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The Relationship between ASMR Experience and the Perceived Stress Levels of College Students

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Abstract: ***ASMR has drawn interest as a potential stress-reduction tool due to its ability to promote emotional balance and relaxation. The findings of this study are of significant importance in examining the effect of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) videos on students' perceived stress levels. This study employs a quantitative non-experimental research design utilizing the correlational technique. The respondents were taken from Davao del Norte since students in this area exhibit a unique combination of diverse cultural backgrounds, socio-economic conditions, and educational experiences that positions them as ideal respondents for research studies. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents to determine the relationship between the ASMR experience and perceived stress levels of students. The findings revealed that among the indicators of ASMR experience, experience viewing frequency had the highest mean, followed by tingling sensation response. This indicates that college students, particularly those from selected schools in Davao del Norte, exhibit a significant degree of ASMR experience, as evidenced by their frequent engagement with ASMR content and their tingling sensation responses when exposed to ASMR triggers. In terms of perceived stress levels, both emotional stress and cognitive stress were found to be low among college students. This suggests that, in the study's sample, students generally experience low levels of stress, even while engaging with ASMR content. This supports the hypothesis that ASMR experience can have a stress-reducing effect on individuals, aligning with previous research indicating that ASMR induces relaxation and positive emotional responses.***

Keywords: ***Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, Perceived Stress Levels, Tingling Sensation Response.***

1. INTRODUCTION

Autonomous sensory meridian response or ASMR's potential effects on relaxation and mood enhancement have been explored and few studies have investigated its potential link to stress

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states [2] [17]. Given the relaxation-inducing properties of ASMR, there may be a connection between frequent ASMR experiences and reduced stress levels [10] [21]. ASMR videos, podcasts, and content online are designed to trigger ASMR sensations, reflecting a growing interest in this phenomenon [17]. Neuroscientific studies suggest that ASMR experiences may involve brain regions associated with emotional processing and attention [20].

Stress is a normal biological and psychological response to the demands of life. It is obtained through unfamiliar or unanticipated events that challenge one's sense of self and control. College students, specifically, are consistently exposed to a wide variety of causes of stress that come in a variety of forms. One significant known source of stress is an academic burden. The academic difficulty of the subject matter, workload due to subjects, time management due to subjects, obligations due to being on one's own, and time management due to both subjects and organizations were the top five overall stressors of Filipino college students [6].

Interestingly, despite the public intrigue, only a few studies have been carried out on the subject. The comprehension of the formal descriptive criteria of ASMR is quite limited. According to a recent survey research which discusses the limited scientific literature on ASMR and recognizes that ASMR is a relatively new and underexplored phenomenon. They discovered that the most effective stimuli for triggering ASMR were those that depicted whispering, personal attention, crisp sounds (such as metallic foil or tapping fingernails), and slow or repetitive movements. respondents often reported that the characteristic tingling sensations began at the top of the head and then traveled down the spine toward the rest of the body when they were presented with such stimuli [2].

Additionally, the researchers identified 40 studies meeting their inclusion criteria about ASMR. Among these, merely four delved into the correlation between ASMR and the perception of stress levels. The authors' findings underscore the call for additional research to probe the potential benefits of ASMR in addressing stress and anxiety [10]. They also stressed the significance of future studies concentrating on unraveling the mechanisms through which ASMR might alleviate stress and anxiety.

Furthermore, the subjective reports conveyed by the respondents gave researchers the impression that people who use ASMR may be experiencing the placebo effect, stress reduction, because they expect to experience it, which showed in the results of their study. Due to the preliminary scientific studies regarding ASMR and its effects on stress reduction, it is natural to ponder whether or not listening and watching ASMR content reduces the stress levels experienced by an individual [4].

With the heightened popularity of online-based self-help learning[28-30], we must cultivate newer and more accessible mediums on the internet. Along with the fact that Filipinos participate in producing and consuming ASMR content, it is important to note that local studies indicating the assistance of such content on mood and emotion among Filipinos appear to be lacking [12]. Consequently, the researcher aims to further extend the findings about the cognitive benefits, particularly in relation to stress, of ASMR by analyzing the relief it induces

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to the people.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative non-experimental research design utilizing the correlational technique. This method was used when the objective is to describe the status of the situations at the time of study to explore the causes of a particular phenomenon. A correlational study is a type of research design used in scientific investigations to explore and establish the degree and direction of a relationship between two or more variables.

The respondents were taken from Davao del Norte since students in this area exhibit a unique combination of diverse cultural backgrounds, socio-economic conditions, and educational experiences that positions them as ideal respondents for research studies. The amalgamation of indigenous traditions and contemporary influences within its communities would provide the researcher a nuanced environment to explore complex phenomena across cultural, social, and economic dimensions.

