

Coping with Financial Uncertainty: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study on the Effects of TES Grant Reductions on the Mental Well-being of Business Administration Students

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Abstract—This hermeneutic phenomenological study aims to discover the lived experiences of Holy Cross College Business Administration students impacted by the cut backs in Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) grants. With increased financial uncertainty — particularly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and government budget restrictions — this research explores the relationship between diminished financial aid and students' mental well-being and academic engagement. Data were gathered via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve students who had experienced cuts to the TES grant. Thematic analysis identified six impacts: increased financial burden, emotional and psychological strain, lifestyle changes, increased reliance on family, search for alternative sources of income, and uncertainty regarding continuity of education. Using all of these coping mechanisms, including budgeting, mobilizing social and institutional support, taking on part-time work and using spiritual practices, students displayed considerable resilience despite these challenges. The results highlight the deep connection between financial uncertainty and student well-being, pointing to the critical need for integrated support structures on campus. The study provides valuable insights for educators, administrators and mental health professionals who shape educational policy in an effort to reduce the detrimental impacts of financial precariousness on students' educational and personal well-being

I. INTRODUCTION

The financial uncertainty that many students and college students face is more and more seen as a big problem in higher education today that has a deep influence on students' academic careers and mental health. Economic instabilities, globalization processes and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated financial burdens on students in higher education around the world (Harrison & Johnson, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). This pressure is especially acute for students from low-income backgrounds, whose access to quality education is often dependent on the availability of funding in the form of government grants and scholarships.

The Philippine educational system and student experiences is rooted in socioeconomic conditions that directly impact students' ability to finance their education. Programs like Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

(TESDA) grants, for example, are pivotal lifelines on which a lot of Filipino students depend on for sustaining their enrollment to ensure they can graduate (Cruz, 2021). Yet the recent reductions in these financial aid programs have left many students unsure of their academic futures — common manifestations include increased stress levels and negative mental health outcomes.

This study analyzes the effects of the reduction of these necessary financial scholarships on the students pursuing business administration at Holy Cross College. It also seeks to investigate students' coping mechanisms in living with financial challenges and try to check the psychological effects of financial insecurity on well-being and academic performance. It is crucial to know how these forms of financial insecurities affect mental health, for the development of relevant institutional approaches to protect students' academic pursuits and mental well-being.

In the Philippine context, financial stress tends to be studied together with other factors influencing finance such as literacy (or lack thereof), student loan debts and family support. A study in the Davao area has shown financial literacy to be the main determinant of financial stress; especially how details like your spending habits can lead to high distress levels in students overall (Peña et al., 2024). Further studies have also emphasized that financial stress often leads to depression among Filipino students. For example, using the Filipino Student Depression Inventory, we find that worries about the family budget significantly correlate with high scores of depression, hinting at a vicious circle between financial distress and intellectual shadow (Orr et al., 2022). In addition, psychometric studies have furnished particular robust evidence for financial pressures in Filipino students. Since instruments such as the Perceived Stress Scale capture the stress levels associated with them, we can conclude that stress was actually being measured quite accurately in these scales (Reyes et al., 2023).

The outbreak of COVID-19 has also put an additional strain on students in the Philippines. Pandemic-related interruptions have not only deepened the financial pressure, but also made existing academic and social challenges more

complicated (Dantic et al., 2024). Meanwhile with transition into online learning further exacerbated by ever-dwindling resources and more demands on living expenses psychological distress just goes up and up, from high levels of anxiety and depression (Aruta et al., 2024). During the time of the Covid-19 crisis, the evidence suggests that money worries were an even greater predictor of psychological distress among Filipino university students than usual. Such findings argue clearly for targeted financial and psycho-social intervention. (Galanza et al., 2021) Research in line with these studies have similarly discovered -- in this special period -- that greater financial crises mean more pain for learners at university ("Financial Stressors among University Students in the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic", 2023).

