



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND COPING MECHANISMS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A WELLNESS PROGRAM

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Abstract

This study examined the mental health awareness and coping mechanisms of students, addressing the persistent gap in understanding how awareness influences the ways students manage academic and personal stress. Despite growing advocacy for mental health education, many students continue to display limited awareness and use less effective coping strategies. The study aimed to determine the level of mental health awareness of the students, the extent of coping mechanisms they employed, the significant difference in coping mechanisms when grouped according to their level of mental health awareness, and the relationship between the two variables. Using a descriptive–quantitative research design, data were gathered from 379 student respondents through a structured questionnaire. Findings revealed that students demonstrated a low level of mental health awareness, particularly in areas concerning knowledge of mental disorders and help-seeking behaviors. Similarly, the extent of coping mechanisms was found to be less, indicating limited use of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, while avoidance coping was moderately used. Statistical analysis further revealed a significant difference in coping mechanisms when students were grouped according to their level of mental health awareness, suggesting that awareness levels influenced how students coped with stress. Results also indicated a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. The study concluded that students with higher mental health awareness tended to use more adaptive coping mechanisms, while those with lower awareness relied on less effective strategies. It is recommended that educators and counselors strengthen mental health literacy programs (Practice), school administrators and policymakers implement comprehensive mental health support systems (Policy), and future researchers conduct longitudinal and intervention-based studies to explore the long-term effects of awareness-building programs (Research).

Keywords: *Mental Health Awareness, Coping Mechanisms, Students, Descriptive–Quantitative Study, Stress Management, Emotional Well-being*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial period in human development which is characterized by social, psychological, and emotional transformations. Teenage mental health at this stage has been extensively acknowledged as significant on a global scale. According to the World Health Organization (2020), the promotion of mental health during this moment is imperative in attaining one's general well-being and academic achievement. To prepare young ones for the possible life challenges and education, the schools should be equipped with programs about wellness, mental health, and education.

This research gives due importance at exploring the level of mental health awareness and coping mechanisms among the grade 11 students at Moalboal National High School with the purpose of creating and implementing a wellness program fitted to their needs. Several experts emphasized the importance of a responsive and school-based wellness program. According to Weare and Nind (2011), mental health programs are significantly effective when they address the specific needs of the students. In the Philippines, Ocampo et al (2018) found that although awareness is gradually improving, many schools still lack structured wellness program tailored to the needs of the student and the support students' emotional and psychological struggles.



Despite previous research, there still lack of a clear study that concentrates on local contexts where social and cultural elements have a significant impact on teenage behavior at Moalboal National High School. These students seem to be exposed to more carefree and dangerous lives due to special circumstances like shifting family structures which includes an increase in parental separation and partner swapping as well as on the impact of a thriving tourism business. To address this gap, this research will conduct a thorough assessment of students' awareness of mental health and coping strategies they employ to handle stress and emotional challenges using a standardized tool. The findings will provide the foundation for a Wellness Program that is student-centered, needs-based, and responsive to the unique realities of learners at Moalboal National High School.

This research is significant to multiple stakeholders: students, who will benefit from improved support systems; teachers and guidance counselors, who will gain tools and frameworks for intervention; parents, who will better understand the challenges faced by their children; and school administrators, who can strengthen institutional support for student wellness.

The expected output of the study is a structured, school-based wellness program that enhances mental health awareness, equips students with effective coping strategies, and fosters a supportive environment for mental wellness. Beyond Moalboal National High School, the program may also serve as a model for other schools in similar contexts, promoting sustainable and mental health initiatives through education, intervention, and guidance.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the level of mental health awareness and the coping mechanisms of the Grade 11 Senior High School students at Moalboal National High School for Academic Year 2025–2026, and to use the results as the basis for developing a Wellness Program.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What was the level of mental health awareness of the students in terms of:
 - 1.1. Knowledge of how to achieve and maintain good mental health;
 - 1.2. Knowledge of mental disorders and available treatments;
 - 1.3. Attitudes toward stigma associated with mental health conditions;
 - 1.4. Help-seeking behaviors and self-efficacy?
2. What was the extent of coping mechanisms employed by the students in terms of:
 - 2.1. Problem-focused coping;
 - 2.2. Emotion-focused coping;
 - 2.3. Avoidance coping?
3. Was there a significant difference in the coping mechanisms of students when grouped according to their level of mental health awareness?
4. Was there a significant relationship between the students' mental health awareness and their coping mechanisms?
5. What wellness programs could be drafted based on the findings of the study?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental health literacy (MHL) and effective coping mechanisms have gained increasing attention in recent years, especially in school settings where students are most vulnerable to psychological stressors. With the rise in mental health concerns among adolescents, several researchers emphasize the urgent need to implement educational programs that enhance students' awareness, attitudes, and behaviors related to mental health.

