



MEDIATING EFFECT OF HOPE BETWEEN STRESS IN ONLINE LEARNING AND FLOW AMONG BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to determine if there was a mediating effect of hope between stress in online learning and flow among BS Psychology students. Utilizing mediation analysis, data were gathered from 212 students from chosen tertiary educational institutions in Laguna, Philippines and were analyzed using regression analysis and Sobel Test. It was revealed that students in online learning had slightly high level of stress and very high level of hope and flow. It was also revealed that stress levels had significant negative association with hope ($B = -.754, p < .001$) and flow ($B = -.312, p = < .001$), while hope ($B = .305, p = < .001$) was positively associated with flow, wherein, stress accounts 12.1% of the variance in hope and both stress and hope accounts 53.7% of the variance in flow. Furthermore, hope level carried a significant partial mediating effect between stress level and flow level ($t = 4.888, p = < .000$) which meant impact of stress to flow could not fully mediated by hope, even without hope, stress can still significantly impact flow of students. Lastly, an action plan was also proposed.

Keywords: stress, hope, flow, mediation, online learning

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INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on rustic and urban lives, with income-loss and employment possibilities being overriding issues in disadvantaged areas in the country, according to Fallesen (2021). In addition, Statista Research Department (2021) stated that the rate of coronavirus contagion in the country continues to obstruct the country's economic recovery which also led to rapid rise in stress and anxiety among individuals because of disease uncertainty which is also accompanied by necessary but socially disruptive measures such as lockdowns and quarantines.

According to Akat & Karataş (2020), each person's psychological reaction to tremendous stress and panic produced by pandemics might differ. Pandemics have been shown to have psychological impacts such as depression, anxiety, dread of death, loss of loved ones, posttraumatic stress disorder, and psychotic symptoms. In support to this, Tee et al. (2020) stated that in the Philippines, during the early stages of the pandemic, one-fourth of respondents expressed moderate-to-severe anxiety, while one-sixth reported moderate-to-severe depression and psychological impact.

Along with the economic hardships the Philippines encountered because of the pandemic, the academic community was also affected. According to Ancheta & Ancheta (2020), and Bernardo (2020), the necessity to include e-learning into the curriculum has become more apparent because of the COVID-19. To address pandemic difficulties and the limits put on schools to obey health standards and conduct social distance, government authorities such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd) promote online classes or flexible learning. As a result, according to Narmada & Somasundaram (2020), schools investigated the feasibility of integrating online classes or flexible learning, which includes both online and offline courses.

Given such adjustment to new normal, stress in online learning became very prevalent. When it comes to getting a degree and advancing one's education, there is often a ton of pressure. Studying, assignments, testing, laboratories, reading, and quizzes are all part of the curriculum. There's the pressure of completing all the tasks, balancing time, and so on (Prabu, 2015). Particularly during this pandemic where students are under online classes and flexible learning, there is sufficient information to show that serious and long-term stress related to schooling might result to negative outcomes on students' academic attainment, mental upbringing, and mental health.

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On the other hand, flow is characterized as the strong experiential participation in moment-to-moment action, which can be either physical or intellectual, it is the person's whole attention is focused on the work in hand, and he or she performs to the best of their abilities (Cherry, 2021; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). As per online learning, studies stated that there is a positive effect of students' interactivity on flow experience in an e-learning environment (Rodriguez-Ardura & Meseguer Artola, 2016) and online university courses (Guo et al., 2016).

Lastly, in terms of hope, it is described as two interconnected and mutually reinforcing approaches to achieving goals: agency and pathways. The perceived capacity to build routes to one's objectives or overcome difficulties is represented by agency thinking, while pathway thinking is the perceived ability to generate routes to one's goals or overcome obstacles is represented by pathways thinking (Rand & Cheavens, 2009). Together, agency and pathways denote a tendency for goal-oriented optimistic thinking (i.e., hope) that differs from self-efficacy and optimism (McDermott et al., 2017). It is found that hope is a distinct predictor of academic performance of students (Rand et al., 2020) and even when intellect and past academic accomplishment are considered, hope predicts greater academic performance (Feldman & Kubota, 2015).

