

# The Lived Experiences of Working Architecture Students in Coping Academic Stress as Regards to Plates Making

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# ABSTRACT

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Keywords: This is a qualitative descriptive research that identify the challenges Academic Stress; experienced by working architecture students. A content analysis was used Coping Mechanism; to examine the nine working architecture students at the Technological Technological University of the Philippines - Manila. Snowball sampling was used to identify the participants. The researchers conducted semi-structured University of the Philippines; interviews to gather data on the challenges faced by the students which Architecture Students; includes identifying the main challenges, sub-challenges, effects, and coping mechanisms. The participants' narratives reveal the interrelation of factors Plates Making. affecting their ability to meet academic requirements and maintain a healthy lifestyle. It was found out that their academic performance is affected as they work with their respective part time job. While coping mechanisms such as seeking support, engaging in therapeutic activities, and maintaining integrity through consistent efforts are employed, the pervasive impact of these challenges on academic performance and well-being emphasizes the necessity for targeted interventions and support structures to foster a more conducive environment for the success and betterment of working architecture students. The study is instrumental in forming adaptive and inclusive educational policies, acknowledging the increasing prevalence of students managing multiple commitments which highlights the broader issue of work-life balance, this further recommends to institutions to adopt holistic approach that prioritize not only academic achievement but also the overall well-being of students. Article History: Received: 14-07-2024 This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license Revised : 29-08-2024 Accepted: 31-08-2024 Crossref

# A. INTRODUCTION

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Architecture is a field that comprises various disciplines, such as arts, culture, economics, geography, history and science that encompass the needs of the people while maintaining sustainability for an efficient result of structure (Hasan et al., 2017). It is a course that needs time and constant effort to produce an acceptable outcome. A survey from Indiana University's National 2016 Study of Student Engagement showed that architecture students study the most hours compared to multiple degrees, proving the claim of society that architecture is the forerunning arduous degree (Lynch, 2017). Due to this, students undergo negative emotions and issues, hindering their academic progress and success.

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According to Ayalp & Civici (2021), architectural education differs from other programs since it has specific properties due to it being an interdisciplinary practice or field. As a result, various studies about the consequent stressors of the program exist, but there exist limited studies regarding the effects, levels, and factors of these stressors. That said, Tayade (2023) supports the above mentioned excerpt by concluding that stress in architecture is a given due to the high demands of the curriculum and seniors in the professional practice because of continually prioritizing other users' needs to respond and reflect on their design.

According to American College Health Association data from 2017, negative emotions were experienced by an alarming population of college students, with 24.2% experiencing anxiety, 15.9% experiencing depression, and 30.6% experiencing stress. Some of the factors that influence the perceived stress level of architecture students are academic inadequacy, an intensive academic schedule, unusual assessment and evaluation techniques of courses, different characteristics of architectural education, and examination-course challenges (Ayalp & Civici, 2021). Other factors that influence the stress of architecture students include high expectations, financial constraints, and time travel.

Architectural education was regarded as a demanding and stressful course as the curriculum requires students to acquire multiple competencies, such as knowledge of theory, expertise in technology, creative design, and interpersonal skills, which causes pressure and overwhelm (Ayalp & Çivici, 2021). This demanding task is exacerbated by stressors identified by Smith and Lilly (2014), encompassing unclear directions, disorganization, and negative feedback, stemming from teaching staff who uphold elevated expectations for student work. Furthermore, architecture students grapple with personal attributes such as perfectionism, overachievement, procrastination, and self-criticism, amplifying academic pressure and stress.

Another factor that caused stress to architecture students was financial stability. Entering the field of architecture is a costly one. Many people find it prohibitively expensive due to the cost of schooling, supplies, and other connected fees (Parker, 2023). It can be challenging to pursue an architecture degree due to financial constraints. Many architecture students found themselves juggling part-time jobs or looking for other sources of income to pay their expenses due to financial limits or commitments, looming debt from expensive tuition, and the cost of basic needs like housing and food (Hegenauer, 2018). Furthermore, along the challenging academic path, students may feel disoriented, overwhelmed, and neglected due to a lack of support meant specifically for the architecture field.

