

Innovations

Empowering Future Fisheries Leaders: A Systematic Review of Scholar Resilience

Beberly T. Calugan^{2,3}, Irene P. Tanyag^{1,3}

¹Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

²Department of Environment and Natural Resources

³Baguio Central University

Abstract: *This study delves into the multifaceted challenges BFAR Fisheries Scholars face, particularly those from marginalized sectors. The research investigates the interplay between academic, emotional, and social factors that influence the experiences and resilience of these scholars. The findings highlight the significant challenges faced by BFAR Fisheries Scholars, including academic pressure, financial constraints, cultural adaptation, and social isolation. Despite these adversities, many scholars demonstrate remarkable resilience, employing various coping strategies and seeking support from diverse sources. The study underscores the importance of emotional resilience, self-efficacy, a growth mindset, and effective emotional regulation in navigating these challenges. A strong social support network of family, friends, mentors, and peers gives an individual a better opportunity to reduce stress and increase resilience. The present study focuses on developing interventions and support systems that address the BFAR Fisheries Scholars' needs. These interventions should prioritize mental health support, academic advising, and a supportive learning environment. It is imperative to implement a comprehensive strategy that addresses immediate and long-term needs to sustain the positive impact of this research. In the short term, policymakers and institutions should focus on providing targeted support services, such as mental health counseling, academic advising, and peer mentorship. Additionally, increasing financial aid and scholarships can alleviate financial burdens and provide opportunities for marginalized students. In the long term, fostering a culture of well-being within the fisheries education system is essential, which involves incorporating mindfulness and stress management techniques into curricula, promoting a growth mindset, and encouraging open communication about mental health.*

Keywords: *BFAR Fisheries Scholars, emotional resilience, mental health, academic performance, support systems*

Introduction

Higher education institutions worldwide are becoming more aware of the significance of student mental health. UNESCO Institute for Educational Statistics stated that up to 50% of higher education (HE) students suffer from mental health challenges (UNESCO). In addition to increasing academic pressures, social expectations, and economic uncertainties, students face an increasing range of mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and stress. A growing body of international research has emphasized the rising prevalence of mental health problems among college students. Such include stress, anxiety, and depression (American College Health Association, 2021). Factors such as academic pressures, financial constraints, and social isolation can intensify these issues, especially during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020).

The study of empowering future fisheries leaders aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), SDG 4: Quality Education with target 4.3, which focuses on ensuring equal access for all to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university education. Additionally, the program contributes to SDG 14: Life Below Water, focusing on conserving and using marine resources (United Nations, n.d.). The FSP provides the opportunity for skilled professionals to nurture the sustainable management of aquatic resources and the well-being of coastal communities through financial assistance and academic resources.

As in any other country, Philippine higher education is a critical player in national development and building since it aims to develop professionals with abilities relevant to the economy's economic growth and social development. This government has always sponsored many students who have capabilities on merit scholarships, particularly those with underprivileged backgrounds. Given the important task of the fishery industry, developing human resources capable of managing and addressing the sector's complex challenges has been a priority for the administration and the government. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), through its Fisheries Scholarship Program (FSP), has led this effort, providing educational opportunities to promising individuals and fisherfolk children since its induction in 1979 under President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

The BFAR FSP is a crucial initiative to nurture skilled professionals in the fisheries sector (BFAR, 2024) by providing financial assistance and academic resources required to continue students' education in fisheries science and related fields. However, despite their noble intentions, BFAR scholars, like any other

student, may be subject to various challenges that may impede their pursuit of academic and professional growth.

Resilience, or the ability of a person to bounce back or recover from adversity, has been identified as an important factor in dealing with the pressures of life and reaching successful outcomes. This dynamic process requires internal and external resource sources to build resilience. While personal traits such as self-esteem and communication skills contribute positively to the level of resilience in a person, external sources such as strong social support networks and access to resources also contribute to resilience significantly (Hurley, 2023).

Social support is crucial to building resilience and mental health. Social support networks are not merely a source of solace; they also serve as an important modulator of adversity and a great enhancer of psychological well-being. Such networks of relationships with family, friends, and community involve belonging, emotional validation, and practical support, which an individual feels during difficult times (iMindHealth, 2023).

While limited research exists specifically on BFAR Scholars, studies on general student populations reveal similar challenges. For instance, academic pressure, financial strain, and personal and social encounters are the common challenges that plug the young minds of students that will test their resilience, perseverance and adaptability (Natal, 2023). In the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), challenges related to inadequate financial support, burnout, and compliance with academic requirements over quality instruction due to workload-induced and time constraints are pressing some difficulties for students (Ballogan, 2021).