In the end, the research suggests that interventions designed to enhance financial intelligence and increase family support are working effectively in minimizing impacts of financial strain. However, studies focusing on college students have found that whether or not financial management behaviors are positive indeed affects your stress levels in complex ways (Danahy et al., 2024). Some studies have suggested even for those students exhibiting positive financial behaviors they may also encounter high levels of stress (Cardenas & Fonte, 2021). It is broadly concluded from these studies that the financial burden felt by Asian and Filipino students is not homogeneous but multifaceted, pointing to a need for approaches which take into account both learning itself and mental health care.

Local Context of Financial Uncertainty

In the context of Philippines higher education, the major problem for students is their financial uncertainty. This is particularly true for those students enrolled in competitive programs that, like business administration at Holy Cross College, provide pretty cozy pay for graduates at graduation. Many students rely on government assistance programs such as TESDA in order to relieve the financial pressure associated with pursuing their college education (Santos, 2022). These scholarships become less likely as budget constraints and slow disbursement of funds make students feel a sense of heightened anxiety about both their academic futures and how they will avoid financial ruin. A recent survey of business administration students revealed that among respondents, about 70% said they felt severe money issues that came directly from cuts in subsidy (Lim & Santos, 2023). This financial anxiety affects more than just what grades students bring home—it penetrates their mental health, creating a climate wherein they are more likely than normal level to suffer from anxiety and depression (Alvarez, 2022; Ramos, 2019). The harsh reality for these young people—managing both studies and financial strain—tends to force them into work rather than study.

The economic fallout from the pandemic has led to massive job losses and declines in family incomes, making these students' lives harder than ever before. Falling into this category is a report by the Commission on Higher Education (2021) which said the pandemic fallout has forced many students to take on part-time employment in order to hang on

in school life, but this affects directly both their level of academic engagement and also general well-being.

Financial Stress and Its Impact on Mental Health

Among student populations, financial stress is consistently linked to negative mental health outcomes. Economic problems and distress are associated with emotional disorders in higher education contexts, according to Smith et al. (2022), resulting in lower levels of motivation to work on studying overall academic investment. However, Alvarez (2022) argues that students in fields already questioning their competence are especially at risk for mental health disorders in those "akhara," sub-income arenas of such extreme material hardship — pointing to the visible imperative for institutions to act.

One thing in common about financial insecurity is that its impact on Philippine education is but part of an international trend. Around the world, across different educational systems, students face similar financial pressures that impact their mental health and ability to study. For example, Choi et al. (2021) found through systematic reviews that financial stress is a feature of U.S. students. It drives up levels of anxiety and depression there, which will obviously also damage academic results and overall quality-of-life judgments. This was verified by a 2020 study published by the National Union of Students in Europe, which showed that over half its domestic pupils suffered from financial distress. This seriously impacted them emotionally and so universities worldwide are urged to provide better support mechanisms for students with money problems. It is consistent with the World Health Organization (2020) research conclusions also, which showed a significant link between financial pressures on adolescents and young people's mental health. Society needs to take urgent action, in the form of policy interventions for example, to resolve this crisis it so afflicted that generation. Studies have agreed that financial adversity in higher education environments not only impedes academic progress but also harms the psychological health of students. According to Harrison and Johnson (2020), financial stress causes student disengagement and eventually lowers student retention. Meanwhile those who face financial difficulties are more likely to give up early altogether from university life.

Existing Literature: Highlights and Gaps

Despite the increasing acknowledgment concerning the relationship between financial uncertainty and mental health implications, qualitative research centered on students' lived experiences amidst financial hardship remains limited. Much of the current literature tends to prioritize quantitative studies that elucidate correlations between financial pressure and academic performance (Gonzalez, 2021; Dela Cruz et al., 2023). However, deeper qualitative analyses focusing on students' personal narratives, coping strategies, and the psychological toll induced by financial strain are notably scarce (Fernandez & Perez, 2020).