Time has also always been a huge factor as a source of stress for students. Whether it is about meeting deadlines, extended hours of studying, or long hours of travel, time constraints cause stress, pressure, and anxiety. Regardless of the mode of transportation, traveling can be tiring and tough (Callo et al., 2021). Most students experienced exhaustion due to their long hours of traveling to school, waiting for a ride, and traffic congestion. These can negatively impact the students' well-being as their sleep and exercise time decreases. Students' performance in school was greatly affected since by the time they arrived at home or school, students felt exhausted from the travel. In the study of Xie et al. (2019) studying away from home and the long hours of learning and designing were recognized as some of the sources of stress for architecture students. Lectures and laboratory subjects design often happen for the whole day. Due to the stress given by the course, architecture students often feel burned out and unmotivated as the long hours of time travel, lectures, and constant working on designs take a toll on them. In support of that, Rupido (2020) found that coping strategies affect college students' academic achievement, contingent upon the degree of academic stress they had experienced.

This research indicates underlying conflicts in the work-academic conditions of architecture students when plate making as working students to highlight the stressors, such as heavy workload, high expectations, and financial constraints, that eventually hinder the student's success. Despite the notable research conducted on working students, there is a noticeable gap in the limited studies focused on architecture students, which further emphasizes the importance of the study. Furthermore, by identifying the significant stress factors, this study aims to unveil the experiences of working architecture students and their effective coping strategies.

#### **B. METHODS**

The researchers utilized a qualitative study with a descriptive research design to identify the challenges experienced by working architecture students and understand how these challenges impact both their personal lives and academic pursuits, as well as the strategies they use to manage them. A content analysis examined nine working architecture students from the first year to the fifth year at the Technological University of the Philippines – Manila. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews through the use of snowball sampling to gather data on the challenges faced by the students during their studies, identifying the main challenges, subchallenges, effects, and coping mechanisms.

A semi structured interview was used and it involved conducting one-on-one interviews with architecture students to let them express in their own ways and pace. The interviewer does not follow a predetermined set of questions or a fixed interview structure. Instead, the conversation is more open-ended and flexible. It is often referred to as a "controlled conversation" that is influenced by the interviewer's interests (Gray, 2021). This methodology suited the nature of this research study, which analyze the lived experiences of architecture working students of TUP-Manila during plate making, as shown in Table 1.

Code	Year and Section	Age	Gender	Location	Type of work	Scholarship grantee or not
PN1	BSA-2A	20	Female	Quiapo, Manila & Arayat, Pampanga	SK Councilor	No
PN2	BSA-1B	18	Male	Blk 419A L29, Heritage Villas, Metrogate & CSJDM Bulacan	Part time McDonald's service crew	No
PN3	BSA-3D	23	Male	Tondo, Manila	Kitchen crew in a Fastfood restaurant	No
PN4	BSA-4D	23	Female	Makati City	BPO, & Accepting Commissions	No
PN5	BSA-4C	21	Male	San Marcelino, Manila & Olongapo City, Zambales	Commercial Model, Event Host, & Public Official	Yes
PN6	BSA-2C	19	Male	Santa Maria, Bulacan	Financial Health Planner	Yes
PN7	BSA-3C	20	Female	Teresa, Rizal	Customer Service Representative	Yes
PN8	BSA-2A	19	Female	Quezon City	Part time Artist	Yes
PN9	BSA-2A	19	Female	Cavite	Freelance Artist	No