Mental Health Literacy in young people is still inconsistently addressed across many educational systems. Their study revealed that most of the school-based MHL initiatives focused heavily on recognizing symptoms of mental illness rather than teaching strategies for maintaining good mental health. This supports the need for a more balanced approach, where awareness includes both illness prevention and well-being promotion.

Moreover, another study found that comprehensive wellness programs with knowledge about mental health maintenance, reducing stigma, and encouraging proactive behaviors like help-seeking were significant. Such a review



highlighted that integrating mental health education as part of the regular school curriculum is vital for the student's overall well-being; rather, treating is an isolated or one-time activity.

Further, a meta-analysis was conducted in 2021 confirmed that the effectiveness of school-based MHL programs increased the students' mental health awareness and influence their attitudes positively in combatting against mental illness. Authors noted that sustained and localized wellness programs should be observed to address the needs of the students regularly.

According to Kutcher, Wei, & Coniglio (2022), in line with a study conducted in Japan among junior high students, effective and efficient MHL Program if to be implemented based on the needs of the students helped them show improvement in knowledge, reduced stigma and enhanced willingness to seek professional help. These findings are particularly relevant for communities like Moalboal, where cultural norms and external influences may affect how students perceive and respond to mental health issues.

Melo et al. (2022) confirmed that the link between MHL and mental health outcomes was validated in their study and found that adolescents with higher MHL levels reported greater emotional resilience and well-being. This led to the creation of a foundation for exploring the relationship between mental health awareness and coping strategies, a key focus of this study.

A qualitative evaluation in U.S. middle schools (2024) reinforced that MHL programs not only improve knowledge but also foster empathy and stronger student-teacher relationships. Such relational improvements are vital in promoting help-seeking behaviors and establishing a support system within the school.

In the study conducted by Lin et al. (2021) with the Taiwan undergraduate students, they found out that these respondents improved their understanding in both mental health maintenance and treatment options within an 18-week MHL course. Hence, they concluded that it was important to sustain the students' exposure to mental health education, instead of one-time seminars only to align the intention of the study to a structured and ongoing guidance program or better yet a wellness program.

Chong et al. (2021) revealed in his study that high reliance on social support, avoidance and distraction-based strategies play a crucial role in managing student well-being. This demonstrated the need to guide students toward more constructive coping mechanisms, especially when external stressors are persistent or community based.

The findings of one of the studies among Indonesian High School Students revealed that while some of the students employed problem-focused coping, many still displayed leniency or passive or emotion-focused responses Marhardika et al., (2023). These findings gleaned that there was a necessary move to create a needs-based mental wellness program that will develop the student's coping mechanism in every challenge they faced during their journey as a student.

According to research, Mental Health Literary (MHL) encompassed the knowledge on how to achieve and maintain good mental health, as well the recognition of mental health disorders and medical treatments as well as attitudes toward stigma including help-seeking self – efficacy. This was supported by Ma, Anderson and Burn (2023) who emphasized that school-based wellness program interventions were effective in improving students' knowledge and in reducing stigma through evidence – based impact on actual help-seeking approach, however, this remains inconsistent in schools.

Interestingly, Tullius et al. (2024) further contribution to the field must be achieved and it should be through validating the Knowledge and Attitude to Mental Health Scales (KAMHS-NL). This scale explicitly measures knowledge, disorder recognition, stigma, help-seeking attitude and confidence, and avoidance of coping. This can be done by offering a comprehensive tool for assessing adolescents' mental health awareness. Nazari, Garmaroudi, Rahimi Foroushani, and Hosseinnia (2023) agreed to the previous claim based on their systematic review and meta-analysis of web-based intervention programs. They cited significant improvements in knowledge but highlighted that limited effectiveness in the changing stigma and help-seeking attitudes were relevant. They added and emphasized that one of the challenges in dealing with the cultural and social barriers was also imperative. Yang et al. (2024) argued positively that indeed MHL was associated with help-seeking interests and intention and this must be paired with



stigma that perceived social support mediating this relationship. If one may consider this, the result of their study argued that targeting and overcoming relational issues, effectual factors, and attitudinal challenges could improve awareness sufficiently.