Furthermore, one commonly accepted guideline for sample size determination is to consider a minimum of 100 participants when dealing with a large population. This threshold ensures that the sample adequately represents the population's diversity and characteristics, allowing for more robust statistical analyses [1]. This observation was prevalent in other quantitative studies in the academe [23-26]. In this context, a sample size of 144 is used because the researcher needed to remove outliers, resulting in a dataset of 144. Fortunately, this size not only exceeds the minimum recommended threshold of 100 but also enhances the research's credibility and the accuracy of its conclusions by providing a more comprehensive dataset. Additionally, most statisticians agree that the minimum sample size to get any kind of meaningful result is 100 [3]. Moreover, in the book of Cohen, he stated that a sample size of 100 is generally sufficient to detect a medium-sized effect with a power of 80%. This means that there is an 80% chance of detecting a statistically significant effect if the true effect size is medium or larger [27].

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents to determine the relationship between the ASMR experience and perceived stress levels of students. The purposive sampling technique is preferred by most researchers especially when dealing with large populations and when randomization seems impossible [8]. Since the province of Davao del Norte covers a large population, the use of this sampling technique is deemed appropriate. Due to a similar reason, the respondents would be recruited through online platforms such as social media groups, college forums, and student associations within the region. To qualify as respondents for this study, a person must have ASMR experience at least once and must be a student currently enrolled at any college and university in the province. Considering the richness of these students' cultural backgrounds, it can be a factor to enhance the generalizability and depth of research findings. By engaging with Davao del Norte students in research endeavors, the researcher can tap into a population that embodies the complexities of a dynamic society.

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This study used the modified ASMR experience questionnaire (AEQ) for the independent variable to suit the context of the study and an adapted standardized rating scale of 10-item questionnaire, the Perceived Stress Questionnaire (PSQ), to examine the perceived stress levels of students in Davao del Norte Province. The Perceived Stress Questionnaire (PSQ) is a classic stress assessment instrument [5]. The questions in the adapted scale assessed a person's feelings and thoughts.

The instrument's contents were presented to the experts for validation and to know if it would gain a satisfactory rating conducive for the study as expected. In determining the frequency of respondents' ASMR experience, the following scale would be used with their respective range of means and description:

Figure 2. Table for the descriptive level of the independent variable

Range of Mean	Descriptive equivalent	Interpretation
4.50-5.00	Very High	This means that the ASMR experience is very much observed.
3.50-4.49	High	This means that the ASMR experience is observed.
2.50-3.49	Moderate	This means that the ASMR experience is moderately observed.
1.50-2.49	Low	This means that the ASMR experience is less observed.
1.00-1.49	Very Low	This means that the ASMR experience is not observed.

The second set of the questionnaire deals with the perceived stress levels of the students. Developers Levenstein and colleagues conducted a psychometric evaluation of the scale and found an internal consistency ranging from 90 to .92 and a test–retest reliability of .82. Results of the PSS correlated highly with trait anxiety and with scores on Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale.

Figure 3. Table for the descriptive level of the dependent variable

Range of Mean	Descriptive equivalent	Interpretation
4.50-5.00	Very High	This means that the perceived stress level is very much observed.
3.50-4.49	High	This means that the perceived stress level is observed.
2.50-3.49	Moderate	This means that the perceived stress level is moderately observed.

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1.50-2.49	Low	This means that the perceived stress level is less observed.
1.00-1.49	Very Low	This means that the perceived stress level is not observed.

The statistical tools that were used for data analysis and interpretation are the following:

Mean. This statistical tool would be used to determine the average ASMR experience and perceived stress levels of the subjects from the province of Davao del Norte, Philippines.
Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. This statistical tool was used to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. It assesses how well the relationship between the ASMR experienced and the perceived stress levels of the students.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, the researcher presents, analyzes and interprets the data gathered. Presentation of data is made through tables with their corresponding textual discussions. The tables are arranged in the following subheadings: Level of ASMR Experience, Level of Perceived Stress, and Relationship Between Levels of ASMR Experience and Perceived Stress levels of College Students with their corresponding indicators.

Level of ASMR Experience

Table 1 presents the extent of application of ASMR Experience in terms of experience viewing frequency and tingling sensation response. The overall mean is 3.47 and a standard deviation of 0.96 with a descriptive level of moderate. The overall result could be explained by the moderate rating given by the respondents in all indicators. This means that the application of ASMR experience is observed in the majority of the cases in the items of experience viewing frequency and tingling sensation response.