The theory of emotional resilience focuses on an individual ability to adapt and recover from adversity (Masten, 2001). This theory is central to understanding how BFAR Fisheries scholars cope with academic and personal challenges. Emotional resilience is a dynamic process influenced by personal traits, coping mechanisms, and social support (Rutter, 2006). The study will use this theory to analyze how scholars develop and sustain resilience in the face of stress, homesickness, and imposter syndrome. By examining resilience through this theoretical lens, the study can identify key factors contributing to successful adaptation and recovery among scholars.

As proposed by Cohen and Wills (1985), social support theory posits that social support plays a critical role in buffering the effects of stress and enhancing emotional resilience. This theory is relevant to the study as it provides a framework

for examining how support systems, such as family, peers, and mentors, influence the emotional resilience of BFAR Fisheries scholars. According to the theory, perceived support can mitigate stress and promote positive outcomes by providing emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance (House, 1983). The study will investigate how different types of social support contribute to their ability to manage challenges and maintain well-being throughout their academic journeys.

The Emotional Resilience Model integrates various factors influencing an individual ability to adapt to and recover from adversity. This model includes personal traits (e.g., optimism, self-efficacy), coping mechanisms (e.g., mindfulness, stress management), and social support networks (e.g., family, peers, mentors) (Connor & Davidson, 2003). For the BFAR Fisheries scholars, the model will be used to conceptualize how these factors interact to shape their emotional resilience. The model will guide the analysis of how different components of the scholarship program (FILG, FCEG, IP/ICCs) support or hinder scholars in developing resilience.

The Academic and emotional challenges framework focuses on understanding the intersection of academic and emotional challenges scholars face. It posits that academic stress, homesickness, imposter syndrome, and isolation are interconnected challenges that affect emotional well-being and academic performance (Smith & White, 2019). By examining these challenges within the context of the BFAR Fisheries Scholarship Program, the framework aims to identify specific factors contributing to emotional resilience and areas where additional support may be needed. The framework will help elucidate how experiences with these challenges influence their overall success and well-being.

The increasing incidence of mental health challenges among higher education students, including BFAR Fisheries Scholars, is an area that has been of great concern recently. Such pressures are an academic burden, the lack of sufficient financial needs, social isolation, or the unique nature of an area like fisheries science and its requirements. The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified these challenges, highlighting the need for greater attention to student mental health and well-being. Understanding the factors contributing to resilience and practical strategies to support scholars is paramount to ensure that scholars succeed and thrive.

This study lies in its potential to address the emotional well-being and academic success of BFAR Fisheries Scholars, particularly those from marginalized sectors. It aims to improve scholarly mental well-being, enhance performance, and empower marginalized communities by exploring emotional challenges and

strengthening support systems, which contribute to developing more effective support systems, increased academic performance and retention rates, and enhanced emotional resilience among scholars. This research may aid in addressing the unique challenges faced by scholars from disadvantaged backgrounds, hence empowering the marginal communities. Ultimately, this research will be relevant to developing a highly skilled and socially responsible fisheries workforce, which will benefit the fisheries sector in the Philippines for generations to come.

BFAR Fisheries Scholars, particularly those from marginalized sectors, face significant emotional challenges that impact their academic performance and well-being. The study aims to identify and assess the emotional challenges, examine the role of institutional and social support systems in mitigating them, and determine the impact of socio-economic background on scholars' vulnerability and the effectiveness of their coping mechanisms. Ultimately, the goal is to develop evidence-based recommendations to enhance intervention programs and support services to improve the emotional well-being and academic success of BFAR Fisheries Scholars.

The study aims to significantly contribute to the well-being and success of BFAR Fisheries Scholars. By identifying the specific emotional challenges, the scholars face, the study provides evidence-based recommendations to BFAR and other relevant institutions to develop more effective support systems and intervention programs tailored to the needs of scholars, such as mental health counseling services, academic support, and social activities. Improving support services available to scholars to enhance the quality and accessibility of counseling, mentoring, and tutoring services will help scholars build resilience in managing stress and achieving academic goals. Encourage a well-being culture in the BFAR Fisheries Scholarship Program by enhancing mental health awareness and developing healthy coping strategies. By encouraging an open environment of communication and support, the study will shape a supportive and inclusive environment for scholars.

This study aims to examine the impact of socio-economic background on the emotional and psychological challenges that scholars encounter throughout their academic journey and assess their emotional resilience. Emotional resilience, the ability to adapt and recover from adversity or difficulty, is key to scholars' success as they face various academic, social, and emotional problems. This study will explore how scholars manage challenges such as stress, homesickness, imposter syndrome, and isolation and how support systems, coping strategies, and personal resilience contribute to their general success and well-being.

