

# Cultural Challenges, Level of Anxiety and Coping Strategies in Disciplined Training Among Maritime

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## Abstract

This study examined the cultural challenges, level of anxiety, and coping strategies among maritime students undergoing disciplined training. The research aimed to determine the extent of cultural challenges in terms of behavioral, socio-cultural, and emotional adjustment; assess the level of anxiety across physiological, cognitive, and emotional domains; and identify the coping strategies employed by maritime students, including problem-focused, emotion-focused, and maladaptive coping. A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized, employing a structured survey questionnaire administered to maritime students. Data were analyzed using weighted mean to determine the level and pattern of responses across the identified variables.

Findings revealed that respondents experienced a high level of cultural challenges, with behavioral adjustment emerging as the most dominant domain, followed by socio-cultural and emotional adjustment. In terms of anxiety, results indicated an overall Moderate level; Sources of anxiety came from Physiological, Emotional, and Cognitive symptoms. Regarding coping strategies, respondents demonstrated a high level of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, indicating the use of adaptive strategies such as planning, acceptance, and active problem-solving. Maladaptive coping strategies were found to be generally low, although occasional disengagement and reduced effort were observed.

The study concludes that maritime students are generally capable of adapting to disciplined training environments despite experiencing cultural challenges and varying levels of anxiety. Their reliance on adaptive coping strategies plays a significant role in managing stress and maintaining psychological stability. However, the presence of anxiety among respondents suggests the need for targeted psychological support and institutional interventions to further enhance student well-being and adaptation.

**Keywords:** *cultural challenges, anxiety, coping strategies, disciplined training, maritime students, behavioral, socio-cultural, and emotional adjustment, physiological, cognitive, and emotional anxiety, problem-focused, emotion-focused, and maladaptive coping*



## I. INTRODUCTION

Maritime education operates within a highly structured, hierarchical, and discipline-oriented environment designed to prepare students for the demands of global seafaring. However, this training context also functions as a distinct cultural system that requires significant behavioral, emotional, and socio-cultural adaptation. As emphasized in the present study, maritime students at the University of Perpetual Help System Laguna (UPHSL) encounter complex cultural challenges while adjusting to rigid institutional norms and expectations.

Existing literature highlights that such environments often generate acculturative stress, particularly when students transition from less structured backgrounds into highly regulated systems (Li et al., 2023). Similarly, research by Simanjuntak et al. (2023) demonstrates that maritime cadets experience socio-cultural and psychological strain during early adaptation phases. These findings align with Acculturative Stress Theory (Berry, 1997), which explains how cultural adjustment pressures may lead to psychological distress.

Anxiety is another critical factor in disciplined training environments. Studies indicate that strict routines, academic demands, and performance-based evaluation significantly contribute to anxiety among students (Paraggua et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Zhang & Chen, 2024). According to Cognitive Behavioral Theory (Beck, 2020), maladaptive thought patterns may intensify emotional and physiological responses, further complicating students' adjustment processes.

In response to these stressors, students employ various coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) categorize these into problem-focused, emotion-focused, and maladaptive coping, which influence how individuals manage stress. Research suggests that adaptive coping strategies, such as planning and emotional regulation, are associated with improved psychological outcomes (Park et al., 2022).

Despite extensive research on cultural adaptation, anxiety, and coping, there remains limited integrative analysis of these variables within maritime education, particularly in the Philippine context. This study addresses this gap by examining the interrelationships among cultural challenges, anxiety levels, and coping strategies among maritime students undergoing disciplined training.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, appropriate for examining relationships among variables without manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The research was conducted among maritime students enrolled at UPHSL during Academic Year 2025–2026.

A total population of 207 students served as the sampling frame, with respondents selected through simple random sampling to ensure representativeness and minimize bias.

Data were collected using:

- A self-developed questionnaire for cultural challenges (behavioral, emotional, socio-cultural adjustment)
- A self-developed anxiety scale (physiological, emotional, cognitive dimensions)
- A modified Brief COPE Inventory for coping strategies

All instruments underwent content validation, pilot testing, and reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha) to ensure validity and internal consistency.

Statistical analysis included:

- Weighted mean for descriptive analysis
- Pearson's r correlation to determine relationships among variables

### III. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

**Table 1. Cultural Challenges during Disciplined Training among maritime Students in UPHSL AY 2025-26**

Domains	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Behavioral Adjustment	4.36	Highly Evident
Emotional Adjustment	3.88	Evident
Socio-cultural Adjustment	3.95	Evident
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.06</b>	

Maritime students demonstrated an overall evident level of cultural challenges (WM = 4.06), indicating general adaptability to disciplined training. Behavioral adjustment ranked highest (WM = 4.36), reflecting strong compliance with institutional rules and structured routines, while emotional adjustment ranked lowest (WM = 3.88), suggesting that internal regulation remains more challenging. These findings support prior research indicating that adaptation in structured environments initially manifests through behavioral compliance before deeper emotional adjustment occurs (Lai et al., 2022), while socio-cultural adaptation remains a continuous process in multicultural contexts (Kristiana et al., 2022).