Table 1. Level of ASMR Experience

Indicator	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Experience Viewing Frequency	3.51	0.97	High
Tingling Sensation Response	3.42	1.10	Moderate
Overall	3.47	0.96	Moderate

It can be extracted from the table that among the indicators, experience viewing frequency and tingling sensation response has the highest mean of 3.51 with a standard deviation of 0.97 and

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followed by the tingling sensation response, which got a mean of 3.42 with a standard deviation of 1.10.
This outcome implies that two key aspects of ASMR experience, namely, the frequency of viewing and the tingling sensation response, were noticeable among college students. This also indicates that students from selected schools in Davao del Norte were capable of experiencing ASMR, as they exhibited both a high frequency of watching ASMR videos and a tingling sensation response when they viewed such content.

The main indicator of ASMR experience that was positive among college students is the experience viewing frequency, being the indicator with a high descriptive level. This outcome, was supported by some authors, stated that the internet has played a pivotal role in popularizing ASMR, with millions of ASMR videos available on platforms like YouTube [22]. Despite their length, viewers often watch them repeatedly due to the physiological and emotional responses they evoke [14].
This is followed by tingling sensation response which is being the indicator with a moderate descriptive level. As mentioned by authors, ASMR involves pleasurable tingling sensations in response to specific triggers such as whispering, tapping, and personal attention [19]. These tingles can occur on various body parts and are sometimes humorously referred to as "brain tingles" or "brain orgasms" [15].

Level of Perceived Stress of College Students
Table 2 reflects the level of perceived stress of college students in terms of emotional stress and cognitive stress. The overall mean is 1.98 and a standard deviation of 0.94, which is described as low. The overall result could be explained by the low rating given by the respondents in all indicators. This means that the level of perceived stress of college students is less observed in the majority of the cases in the items of emotional stress and cognitive stress.

Table 2. Level of Perceived Stress of College Students

Indicator	Mean	SD	Descriptive Levels
Emotional Stress	1.94	0.98	Low
Cognitive Stress	2.04	0.96	Low
Overall	1.98	0.94	Low

It can be extracted from the table that among the indicators, emotional stress has the lowest mean of 1.94 with a standard deviation of 0.98, followed by cognitive stress, which has a mean of 2.04 with a standard deviation of 0.96. All these indicators have a descriptive level of low.

The respondents' response on their level of perceived stress appears on a low level. This result suggests that the two components of perceived stress levels of college students notably, emotional stress and cognitive stress were less observed. This further means that the undergrads

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from selected schools in Davao del Norte were far from experiencing stress when watching ASMR videos. According in the study about ASMR has the capacity to reduce mental stress and has a calming impact that helps people feel less stress [13]. Also, a study supported this claim that college students successfully manage and lower their stress levels by employing techniques [16].

The main indicator of perceived stress level that is negative among college students is the emotional stress level, being the indicator with lowest descriptive level. As mentioned by some authors, the parallels between aesthetic emotional experiences and the psychological state of ASMR suggest that ASMR is likely to be characterized by a strong emotional response when sensory stimuli produce a distinct emotional profile (tingling, relaxation and calmness) in response to ASMR triggers [17].

This is followed by cognitive stress, which is being the indicator with low descriptive level. As mentioned by authors, ASMR has been suggested to improve cognitive abilities, such as attentional performance or decision making. It was found that the ASMR videos activated brain areas related to sensation, emotion, motor skills and attention, suggesting that ASMR is not just confined to sensory or emotional experiences but also related to motor skills and cognitive functioning [7].

Significance on the Relationship between ASMR Experience and Perceived Stress Levels among College Students.

The main purpose of this study is to determine whether ASMR experience has a significant relationship with perceived stress levels of college students. Pearson r was used to determine the correlation between the two variables. The results of the computations are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Significance on the Relationship between ASMR Experience and Perceived Stress Levels among College Students

Variables	Mean	SD	r-valu e	p-value
ASMR Experience	3.47	0.96	-0.512	<.001
Level of Perceived Stress Among College Students	1.98	0.94		

To test the relationship between the two variables, Pearson-r is used at a 0.05 level of significance. Data shows that at α=0.05 as the level of significance which is greater than the probability value of 0.001 with r-value of -0.512. This allows the researcher to reject the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between ASMR experience and perceived stress levels among the college students of Davao Del Norte. This implies that there is a significant negative relationship between the levels of ASMR experience and perceived stress levels of college students.

The results also mean that the perceived stress levels of college students are dependent on ASMR experience. Furthermore, if the ASMR experience is more extensive, the lower the perceived stress levels of college students become, since the r-value is negative. This result was associated with a study [10] which stated that given the relaxation-inducing properties of ASMR, there may be a connection between frequent ASMR experiences and reduced stress

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levels.