The role of problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping strategies among adolescents help in advocating the positive outcomes of the student's wellness, and these should be implemented with consistency. Such findings were agreed by Compas et al., (2021) and declared that based on their study adaptive emotion-focused strategies strongly contributed to resilience and somehow maladaptive responses like rumination could worsen the psychological well of the students as an outcome. Therefore, effective, and efficient interventions must go beyond the knowledge of awareness transmission although awareness and coping were interrelated. This was to reduce reliance on avoidance strategies while equipping themselves actively with adaptive coping skills.

Stankovic et al. (2023) examined how young people present and learn coping behaviors through social media platforms like TikTok. According to them, peer modeling, cultural norms, and individual experiences had an impact on the students' coping strategies. Hence, they concluded that context-based intervention programs like the wellness program must be fitted to the needs of the students such those in tourism-affected communities like Moalboal.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methods

This researcher considered and used descriptive – quantitative in checking the level of mental health awareness among the Grade 11 students of Moalboal National High School, as well as their coping mechanisms. The same design was used to examine the significant differences in the demographic profile of the participants. The findings of this research were used as the basis in the development of a wellness program tailored to the needs of the students. This design allowed the use of statistical tools to measure, describe, and interpret data objectively.

Environment

Moalboal National High School was one of the significant sources of learning which nurtured mental health concerns among the students. Such was considered the school of refuge from students with various backgrounds, such as those with social issues and familial concerns. The school recorded 713 senior high school enrollees including the 379 Grade 11 students distributed across eight sections in academic and technical-vocational tracks for school year 2025-2026. According to the source, the gender distribution of the students was balanced because it represented those teenagers dealing with various pressures from the community situation, family obligations, and academic demands.

As a result, these difficulties raised students' awareness of mental health issues. Their inconsistent understanding of coping mechanisms and their differing attitudes toward help-seeking behaviors served as evidence of this.

Based on the collected data, most of the students exhibited mental health issues in this environment. These challenges included constant high stress levels, mood swings, difficulty in concentrating, frequent absenteeism, and peer isolation. Other issues were also shared from the source that due to the changing social realities at Moalboal such as the booming tourism activities with the presence of foreigners which influence slight change of culture put pressure on a few other students. These realities led to family-related problems, for instance, parental separation and chaotic family dynamics, which made the students confused and total emotion challenges. Because of these difficulties, there was a pressing need for the students to leverage their awareness on mental health issues. This was evident through the inconsistencies exhibited by the students' coping mechanisms and differing attitudes toward help-seeking behaviors.

The challenges were also pressing in the part of the teachers and the school administrators. They often encounter difficulty in detecting at – risk students early, addressing the stigma that prevented learners from opening, and providing timely and structured guidance. This might be because of the limited resources for intervention and training on mental health literacy. This was a significant gap in providing school-based mental health support and underscored the need for a localized, evidenced-based Wellness Program that can address the unique realities faced by students at Moalboal National High School.



Respondents

Table 1

Distribution of Grade 11 Participants by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	185	48.81%
Female	194	51.19 %
Total	379	100 %

n=379

With the use of the universal population, the data shown in Table 1 on the next page illustrates the proportions in Grade 11 students comprising 51.18% females and 48.81% males. Near equity in gender representation was shown in the data.

Despite the gender variation in the choices of strands from among the students of Moalboal National High School, several literatures had also noted this. For instance, Cabero-Almenara et al. (2021) cited that ICT-related courses have more male enrollees because technology-related courses were perceived as masculine. Cheryhan et al. (2021) agreed to such and added that indeed technology was still perceived as manly thing, this might prevent women from enrolling to such courses. To address this in the context of Philippine schools, the Commission on Women (2022) cited that gender mainstreaming in schools or universities was a dire need to get rid of misconceptions. This was to guarantee that students enroll in courses based on their talents, abilities, and interest instead of gender considerations.