Review of Related Literature

This literature review provides insight into the multifaceted stressors facing fisheries students: academic pressures, mental health concerns, and cultural adjustments. It explores how these stressors affect students' well-being and academic outcomes and discusses how resilience, self-efficacy, and social support can all help alleviate these stresses. This review aims to inform targeted interventions for enhancing academic success and overall well-being by identifying the unique needs of fisheries students.

The Challenges Faced by Students

A growing body of research points to many obstacles students encounter, particularly in higher education. Some of these challenges include mental health issues, financial constraints, and academic stress, which can ultimately affect students' performance academically and overall. The mental health crisis in the university is getting worse. Rising academic pressure, social challenges, and financial stress all contribute to increased mental health concerns (University of Edinburgh, n.d.).

Academic Stressors and Mental Health

Academic stress can significantly impact student well-being and academic performance by reducing motivation, hindering academic achievement, and eroding self-confidence. According to Córdova et al. (2023), stress management workshops and time management techniques, among others, can be helpful. Also, fostering a supportive learning environment, raising teacher awareness, and adapting teaching methodologies (e.g., flexible assessment, clear expectations, regular feedback) can help reduce academic load and promote student well-being. Students can also play an active role by practicing self-care, seeking support, and setting realistic goals. Institutional support, including counseling services, tutoring centers, and quiet study spaces, is also crucial in mitigating the adverse effects of academic stress. The implementation of academic programs on stress management and coping can enable the student to manage stressful situations better and thus improve performance.

Cultural Factors and Mental Health

Cultural changes and acculturation can worsen or even trigger mental health problems in students from other cultural backgrounds. Such students often experience cultural adaptation, language usage, and alienation difficulties. According to Higgen et al. (2020), mental health can create problems for students in achieving competence at the academic and social levels. Moreover, diversity in

terms of cultural and linguistic background may involve learning problems and uncertain social affiliation.

Cultural factors can significantly affect the well-being of fishery students in terms of mental health and academic outcomes. Hence, the need to bolster cultural intelligence and academic resilience to enhance students' feelings of belonging and overall well-being during cultural transitions is crucial (Wu et al., 2022).

The Importance of Emotional Resilience in Academic Success

Emotional resilience is a strong predictor of academic success. It helps students navigate the negative aspects that they may face, thereby keeping them optimistic and productive. It enables individuals to bounce back from setbacks, maintain a positive outlook, and persevere in facing challenges. Several factors contribute to emotional resilience, including self-efficacy, growth mindset, emotional regulation, and social support.

Self-efficacy and Growth Mindset

Self-efficacy refers to the belief in the ability to succeed, which has been identified as a critical personal factor for emotional resilience. Research has shown that self-efficacy is crucial in motivation, goal-setting, and persistence (Bandura, 2023). People with this kind of self-efficacy view challenges as opportunities for growth and are likelier to stick with things even if obstacles arise.

A growth mindset depicts people who believe their success relies on time and effort. Individuals possessing a growth mindset feel that their ability or intelligence could be developed through hard work, dedication and persistence. People with growth mindsets thrive on challenges, persevere in the face of obstacles, learn from criticism and are inspired by successes (Dweck, 2024).

Building self-efficacy and developing a growth mindset will enhance emotional resilience, leading to tremendous success at school and work. Strategic interventions should be implemented to enhance students' ability to navigate diverse cultures, build resilience, boost self-achievement, and foster a sense of belonging (Wu et al., 2022).

Emotional Regulation and Social Support

Effective emotional regulation techniques, such as mindfulness and journaling, are taught to empower students and help them manage emotions more effectively. Mindfulness-based interventions show a beneficial influence on emotional regulation and decrease stress. As highlighted by An et al. (2022),

mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) has been shown to significantly reduce negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and depression among college students, even in the long term.

Social support is especially critical during stressful periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Szkody et al., 2021). People who enjoy better support from their social contexts tend to perform better and benefit more from challenges, mental health, and recovery after adversity. In the background of the BFAR Fisheries Scholarship Program, mentors are advisors, cheerleaders, sounding boards and sometimes even life coaches. Their primary role is to provide students with the tools they need to navigate the often-turbulent waters of academia. This support can take many forms, including academic guidance, personal encouragement and career advice. The goal is to empower students to become independent learners capable of overcoming challenges independently (Haq, 2024).