Considering these, the researcher aimed to contribute to the existing knowledge by determining the levels of stress, hope, and flow of BS Psychology students, and determine if there would be a mediating effect given by hope between stress and flow levels of the students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized a pure quantitative approach, specifically conducting a mediation analysis to determine the relationships of the variables as well as to know if there would be a mediating effect from the mediator which is hope between stress and flow levels. The study also utilized questionnaires namely: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Domain Specific Hope Scale (DSHS), and Flow in Online Learning – Short Scale (researcher-made test), to collect data which were gathered from 212 BS Psychology students from two educational institutions in Laguna, Philippines, comprising students from first year to fourth year levels, through stratified random sampling. Using sample post-hoc analysis in GPower, it was implied that the sample size of 212 respondents achieved statistical power of 1.000 based on 1.1598 effect size ($\alpha = 0.05$) of a linear multiple regression analysis of 2 predictor variables. Simple linear regression, multiple linear regression, and Sobel test were used to analyze the data gathered.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Stress level in Online Learning of BS Psychology Students

In the last month,	\bar{x}	Interpretation
1. how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	2.97	H
2. how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	2.87	H
3. how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	3.25	VH
4. how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	1.50	L
5. how often have you felt that things were going in your way?	1.62	SH
6. how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	2.53	H
7. how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	1.57	L
8. how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	2.03	SH
9. how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	2.70	H
10. how often have you been felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	2.70	H
GENERAL ASSESSMENT	2.37	SH

Legend: 3.20 – 4.00 Very Often/ Very High (VH); 0.80 – 1.59 Almost Never/ Low (L); 2.40 – 3.19 Fairly Often/ High (H); 0.00 – 0.79 Never/ Very Low (VL); 1.60 – 2.39 Sometimes/ Slightly High (SH)

Based on Table 1, the general assessment was 2.37 which can be interpreted and implied that most of the respondents are somewhat having a slightly high level of stress in online learning. For the positively keyed items, the indicator "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?" has the highest computed mean of 3.25 which was verbally interpreted as "Very

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High”, while the indicator “In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?” has the least computed mean of 2.53 and was verbally interpreted as “High”. For the negatively keyed items, the indicator “In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?” has the highest computed mean of 2.03 which can be verbally interpreted as “Somewhat High”, while for the least computed mean, the indicator “In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?” scored a total of 1.50 which can be verbally interpreted as “Low”.

For the past years, online learning setup has been utilized in different educational institutions in our country, to observe safety from COVID infection, this has been a huge factor in the adaptability of students in the way they study, which can sometimes cause stress. Regarding the results stated above, we can imply that under online learning setup, students tend to have slightly high levels of stress because they only might have some instances of not coping to the things that are happening to them related to their studying and eventually leading for them to feel nervous, stressed, and less motivated. Because of these feelings, they tend to feel less confident about overcoming problems that they might experience academically and have less drive to work at their best to overcome these problems. Also, these feelings would negatively affect their performances in school since they feel overwhelmed about the things happening to them. But nonetheless, since the results is just slightly high, implications that is explained above would be less often, maybe because since online learning setup is mandated for quite some time now, students have already adapted well with the setup.

To support this, according to Regehr et al. (2013), psychological well-being issues are developing more prevalent among students in the collegiate level, this psychological well-being include feelings of motivation and confidence and according to associated studies, almost half of collegiate students have moderate difficulties on their psychological well-being that are related to stress, wherein, Saleh et al. (2017) have found that 72.9% and 86.3%, respectively, were experiencing mental discomfort and anxious tendencies because of perceived stress. Futhermore, according to Kötter et al. (2017), stress has a negative impact on academic performance and can lead to a spiteful sequence of continually decreasing performance and increasing stress which also can be supported by Pascoe et al. (2020), where they found that academic-related stress is strongly linked to decreased student academic motivation. Since Tus (2020) said that more motivation leads to higher academic achievement, motivation is defined as a person's willingness to undertake specified activities.

To further discuss the stress level attained from this study to the researcher, to the researcher’s knowledge, there were no other studies that would discuss the stress level of students in online learning at present, but the result would contradict some other studies from previous years that would imply that stress online learning during pandemic can have high levels,

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like what Funa et al. (2021) and Tee et al. (2020) has stated. This would imply that there is already a possibility of proper adjustment for the students in online learning setup.