UNESCO (2021) confirmed that this was essential in comprehending how gender and education interact. The results showed that the academic strands that male and female follow more in technology and social science were influenced by cultural variables. This specified that the group of respondents' choice of educational strands was influenced by their gender norms. Further, they asserted that the respondents' education strands were impacted by their gender norms. OECD (2020) agreed to it and emphasized that it was necessary to address the gender gap for those who enrolled in STEM and technology education. This contention was supported by Cheryan et al. (2021), according to the results of her study, women need to embrace STEM education strands, since based on the findings technology was more associated with males.

Even though the balanced of ratio of males to females was a step toward attaining fairness, the distribution of the strands indicated that there was still some gender-based patterns. Hence, such necessitated that implementation of certain programs allowed the students to choose and enroll in courses according to their aptitude that what society expects of them.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. The paper covered Grade 11 Senior High School (SHS) students only enrolled in the School Year 2025–2026. These participants have secured informed consent from their parents or guardians. Since they are minors, they got an assent form and filled it out to qualify in the participation of the study. Upon their academic coordinator's help, the participants identified from ABM, STEM, HUMSS, ICT, and Home Economics.

Those who were absent during the conduct of the assessment tools and during the data gathering were excluded in the study. Moreover, those who failed to provide parental consent opted not to participate, and those who submitted but incomplete or incurred invalid responses were also excluded to ensure the data's integrity and reliability.

Sampling Technique

The study utilized a universal population sampling technique, also known as total population sampling, wherein all Grade 11 students enrolled at Moalboal National High School for the School Year 2025–2026 were included as



respondents. Instead of selecting a subset through random or stratified procedures, the researchers gathered data from the entire accessible population that met the inclusion criteria, resulting in 379 participants. This approach ensured comprehensive representation of Grade 11 students across strands such as ABM, STEM, HUMSS, ICT, and Home Economics. By including all eligible students, the study minimized sampling bias and strengthened the accuracy of descriptive comparisons, particularly in examining gender distribution and strand preferences.

Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria further defined the sampling process to maintain data integrity. Only officially enrolled Grade 11 students with secured parental consent and signed assent forms were allowed to participate, ensuring compliance with ethical standards for minors. Students who were absent during data collection, failed to submit parental consent, declined participation, or provided incomplete or invalid responses were excluded from the final dataset. Through this method, the researchers ensured that the final sample accurately reflected the intended population while upholding ethical considerations and maintaining the reliability and validity of the gathered data.

Instrument

This study utilized a standardized questionnaire adapted from the two experts on Mental Health. The researcher opted to use a standardized research tool to successfully conduct this study. The tools utilized were the Coping Strategies Inventory (CSI) by Tobin et al. (1989) and the Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS) by O'Connor and Casey (2015). Based on record, the two standardized questionnaires underwent validity and reliability tests. The instrument was subjected to internal consistency testing utilizing Cronbach's Alpha to further validate its dependability in the setting where the study was conducted. Based on the result, the items had been assessed before and were in line with the theoretical frameworks on coping mechanisms and mental health literacy. Hence, the use of standardized instruments guarantees content validity.

As depicted by Taber (2018), if the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.70 or higher, the result is typically regarded as appropriate for psychological and educational research. When the values are over 0.80, this indicates good reliability and if the values are above 0.90, this indicates outstanding reliability. Since the study's reliability test results showed that the questionnaire items consistently measured the desired construct, these tools fell within acceptable-to-excellent range. Therefore, this questionnaire could be considered valid and reliable, making it fitted to the current study a suitable instrument for evaluating the students' awareness of mental health issues and coping strategies with the target demographic.

Part I of the questionnaire covered the demographic profile of the participants which included: age, sex, grade level, and family background. The Grade 11 students' actual age in years was referred to as the variable age. This helped the researcher identify the trends from among the various periods of adolescence. Through this, the study was able to determine the potential gender-based variations in maturity or academic strain. Finally, the family background highlighted the details about the cost-of-living circumstances as well as the marital status of the parents. This could have an impact on the grade 11 students' psychological health and access to support networks. The factors were utilized to categorize and examine the respondents' coping strategies and mental health literacy.

Part II of the questionnaire used the Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS), which was developed by O'Connor and Casey (2015). This was a validated instrument designed to assess the individual's knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes toward mental health. The order in the scale was clustered into four core dimensions of the Mental Health Literacy (MHL) Framework. The first dimension was used to determine the participant's knowledge of how to achieve and sustain good mental health. This included their ideas about stress management, healthy coping, and emotional well-being. The second dimensions checked the student's awareness about mental disorders and available treatments like therapy, counseling, or medication. The third dimension specified on how to reduce stigma relevant to mental health conditions. This aimed to evaluate the students' perception with mental illness and whether they hold prejudicial beliefs. Finally, the fourth dimension included help-seeking behaviors like self-efficacy, or the confidence and willingness of the students to seek professional help or talk with a more advanced adults or trusted individuals while they are experiencing challenges psychologically. This scale provided a relevant mitigating measure about the students' level of mental health awareness across the mentioned key areas.