In doing so, this study seeks to fill gaps by examining the impact of the reduction in TES grants on the mental well-being of students in the Department of Business Administration at Holy Cross College specifically. Using

qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, this study aims to reveal the nuances of students' struggles, explore their adaptive coping mechanisms, and assess the institutional support systems accessible to them in times of financial distress (Alvarez, 2022; Santos & Lim, 2023).

Research Objective

This study primarily aims to explore the effects of TES grant cuts on the mental wellbeing of Holy Cross College students taking up business administration. This study specifically seeks to accomplish the following:

1. Investigate the Negative Perception of Lower Financial Aid on Students' Mental Health
2. Evaluate the strategies used by students to cope with financial insecurities and the need to achieve academic success.
3. Discover how financial pressure on students affects their classes, staying in school and their social life in their college community.
4. Through a comprehensive examination of students' lived experiences, this research strives to provide vital insights that can guide institutional policies and frameworks aimed at supporting students facing financial adversities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Financial Uncertainty and Its Psychological Implications

First, the psychological impact of financial stress on students is profound, especially in higher education. Dela Cruz et al. led extensive research up to the 2023 date. (2023), which notes that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are especially at risk for mental health concerns. Added to financial strife is the burden of academia, which produces a cascading effect that hinders students' capabilities to concentrate and performs unhealthy in school. This complex problem not only leads to more anxiety in students, but it leads to more depressed students who fear they are not living up to expectations while struggling to pay their way. And the theoretical frameworks around both stress and coping lend themselves well to studying these phenomena." Based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the subjective interpretation of stressors greatly impacts the responses of individuals. Students who view their financial difficulties as unmanageable may undergo more psychological strain. This view is validated by Alvarez (2022), who found that increased financial strain was associated with worse depressive symptom severity, and with perception of ability to cope with these stresses being of utmost importance to psychological well-being. These implications highlight how critical it is for institutions to proactively understand and address these obstacles students face related to mental health.

Moreover, studies highlight that schools should foster an environment that actively supports students under financial stress. Villanueva (2023) emphasizes the importance of institutions understanding their students' overall financial condition to create wider mental health services that consider the implications of financial stress on mental health. When grappling with constant economic concerns, many students

will miss out on indispensable mental health support, which will only compound the existing challenges they are facing. To alleviate the detrimental impacts of financial distress on academic performance and mental health, it is essential to create easily accessible resources for this population. We are still seeing the impacts of financial insecurity on mental health. Lacking these resources, many students suffering prolonged financial distress report heightened anxiety and depressive symptoms, emphasizing the urgent need for institutional coordination that marries financial support with mental health services (Calhoun, 2023). Grasping the complex interplay between economic distress and mental health is critical for designing effective interventions that potentially can enhance students' academic performances in higher education settings.

Coping Mechanisms in the Face of Financial Adversity

One prominent theme in the literature regarding financial insecurity is the range of coping strategies that students adopt as they navigate financial hardship. For example, as demonstrated in studies such as those by Tan and Baquiran (2024) students utilize social family systems (family, friends and peers) as a fundamental source of emotional and logistical support. This dependence on social support forms the backbone of the Social Support Theory, which describes how supportive relationships provide benefits that can alleviate stress-related harm. The positive feedback they get from their social networks is one reason the students who make an effort to be social tend to have better emotional health — which can lead to better academic performance.

Osorio (2022) delves deeper into coping strategies noting that institutional resources are key for students who cope effectively. Which impact should be examined further is the extent to which students have access to mental health services to help manage the stress that accompanies financial issues. The students accessing counseling services not only share their stories. They develop coping strategies that can reduce the psychological impact of financial uncertainties. These results encourage greater attention to campus mental health programs aimed at empowering students with the tools to resolve their financial anxiety before they develop.

In addition, this is where financial literacy programs have become another important coping mechanism. Studies show students who go through personal finance training and learn money management skills tend to feel more confident handling their finances (Bautista, 2021). An improvement in awareness and financial skills creates programs that could lead to fewer anxiety-inducing unmanageable financial stressors. As a result, educational institutions need to incorporate financial literacy into their curricula and support services so as to equip students to better deal in their financial reality.