**Table 2. Levels of Anxiety during Disciplined Training among maritime Students in UPHSL AY 2025-26**

Domains	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Physiological Anxiety	3.24	Moderately Anxious
Emotional Anxiety	3.20	Moderately Anxious
Cognitive Anxiety	3.08	Moderately Anxious
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>Moderately Anxious</b>

The results revealed a **moderate level of anxiety** (WM = 3.17), indicating that anxiety-related responses were present but manageable. Physiological anxiety was slightly higher (WM = 3.24), suggesting frequent physical manifestations of stress, followed by emotional (WM = 3.20) and cognitive anxiety (WM = 3.08). The relatively balanced scores across domains indicate that anxiety is multidimensional. These findings are consistent with studies showing that structured academic environments and performance demands contribute to moderate levels of student anxiety (Li et al., 2023; Zhang & Chen, 2024).

**Table 3. Coping Strategies during Disciplined Training among maritime Students**

Domains	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Problem-Focused Coping	2.95	High Use
Emotion-Focused Coping	2.84	High Use
Maladaptive Coping	2.49	Low use
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.76</b>	

Maritime students demonstrated an overall high use of coping strategies (WM = 2.76), indicating active efforts to manage stress in a disciplined training environment. Problem-focused coping ranked highest (WM = 2.95), suggesting that students primarily rely on planning, decision-making, and direct problem-solving. Emotion-focused coping was also highly utilized (WM = 2.84), reflecting the use of acceptance and emotional regulation strategies. In contrast, maladaptive coping showed a lower mean (WM = 2.49), indicating that ineffective strategies such as avoidance are less frequently employed.

These findings suggest that students predominantly adopt adaptive coping mechanisms, which are associated with better psychological adjustment. This supports prior studies indicating that problem-focused and emotion-focused coping are effective in managing stress in structured environments, while lower reliance on maladaptive coping reduces the risk of psychological distress (Park et al., 2022; García et al., 2022; Faradillah, 2025).

**Table 4. Relationship Between the Cultural Challenges and Level of Anxiety of the Respondents**

Cultural Challenges	Level of Anxiety		
	Physiological	Cognitive	Emotional
Behavioral	$r = -.027$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .699$ Not significant	$r = .027$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .704$ Not significant	$r = .012$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .969$ Not significant
Emotional	$r = -.307$ Weak Correlation $p = .000^*$ Significant	$r = -.225$ Weak Correlation $p = .001^*$ Significant	$r = -.204$ Weak Correlation $p = .003^*$ Significant
Socio-cultural	$r = -.286$ Weak Correlation $p = .000^*$ Significant	$r = -.224$ Weak Correlation $p = .001^*$ Significant	$r = -.188$ Weak Correlation $p = .007^*$ Significant

\*\*Significant @ 0.01; \*Significant @ 0.05

The results show that behavioral adjustment has no significant relationship with physiological ( $r = -.027, p = .699$ ), cognitive ( $r = .027, p = .704$ ), and emotional anxiety ( $r = .012, p = .969$ ), indicating that outward compliance with rules does not significantly affect students' internal anxiety levels.

In contrast, emotional adjustment is significantly and negatively correlated with physiological ( $r = -.307, p = .000$ ), cognitive ( $r = -.225, p = .001$ ), and emotional anxiety ( $r =$

-.204,  $p = .003$ ). This suggests that difficulties in emotional regulation are associated with higher anxiety across all domains.

Similarly, socio-cultural adjustment shows significant weak negative correlations with physiological ( $r = -.286$ ,  $p = .000$ ), cognitive ( $r = -.224$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and emotional anxiety ( $r = -.188$ ,  $p = .007$ ), indicating that poorer socio-cultural adaptation is linked to increased anxiety.

Overall, the findings imply that emotional and socio-cultural challenges are key factors influencing anxiety, while behavioral adjustment has no significant effect.

**Table 5. Relationship Between the Cultural Challenges and Coping Strategies of the Respondents**

Cultural Challenges	Coping Strategies		
	Problem-focused	Emotional-focused	Maladaptive
Behavioral	$r=.179$ Very Weak Correlation $p=.010^*$ Significant	$r=.095$ Very Weak Correlation $p=.172$ Not significant	$r=-.037$ Very Weak Correlation $p=.595$ Not significant
Emotional	$r=.329$ Weak Correlation $p=.000^*$ Significant	$r=.325$ Weak Correlation $p=.000^*$ Significant	$r=.137$ Very Strong Correlation $p=.049^*$ Significant
Socio-cultural	$r=.323$ Weak Correlation $p=.000^*$ Significant	$r=.259$ Weak Correlation $p=.000^*$ Significant	$r=.114$ Very Weak Correlation $p=.102$ Not significant

\*\*Significant @ 0.01; \*Significant @ 0.05

The results indicate that behavioral adjustment is significantly related only to problem-focused coping ( $r = .179$ ,  $p = .010$ ), with no significant relationship to emotional-focused and maladaptive coping. This suggests that better behavioral adjustment is associated with more active problem-solving strategies.