Table 1. Pai	rticipant Demo	graphic Info	rmation
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# C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data gathered from the respondents. The presentation is made using tables. Analysis and interpretation of data were performed through the tabular presentation, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes				
Main themes	Subthemes			
	Unsatisfactory outputs			
High expectations	Pressure			
Financial Stability	Lack of financial resources			
	Simultaneous Deadlines			
Heavy workloads	Complex Designs			
	Incomplete Attendance			
Time Constraints	Long hours of travel			
	Declined Holistic Health			
Effects of stress	Exhaustion			
Coping with stress	Therapeutic Activities			
	Integrity			

# 1. Unsatisfactory Output

The informants admitted that balancing academic responsibilities and work is challenging. As they juggle the demands of their academic pursuits and jobs, they often experience a lack of time to produce a good-quality output. PN 2 stated: *"Sometimes I can't give my 100% to my plate because of the lack of time and energy, my mentality is for me to pass it on time and complete it based on the requirements."* According to Briant et al. (2023), students may adopt a mindset that prioritizes productivity over enjoying the process of their projects as a result of the need to manage work and study responsibilities which can be overwhelming and hinder the ability to produce high-quality work. Additionally, when students hold high expectations, they can feel disappointment when those expectations are not fulfilled. As a result, this can lead to a sense of dissatisfaction with their work and potentially result in lower output levels (Aghaei et al., 2023). On the other hand, PN1 revealed that she is not satisfied with her plates. She always say that she can do better, but since her drafting skills are not good, it results to get her a low grades.

# 2. Pressure

Being under pressure is one of the sub themes of the participants' high expectations. Architecture students always have a lot on their hands, so they feel pressure to finish their activities, especially in major subjects, on time since everyone else is working. Being employed puts pressure which has an impact on their academic performance. As stated by PN5, *"actually it forces me to do my task immediately knowing all the errands I must do."* In the study of Hasan et al. (2017), the academic performance of working architecture students can be adversely affected by the pressure to complete assignments on time. Students who work often struggle to balance their time between work and school, which can negatively impact their academic achievement. Furthermore, the pressure to finish projects and meet deadlines can be stressful and have an impact on the quality of their work. This situation is also discernible at work, as PN4 said, *"Situations that can induce stress... when there is a quota score that we need to reach in work, and when the deadlines in school and work come up together."* Time pressure is a common challenge

for architecture students, which can contribute to stress. Working architecture students may experience stress and difficulties due to the demands of both work and school (Xie et al., 2019).

## 3. Lack of Financial Resources

Previous research by Ahmed & Julius (2015) demonstrates that students' levels of depression, stress, and anxiety have a significant impact on their academic performance. One stressor that has a significant negative impact on college students' mental health is financial stress (Tran et al., 2018). According to prior research by Chantea et al. (2017), there are four primary reasons why students choose to work: to improve their skills, which accounted for the greatest percentage of respondents (40.3%), to be financially independent, to support their families, and finally to gain experience. The interviewees acknowledged that architectural education is an expensive course of study because it demands buying a variety of costly materials and tools, such as drawing supplies and model-making materials, to name a few. The lack of financial resources to acquire these materials and to support other personal needs is one of the main reasons for participants getting a job while studying. PN2 answered, "I was urged to support myself since my course needs enough finances." PN3 recognized this reason as well, stating: "What urged me to get a job while studying is mainly the lack of financial capability to sustain my everyday fare fee and to buy the materials needed in the course such as pens, paper, etc. which are a bit pricey." Some individuals still receive some financial assistance from their parents for basic needs; PN5 stated, "My parents are my primary financial support, assisting with utility bills and academic necessities." However, PN4 is urged to work since she does not receive financial assistance from their parents to support herself.