These differences in coping strategies also highlight the need for tailored student support mechanisms. Schools must develop a layered plan of action—emotional, educational and financial supports—to build resilience and academic success for all. In so doing, colleges and universities can help students cultivate not only the skills but the emotional resilience they need to flourish in the face of financial hardship.

The Impact of Economic Disruptions

Current events around the world, particularly economic turmoil like the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted the precarity of students' financial situations. Pandemic like never before brought a different kind of challenges, there were massive job losses and more dependence on financial aid (Harrison & Johnson, 2020). However, the Commission on Higher Education finds this far from a universal experience: in 2021, many students were in a position of being unable to afford basic necessities, making their education even more complex (Commission on Higher Education, 2021). Such financial insecurity has already disrupted students' studies in the now, but it also planted the seeds of longer-term emotional malaise that could follow them for years to come.

Smith et al. (2022) highlight the potential to handle financial insecurity they experienced during the pandemic, with long-term consequences for mental health. They discovered that students who experienced economic distress reported higher rates of depressive symptoms and anxiety than those who did not, rates that may perpetuate even as conditions return to normal. It signifies a need for continued mental health support that takes into consideration the experiences of those affected by a crisis's economic repercussions. School districts need to be aware, and do more to offer resources and counseling services to help students dealing with them.

The literature also reflects growing recognition of the necessity for institutional responsiveness to changing economic conditions. For example, Gonzalez (2021) proposes a proactive approach, in which educational institutions put in place initiatives to predict the needs of students in periods of economic turmoil. Examples include making emergency financial aid available and tailoring tuition around students' economic conditions. Colleges that gradually insert flexibility into their protocol streams will set the stage for continuing support that allows students to concentrate on their studies, rather than their economic woes.

In addition, the long-term impact of economic disruptions require the creation of comprehensive support frameworks that cater to both more immediate economic vulnerabilities and also longer-term mental health trajectories. We know that to live a well-rounded happier life, student well-being is tricky business realizing and it must be piece of institutional policy and practices, which shouldn't restrict to just student mental health practices, financial wellbeing is obviously a contributory factor of upcoming graduates as well.

This study holds significant value in highlighting the effects of financial challenges on students' mental well-being, providing practical insights for stakeholders to develop programs, policies, and support systems that foster a healthier educational environment. The objective of this study is to explore and interpret the lived experiences of Business Administration students facing financial uncertainty due to reductions in the TES grant, focusing on how these financial challenges impact their mental well-being. This research seeks to understand the coping strategies students employ, their perceptions of financial stress, and the broader effects on their academic and personal lives. By using a hermeneutic

phenomenological approach, the study aims to provide in-depth insights into students' struggles and resilience, offering valuable implications for higher education policy makers, administrators, mental health practitioners, and student support services.

Here are three central research questions for the study:

1. How do Business Administration students experience financial uncertainty following reductions in the TES grant?
2. What coping strategies do students employ to manage the financial and emotional challenges associated with reduced financial support?

These questions aim to uncover the nuances of students' experiences, their adaptive strategies, and the broader impact on their well-being.

III. MEHTOD

Research Design and Method

The overall purpose of this study was to qualitatively explore and phenomenologically interpret the lived experiences of Business Administration students, who were maintaining their enrollment during periods of financial uncertainty related to the identification of the degree of reduction in the grant provided under the TES grant. Hermeneutic phenomenology, based in the philosophy of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, focused on understanding the interpretations people ascribed to their experiences within a contextual realm (van Manen, 2016). Data from this type of qualitative interview was particularly appropriate for this study, which needed to do more than just catalogue how financial challenges impacted the students' mental health but also to explore what these challenges meant to the students and ways in which they coped (Mason, 2018).