Table 2. Hope Level of BS Psychology Students in online learning

Indicators in terms of Hope Level	\bar{X}	VI
1. I can think of lots of ways to make good grades	6.21	H
2. I energetically pursue my schoolwork	5.81	H
3. There are lots of ways to meet the challenges of any class	6.29	VH
4. Even if the course is difficult, I know I can find a way to succeed	6.97	VH
5. I've been prettysuccessful in school	6.00	H
6. I can think of lots of ways to do well in classes that are important to me	6.48	VH
7. My past academic experiences have prepared me well for future success	6.29	VH
8. I get the grades that I want in my classes	5.95	H
GENERAL ASSESSMENT	6.25	VH

Legend: 7.16 – 8.00 Definitely True/ Extremely High (EH)
6.28 – 7.15 Mostly True/ Very High (VH)
3.64 – 4.51 Slightly False/ Slightly Low (SL)
2.76 – 3.65 Somewhat False/ Low (L)
5.40 – 6.27 Somewhat True/ High (H)
1.88 – 2.75 Mostly False/ Very Low (VL)
4.52 – 5.39 Slightly True/ Slightly High (SH)
1.00 – 1.87 Definitely False/ Extremely Low (EL)

Based on Table 2, the general assessment was 6.25 which was verbally interpreted as “Very High”. In particular, the indicator “Even if the course is difficult, I know I can find a way to succeed” has the highest computed mean of 6.97 which was verbally interpreted as “Very High”, while the indicator “I energetically pursue my schoolwork” has the least computed mean of 5.81 and was verbally interpreted as “High”.

The results above would imply that students tend to have tendencies to accomplish the tasks given to them with eagerness and perseverance and even though online learning setup is

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quite hard to adjust with, they still tend to come up with ideas on how to adapt in the virtual environment and how to overcome academic challenges given by the setup and because of this, they still tend to feel some motivation to push more and achieve more, even in the presence of stress produced by the setup and improve their academic performance more.

To support this, Rand et al. (2020), stated that even when IQ and past academic accomplishment are considered, hope predicts superior academic performance. They also said that having more hope predicts improved psychological well-being, even academic stress is included. Rand et al. (2011) also said that when looked at collectively, hope, not optimism, has been found to predict academic achievement, and hope may be the greater predictor of academic performance, however this link was mediated by other characteristics such as grade expectancy. Furthermore, after adjusting for educational background, Gallagher et al. (2017) found that hope was the most powerful predictor of academic performance in college. These findings highlight the importance of assisting students in developing the ability to begin and sustain goal-oriented activity in the quest of better academic accomplishment.

Table 3. Flow Level of BS Psychology Students in online learning

Indicators in terms of Flow Level	\bar{X}	VI
1. I feel calm and does not feel any physical restraints	2.80	VH
2. I am focused regarding accomplishing my tasks	2.80	VH
3. I feel that my abilities can meet what the situation is demanding from me	2.91	VH
4. I feel that I am in control of the situation	2.83	VH
5. I feel that it brings a sense of well-being	2.96	VH
6. I feel that I am fully engaged in what I am doing	2.86	VH
7. I feel so involved in my tasks that I do not feel the time passing	2.84	VH
8. I feel that I know what I am doing	2.92	VH
9. I feel that I concentrate on my tasks very well	2.68	VH
GENERAL ASSESSMENT	2.86	VH

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Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Strongly Agree/ Very High (VH)
2.50 – 3.24 Agree/ High (H)
1.75 – 2.49 Disagree/ Low (L)
1.00 – 1.74 Strobgly Disagree/ Very Low (VL)

Based on Table 4, the general assessment was 2.86 which was verbally interpreted as "Very High". In particular, the indicator "I feel that it brings a sense of well-being" has the highest computed mean of 2.96 which was verbally interpreted as "Very High", while the indicator "I feel that I concentrate on my tasks very well" has the least computed mean of 2.68 and was verbally interpreted as "Very High".

The results above would imply that students tend to be most likely immersed in most situations that is related to their academics, this leads them more to become focused in their studying where they eventually might experience flow. We can also imply that since some of the tasks given in online learning are "milder" than tasks given in traditional settings, this results to the students feeling a sense of well-being since they can concentrate on their tasks and perform them in acceptable levels.

To support this, according to Cherry (2021), when someone is in flow, they are operating at maximum potential. It is in a condition of active stability. And being in flow, this would result to greater enjoyment and fulfillment, where they enjoy their work more, increased engagement and improved performance. Cherry (2021) also added that worriedness or dullness forces an individual to change their amount of ability and/or confront to get out of the unpleasant situation and back into flow. Furthermore, Mustafa and Jahan (2019) concluded that there is a positive relationship between flow and academic achievement, and that for students to experience flow in academic settings, they must have clear goals, be intrinsically motivated, feel engaged in their studies, and find a challenge-skill balance. According to Olcar et al (2021), it is crucial for students to have opportunities to experience flow in their studies since it is a pleasant condition that is linked to improved success and adds to their general well-being.