Part III of the questionnaire utilized the Coping Strategies Inventory (CSI) which was adapted from Tobin et al. (1989), which was used to determine the extent to which students utilized several coping mechanisms in response to stress or



emotional challenges. The inventory was designed to evaluate the three major types of coping, such as (1) problem-focused coping, which involved how to address the source of stress through planning, problem-solving, or seeking information; (2) emotion-focused coping, which covered strategies at aiming to manage emotional responses in expressing feelings, seeking emotional support, or practicing relaxation techniques and strategies; and (3) avoidance coping, this reflected the efforts on how to get rid or deny the problem like distraction, withdrawal, or substance use. Through these coping styles, the study aimed to evaluate the students' understanding and management of mental health concerns and which strategies were most employed.

All items were rated using a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Instrument reliability was validated through a pilot test and measured using Cronbach's Alpha.

Data Gathering Procedures

To get sufficient results about this study, the researcher utilized quantitative correlational research design. This was anchored on the Mental Health Literacy (MHL) Framework. This was to determine the Grade 11 students' level of mental health awareness and coping mechanisms. The researcher believed that such shall lead to exploring the relationship between these variables. The data gathering was structured into three key phases: pre-data gathering, actual data gathering, and post-data gathering.

Pre-Data Gathering. To ensure the validity, reliability, and ethical soundness of this paper, the researcher completed all the preliminary steps prior to the data collection. The preparation of a concept paper was undertaken, which outlined the research purpose, its significance, methodology, and expected outputs. Refining the study's focus and instrument design was taken into consideration based on the feedback of the panelists during the design hearing and upon the guidance, consultation, and recommendations from the research adviser.

In adherence to the guidelines requirements from the Research Ethic Committee (REC) for ethical considerations, this research underwent necessary safeguards, such as the informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Prior to the ethical consideration checkup, the researcher ensured that all the recommendations of the panelists during the design hearing were integrated. A research plan including sampling method, instrument validation and data collection techniques were reviewed and sought for approval by the panelists.

Actual Data Gathering. Upon completion of the necessary documents as proof of the approvals, the researcher pursued the conduct of the questionnaire to the Grade 11 students of Moalboal National High School with the assistance of their teachers. During the questionnaire, stratified random sampling was used in choosing the participants. This guaranteed representation from a range of age groups, genders, and grade levels. An assent form was provided and administered to them prior to the data collection since they are minors while their parents or guardian had to comply with the informed consent. All these are part and parcel of the ethical research guidelines as mandated by the Research Ethical Committee.

The survey was conducted to the students during classes with the school principal's approval in collaboration with the guidance counselor and subject teachers after consultation. The researcher ensured the students understood the instructions by giving them the outline of this paper's goals. It highlighted that the research's participation was voluntary and guaranteed that their responses were kept with utmost confidentiality.

To achieve ease and friendly approaches in the survey, the questionnaires were printed before administration. Hard-copy questionnaires were then distributed in the students' respective classroom with the assistance of their subject teachers. The answered survey was then collected immediately upon completion to prevent data loss. The students were encouraged to ask questions for clarification since the researcher was there to ensure honest and independent responses.

Post-Data Gathering. For consistency and to achieve completeness, the completed surveys were sorted and examined after the collection of data. The researcher double checked all the responded tools and requested those students who had an incomplete response to complete or supply missing data or information to achieve consistency. After doing so, the researcher analyzed the collected data using a statistical tool by encoding all the responses. The data was reviewed



and cleared up before statistical analysis was done which included looking for inconsistencies, duplicate entries, and missing information.

Upon finalization of the dataset, the determination of the levels of mental health among the participants was done using descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics were applied to identify significant differences and relationships between variables which include t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation.

After the completion of a thorough report on the data gathered, the researcher created, organized, and interpreted them which form part of the research findings. As a result, a foundation for the creation of a wellness program was designed to improve the students' coping mechanisms and mental health literacy. The program was incorporated as part of the Guidance Program plan established by the Guidance Counselor at Moalboal National High School which was offered to foster and promote a more mentally healthy learning environment.