Environmental Factors and Institutional Support

Environmental factors play a profound role in moulding the emotional resilience of an individual. These external influences can foster or impede the ability to adapt to adversity. Institutional support, such as schools, is crucial in shaping emotional resilience. Schools can offer a supportive and protective learning environment, mental health services, and opportunities for social interaction. However, they can also be locations of tension, harassment, and even academic pressure. As UNICEF research highlights (UNICEF, 2022), schools can serve as both a source of self-esteem and a place of adversity. So, creating a school environment that prioritizes students' mental health and well-being is crucial, offering resilience and positive development. A government's social welfare policies promoting social capital and economic equality may also influence the resilience of a society. Cultural factors, such as values reflecting resilience, perseverance, and optimism, contribute to well-being. An environment that places a premium on mental well-being builds resilience and fosters positive development must be created.

Discussion

The study findings shed light on the complex interactions between challenges, support systems, and resilience among BFAR fisheries scholars. The results underscore the need to address their specific needs and make them capable of succeeding academically and emotionally.

Unique Challenges of Fisheries Students

Fisheries students face unique challenges that go beyond the conventional academic experience. One significant challenge is conducting the subject through

intense fieldwork and practice applications. These challenges can be particularly stressful for students from marginalized communities, who may face additional obstacles due to socioeconomic disparities.

Many fishery students, particularly those from marginalized communities, encounter additional obstacles due to their socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, students who are the first in their families to attend college often experience imposter syndrome, leading to self-doubt and a lack of confidence in their abilities. Socioeconomic status (SES) plays a role in academic performance, as students whose parents lack a college degree face more significant hurdle (Rodríguez-Hernández et al., 2020). For instance, students might experience an awkward fit into academic environments, which further blossoms into a thought of inadequacy or self-doubt. Furthermore, according to Van Beek and Patulny (2022), a higher sense of social divide exacerbates loneliness in rural communities and higher levels among participants living alone in either area. It was concluded that loneliness was experienced extensively among those who were single and lived alone, regardless of their geographical location.

Academic pressure and the demand for field assignments are some of the challenges many students face, as Kyle Westly Calibuyo, a Fisherfolk Children Educational Grant (FCEG), a fresh Graduate at Mariano Marcos State University. He cited that during his college days, during our on-the-job training (OJT) in particular, his challenge was balancing theoretical knowledge and practical experience. At their deployment, he was very confident and equipped with theoretical knowledge and thought his OJT would go easy with that confidence. However, a problem arose as he lacked practical learnings and that the work of fisheries professional does not only roam around on pure "know what" but in reality, fisheries professional work is about the balance of "know what" and "know-how" (just like other professions) that is very technical. This statement proves the findings of Cordova et al. (2023) that everyday stress experienced by students includes performance anxiety.

Balancing academic responsibilities with leadership roles can also be a significant challenge. Shane A. Sabado, a Fisherfolk Children Educational Grant, cited that as a fisheries student, her most significant challenges are academics and being a student leader. First, balancing her studies with her duties as a leader was hard. Attending classes, doing lab work, and leading other students was tough. She often felt tired and worried about doing everything well. Second, sometimes big school projects and student events happened simultaneously, which she felt was very stressful. Another big challenge she faced as a fisheries student was struggling

to keep up with field activities alongside her classmates since fisheries are often seen as male-dominated, and she is a female student.

Financial constraints can also hinder students' ability to participate fully in academic and field activities. As Bea Perlas, a Fisherfolk Children Educational Grant (FCEG) fresh graduate at Don Mariano Marcos State University, she faced many challenges. The biggest challenges she experienced were adjusting to the new environment, dealing with financial struggles, and staying focused on her training. The shift from a classroom setting to a fast-paced, hands-on work environment was overwhelming, especially since she lacked knowledge and experience in biotechnology work. She was also initially deployed to another center, so she had to adapt from one environment to another. Despite the scholarship she received, financial struggles were another problem, as costs for documents, transportation, OJT fees, rent, and meals stretched her budget. Moreover, balancing leadership responsibilities and the pressure to perform well added stress and exhaustion (physical, mental, and emotional).

The Importance of Emotional Resilience

The study revealed that resilience is crucial in helping scholars navigate these challenges. Resilient scholars were more likely to employ effective coping strategies, seek support from mentors and peers, and maintain a positive outlook. This resilience enables the person to get back up when knocked down by setbacks and thrive over difficulties.

Emotional resilience forms an important basis for any navigable academic grind toward success. Kyle Westly Calibuyo cited the importance of perseverance in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Shane Sabado implied that handling stress and overcoming challenges is crucial. Bea Perlas also implied that persevering through financial challenges and adapting to a new environment is important.

Emotional resilience is, for instance, a strong predictor of academic success. It helps students navigate the negative aspects that they may face, thereby keeping them optimistic and productive. Building emotional resilience requires the individual to establish a growth mindset, manage emotions accordingly, and develop problem-solving skills. Another way to enhance well-being is by building social connections and encouraging self-awareness. Constructive feedback on effort and learning can also help reinforce resilience and motivation.