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performance and if adopted in schools may have positive effects on individuals' low stress and exams.

Table 5.1. Multiple Regression Analysis on the Impact of Stress Level in Online Learning and Hope Level to Flow Level of BS Psychology students

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	1.696	.245		6.927	<.001
STRESS	-.312	.056	-.278	-5.540	<.001
HOPE	.305	.026	.588	11.716	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: FLOW
R – Square = .537 *F-value = 121.26*
Adjusted R Square = .553

Based on the findings, it is revealed that 53.7% of the variance is explained by the two predictors, ($F = 121.6$, $p = <.001$). Specifically, stress ($B = -.312$, $p = <.001$) is negatively associated with flow while hope is ($B = .305$, $p = <.001$) is positively associated with flow. This would imply that if students have high levels of stress regarding online learning, there would be instances that they would not enter flow and eventually lead to less performance since they are not functioning in their maximum potential, as well as if they have lower level of stress, this will lead in entering the flow state.

Even Peifer et al. (2014) generally discovered support that flow may be felt in settings that are stress-related corresponding to the transactional stress model, as referenced by Lazarus & Folman (1984). In terms of supporting the notion found in this study, some other studies might contradict it since Peifer et al. (2015), Rheinberg et al. (2007), and Tozman et al. (2015) all stated that flow can happen through active management with demanding task demands, while Peifer (2012), stated that there is a relationship between flow and challenge, with stress being turned into flow when it is regarded as a challenge, this would mean that in order to enter flow, students should feel stress, since they would deem to become more challenged and leads to become more

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engaged in their activities. Such result would suggest in exploring the factors that might interplay between stress and flow to explain better their relationship.

Futhermore, in terms of hope and flow, the results would imply that if students have high levels of hope they would also experience high levels of flow, which can be stated that if they have tendencies to think of ways of overcoming the academic challenges they are facing at present and have the motivation to pursue success in their academic tasks, they would eventually enter their respective flow states when accomplishing these tasks, which can lead to more engagement, a state of well-being and better task outputs. Studies related to the relationship between these two variables is lacking, which some would use them as how they are in combination related with some other constructs or even as mediator or moderator.

Table 5.2. Multiple Regression Analysis on the Impact of Stress Level in Online Learning and Hope Level to Flow Level of BS Psychology students

Regression	t	Sobel Test Statistics	Sig.
Stress Level and Hope Level	-5.379	4.888	<.001
Hope Level and Flow Level	11.716		

Mediator: HOPE LEVEL Critical value = 1.96

Based on Table 5.2, it is revealed that hope level carries a significant mediating effect between stress level and flow level in online learning of BS Psychology students ($t = 4.888, p = <.000$). Specifically, the results show us that the effect of the mediator between the predictor and criterion variables is just partial, since both the direct (c') and indirect (ab) effects established and computed from the variables are both significant.

The results above would imply that stress is directly and indirectly related to flow through hope. To be specific, in some instances, if students have high levels of perceived stress, this

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might predict a diminishment on hope, which in turn, predict lower levels of flow, while low levels of perceived stress would predict increase in hope, which in turn, also predict increase in flow of students. In other words, stressed students will be somewhat demotivated and feel lost and eventually not function in their full potential. Nonetheless, even though without the influence of hope, we can still imply that stress would still affect flow in most instances. In terms of being a partial mediation, this result would state that since the direct and indirect effects are both significant, we cannot say that flow can be affected by stress solely through hope, direct effect of stress to flow can still be evident but we state that based on the variance stated earlier, with hope, the influence of the predictor is stronger.

To the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies that use all three variables in a single study, there are studies that support hope as a partial mediator in some relationships between variables like self-efficacy and subjective well-being (Quan et al, 2016), body image distress and resilience (Hsu et al., 2021), happiness aversion and depression (Bloore et al, 2020), and perceived Stress and PTSD Symptoms (Zhang et al., 2021).

As an output, an action plan is proposed which is intended for the use of mainly Guidance and Counseling Office to serve as a guide to manage stress in online learning, hope and of BS Psychology students.