#### 4. Simultaneous Deadlines

The respondents acknowledge that having multiple deadlines for different subjects while also considering their professional obligations causes their workloads to become overwhelming, necessitating the development of time management skills. This is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Reddy & Vaishnavi (2020), which found that one of the main factors contributing to students' stress in architecture education is working loads and deadlines, with 77.2% of respondents agreeing. The sub-theme was summarized through PN6 answer: "*The challenging aspect of architecture arises when professors assign multiple plates simultaneously, requiring effective time management.*" Additionally, PN7 contributed that the deadlines linked with the complexity of architecture's range of considerations fuel the difficulty of meeting their deadlines on time, stating: "*Architecture is not just about drawing; there are numerous things we must consider while designing.*"

#### 5. Complex Designs

According to Meyer & Fourie (2018), students acquire knowledge in design during architectural education, in which they must follow the systematic architectural design phase, which includes site analysis, concept design, design development, construction drawings, presentation, and revision to address complex design problems. However, these design phases alone pose challenges for those studying architecture. PN1 shared, "Mahirap mag isip ng complex design requirements, and yung pressure every time may plates and exams." ["It is challenging to work with complex design requirements, especially when you feel pressured about other plates and examinations."] Designing complex structures can be challenging for every architect, including students, as it requires careful planning. Danacı (2015) identified that one of the primary problems students experience is their inability to apply their theoretical understanding into

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practice. Because the pre-university education trained them to study by memorization, architecture students frequently struggle to come up with original design concepts. They lack the inspiration and resources necessary to create innovative projects that include various knowledge from prior years.

Alongside other factors to consider during the design phase is the aesthetics of the building since transforming a structure into a beautiful work of art is one of the jobs of an architect. PN1 added, *"Need din na creative ka and magaling sa drafting." "You also need to be creative and adept in manual drafting."* Arslan & Dazkir (2017) revealed that students may encounter difficulties in the conceptual phase when working on their 2D drawings. Their inability to produce 2D and 3D mental representations and to draw with technical proficiency had a negative effect on their design process. Thus, formulating new ideas to create a complex design for an architectural structure brings stress to architecture students.

#### 6. Incomplete Attendance

Tumin et al., (2020) discovered that students who opt to work while they study do so for numerous reasons, including financial support, personal growth, and a desire to combine theory and practice. But juggling between work and education comes with its costs and benefits. One of the stressors associated with being a working student seems to be missing class. PN7 said, *"I can sometimes be late to class, or I can't attend at all due to work-related exhaustion."* As mentioned by Creed et al. (2015), students who think that work takes up too much of their time also perceive that it competes with their schoolwork, making them feel more drained and requiring them to skip classes and have less time for studying.

Even though students need to attend class because their attendance is one of the factors that determines their grades and they indicate how engaged a student is with their course of study, *PN1 admitted, "Hirap ako kung ano need unahin na gawin kasi parehong importante. May nasasacrifice na isa. Either di ko magagawa agad acads ko or vice versa". "I find it hard to determine which I must do first because both are crucial. It ends up sacrificing one to accomplish the other. It would be either not finishing my academic task on time to do my work or vice versa". This is consistent with the findings of Darolia (2014), who found that working while being a student can negatively affect a student's academic performance. Because of limited time resources, students may choose to work instead of engaging in educational, social, extracurricular, or leisure activities, which could affect their well-being, socialization, or academic achievement.* 

#### 7. Long Hours of Travel

The interviewees revealed that the minimum time it usually takes them to get from home to school, school to work, and home to work is roughly one hour or beyond. PN2, for instance, answered that his travel time from home to school and school to work is 2-3 hours. The long hours of travel are mainly because of the significant traffic congestion experienced, especially in Metro Manila, as also noted by PN3: "... depends on the traffic it mostly takes up to 1 hour." According to the findings of Somuyiwa et al. (2015), traffic congestion is found to have a significant and negative effect on workers' productivity. Commuters arrive late at their destination which not only disrupts their own schedules but can also affect their overall workplace efficiency. Furthermore, arriving late at school or work can result in absenteeism which affects their salary as well as personal records, thus, impacting their efforts.