Data Analysis

Once data collection was achieved, the researcher then organized, screened, and encoded for statistical analysis using the descriptive and inferential techniques suited to a quantitative descriptive correlational design. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution through percentage and mean and standard deviation were covered. Inferential statistics were also considered, like t-test, ANOVA, and Person correlation was also used as a statistical tool in characterizing the students' mental health awareness and coping strategies. Based on the results, conclusion, recommendation, and the creation of an all-encompassing school-based program could be created to improve students' mental health awareness and coping abilities; such were exhibited using tabular presentations.

Based on the nature of each study's sub-problem, proper statistical tools were used to determine the data to be collected.

As to the level of mental health literacy (MHL) among students which is conveyed in sub-problem 1, the mean and standard deviation were computed to determine the average level and variability of responses across the four dimensions of the Mental Health Literacy Framework.

As to the extent of coping mechanisms by the students which are gleaned in sub-problem 2, utilized the mean and standard deviation were also used to summarize the types and frequency of coping strategies.

As to the identification on the significant difference in the coping mechanisms of students when grouped according to their level of mental health awareness which is clearly defined in sub-problem 3, Independent Sample t-test and one-way analysis variance (ANOVA) were utilized.

As to the coping mechanisms, whether it differs according to the students' level of mental health literacy, which is expressed in sub-problem 4, the researcher utilized one-way ANOVA.

As to the investigation of the relationship between students' mental health literacy and their coping mechanisms, which was enunciated in sub-problem 5, the researcher employed Pearson Product – Moment Correlation Coefficient in assessing the strength and direction of the association between these two variables.

The data were encoded and analyzed using SPSS in achieving the results which were interpreted based on established significance levels which is typically at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical Considerations

Following the guidelines set by the Research Ethics Committee, this study adhered to the ethical principles of beneficence, respect, justice, confidentiality, and transparency. Upon careful checking and documentation, a certificate of compliance through an NTP was attached with REC – UV Reference No. NPAMAED 2025 - 0105, dated October 21, 2025.

Before the start of the study, the parents or guardians of minors and the participants gave their informed consent. The researcher ensured that both parents and participants understood the content of the consent.



The researcher emphasized the parents and participants that there were no rewards or consequences for withdrawal, and participation was purely voluntary. With the approval of the school principal and the cooperation of the teachers and advisers, the study ran smoothly, and the conduct did not interrupt any classes.

The information gathered was kept confidential. It was kept and used for exclusive use of this research, and every phase of the investigation was done ethically, guaranteeing the reliability and integrity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presented, analyzed, and interpreted the findings of the study on the level of mental health awareness and coping mechanisms of Grade 11 Senior High School students at Moalboal National High School for the Academic Year 2025–2026. The results were organized according to the specific sub-problems of the study, focusing on students' knowledge of mental health, understanding of mental disorders and available treatments, attitudes toward stigma, and help-seeking behaviors. Furthermore, the discussion highlighted the extent of coping mechanisms employed by the respondents, which included problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping. Statistical analyses were also conducted to determine significant differences and relationships between students' mental health awareness and their coping mechanisms. These findings were the basis for developing a proposed Comprehensive Guidance Program that aimed to enhance students' mental well-being and adaptive coping strategies.

Level of Mental Health Awareness of the Students

This part of the study presented the findings on the level of mental health awareness of the Grade 11 Senior High School students at Moalboal National High School for the Academic Year 2025–2026. It aimed to determine how knowledgeable the students were about achieving and maintaining good mental health, their understanding of mental disorders and available treatments, their attitudes toward stigma associated with mental health conditions, and their help-seeking behaviors and self-efficacy. The results provided insights into the students' overall awareness and perception of mental health, which served as an important basis for addressing their needs through a Comprehensive Guidance Program.

Table 2 on the previous page, gleaned the sub-variables under mental health awareness. These were discussed from the highest to the lowest weighted mean, with a focus on how students' perceptions translated into actual circumstances and the institutional reaction that followed.