Regarding this, the plan will focus on sharing and discussing the concepts of stress in the academe and particularly how it affects students in online learning, as well as discuss concepts of flow and hope about how they are essential to students. Since hope and flow are negatively associated with stress, the plan will focus on activities that will help diminish stress in students for them to be able to perform better and be at their optimal capacities to overcome tasks and academic challenges, as well as focus on giving guidance counseling to those students that are affected by stress and wanted to get some advice or help. The plan will also include activities that will foster hope and flow that could help students perform better in online learning since it was stated that they are positively associated with each other. The plan will include seminars about stress, flow, and hope, as well as guidance counseling and group dynamic activities which will be done accordingly with people from Guidance and Counseling Services of the institution.

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CONCLUSIONS

Based on the significant findings of the study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Under online learning, students have slightly high levels of stress, this would be explained by the fact that in some instances they could not cope on their academic challenges which in turn leads to lack of feelings of confidence and motivation, which in turn leads to less academic performance.
2. Students have high levels of hope which can be deemed that they set goals and have the motivation and perseverance to adjust in online learning and accomplish tasks given to them amidst the challenges given by the setup.
3. Students have high levels of flow which they tend to be most likely immersed in most situations that is related to their academics, this leads them more to become focused in their studying where they eventually might experience flow.
4. Stress level in online learning tend to impact hope level of BS Psychology students significantly and negatively, which means lower stress level leads to higher hope level.
5. In terms of direct effect, stress level in online learning, with influence of hope, tend to impact flow level of BS Psychology students significantly and negatively, which means, with influence of hope, lower stress level can still lead to higher flow level. Also, hope would significantly impact flow, where higher levels of hope would lead to higher levels of flow.

Furthermore, hope level tend to have a partial and significant mediating effect between stress level in online learning and flow level, which means impact of stress to flow cannot be fully mediated by hope, even without hope, stress can still significantly impact flow of students.

6. That the Proposed Action Plan is a helpful resource for effective strategies to improve hope levels and flow levels more and lessen stress levels among BS Psychology students.

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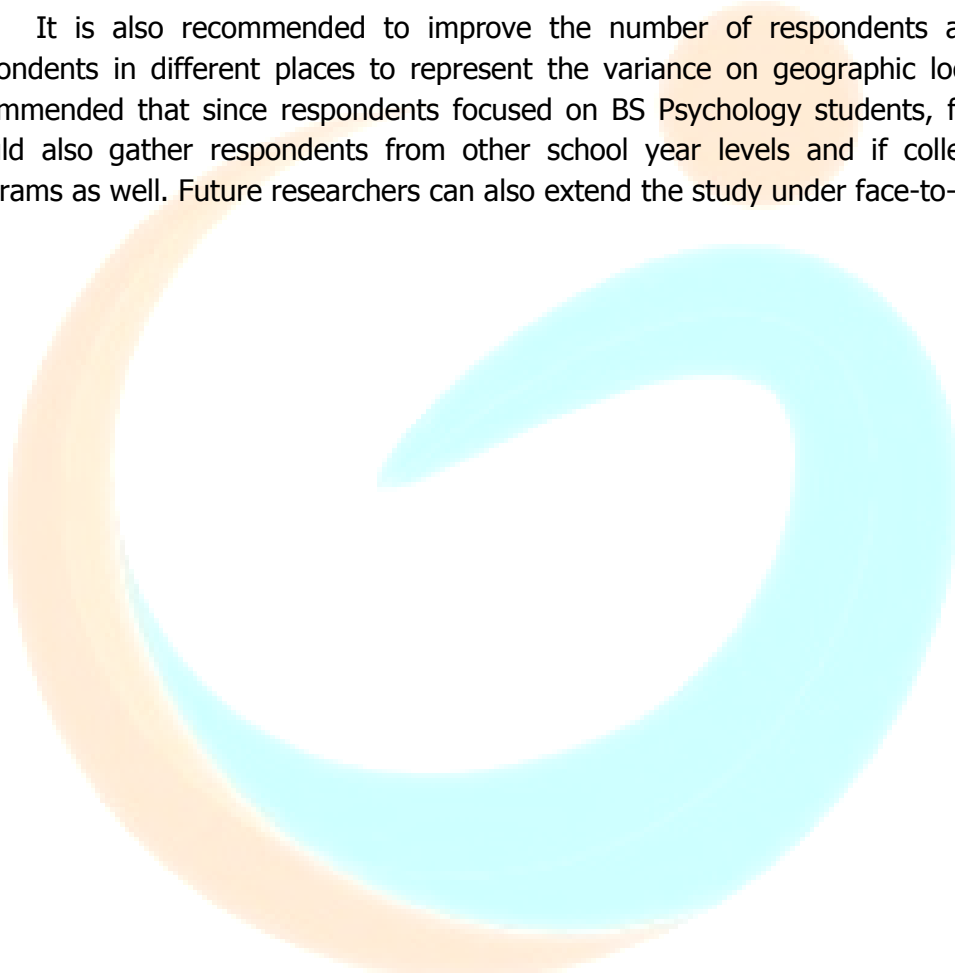
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RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that educational institutions, in cooperation with their respective Guidance and Counseling offices, and if applicable with psychology professionals, outsourced or within faculty, should work hand in hand to come up with activities and services that would help diminish more the level of stress of students that can be brought by online learning, and improve both hope and flow levels of students.