PN5 states that, while living in a dorm in Metro Manila, he had to travel for 4-5 hours to get home and perform his official duties in his hometown as an SK Kagawad. The amount of time spent

on travel poses challenges to their tight schedules, leading to delays and limited time to work on their projects. To alleviate the difficulties that the working architecture students face, some of them opt to reside in dorms close to the TUP-Manila campus and take jobs that can be completed from home or nearby. PN5 stated: *"As a freelance model, I restrict my work opportunities to locations within Metro Manila for easier access to school and my dorm."* 

## 8. Declined Holistic Health

The participants reported that their overall well-being is below their perceived standards of being healthily okay. Consequent to the above-stated challenges they face, PN8 added that their physical situation contributes to their stress, stating: *"The most stressful moment for me is when I am sleep deprived while skipping meals & tired commuting to school every day [trans.]."* Patrick et al., (2017) stated that students commonly experience sleep deprivation due to academic and social pressures as they often sacrifice sleep to comply with the overwhelming demands from school, sports, work, family, and friendships. These poor sleep patterns may affect college students and raising the risk of major mood disorders and substance abuse. They also highlighted that sleep deprivation does not affect students' cognitive ability while their physical performance is significantly affected. However, PN5 stated that these difficulties faced by working architecture students cause them trauma in addition to stress. Meaning, it can also impact their mental health which also harms academic performance.

PN7 went out of their way, implying: *"I would summarize my well-being as with the word, 'damaged' due to fatigue, leading me to catch illnesses quite often [trans.]."* Drăghici & Cazan (2022) suggest that students holding full-time jobs tend to encounter elevated levels of academic burnout in contrast to work-related burnout. However, for cognitive impairment, this trend is reversed, with higher levels observed among students engaged in part-time employment. This indicates that students with jobs find it challenging to juggle academic and work demands. Academic burnout predicts academic maladaptation, resulting in reduced motivation to learn and higher dropout rates. Anxiety mediates the relationship between burnout and academic maladaptation, implying that students with high anxiety levels struggle more to adapt to academic settings, leading to heightened stress and burnout. Their participants' answers lead us to encapsulate their overall well-being dwindling as they progress to fulfill their academic and professional responsibilities.

## 9. Exhaustion

The academic achievement of students plays a crucial role in shaping their future goals and objectives. According to Kremer (2016), McNall & Michel (2017), a growing interest in multitasking as a means of balancing work and school responsibilities, which can serve as a valuable resource that helps alleviate the stress and emotional exhaustion caused by academic demands of working students. In the context of working students, it is important to consider how the exhaustion resulting from juggling multiple roles can impact their academic performance and overall well-being.

Being able to manage your time well is an essential skill for college students. Each student's academic performance is significantly impacted if they struggle with time management. According to the interviews, students studying architecture find that time management, staying on schedule, and consistency are key to completing their coursework and other assignments. However, being exhausted is occasionally one of the results of the source of workloads. In response, PN5 said, *"I often feel exhausted, but surviving college seems the only option."* PN4 agreed that exhaustion also affects the performance of the students by stating: *"Having poor performance at work doesn't affect* 

*my salary, unlike in school, where having poor performance does affect your grade."* The interviews revealed that one of the factors contributing to students' exhaustion is their workload and sleep deprivation.

# **10. Therapeutic Activities**

Reportedly, participants stated therapeutic activities heals their stress. One of which is spending time with loved ones as a coping technique adopted by our interviewees, Participant No. 2, 4, and 6 encompassed that their means of coping includes the support system that they received from her friends and loved ones. Additionally, PN4 gave a specific example: "...giving myself a downtime like sleeping"; and PN6 also stated: "... and taking a break from everyday pressures," revealed that secluding themselves from stressful thoughts regarding plates helps them to thrive. In line with coping with stress when going through multiple deadlines, projects, and work commitments, PN3 takes time for self-care by going to the gym, stating: "Lifting heavy weights and tiring my body there feels very relieving and satisfying. Sometimes it's my escape when duties and obligations are overloaded." Several interviewees also noted that small indulgences such as treating oneself with their favorite meal helps them cope with the challenges during plate making and work. Therapeutic activities have been found to be effective in reducing stress among working students, aligning with the importance of effectively managing stress to maintain overall wellbeing and academic performance. Improper stress management can have detrimental effects, and while stress can be adaptable and controllable in certain situations, prolonged high levels of stress can lead to significant problems. Therefore, engaging in therapeutic activities can serve as a valuable coping strategy for working students to alleviate stress and promote their overall wellbeing and academic success.