In doing so, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach facilitated an interpretive analysis imaginative enough to go beyond descriptions of financial stress to unearth students' subjective realities relevant to how they endeavored to survive financially Krummenacher et al 2021. Reviewing and coding the data while interpreting it also created a hermeneutic circle where preliminary interpretations were revisited and refined via ongoing exposure to the data and participants (Smith et al., 2009).

Data Collection

We collected data using individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which suited phenomenological studies as they enabled the participants to talk openly about their experiences and allowed the researcher to probe for more information (van Manen, 2016). In each, we aimed to prompt students to consider how TES grant cuts impacted their financial security, emotional health, and day-to-day lives. Such an open-ended format provided an opportunity for flexibility and responsiveness in line with the interpretative aim of capturing the essence of students' lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Data Analysis

The analyses were based on van Manen's (2016) method of thematic reflection, which entailed ascertaining significant themes from participants' accounts that conveyed the core of their experiences. Using the hermeneutic circle, the researcher interpreted each part, refocusing on the text outcomes as well as the whole in order to unearth underlying meanings and patterns (Heidegger, 1962). This cyclical process sought to illuminate the impacts of financial uncertainty on students and to reveal the personal meanings and coping strategies that students created in response to that financial uncertainty (Tables).

This framework allowed to interpret the students' lived experiences in a way that revealed the impact of financial uncertainty on the mental well-being, academic engagement and overall life satisfaction of students.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview guide designed to facilitate an open-ended and flexible conversation with participants. This guide consisted of carefully crafted questions intended to probe students' experiences with financial uncertainty and its effects on their mental well-being due to TES grant reductions. The semi-structured format was particularly suited to hermeneutic phenomenology, as it allowed participants to share their narratives in a manner that reflected their lived realities, while also enabling the researcher to explore emergent themes and deepen the inquiry as needed (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Content and Validation of the Research Instrument

The interview guide included questions addressing the central research questions, focusing on how students experienced financial uncertainty, their coping strategies, and the effects of this uncertainty on their mental health and daily lives. Open-ended questions allowed participants to respond freely, fostering rich, descriptive responses that captured the depth of their experiences. For instance, questions such as "How has the reduction in the TES grant affected your daily life?" or "What strategies do you use to cope with financial stress?" were designed to elicit detailed responses reflecting each participant's unique perspective.

Validation Process

To ensure the reliability and validity of the interview questions, the guide underwent an expert validation process involving professionals with expertise in phenomenological research, higher education, and student mental health. Three experts were invited to review the interview guide: An expert in qualitative research and hermeneutic phenomenology reviewed the questions for alignment with the study's philosophical approach, ensuring they were open-ended and conducive to interpretative analysis, a higher education policy specialist assessed the relevance of the questions to current financial challenges affecting students, ensuring they captured pertinent issues related to TES grant reductions. A mental health professional reviewed the questions for sensitivity, clarity, and appropriateness, ensuring they did not

unintentionally trigger emotional distress in participants and were respectful of their experiences.

Each expert received a copy of the interview guide along with the study's objectives, methodology, and central research questions. They were asked to provide feedback on each question's relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's goals. Following their review, the researcher conducted a content validity assessment and incorporated expert feedback to refine the questions. For instance, some questions were rephrased to improve clarity, and additional probes were added to prompt deeper responses. After revisions, the guide was finalized, with each question validated for its contribution to understanding the lived experiences of students facing financial uncertainty. In this way, the expert validation process ensured that the interview guide was both rigorous and suitable for exploring the study's research questions. The validated instrument provided a robust foundation for collecting meaningful data, enabling the researcher to capture rich insights into students' perceptions and experiences.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of 12 students enrolled in a Business Administration program, selected to explore the lived experiences of those directly impacted by TES (Tertiary Education Subsidy) grant reductions. Selecting students from the Business Administration program ensured a focused exploration within a specific academic field, providing insights into how financial uncertainty affected students' mental well-being, academic engagement, and daily lives.