Support systems such as family, friends, mentors, and institutional resources often advocate emotional resilience. Research suggests that having a supportive social climate and resources to aid students in managing failure can prevent stress and its associated harmful effects on engagement with learning (Ursin et al., 2021). A student who can be supported well socially is always better prepared to cope with stress and adversity and maintain motivation. Support systems play a crucial role in developing emotional resilience and promoting good well-being among scholars in BFAR. As Ángeles and Shaddock-Hernández (2024) highlight the critical role of family and peers in supporting workers and learners by providing various forms of capital, such as knowledge, financial resources, and employment opportunities, which significantly contribute to their academic and career success. Moreover, by supporting, guiding, and encouraging scholars, one gains the strength and resilience to overcome obstacles and attain academic success.

Believing that intelligence and abilities are changeable makes people persist longer when faced with adversity and regard adversities as excellent opportunities for improvement. Research on students' motivation, resilience, and academic performance in response to growth mindset interventions by Mohamoud, A. M. (2024) found that growth mindset interventions influence motivation, resilience, and academic performance positively. However, challenges in these interventions include difficulties in sustainability, individual differences, and limitations of teacher training. The beneficial effects of growth mindset interventions can best be maximized when embedded into a curriculum, with professional development for teachers and support learning environments. Other studies have proved that mindfulness-based interventions positively influence emotional regulation and decrease stress.

Student resilience plays a positive role in academic and personal success. According to Etherton et al. (2022), resilience may directly or indirectly influence student outcomes; similarly, for BFAR Fisheries Scholars. For example, resilient scholars may be more likely to set challenging goals, believe in their ability to achieve them (self-efficacy) or have less state anxiety. These factors can then benefit their academic performance and general well-being.

Effective emotional regulation and management strategies, such as mindfulness and journaling, allow one to manage stress and anxiety. Additionally, social support from family, friends, and mentors plays a crucial role in developing resilience and good well-being.

Emotional resilience is responding to stress or unexpected situations and crises. Developing emotional resilience among students requires a holistic approach. Emotional regulation techniques, such as mindfulness and journaling, are taught to empower students and help them manage emotions more effectively. Stress and anxiety are thus reduced. Creating problem-solving skills in students enables them to approach complex tasks with a solution-oriented mindset, builds their confidence, and makes them strong for challenges. Developing good social bonding creates emotional support and facilitates a sense of belongingness among students. Encouraging self-awareness and reflective skills develops their understanding of strengths and weaknesses, leading to personal development. Finally, providing constructive, not outcome-based, feedback on effort and strategies contextualizes the concept of resilience in learning (Dwivedi, n.d.).

Resilience enables the students to maintain a sense of self-worth and confidence despite external pressure. This enhances a healthy profile of identity and personal purpose, which is necessary for long-term happiness and success (Dwivedi, n.d.).

The Role of Support System

The findings emphasize the importance of strong support systems in promoting resilience. Mentorship, counseling, and peer support were key factors in helping scholars cope with stress and maintain their academic performance.

Social support is another significant factor in emotional resilience. Students with supportive relationships with family members, peers, or mentors can better manage emotional challenges and maintain their well-being. Kiara Ticgongan directly acknowledged the crucial role of family and friends in providing emotional and practical support. For instance, social support is especially critical during stressful periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Szkody et al., 2021). People who enjoy better support from their social contexts tend to perform better and benefit more from challenges, mental health, and recovery after adversity.

A sound support system can foster emotional resilience. While formal institutions and less formal social groups can directly impact the coping capabilities of a person exposed to adversity, overall support systems can positively influence an individual's response to adversity. As Kyle Westly Calibuyo, a Fisherfolk Children Educational Grant (FCEG) and a fresh graduate at Mariano Marcos State University, states that to overcome the challenge he encountered was to ask for support from their mentors during that time in order to supplement the "know-how" concept of our work. Their mentors help him and his classmates balance theoretical knowledge and

practical experience, especially the very technical part of the work of a fishery professional. Bea Perlas also cited the importance of learning from mentors and co-trainees.

Counseling and mental health services professionals are important in changing the lives of people, families, and communities. As the Wake Forest University Online Counseling Program (n.d.), counseling offers individuals the opportunity to cope with situations related to death, natural disasters, and even school pressures. It makes people cope and live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Academic advising and faculty mentoring support students' academic and personal growth. They can help students persist with their studies, connect with opportunities in their discipline, and assure access to the support systems that enable them to succeed. According to Afzal, Sami, and Munawar (2024), enhancing advising and mentoring practices could significantly improve students' learning outcomes. With their implementation, institutions could create more supportive learning environments and empower students to succeed.

