



Assessing Stressors and Coping Strategies in Coast Guard Non-Officers Course (CGNOC) Training: Enhancing Performance, Well-Being, and Operational Readiness

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Abstract

This study investigated the stress experienced by trainees of the Coast Guard Non-Officers' Course (CGNOC), focusing on perceived stress levels, common stressors, and utilized coping strategies. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study administered the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) to 626 female trainees and conducted focus group discussions and expert interviews. Findings revealed that two-thirds of trainees experienced moderate stress levels. Primary stressors included physical fatigue, intensive training requirements, time pressure, and adjustment to military discipline. Trainees predominantly employed adaptive coping strategies such as seeking social support, goal setting, and positive reframing. The study concludes that mentorship and access to psychological services are essential for maintaining resilience and operational readiness.

Keywords: *Coast Guard Training; Perceived Stress; Coping Strategies; Operational Readiness; Resilience; CGNOC*

1. Introduction

Military and law enforcement training courses are globally recognized for rigorous physical, mental, and emotional demands. Trainees must endure strict discipline and time pressure, which can significantly impact psychological health and performance. In the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the Coast Guard Non-Officers' Course (CGNOC) serves as the entry-level program for recruits, transitioning them from civilian to military life over six months. Despite screening measures, attrition remains a concern, often linked to stress-related challenges. This study aims to identify unique stressors and effective coping mechanisms within the CGNOC context to improve trainee welfare and organizational effectiveness.

2. Methodology

The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-method design.

- **Participants:** The primary group consisted of 626 female CGNOC trainees from the March–November 2025 cycle at the Regional Training Center Misamis Oriental. Additionally, two Tactical Officers and one psychologist provided expert perspectives.
- **Instruments:** Quantitative data was collected via the PSS-10. Qualitative data was gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with 33 trainees and interviews with experts.
- **Data Analysis:** Quantitative results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis (open, axial, and selective coding).

3. Results and Discussion

- **Stress Levels:** Two-thirds of the trainees exhibited moderate stress.
- **Stressors:** Major stressors were categorized into course-related (physical training, drills, constant evaluation), personal (homesickness, family concerns), and environmental (facility deficiencies). Course-related stressors often led to diminished focus and slower task completion.
- **Coping Strategies:** The most frequent strategy was social and emotional support (f=30), followed by positive outlook (f=25) and acceptance (f=23). Behavioral strategies like goal setting were also cited as effective for performance maintenance.
- **Expert Perspectives:** Experts emphasized that while physical stressors are prominent, emotional factors like separation anxiety significantly impact trainees. They recommended a holistic approach combining leadership engagement and structured rest.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Trainees face a complex array of stressors that can compromise operational readiness if not managed. The study recommends:

1. **Environment:** Enhancing rest, recovery, and barracks conditions.
2. **Support Systems:** Normalizing help-seeking through regular psychological check-ins.
3. **Leadership:** Establishing mentor-based frameworks where Tactical Officers monitor both performance and well-being.
4. **Programs:** Integrating preventive mental health and resilience training prior to the start of CGNOC.

Endnotes

1. **CGNOC:** Coast Guard Non-Officers' Course, the foundational training for PCG recruits.
 2. **PSS-10:** Perceived Stress Scale-10, a 10-item instrument used to measure the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful.
 3. **SDGs:** This study aligns with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 5, and 16.
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Appendices

- **Appendix A:** PSS (Perceived Stress Scale) Instrument.
 - **Appendix B:** Interview Guide for Trainees.
 - **Appendix C:** Interview Guide for Tactical Officers.
 - **Appendix D:** Interview Guide for Psychologist.
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Table 1
Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–20	0	0%
	21–23	415	66.29%
	24 and above	211	33.71%
Gender	Male	0	0%
	Female	626	100%
Educational Attainment	High School Graduate	0	0%
	College Level	0	0%
	College Graduate	619	98.88%
	With Master’s Degree Units	6	0.96%
	Master’s Degree	1	0.16%

Table 2
Stressors Experienced by CGNOC Trainees

Stressor	Mean	Interpretation
Physical Training Demands	3.28	Moderate
Academic Workload	3.15	Moderate
Strict Discipline	3.22	Moderate
Limited Rest Periods	3.67	High
Adjustment to Military Lifestyle	3.10	Moderate

The data suggest that physical demands and limited rest periods are among the most significant stressors experienced by trainees.

Table 3

Coping Strategies Used by Trainees

Coping Strategy	Mean	Interpretation
Peer Support	4.2	Frequently Used
Emotional Regulation	4.1	Frequently Used
Spiritual Practices	3.2	Moderately Used
Physical Recovery	4.0	Frequently Used

The results show that peer support and emotional regulation are commonly used coping strategies among trainees.

Table 4

Relationship Between Stress Levels and Coping Strategies

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Interpretation
Stress Level vs Coping Strategies	0.56	Significant Relationship

The correlation results indicate that coping strategies play an important role in helping trainees manage stress and maintain their performance during training.

Note: Data derived from the trainee cohort at RTC Misamis Oriental (2025).

Figures

• **Figure 1:** Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman)

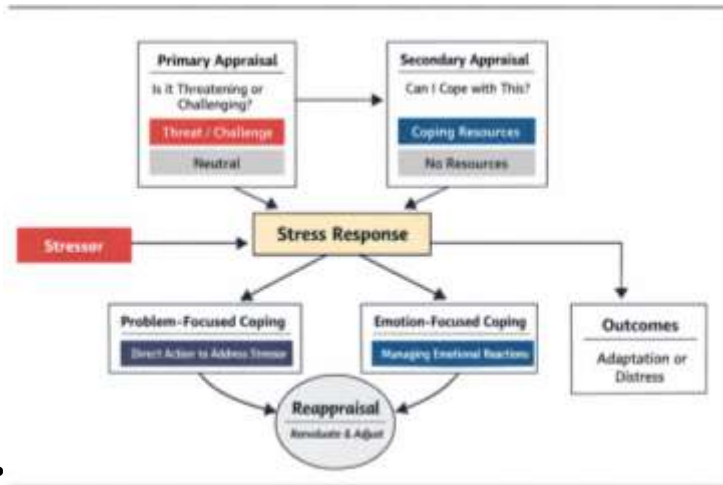
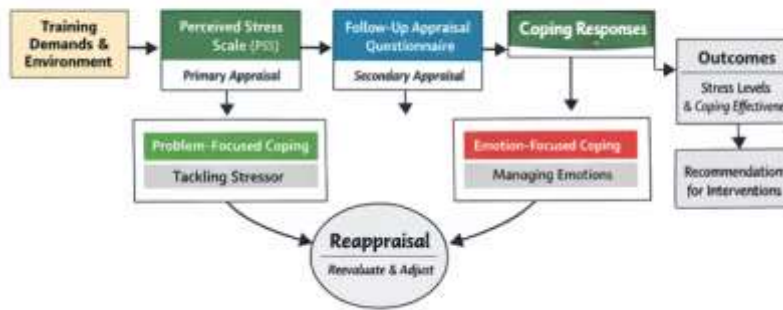


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Stress and Coping among CGNOC Trainees



Adapted from Lazarus & Folkman, 1984

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