	9.0 %
High	191	34.4 %
Average	88	15.9 %
Low	77	13.9 %
Very Low	149	26.8 %
Total	555	100.0

Legend: 541 to 600 - Very High Employment Readiness, 481 to 540 - High Employment Readiness, 421 to 480 - Moderate Employment Readiness, 361 to 420 - Low Employment Readiness, 60 to 360 - Very Low Employment Readiness

Table 3.4 shows the respondents had a low score in social intelligence (communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills). This implies that a great number of students might not be able to effectively communicate with other people in the workplace. As workplaces mean teamwork and mutual understanding, such poor scores point to the necessity of the further development of interpersonal skills.

Table 4.1 Test of relationship between perceived stress and employment readiness in terms of personal characteristics

Spearman Rho Correlation	df	P-value	Significance	Decision
-0.194***	553	<.001	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis

*Legend. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Table 4.1 demonstrates that there is a significant correlation between perceived stress and the personal characteristics. This dimension had a negative relationship with an increase in stress levels, which means that stress reduces the resilience of students, their motivation, and emotional stability. The findings indicate that stress students can be more challenged to exhibit characteristics required to be ready to work.

Table 4.2 Test of relationship between perceived stress and employment readiness in terms of work competence

Spearman Rho Correlation	df	P-value	Significance	Decision
0.255	553	<.001	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis

*Legend. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Table 4.2 demonstrates that there is significant correlation between perceived stress and work competence. The direction of the relationship is positive which implies that there is a possibility of some students reacting to stress in terms of putting more concentration on work or working harder. Despite the fact that this does not hold to all respondents, the findings suggest that work-related competencies could be supported or acquired by some people due to stress.

Table 4.3 Test of relationship between perceived stress and employment readiness in terms of organizational acumen

Spearman Rho Correlation	df	P-value	Significance	Decision
0.264	553	<.001	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis

*Legend. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Table 4.3 demonstrates that there is a significant correlation between perceived stress and organizational acumen. Students who were more stressed were more likely to be more aware of the expectations at the workplace. This implies that the individuals who are exposed to more pressure are likely to be exposed to more responsibilities and therefore, get to learn more concerning organizational roles and processes.

Table 4.4 Test of relationship between perceived stress and employment readiness in terms of social intelligence

Spearman Rho Correlation	df	P-value	Significance	Decision
0.185	553	<.001	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis

*Legend. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Table 4.4 demonstrates a modest yet significant relationship between social intelligence and perceived stress. Stressed students also have communication and interaction situations that may involve them. Stress can also not eliminate or deteriorate their social skills as long as it is under control.

Table 5. Test of relationship between perceived stress and overall employment readiness of the participants

Spearman Rho Correlation	df	P-value	Significance	Decision
0.248***	553	<.001	Significant	Reject Null Hypothesis

*Legend. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Table 5 reveals that there is a significant correlation between perceived stress and the overall readiness to be employed. Students who had greater Stress levels were found to have greater readiness levels. This implies that more responsibilities and demanding work can help in acquiring skills to work allowing the students to have confidence and readiness even after facing stress.

Table 6. Areas of Development and Propose Program (Module-Based)

AREA OF DEVELOPMENT	PROPOSE PROGRAM (MODULE-BASED)
1. Low resilience resulting from increased perceived stress, which negatively affects employment readiness in terms of personal characteristics	• Resilience Building and Strengthening Module

Table 6 shows the primary area of growth among the respondents is low resilience which is manifested by their very low scores in personal characteristics. This implies that a large group of students does not cope, adapt, and stay motivated on how to manage academic or personal difficulties. Since resilience has a strong effect on emotional stability, confidence and work readiness, the lack of resilience greatly affects their overall work readiness. The table proposed program is based on resilience building and resilience strengthening to assist students in coping with stresses better, their coping mechanisms, and their capacity to deal with workplace stress. The results have indicated the needs, and this recommendation is a direct solution to them, therefore, resilience is an area that needs development.

Conclusion

The results of the research indicate that the majority of the people interviewed have moderate levels of perceived stress with a significant proportion experiencing high stress levels and only a few having low levels of stress. This distribution is in opposition to what other studies depict of graduating students; where they are generally characterized to be highly stressed, but rather it is a subjective concept that is dependent on personal viewpoints, coping styles and personal expectations. When it comes to general job preparation, a large percentage of the respondents will be in the average category meaning that they have the basic work skills, but they still have areas that are not well developed and may be something that prevents them both in terms of confidence and their readiness to enter into work life.

On analyzing the employment readiness in terms of certain dimensions, significant differences can be found. Personally, most of the respondents are found within the very low to low range suggesting underdeveloped qualities like resilience, confidence, emotional maturity and willingness to learn. Such findings are in contrast to the literature that highlights that such characteristics as conscientiousness and self-efficacy tend to contribute to better academic and career results. Work competence indicates varied results; some of the respondents exhibit great willingness whereas others indicate significant lacks indicating discrepancies in the functional skills as well as professional behaviors needed in the work environments. The organizational acumen seems to be among the strong sides of the respondents as many of the respondents are extremely knowledgeable about the norms, structures, and expectations in the workplace. Social intelligence is also quite high in the cases of respondents, and most of them demonstrate efficient communication, interpersonal awareness, and adaptive social functioning that is significant in dealing with collaborative environment.

The correlation of the perceived stress and employment readiness has some important trends, as it is the result of the analysis. It was discovered that there was a negative correlation between perceived stress and personal characteristics that perceived stress is in turn related to lower levels of confidence, weak emotional stability, and lower resilience. Conversely, perceived stress has a positive correlation with work competence, organizational acumen, and social intelligence. Such results indicate that stress can become a motivational tool

to some people and can increase their concentration, attention, and sensitivity to workplace-related challenges. The correlation between perceived stress and general employment readiness is also positive, which means that the students who have more responsibilities or get more involved in working on complex tasks can get more stressed and report being more prepared at the same time.

In these findings a number of developmental areas were found. Students need assistance in building on their personal attributes, especially resilience which is adversely impacted by the perceived stress. Besides, they require additional practice work competence, strengthened learning of workplace structures, and long-term improvement of interpersonal skills. A significant portion of the students also exhibit mediocre to poor overall job preparation, which implies the necessity to provide more adequate career guidance, exposure to the real-life working conditions, and organized job preparation. The study will respond to these needs by suggesting a module-based improvement program on resilience building. This module should assist students to better manage stress, overcome the setbacks, and build the emotional resilience to facilitate the readiness to work. All these interventions are meant to equip the students as a group with the psychological and professional powers that are needed to come into the workforce in a more stable, confident, and competent manner.

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