Peer support groups have positive impacts on a person's support system. These can reduce social isolation, improve mental health, and bring a sense of belonging. Research by Shalaby and Agyapong (2020) has shown that PSSs can improve engagement, quality of life, and self-confidence while reducing the burden on the healthcare system. However, the effectiveness of PSSs can vary depending on various factors, including the specific context and implementation strategies. To ensure the sustainability and impact of PSSs, ongoing support and collaboration between healthcare professionals, policymakers, and peer support workers are essential.

Additionally, social support is another significant factor in emotional resilience. Scholars with access to supportive relationships, whether with family members, peers, or mentors, can better manage emotional challenges and maintain their well-being. As the scholars cited, being with their friends, mentors, and their families' support helps them cope with all these challenges. As supported by Carandang (2021), counselors, mentors, and organized support systems are vitally important in helping scholars navigate the emotional demands of academic life and develop the resilience needed for long-term success.

Further, institutional support and policies are important to students because they can improve academic performance, increase student satisfaction, create a structured learning environment, promote fairness, and create consistent practices.

As highlighted by Pulimeno et al. (2020), by prioritizing health promotion, schools can create healthier and more supportive learning environments for all students.

The Power of Self-Efficacy and Growth Mindset

A sense of self-efficacy and a growth mindset are essential in developing emotional resilience. Self-efficacy refers to a belief in one's ability to succeed, while a growth mindset refers to the opinion that abilities can be developed through effort and learning.

Several factors contribute to developing emotional resilience among scholars, including personal, social, and environmental. Among the most significant personal factors related to flexibility is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the belief in the ability to succeed at tasks in a given situation. Research has shown that self-efficacy is crucial in goal-setting and persistence motivation (Bandura, 2023). Persons with intense self-efficacy regard challenges as potential learning experiences, and they can overcome barriers, as Shane Sabado and Bea Perlas demonstrated their confidence in their abilities and willingness to take on leadership roles. An enhancement in the strength of self-efficacy may help us prepare scholars who will be effective in their academic and professional pursuits.

Exercising a growth mindset helps students be motivated and learn to overcome challenges. As cited by Sunshine Iwad, an Indigenous People/Indigenous Cultural Communities, throughout her study, she cultivated a composed mindset, prioritizing positivity and productivity over stress. This approach enabled her to tackle challenges head-on, and during her practicum, adapting to a new environment proved demanding. Embracing uncertainty, she accepted the emotional setbacks and went for it for the sake of learning. The practicum experience taught her how to develop innovative solutions, build meaningful connections, and develop a deeper understanding of industry dynamics. This transformative experience reinforced her passion for learning and adaptability. Bea Perlas also demonstrated a positive mindset by focusing on growth and learning. The statement aligns with Dweck's study (2024), which states that people with growth mindsets thrive on challenges, persevere in the face of obstacles, learn from criticism, and are inspired by successes.

While the BFAR Fisheries Scholarship Program has successfully developed the technical skills of its scholars, the emotional and psychological aspects of their journeys have received less attention. Scholars within the fisheries program undergo different emotional challenges, such as anxiety, stress, homesickness, and even imposter syndrome, which often go hand-in-hand with feelings of loneliness.

All these factors influence a student's motivation, performance, and general well-being. Different studies suggest motivation, self-efficacy, and time management skills are necessary for academic fulfilment (Agustina et al., 2021). Time management is crucial. Shane A Sabado cited that she manages her time by making a simple plan for when to study and do leadership work each day. Addressing these emotionally challenging issues and building their resiliencies prepares the BFAR scholars to be more academically productive, giving meaning to the fisheries sector.

The Need for Targeted Support

The right approach to support such students will also involve preparing special programs focused on the needs of fisheries students. Such programs could facilitate wide-ranging services, such as academic advising, counseling, mentorship, and peer support. All these would foster a supportive learning environment, as students are prepared to bounce back with appropriate resilience and competencies to succeed in their academic and professional journeys.

Mentors and advisors can help students in fisheries programs with their career preparation, building confidence, developing their identity, and overcoming obstacles in their academic journey. As stated by Morris Zelditch, "Mentors are advisors, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; tutors, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; masters, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about and aid in obtaining opportunities; models, of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic," (American Fisheries Society, n.d.).

Peer support is just one aspect of a mental health support system. Peer support refers to support from individuals who share life experiences or face similar challenges. This type of mental health support is not professional yet, yet it is based on empathy, understanding, and compassion (unknown author, 2024).

Mental health problems are as common among students as they are in the general population. Anyone with new challenges as a student, including friends and family, could benefit from talking to someone. Counseling could help understand these issues and suggest some strategies for dealing with emotions (National Health Service, 2020).