This outcome is also supported by a study conducted [11], which stated that ASMR is a sensory phenomenon in which a tingling sensation on the skin is evoked in reaction to audio-visual stimuli, such as whispers, soft sounds, personal attention, and slow movements accompanied by a sense of peace and relaxation. Moreover, studies have found that ASMR can potentially improve mood and pain symptoms and induce sleep. As a way to relax and fall asleep while managing stress, ASMR have become very popular in recent years. Psychologically satisfying responses, such as a sense of relaxation triggered by ASMR. Interestingly, in the same study reported that sitting still while watching relaxed scenes to arouse ASMR for a set amount of time could be regarded as a form of mindfulness. Through cultivating a level of mentalization that regulates emotion and using a capacity for resilience in the face of distressing circumstances, mindfulness meditation can promote calm and relaxed states.

Lastly, the initial ASMR theory, a continuously evolving concept introduced by Dr. Craig Richard, aligns with the findings as well. This theory posits that the stimuli inducing ASMR in individuals could also activate biological pathways related to interpersonal connections and affiliative behaviors, including parent-infant bonding, familial bonds, and friendship formation. ASMR and these bonding behaviors are triggered by similar stimuli, such as comfort, relaxation, and feelings of security, thereby potentially reducing stress levels [18].

Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings revealed that among the indicators of ASMR experience, experience viewing frequency had the highest mean, followed by tingling sensation response. This indicates that college students, particularly those from selected schools in Davao del Norte, exhibit a significant degree of ASMR experience, as evidenced by their frequent engagement with ASMR content and their tingling sensation responses when exposed to ASMR triggers.

In terms of perceived stress levels, both emotional stress and cognitive stress were found to be low among college students. This suggests that, in the study's sample, students generally experience low levels of stress, even while engaging with ASMR content.

The analysis of the relationship between ASMR experience and perceived stress levels revealed a significant negative correlation. Specifically, as ASMR experience became more extensive, perceived stress levels among college students decreased. This supports the hypothesis that ASMR experience can have a stress-reducing effect on individuals, aligning with previous research indicating that ASMR induces relaxation and positive emotional responses.

The conclusions drawn from this research offer valuable insights into the relationship between Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) experience and perceived stress levels among college students in selected schools in Davao del Norte. The findings provide a clear picture of the prevalence of ASMR among this demographic and its potential impact on

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their stress levels.

First and foremost, it is evident that ASMR is a common phenomenon among college students in the studied area. This observation highlights the significance of ASMR as a relevant subject for research and suggests that it holds a special place in the lives of young adults, possibly influencing their well-being.

One of the key takeaways from this study is the substantial preference for frequent consumption of ASMR content among college students. This preference implies that ASMR holds a certain appeal and significance for this group. The consistent tingling sensation response noted in the participants further underscores the unique nature of ASMR experiences and their potential importance in the lives of college students.

Secondly, the research highlights that the perceived stress levels among the sampled college students are generally low. This low level of stress suggests that the college student population in Davao del Norte may be, on the whole, relatively stress-free. While this is a positive finding, it also prompts further investigation into what factors contribute to this lower stress level, and whether ASMR experience plays a role in this regard.

The most significant conclusion drawn from this study is the strong, negative relationship between ASMR experience and perceived stress levels among college students. The results indicate that as ASMR experience increases, perceived stress levels tend to decrease. This finding is in line with existing literature, which has consistently suggested that ASMR can induce relaxation, positive emotional responses, and stress reduction in individuals.

In summary, the research suggests that ASMR holds a notable place in the lives of college students in Davao del Norte, possibly contributing to their overall lower perceived stress levels. These conclusions underscore the potential therapeutic value of ASMR, particularly in the context of stress reduction and emotional well-being, and warrant further exploration of ASMR's role in promoting mental health and relaxation among college students and beyond. This study opens the door to future research avenues that delve deeper into the mechanisms through which ASMR impacts stress and the potential benefits it may offer for mental health in various populations.

Based on the conclusions drawn from this research, the following recommendations can be made:

Awareness and Education. Institutions and educators should consider incorporating ASMR-related content or techniques into stress management programs for college students. Educating students about the potential stress-reducing benefits of ASMR may be beneficial.

Further Research. Future research should explore the specific mechanisms through which ASMR affects stress levels in college students. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of ASMR on stress reduction and overall well-being would be valuable.

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Psychological Support. Colleges and universities should offer psychological support services that consider the potential role of ASMR in stress management. Students experiencing high stress levels could be encouraged to explore ASMR as a complementary relaxation technique.

Health Promotion. Health professionals can include ASMR as part of their health promotion strategies, particularly for individuals experiencing stress-related health issues. Providing guidance on safe and beneficial ASMR practices could be beneficial.

In conclusion, this research has shed light on the relationship between ASMR experience and perceived stress levels among college students. The findings suggest that ASMR may have a role in reducing stress and enhancing well-being, offering a promising avenue for future exploration and application in stress management strategies.

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