The following criteria were used to select participants for the study:

1. Enrollment in the Business Administration Program: Participants had to be currently enrolled in the Business Administration program, as the study focused on financial and academic challenges within this specific academic group.
2. Bona Fide Students: Only bona fide students who met institutional enrollment and attendance requirements were included to ensure that participants were actively engaged in their academic programs.
3. Directly Affected by TES Grant Reductions: Participants had to have experienced a reduction in their TES grant funding to ensure that their experiences aligned with the study's focus on financial uncertainty and mental well-being.
4. Willingness and Ability to Participate in In-Depth Interviews: Students needed to demonstrate openness to share their personal experiences and insights and be available to participate in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 60–90 minutes.

Students who met any of the following criteria were excluded from the study:

1. Students in Other Academic Programs: Those not enrolled in the Business Administration program were not included to maintain the study's focus on a single academic discipline.

2. Students Not Affected by TES Grant Reductions: Students who had not experienced TES grant reductions were excluded, as their experiences might not align with the study's central research questions.
3. Non-Bona Fide Students: Part-time students or those who did not meet full institutional enrollment criteria were not eligible to participate.
4. Unavailability for Interview: Students unable to commit to a full interview or who expressed discomfort discussing their personal financial and mental well-being were excluded, as this could affect the data's depth and reliability.

These inclusion and exclusion criteria helped ensure that the selected participants were representative of the target population and directly impacted by TES grant reductions, facilitating a focused, in-depth examination of financial uncertainty and its effects on student mental health. This carefully chosen sample enabled the researcher to gain meaningful insights and contribute valuable findings on this critical issue.

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Problem 1. Tabular presentation of Codes and Themes derived from the synthesized responses of the 12 Business Administration students:

This thematic analysis organizes the core ideas expressed by participants, providing a clear structure for qualitative reporting and interpretation.

The framework illustrates how *TES grant reductions* triggered a ripple effect on Business Administration students, shaping their financial behaviors, emotional well-being, and academic journey. Based on the themes, the experience of financial uncertainty can be interpreted through four core areas:

- a) Financial Impact and Lifestyle Adjustments. The students described a clear increase in financial burden, where even essential needs like transportation, data, and food became challenging. These constraints led to a shift in spending priorities, with students choosing to skip meals, sacrifice personal needs, and live under tight budgets. Financial strain compelled students to adopt survival tactics. This reflects a deep disruption in their daily lives, showing how economic instability directly affects student welfare.
- b) Emotional and Psychological Effects. Many students expressed feelings of stress, anxiety, and emotional fatigue. The pressure of constantly thinking about how to make ends meet affected their academic focus and mental stability. Students internalized these struggles, which often resulted in emotional numbness or hopelessness. Financial insecurity didn't only manifest in lifestyle compromises but also took a serious toll on mental health, which could have long-term consequences on academic performance and personal development.
- c) Social and Academic Disruption. Due to reduced financial support, students relied more heavily on their families—leading to feelings of guilt and helplessness. Some even considered dropping out. The added strain on relationships and the emotional burden of being a “financial weight” on their families added to their distress. This reflects a clash between the students' academic goals and their socio-

economic realities, often leading to compromised educational continuity.

- d) **Coping Through Income Generation and Future Worries.** Several students were pushed to look for part-time jobs or side hustles, even if these affected their time for schoolwork. Still, many remained unsure about their future—questioning whether they could continue their studies or graduate on time. While this shows resilience and initiative, it also highlights the precarious balance students must maintain between education and survival, ultimately influencing their long-term educational outcomes

The framework reveals that TES grant reductions did not just reduce the students' buying power—it disrupted their well-being, education, relationships, and sense of self. Financial uncertainty is thus a multifaceted challenge that requires holistic support—not only in monetary terms but also through mental health services, academic counseling, and institutional interventions

This breakdown helps clearly identify how students respond to financial and emotional stress, and can be directly used in qualitative analysis or reporting

2. What coping strategies do students employ to manage the financial and emotional challenges associated with reduced financial support?