The impact of financial aid and scholarships is far-reaching beyond students alone. Such programs break down the barriers to success, increase social mobility, and bring education to people irrespective of their backgrounds. A student with the

same academic and career ambitions as everyone else can pursue his dream because of these initiatives. In addition, financial aid and scholarship programs help promote a trained and educated workforce. Once these students have higher education and specific training, they develop the necessary skills and knowledge that foster competitiveness in their respective fields. Such channels spur innovation, economic growth, and social advancement (Tribhuvanadmin, 2024).

The study's findings have important implications for policies and practices in fisheries education and training. Understanding the unique challenges experienced by BFAR fisheries scholars, especially those from marginal communities, is crucial to developing effective interventions and support systems.

Policymakers must, therefore, provide well-rounded support structures that consider all students' needs. These include monetary support, mental health care, and academic advising. Secondly, policymaking must foster inclusion and diversity within the context of fisheries education, whereby equal opportunities exist for success for every individual from diverse backgrounds.

Therefore, practitioners in fishery education and training institutions should develop strategies to enhance students' emotional well-being and academic performance. This would include curricula with mindfulness and stress management techniques, mentorship, and peer support programs in a supportive learning environment. Moreover, practitioners should be sensitive to students from marginalized communities' unique challenges and adjust teaching approaches to these unique conditions.

The study explores the multifaceted challenges of BFAR Fisheries Scholars, especially those from marginalized communities. Scholars experience a unique combination of academic pressures, financial constraints, social isolation, and the demanding nature of fisheries science. Resilience is important in navigating these challenges, with personal traits, social support, and effective coping mechanisms playing pivotal roles. It further calls for the importance of sound support systems, such as mentorship, counseling, and peer support, to be established in order to create emotional resilience and academic success. Self-efficacy and a growth mindset are also encouraged in overcoming obstacles and attaining personal and academic goals. By addressing the specific needs of BFAR Fisheries Scholars, particularly those from marginalized communities, and implementing targeted support strategies, it is possible to create a more supportive learning environment and empower these individuals to reach their full potential.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate the complex interplay of academic, emotional, and social factors that may affect the experiences of the BFAR fisheries scholars. The research indicates that these scholars face unique challenges, mainly academic stress, financial limitations, cultural adaptation, and social alienation. Surprisingly, several scholars who face these challenges manifest excellent resiliency, using many coping strategies and garnering aid from various sources.

The study emphasizes the role of emotional resilience during these challenges, high self-efficacy, a growth mindset, and proper effective emotional regulation, which are significant well-being and academic performance factors. Moreover, strong support groups, such as family, peers, friends, and mentors, provide a better support mechanism for stressor mitigation and boosting resilience.

The results suggest the need targeted interventions and support systems for BFAR fisheries scholars to meet their specific needs. Such interventions should promote mental health, academic support, and a supportive learning environment. Through these challenges, policymakers and practitioners can contribute to developing a highly skilled and resilient fisheries workforce better equipped to address the sector's complexities.

For the positive effects of this research to be sustained, implementing a whole strategy regarding BFAR Fisheries Scholars with regard to specific needs entails multi-faceted solutions focusing both on immediate and more distant solutions. In the short term, immediate policy programs for targeted support in terms of mental health counseling, academic advising, and peer mentorship shall be focused on both policymakers and institutions. Further, financial aid and scholarship schemes would reduce the financial pressure and give opportunities to students of the marginalized section. In the long term, developing a healthy culture in the fisheries education system is also required through mindfulness and stress management training, a growth mindset, and open communication about mental health. These recommendations will enable BFAR Fisheries Scholars to overcome challenges, perform well in the academe, and contribute even more to the sustainable development of the fisheries sector.

References:

