Teachers' Coping Mechanisms in In-Person Classes

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study was conducted to determine the teachers' level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes in the selected districts in a large school division of Central Philippines for School Year 2022-2023. The needed data for this study was collected from 100 respondents using a self-made survey questionnaire that has passed the rigorous validity and reliability tests. The findings revealed that teachers possess robust skills and strategies for managing various stressors and challenges they encounter in their teaching environment. Teachers with a very high level of coping mechanisms are likely adept at managing stress effectively. They can navigate demanding situations such as classroom management issues, workload pressures, or personal challenges without becoming overwhelmed. High coping proficiency indicates resilience among teachers. They can bounce back from setbacks and adapt to changes in their teaching environment more easily. A significant difference exists in the teachers' level of coping mechanisms in relationships when grouped by age, civil status, and educational attainment in emotion and adaptive-focused. These findings call for establishing a collaborative partnership between the administrators to encourage teachers to participate in ongoing professional development opportunities related to stress management, resilience building, and well-being. Workshops, courses, and seminars can provide teachers with new strategies and resources to enhance their coping skills.

INTRODUCTION

The educational setting changed when the pandemic forced everyone to take a reset. The change, transitioning from one modality to another, paves the way for different stressors and tensions among the teachers and learners to surface. As to the Official Statement on the Full Implementation of Face-to-Face Classes, DepEd Order No. 34, Series of 2022, stated that all public and private schools in the country shall transition to five-day face-to-face classes by November 2, 2022. DepEd Order No. 15, Series 2022, stated the 2022 guidelines on the progressive expansion of face-to-face courses, and DepEd Memorandum No. 30. Series 2022, on disseminating the revised school safety assessment tool for the progressive expansion of the face- to-face classes. Smith and Jones (2019) claimed that teachers often employ various coping mechanisms to manage their challenges in in-person classes. Teachers set clear boundaries between work and personal life to prevent burnout. This may involve dedicating specific time for work and relaxation and avoiding bringing work home. Seek support from colleagues, mentors, or counselors to share their concerns, seek advice, or vent their frustrations. Building a support network can provide emotional validation and practical solutions. Teachers can decompress and recharge by partaking in self-care activities like exercise, meditation, hobbies, or quality time with loved ones.

Remaining flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances helps teachers cope with unexpected challenges and solve problems creatively. Setting realistic expectations for themselves and their students can help teachers avoid feeling overwhelmed and reduce stress. Efficient time management strategies such as prioritizing tasks, breaking tasks into smaller manageable parts, and utilizing organizational tools can help teachers stay on top of their workload and reduce stress. Engaging in professional development opportunities such as workshops, conferences, or online courses can help teachers stay updated with best practices and strategies for managing classroom challenges. Teachers may feel unsupported or undervalued by administrators, colleagues, or parents. Additionally, inadequate resources such as funding, classroom materials, or professional development opportunities can hinder teachers' ability to effectively cope with classroom challenges.

Literature Review

In the words of Johnson and Garcia (2022), teachers use a combination of these coping mechanisms to navigate the demands of in Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) struck globally. As a result of COVID-person classes and maintain their well-19, many people, -being while especially educators, have effectively supporting their students' learning experienced major disruptive societal changes and emotional issues (Auger & Formentin, 2021; Dogra & Kaushal, 2021). When COVID-19 was officially declared a pandemic by WHO, schools and universities were closed, and classes were shifted to online education. Previously, online education was only used to support face-to-face, in-person classes, which was not done on a big scale. However, this change was intended to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. This situation encouraged teachers to prepare themselves and their students for the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world, as defined by UNESCO (Hadar et al., 2020).

Consequently, teachers had to plan and adjust their teaching practices to ensure no children were left behind. Due to limited online learning readiness, educators felt stressed and anxious when forced to rapidly move their teaching online due to the COVID-19 physical distancing measures (Pozo-Rico et al., 2020). Educators and students were forced to switch from traditional textbooks to electronic devices like tablets and smartphones. This shift did not affect students from wealthy or well-off families because their parents could afford to create a better learning environment for them. The duration of confinement caused by the spread of COVID-19 has had detrimental consequences on the world population's psychological status, such as mental health (Amri et al., 2020), stress, anxiety, and overall discomfort among teachers (Palma-Vasquez et al., 2021) anxiety, and general discomfort in teachers. This study aims to investigate the mental health of educators who were compelled to telework due to the pandemic and examine the relationships with teacher-related, sociodemographic, and workplace factors. This pandemic could have significant psychological effects in addition to the possibility of bodily injury. The goal is to assess replacing traditional, in-person

teaching with online teaching (Gobbi et al., 2020). Indeed, according to a study conducted in China, more than 25% of the general population reported moderate to severe stress or anxiety symptoms because of COVID-19 (Amri et al., 2020).

Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984) anchored this study on Stress and Coping Theory. This theory explains the dynamic nature of the stress process, emphasizing that individuals' perceptions of stressors and their coping responses can vary over time and across different situations, and recognizes that coping is influenced by individual differences, social support, and cultural and environmental factors. It helps understand how teachers perceive and respond to stressors. Evaluate the significance of stressors in the classroom environment, and assess their resources and abilities to cope with the demands they face. This theory is relevant to the study when teachers everyday face challenges, and evaluate the effectiveness of brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, which posted rapid adjustments in the educational system (Alvarez et al., 2021), including the student's parents (Guiamalon et al., 2021; Kintanar et their coping efforts in reducing stress and enhancing well-being. The Philippines is still among the most severely affected, despite other nations having already experienced relief. The pandemic significantly impacts education, where academic institutions and schools encounter major adjustments. The pandemic caused hindrances to the usual face-to-face education (Abbas, 2021; Cos et al., 2021). The education department cooperates to ensure the continuity of education and the achievement of its goal and vision of providing quality education to every Filipino learner (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020). As a result, the Department of Education instituted DepEd Order No. 12 series of 2020, which formulated new learning delivery modalities across all levels, as represented in the Learning Continuity Plan for the School Year 2020-2021 to the present (Guiamalon et al., 2021). Different learning modalities were presented, including online distance learning, homeschooling, blended learning, and modular distance learning in digital and printed formats. This is because only a few learners, especially in remote areas, cannot access the internet since only a few have gadgets and a limited internet connection.

Another theory related to this study is the coping mechanisms of teachers in terms of how they reach their purpose in in-person classes and how to provide good learning strategies for the learners. Coping mechanisms constantly change cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Coping mechanisms are the coping techniques people frequently employ to assist them deal with stressful situations and/or traumatic events. These techniques can be either positive or negative, depending on whether they improve or worsen mental health. People who use coping methods can keep their mental health while adjusting to challenging situations. It entails using mental energy in a stress relieving manner. Perceptual experiences and personality traits are important factors in coping. The methods one selects to adjust to a given circumstance are very personal. Everybody copes differently from the other.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine teachers' level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes in a district in a large-sized school division in the Central Philippines for the School Year 2022-2023. Specifically, it sought to determine:

1. The teachers' level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes according to problem, emotion, and adaptive-focused strategies.
2. The significant difference, if any, in the teachers' level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes when grouped by age, sex at birth, civil status and educational attainment.

METHODS

This study utilized the descriptive research design, in the teachers' level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes in the selected secondary schools of the wide division of Central Philippines for the School Year 2022-2023. According to Loeb (2017), the descriptive research method seeks to

determine the relationship between variables, explore the causes of phenomena which is believed to be appropriate in hypotheses, and measuring whether a significant difference exists develop generalizations, principles, and theories based on the findings. In quantifying data, the researcher used a survey questionnaire to determine the teachers' level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes.

Respondents

This paper used simple random sampling to determine the respondents, courtesy of the Cochran formula (N= 157; n= 100). The respondents of this study are a sample size of 100 teaching personnel from the selected secondary schools in the broad division of central Philippines. The respondents were asked to rate each item using the five-point Likert scale containing the Instruments following scores with range and description: *5 - Always; 4– Often; 3 – Sometimes; 2 – Rarely, and 1 - Almost Never.* This study administered a survey questionnaire to the total teacher population.

Research Instrument

This study administered a survey questionnaire to the total teacher population. The respondents were asked to rate each item using the five-point Likert scale containing the following scores with range and description: 5 - Always; 4 – Often; 3 – Sometimes; 2 – Rarely, and 1 - Almost Never.