TABLE 1

Theme	Code
Increased Financial Burden	- Struggle with transportation costs - Difficulty affording school supplies - Lack of funds for internet/data
Shift in Spending Priorities	- Skipping meals/snacks - Cutting down on personal needs - Budget adjustments for daily survival
Emotional and Psychological Strain	- Anxiety and stress due to finances - Difficulty focusing on studies - Constant worry about survival
Increased Dependence and Guilt	- Reliance on family for additional funds - Feelings of guilt and burden - Strained family relationships
Motivation to Look for Income	- Seeking part-time jobs or side hustles - Balancing work and academics - Impact on academic performance
Uncertainty About the Future	- Thoughts of dropping out - Doubts about graduating on time - Hopelessness toward financial aid situation

The Business Administration students employed a variety of coping strategies to manage the dual burden of financial and emotional stress brought on by the TES grant reduction. These strategies were categorized into practical, emotional, and social coping mechanisms:

1. **Budgeting and Financial Discipline**

Many students reported developing strict budgeting habits, learning to prioritize essentials over wants, and tracking their daily spending.

"I started writing down my expenses so I could monitor where every peso goes."

2. **Part-Time Work and Side Hustles**

Some participants sought alternative sources of income, such as selling food online, offering academic assistance to peers, or doing freelance work.

"I sell snacks and load in our barangay. It's not much, but it helps me get by."

3. **Seeking Family and Peer Support**

Emotional support from family members and peers was a significant source of strength. Some students shared how talking to trusted individuals helped them stay motivated.

"I always talk to my older sibling when things get tough. She reminds me why I started."

4. **Time and Stress Management Techniques**

Several students turned to stress-relief practices such as journaling, listening to music, or taking walks to deal with anxiety.

"I write in my journal every night. It helps me process my thoughts and feel lighter."

5. **Spirituality and Prayer**

A number of students mentioned that they found comfort and hope through prayer and spiritual practices.

"When I feel overwhelmed, I pray. It gives me peace even if things are hard."

6. **Seeking Institutional Help**

A few participants tried to approach school offices or scholarship programs for temporary assistance or advice.

"I went to the guidance office to ask if there are other scholarships I could apply for."

7. **Maintaining a Positive Mindset**

Despite the hardships, some students made a conscious effort to stay optimistic and focus on long-term goals.

"I keep telling myself this is just a phase. Someday, I'll look back and be proud I didn't give up."

Students demonstrated resilience by employing a mix of financial adjustments, emotional self-care, social connection, and inner motivation. These coping strategies allowed them to survive and stay committed to their studies, despite the reduction in financial aid.

TABLE 2: Coping Strategies and Corresponding Codes

Theme	Code
Budgeting and Financial Discipline	- Tracking daily expenses - Prioritizing basic needs - Avoiding unnecessary spending
Part-Time Work and Side Hustles	- Selling food or prepaid load - Tutoring or freelance work - Small-scale business efforts
Seeking Family and Peer Support	- Talking to siblings or parents - Emotional support from friends - Encouragement from peers
Time and Stress Management Techniques	- Journaling or writing feelings - Listening to music or walking - Practicing relaxation habits
Spirituality and Prayer	- Praying during difficult moments - Drawing strength from faith - Participating in spiritual activities
Seeking Institutional Help	- Visiting guidance office - Inquiring about new scholarship programs - Asking for academic support
Maintaining a Positive Mindset	- Self-motivation through affirmations - Focusing on long-term goals - Avoiding negativity or giving up

Interpretation and Discussion

This framework shows how Business Administration students navigate the combined financial and emotional pressures stemming from the reduction in TES grants. Their coping strategies form the backbone of their resilience, allowing them to persist despite adversity. *Financial and Emotional Impact.* The initial stage highlights that students experience both financial stress and emotional strain. The inability to meet basic needs like transportation, meals, and school materials creates a persistent background of worry. Emotionally, this pressure manifests as anxiety, sadness, and mental fatigue, with some students feeling hopeless or on the verge of giving up. These burdens are closely intertwined, as financial problems often fuel emotional instability—affecting both personal well-being and academic engagement

2) Student-Initiated Coping Strategies

Students employ several proactive coping strategies, such as: Budgeting and minimalism, showing their efforts to stretch limited funds, Part-time work or small businesses, even if it means sacrificing rest or study time. *Emotional self-care techniques, such as music, walking, or journaling, to relieve stress, Keeping a positive mindset, with motivational self-talk and long-term goal orientation.*

These strategies reflect adaptability and strong willpower. Students are not passive victims of their circumstances—they act creatively to cope, even when their resources are limited.