# 11. Integrity

It arises from the survey that most working architecture students coping with stress are doing something they love that embraces their element. According to Marcinkowski (2018), integrity in architects' education is crucial, especially in the face of technological changes. Holistic transfer of knowledge and skills is necessary, but competition from teachers can replace cooperation. It appears that some interviewees' coping mechanisms for stress are monitoring their schedules and maintaining consistency and diligence. PN4 mentioned her coping mechanisms: "… creating to do list, work on time management…", "I firmly believe that being diligent can beat the wise, and I trust that these efforts will eventually pay off with consistent actions…", PN5 added.

The research discussion delves into the holistic well-being of working architecture students, revealing a pervasive decline marked by stress, fatigue, and even trauma attributed to their rigorous schedules. Participants detailed a range of coping mechanisms, including self-reinforcement through rewarding activities, engagement in therapeutic pursuits, and reliance on a support system. Uncovering the intricacies of the challenges faced, the study highlighted prevalent themes such as financial constraints, extended travel times, suboptimal academic output, pressure, and exhaustion. The participants' articulation of sleep deprivation, irregular meals, and stress as contributors to diminished well-being underscored the interconnected nature of academic and professional pressures. Themes of self-reinforcement, financial constraints leading to employment, dissatisfaction with academic output amid competing responsibilities, and the pressure of meeting deadlines were recurrent, reflecting the multifaceted difficulties encountered. The discussion emphasizes the demanding nature of the participants'

academic and professional commitments, with integrity and consistency emerging as pivotal coping mechanisms. The trust exhibited by the participants in the eventual payoff of sustained efforts and the incorporation of therapeutic activities, such as spending time with loved ones and practicing self-care, further underscore the nuanced strategies employed in navigating the complex challenges faced by working architecture students. In summary, the study reveals a complex interplay of challenges faced by working architecture students, impacting various facets of their lives. The participants employ diverse coping mechanisms to navigate these challenges, emphasizing the importance of support systems, self-care, and diligence in managing their dual roles as students and professionals.

## D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Myriad of challenges confronted by working architecture students, including the struggle to balance academic responsibilities and employment, pressures from high expectations and simultaneous deadlines, financial constraints, long commutes, declining holistic health and exhaustion, collectively results in unsatisfactory academic outputs and diminished overall wellbeing. The participants' narratives revealed the interrelation of factors affecting their ability to meet academic requirements and maintain a healthy lifestyle. While coping mechanisms such as seeking support, engaging in therapeutic activities, and maintaining integrity through consistent efforts are employed.

Understanding the well-being and academic stress of working architecture students provides enlightenment, and is particularly significant in the current educational conditions. The study brings valuable insights into the challenges faced by students balancing academic pursuits with employment, offering educators and policymakers an overview of the stressors specific to the field of architecture. Moreover, this knowledge is instrumental in forming adaptive and inclusive educational policies, acknowledging the increasing prevalence of students managing multiple commitments. Furthermore, the study also highlights the broader issue of work-life balance, urging institutions to adopt holistic approaches that prioritize not only academic achievement but also the overall well-being of students.

By recognizing the specific struggles architecture students face, policymakers and schools can create better support systems. Improving the well-being and success of working students can lead to a more skilled workforce, benefiting fields like architecture and contributing to overall societal progress. Additionally, focusing on the overall well-being of students promotes a healthier community. In simpler terms, addressing these challenges can lead to a society with more successful and balanced individuals which can bring forth positive growth in its individuals and community as a whole.

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