1. Afzal, A., Sami, A., & Munawar, S. (2024). *The role of academic advising and mentoring in promoting student success and retention. International Journal of Human and Society, 4(1), 110-123.*
2. Agustina, E. T., Wahyudin, A. Y., & Pratiwi, A. A. (2021). *The Students' Motivation and Academic Achievement at Tertiary level: A Correlational Study. Journal of Arts and Education, 1(1).*
3. Ángeles, S. L., & Shaddock-Hernández, J. (2024). *The Role of Family, Friends, and Colleagues Supporting Workers and Learners Navigating College. Journal of Postsecondary Student Success, 3(3), 49-80.*
4. American College Health Association. (2021). *American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II: Reference Group Executive Summary Spring 2021. American College Health Association.*
5. An, A., Hoang, H., Trang, L., Vo, Q., Tran, L., Le, T., ... & Ha, H. (2022). *Investigating the effect of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on stress level and brain activity of college students. IBRO neuroscience reports, 12, 399-410.*
6. American Fisheries Society. (n.d.). *Guide to Mentoring. [American Fisheries Society website]. Retrieved from fisheries.org*
7. BFAR. (2024). *Fisheries Scholarship Program: Guidelines and Objectives. Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.*
8. Ballogan, M. (2021). *Status of learners' support in the college of education of a state university in the Cordillera-Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic: Learners' support in a college of education. International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, 13(3), 2676-2708.*
9. Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). *Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. Psychological Bulletin, 98(2), 310-357.*
10. Córdova Olivera, P., Gasser Gordillo, P., Naranjo Mejía, H., La Fuente Taborga, I., Grajeda Chacón, A., & Sanjinés Unzueta, A. (2023). *Academic stress as a predictor of mental health in university students. Cogent Education, 10(2), 2232686.*
11. Dweck, C. S. (2024). *Mindset: Updating your thinking for a successful life. Ballantine Books.*
12. Dwivedi, S. (n.d.). *The Role of Emotional Resilience in Academic and Personal Growth. Dwarka Prasad Singh Gr Noida [DWPS Gr Noida]. Retrieved from dwpsgrnoida.com*
13. Etherton, K., Steele-Johnson, D., Salvano, K., & Kovacs, N. (2022). *Resilience effects on student performance and well-being: the role of self-efficacy, self-set goals, and anxiety. The Journal of general psychology, 149(3), 279-298.*
14. Haq, S. (2024). *Mentorship programmes: A vital part of student success. Retrieved from www.universityworldnews.com*

15. Higgen, S., & Mösko, M. (2020). *Mental health and cultural and linguistic diversity as challenges in school? An interview study on the implications for students and teachers*. *PloS one*, 15(7), e0236160.
16. House, J. S. (1983). *Work stress and social support*. Addison-Wesley series on occupational stress.
17. Hurley, K. (2023, September 28). *Resilience: A Guide to Facing Life's Challenges, Adversities, and Crises*. Everyday Health. www.everydayhealth.com
18. Mohamoud, A. M. (2024). *The Impact of Growth Mindset Interventions on Students' Motivation, Resilience, and Academic Achievement*. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Horseed International University (MJHIU)*, 2(1), 102-125.
19. Natal, M.S. (2023). *Student's Life: Challenges, Opportunities, and Achievements*. Retrieved from www.lingayasvidyapeeth.edu.in
20. National Health Service (NHS). (2020, October 28). *Counselling for student mental health problems*. [nhs.uk]. Retrieved from www.nhs.uk
21. Pulimeno, M., Piscitelli, P., Colazzo, S., Colao, A., & Miani, A. (2020). *School as ideal setting to promote health and well-being among young people*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(23), 8811.
22. Rodríguez-Hernández, C. F., Cascallar, E., & Kyndt, E. (2020). *Socio-economic status and academic performance in higher education: A systematic review*. *Educational Research Review*, 29, 100305.
23. Shalaby, R. A. H., & Agyapong, V. I. (2020). *Peer support in mental health: literature review*. *JMIR mental health*, 7(6), e15572.
24. Tribhuvanadmin (2024, July 3). *Financial aid and scholarships: Ensuring access to education for all* [Blog post]. The Tribhuvan School. Retrieved from thetribhuvanschool.com
25. UNESCO Institute for Educational Statistics. *New brief on student mental health support in higher education released*. [Website]. Retrieved November 11, 2024, from www.iesalc.unesco.org
26. UNICEF. (2022, March). *Five essential pillars for promoting and protecting mental health and psychosocial well-being in schools and learning environments*. www.unicef.org
27. United Nations. (n.d.). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations. sdgs.un.org
28. University of Edinburgh. (n.d.). *The cost of knowledge: Exploring the increasing complexity of student mental health*. *Teaching Matters*. Retrieved from blogs.ed.ac.uk
29. Unknown Author. (2024, January 5). *10 benefits of peer support*. Retrieved from distresscentre.com

30. Van Beek, M., & Patulny, R. (2022). *'The threat is in all of us': Perceptions of loneliness and divided communities in urban and rural areas during COVID-19. Journal of Community Psychology, 50(3), 1531-1548.*
31. Wake Forest University Online Counseling Program. (n.d.). *The Importance of Counseling. Retrieved from counseling.online.wfu.edu*
32. World Health Organization. (2020). *COVID-19 pandemic. World Health Organization.*
33. Wu, S., Chen, W., Chen, W., & Zheng, W. (2022). *Effects of cultural intelligence and imposter syndrome on school belonging through academic resilience among university students with vocational backgrounds. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(13), 7944.*