3) Support Mechanisms and Resources. Aside from personal efforts, students turn to external support, including: Family and friends, who provide emotional and sometimes financial backing, Spiritual beliefs, which offer inner peace and resilience, Institutional help, such as scholarships, guidance offices, or trusted mentors. Support networks play a crucial role in strengthening students' ability to endure. The combination of internal and external coping strategies contributes to holistic resilience

4) Outcome: Resilience and Adaptation

Despite the many challenges, students demonstrate the ability to adapt. Their experiences reflect a form of emerging resilience, where hardship becomes a catalyst for personal growth, resourcefulness, and maturity. This adaptation doesn't imply the challenges are solved—it shows that students continue to persist and strive for their educational goals, even in difficult conditions.

The coping strategies employed by students in response to reduced financial support reveal a layered, complex process of adaptation. While the reduction in TES grants poses serious risks to their well-being and education, students counteract these effects through both personal discipline and social support. Institutions should recognize these coping patterns and provide targeted support systems to amplify student resilience and promote retention and success.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: LIVED EXPERIENCES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS AMID TES GRANT REDUCTIONS

The findings of this study revealed the deeply intertwined relationship between financial uncertainty and emotional well-being among Business Administration students who

experienced reductions in the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES). Framework 1 outlined how the TES cutbacks led to a ripple effect—generating financial stress, emotional strain, and social disruptions that collectively challenged students' academic performance and mental health.

Students reported struggling with basic needs such as transportation, meals, internet access, and academic materials. This material deprivation translated into psychological stress, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness about their academic future. Many students internalized feelings of guilt and burden, especially those who relied on family support amid financial strain. Some even contemplated dropping out due to the compounded pressure of economic instability and academic demands.

However, despite these challenges, students demonstrated significant resilience and adaptive capacity—as captured in Framework 2. They employed a variety of coping strategies to navigate their financial and emotional hardships. These included practical efforts such as strict budgeting, part-time work, and side hustles, as well as emotional strategies like mindfulness, journaling, spiritual reflection, and leaning on peer and family support.

Their ability to adapt was not merely reactive—it was intentional, resourceful, and reflective of a broader goal: to survive and succeed academically despite reduced financial aid. The presence of external support systems, such as empathetic faculty, school counselors, and faith-based resilience, further reinforced their ability to withstand adversity.

Ultimately, the integration of both frameworks paints a picture of students who, although financially and emotionally vulnerable, exhibit commendable perseverance and resourcefulness. The TES grant reductions undeniably disrupted their academic journeys, but these students have managed to construct meaningful coping pathways through both personal effort and social networks

Implications for Practice

- *Higher education institutions* must recognize these lived experiences and provide *targeted psychosocial and financial support*, such as emergency grants, peer support groups, and counseling services.
- *Policy makers* must reconsider the implications of reducing educational subsidies, especially for low-income students, and explore sustainable support mechanisms.
- Encouraging *financial literacy, resilience training, and mentorship programs* may empower students to better manage uncertainty in the future.

Conclusion

- While TES grant reductions brought substantial hardship, students were not passive recipients of these challenges. Through a combination of survival instincts, emotional intelligence, and support systems, they carved out their own paths toward academic and personal stability. Their lived experiences and coping strategies form a compelling narrative of resilience in the face of systemic financial constraints—offering valuable insight for educational

leaders, mental health professionals, and policy makers alike.

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