Data Collection

This study observed proper protocol in the conduct of the entire study, with the researcher securing permission from the office of the Schools Division Superintendent for the conduct of the study. Upon getting the approval, the approved letter was photocopied and attached to the letter to school heads and all concerned junior and senior high school teachers, ensuring the study's healthy purpose and confidentiality of the respondents and the school. Likewise, the highest level of respect for professional ethics was considered while collecting the required data. When all the letters were approved, the researcher created a self-made survey and distributed questionnaires to the target respondents, who were asked to complete and answer the questions wholeheartedly. The rationale, instructions, and consent to participate in this study were given as part of the preliminaries of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Objective 1 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean as statistical tools to determine the teachers' level of coping mechanism in the in-person classes according to problem focused, emotion-focused, and adaptive-focused strategies; Objective 2 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U Test to determine the significant difference, if any, in the teachers' level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes when grouped and compared according to age, sex at birth, civil status and educational attainment.

Ethical Consideration

This research paper strived to minimize the risk of harm to its target respondents by assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses and protecting their anonymity throughout the entire research process. At the onset, this researcher secures their free, prior informed consent and assures them of their right to withdraw from their research participation if deemed necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Level of coping mechanism in the in-person classes*
in the area of problem-focused strategies

Areas	Mean	Interpretation
In dealing with a conflict situation, as a teacher, I....		
1. look for possible solutions that will help resolve the Concerns, Issues, Gaps, and Problems	4.54	Very High Level
2. focus on the essential matters to avoid confusion that will cause problems	4.43	Very High Level
3. create open-ended collective activities that could help hamper the encountered problems	4.33	Very High Level
4. ask for assistance from colleagues, administrators, and stakeholders	4.39	Very High Level
5. establish a healthy environment for a good ambiance even more problems encountered in school and learners	4.50	Very High Level
6. develop a rapport with the learners and teachers to avoid conflicts	4.47	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.44	Very High Level

Table 1 shows analysis of the level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes in problem-focused strategies. The table indicates an overall mean of 4.44, interpreted as a very high level; this means that teachers also need support to reinforce their students' learning by adapting to the dynamics of limited and full face-to-face classes and increasing teaching effectiveness through new tools and teaching methodologies. Hence, students' optimized access to learning opportunities must be prioritized.

Table 2. *Level of coping mechanism in the in-person classes*
in emotion-focused strategies

Areas	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, when I feel emotionally troubled, I...		
1. bow down my head and pray	4.56	Very High Level
2. stay calm and in self-control	4.47	Very High Level
3. seek assistance from the school heads and administrator	4.19	High Level
4. take a break, sit back, and relax	4.35	Very High Level
5. pamper yourself by doing adventurous activities	4.06	High Level
6. do meditation and take 8 hours of sleep	3.89	High Level
Overall Mean	4.25	Very High Level

Table 2 presents the level of coping mechanisms in the in-person classes in emotion-focused strategies. The overall mean is 4.25, with a verbal rating of a very high level. Teachers demonstrated a strong ability to manage and regulate their emotions effectively when faced with challenging situations. Emotion-focused coping involves strategies aimed at directly addressing and managing emotional distress rather than focusing solely on problem-solving or avoidance.

Table 3. *Level of coping mechanism in the in-person classes*
in adaptive-focused strategies

Areas	Mean	Interpretation
In the new environment/situation/scheme, as a teacher, I...		
1. adapt the new culture or style in that respective place or area	4.35	Very High Level
2. develop camaraderie with colleagues, parents, and stakeholders	4.50	Very High Level

	3. engage in community-related activities	4.34	Very High Level
	4. adjust and cope with the challenges encountered in the new environment	4.36	Very High Level
	5. show active cooperation and participation in whatever activities to be done	4.42	Very High Level
	6. make a courtesy visit to the important person in the district and the Municipality.	3.87	High Level
	Overall Mean	4.31	Very High Level

Table 3 discusses the level of coping mechanisms in the In-person classes in adaptive-focused strategies. The table indicates an overall mean of 4.31, interpreted as a very high level. They are likely adept at problem-solving, seeking social support, and utilizing other constructive strategies to manage stress and navigate challenging situations. This high level of coping proficiency suggests that the participants have developed valuable skills for effectively managing and adapting to stressors, which can contribute to their overall well-being and resilience.