Emotional adjustment shows significant positive relationships with problem-focused ( $r = .329, p < .001$ ), emotional-focused ( $r = .325, p < .001$ ), and maladaptive coping ( $r = .137, p = .049$ ), indicating that students experiencing emotional difficulties tend to use a wider range of coping strategies, including less effective ones.

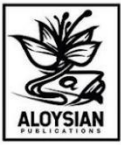
Socio-cultural adjustment is significantly related to problem-focused and emotional-focused coping but not to maladaptive coping, suggesting that students primarily rely on adaptive strategies when facing socio-cultural challenges.

Overall, cultural challenges are linked to greater use of adaptive coping strategies among maritime students.

**Table 6. Relationship Between the level of Anxiety and Coping Strategies of the Respondents**

Anxiety	Coping Strategies		
	Problem-focused	Emotional-focused	Maladaptive
<b>Physiological</b>	$r = -.041$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .554$ Not significant	$r = .007$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .919$ Not significant	$r = .109$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .117$ Not significant
<b>Cognitive</b>	$r = -.012$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .858$ Not significant	$r = -.056$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .422$ Not significant	$r = .046$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .507$ Not significant
<b>Emotional</b>	$r = .018$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .794$ Not significant	$r = -.006$ Weak Correlation $p = .927$ Not significant	$r = .148$ Very Weak Correlation $p = .033$ Significant

\*\*Significant @ 0.05



The results show that physiological anxiety has no significant relationship with problem-focused, emotional-focused, and maladaptive coping, indicating that physical manifestations of anxiety are not strongly linked to coping behaviors.

Similarly, cognitive anxiety shows no significant relationships with all coping strategies, suggesting that thought-related anxiety does not significantly influence how students manage stress.

In contrast, emotional anxiety shows a significant weak positive relationship with maladaptive coping ( $r = .148$ ,  $p = .033$ ), while its relationship with problem-focused and emotional-focused coping is not significant. This indicates that students experiencing emotional distress are slightly more likely to engage in less effective coping strategies.

Overall, anxiety levels show minimal association with coping strategies, except for a weak link between emotional anxiety and maladaptive coping, suggesting that coping responses are relatively stable regardless of anxiety intensity.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATION**

##### **Conclusion**

This study examined the cultural challenges, anxiety levels, and coping strategies of maritime students undergoing disciplined training. The findings indicate that students experience an evident level of cultural challenges, with behavioral adjustment emerging as the strongest domain, followed by socio-cultural and emotional adjustment. This suggests that students are generally capable of adapting to structured and hierarchical training environments, although internal emotional regulation remains relatively more demanding.

The results further revealed a moderate level of anxiety, indicating that while students experience physiological, emotional, and cognitive stress, these responses remain within manageable levels. This reflects anxiety as a normal outcome of adapting to high expectations and performance-driven environments.

In terms of coping, students demonstrated a high use of adaptive coping strategies, particularly problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches, alongside a lower reliance on maladaptive coping. This indicates that maritime students actively manage stress through constructive and self-regulated behaviors.

Moreover, the study established significant relationships among cultural challenges, anxiety, and coping strategies, confirming that adjustment difficulties are associated with increased anxiety, while coping mechanisms play a critical role in mitigating psychological stress. Overall, the findings highlight the dynamic interplay between environmental demands and individual adaptive responses in disciplined maritime training.



## Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance students' adjustment and well-being in maritime training environments.

First, maritime institutions should strengthen psychological support systems, including accessible counseling services and mental health programs, to assist students in managing anxiety and emotional challenges associated with disciplined training.

Second, structured orientation and transition programs should be implemented to better prepare students for the cultural and institutional demands of maritime education. These programs may focus on behavioral expectations, emotional resilience, and socio-cultural adaptation.

Third, educators and training officers are encouraged to adopt supportive instructional practices, such as clear communication, constructive feedback, and inclusive learning environments, to reduce anxiety and improve student engagement.

Fourth, institutions should promote the development of adaptive coping strategies by integrating stress management training, time management workshops, and peer support initiatives into the curriculum.

Finally, future research may further explore the longitudinal development of coping strategies and examine additional factors influencing student adaptation in maritime education, such as institutional support systems and individual psychological traits.

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