It is also recommended to improve the number of respondents as well to gather respondents in different places to represent the variance on geographic locations. It is also recommended that since respondents focused on BS Psychology students, future researchers should also gather respondents from other school year levels and if collegiate from other programs as well. Future researchers can also extend the study under face-to-face context.



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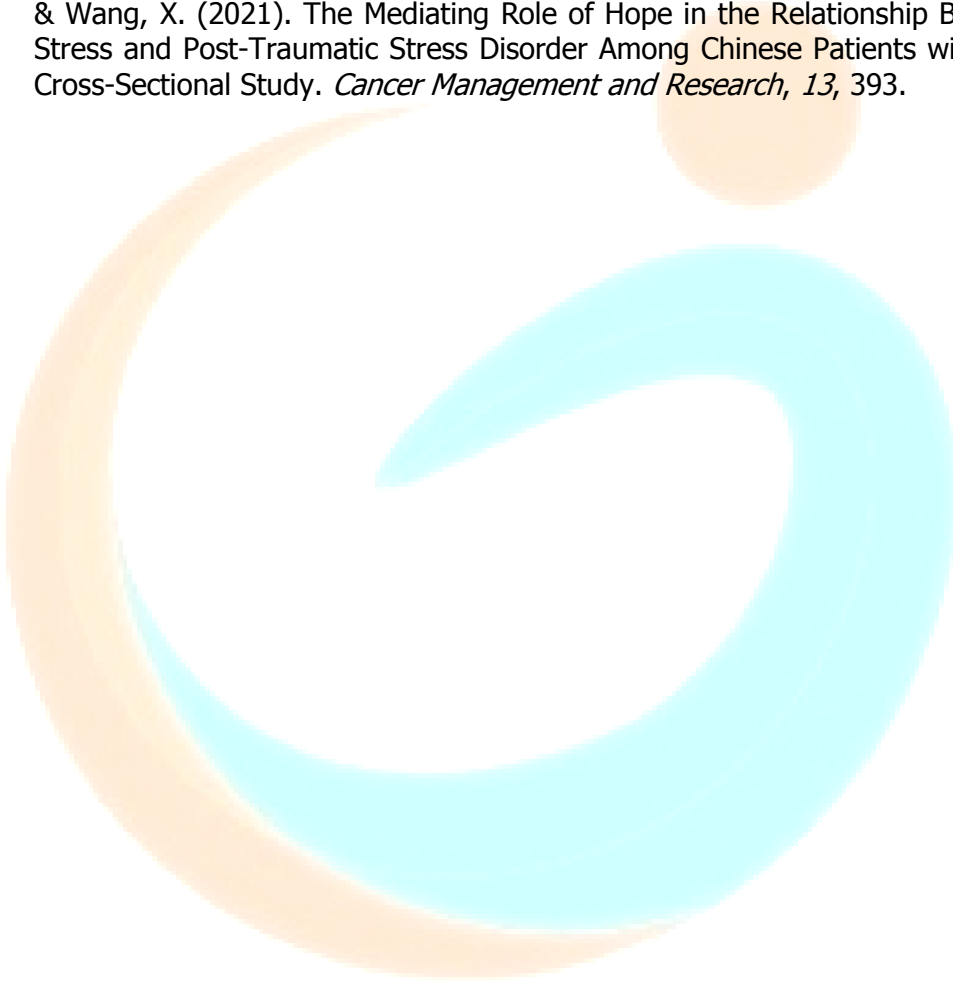
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