Table 4. *Difference in the level of coping mechanism in the in-person classes in problem-focused strategies when grouped according to the aforementioned variables*

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	*p*-value	*Sig. level*	Interpretation
Age	Younger	49	56.20	970.00	0.050		Significant
	Older	51	45.02				
Sex at Birth	Male	33	55.79	931.00	0.193		Not Significant
	Female	67	47.90			0.05	
Civil Status	Single	31	58.76	813.50	0.520		Not Significant
	Married	69	46.79				
Educational attainment	Lower	74	47.47	738.00	0.073		Not Significant
	Higher	26	59.12				

Table 4 compares teachers' coping mechanisms, specifically focusing on problem-focused strategies. The analysis indicates a significant level of p-value (0.050) for age, suggesting its influence on problem-focused coping among teachers. Conversely, the p-values for sex at birth (0.193), civil status (0.520), and educational attainment (0.073) do not reach significance, indicating that these demographic factors do not significantly impact teachers' use of problem-focused coping strategies. These findings align with Robert J. Wicks' (2022) research, which emphasizes resilience and self-care among educators, potentially shedding light on the interplay between demographic factors and coping behaviors.

Table 5. *Difference in the level of coping mechanism in the in-person classes in emotion-focused strategies when grouped according to the aforementioned variables*

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	*p*-value	*Sig. level*	Interpretation
Age	Younger	49	58.63	851.00	0.006		Significant
	Older	51	42.69				
Sex at Birth	Male	33	48.21	1030.00	0.578	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	67	51.63				
Civil Status	Single	31	59.06	804.00	0.047		Significant
	Married	69	46.65				

Educational Attainment	Lower	74	46.12	638.00	0.010		Significant
	Higher	26	62.96				

Table 5 compares teachers' coping mechanisms, focusing on emotion-focused strategies. The analysis yielded significant p-values of 0.006 for age, 0.047 for civil status, and 0.010 for educational attainment. These results indicate that age, civil status, and educational attainment significantly influence teachers' use of emotion-focused coping strategies. Conversely, the p-value of 0.578 for sex at birth suggests no significant impact in this regard. These findings underscore the importance of considering demographic factors in understanding teachers' coping behaviors. Tailored interventions and support systems based on teachers' specific demographic characteristics can be developed to enhance their coping abilities and overall well-being, particularly in managing emotional stressors.

Table 6. *Difference in the level of coping mechanism in the in-person classes in adaptive-focused strategies when grouped according to the aforementioned variables*

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	*p*-value	*Sig.* level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	49	58.45	860.00	0.007		Significant
	Older	51	42.86				
Sex at Birth	Male	33	51.44	1074.50	0.819		Not Significant
	Female	67	50.04			0.05	
Civil Status	Single	31	62.47	698.50	0.005		Significant
	Married	69	45.12				
Educational Attainment	Lower	74	45.04	558.00	0.001		Significant
	Higher	26	66.04				

Table 6 illustrates the comparison of teachers' coping mechanisms, specifically focusing on adaptive-focused strategies. The analysis reveals significant p-values of 0.007 for age, 0.005 for civil status, and 0.001 for educational attainment. These results indicate that age, civil status, and educational attainment significantly influence teachers' use of adaptive-focused coping strategies. Conversely, the p-value of 0.819 for sex at birth suggests no significant impact in this regard. These findings underscore the importance of considering demographic factors in understanding teachers' coping behaviors. Tailored interventions and support systems based on teachers' specific demographic characteristics can be developed to enhance their coping abilities and overall well-being.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In general, teachers possess robust skills and strategies for managing various stressors and challenges they encountered in their teaching environment. Teachers with a very high level of coping mechanisms are likely adept at managing stress effectively. They were able to navigate through demanding situations such as classroom management issues, workload pressures, or personal challenges without becoming overwhelmed. High coping proficiency indicates resilience among teachers. They seemed capable of bouncing back from setbacks and adapting to changes in their teaching environment more easily. Teachers' coping mechanisms can impact the overall classroom climate, and those with strong coping skills can maintain composure and provide a supportive learning environment for their students, even during stressful times. Furthermore, a very high level of coping mechanisms among teachers indicates not only their ability to manage stress effectively but also their capacity to thrive in their roles, maintain wellbeing, and provide a positive educational experience for their students. These findings call for establishing a collaborative partnership between the administrators to encourage teachers to participate in ongoing professional development

opportunities related to stress management, resilience building, and well-being. Workshops, courses, and seminars can provide teachers with new strategies and resources to further enhance their coping skills.

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