The participants generally accepted that mental health difficulties are real. This is manifested in the response to the statement; *I think mental health concerns are as severe as physical ones* (WM = 2.75, Moderate). They acknowledged that mental health was of great importance although their priority was physical symptoms over emotional struggles. They wrote off the tension and anxiety as transient or controllable on their own. This result was consistent with research on mental health knowledge, which showed that early intervention and stigma reduction require recognition of the equal importance of mental and physical health (Jorm, 2020; World Health Organization, 2022). The school covered in this research can use structured mental health program that emphasize the equal importance of mental and physical health. This can be achieved in this case discussions, workshops, and classroom activities to build this understanding (OECD, 2021).

Table 2

Level of Mental Health Awareness among the Students

Item	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Knowledge on how to achieve and maintain good mental health		
1. I maintain a healthy balance between school and rest.	2.44	Low
2. I am aware of how sleep, diet, and exercise affect my mental health.	2.55	Low
3. I use positive ways to manage my stress.	2.34	Low
4. I practice activities that support my emotional well-being.	2.18	Low
5. I understand the importance of a supportive social environment.	2.61	Moderate



	WM	2.42	Low
Knowledge of mental disorders and available treatments			
6. I can recognize signs of anxiety and depression.		2.31	Low
7. I know that mental health disorders can affect anyone.		2.51	Low
8. I am familiar with common mental health conditions.		2.09	Very Low
9. I am aware that professional treatments like counseling are available.		2.36	Low
10. I understand that medication may be necessary for some mental illnesses.		2.75	Moderate
	WM	2.26	Low
Attitudes toward stigma associated with mental health conditions.			
11. I believe people with mental health issues should not be judged.		2.69	Moderate
12. I try not to label others based on their mental health struggles.		2.48	Low
13. I respect classmates who are open about their mental health.		2.57	Low
1.4 I avoid making jokes or comments that stigmatize mental illness.		2.36	Low
1.5 I think mental health concerns are as serious as physical ones.		2.75	Moderate
	WM	2.57	Low
Help-seeking behaviors and self-efficacy			
16. I know where to go when I need mental health mental support.		2.50	Low
17. I would talk to a guidance counselor if I felt mentally unwell.		2.36	Low
18. I feel confident seeking help when I face emotional problems.		2.20	Low
19. I am open to asking for support from trusted adults or peers.		2.58	Low
20. I would use school-based mental health services if needed.		1.96	Very Low
	WM	2.32	Low
	AWM	2.38	Low

Note n: 379 **Legend:** 4.21 – 5.00 = *Very High*; 3.41 – 4.20 = *High*; 2.61 – 3.40 = *Moderate*; 1.81- 2.60 = *Low*; 1.00 – 1.80 = *Very Low*

In a similar vein, students' growing nonjudgmental attitude is shown in the item *I believe people with mental health disorders should not be judged* (WM = 2.69, Moderate). Contextual scenarios, however, show that when peers reveal psychological difficulties, subtle stigma may continue through labeling, avoidance, or gossip notwithstanding such beliefs. According to Thornicroft et al. (2022), stigma can appear in behavioral and unconscious ways even in those with positive mental health views. Weare (2020) agreed and stated that this discrepancy highlights the need for school-wide anti-stigma campaigns and peer-led mental health advocacy programs that humanize mental health experiences and promote empathy via guided reflection and storytelling.

Students acknowledged the significance of social support in preserving mental health. According to the indication, *I understood the importance of a supportive social environment* (WM = 2.61, Moderate). This was observed in real-world situations where students were confused on how to perceive the importance of friends and family and were hesitant in actively assisting or intervening when classmates showed signs of distress. Several studies showed that acknowledged and perceived social support could protect teenagers and young adults from psychological discomfort (Loades et al., 2020; Rickwood et al., 2021). To address such, the schools should create and facilitate faculty mentorship programs targeting the creation of peer support groups suited to the exact needs of the students. They could also train staff and students in psychological first aid, basic supportive communication, and appropriate referral protocols.

Items with comparatively lower means, including *I was open to asking for support from trusted adults or peers* (WM = 2.58) and *I appreciated students who were open about their mental health* (WM = 2.57), indicate a lack of regular practice of partial openness. For example, those students who experienced high stress may naturally chose to handle their problems alone because they feared giving out burden to others or being seen as weak, and some other students did not know how to respond when a classmate shared mental health concerns (Rickwood et al., 2021; Gulliver et al., 2020). Most teenagers understood the importance of asking for help, however, many of them avoid it because of their emotional and social obstacles. Weare (2020) cited that these circumstances called the need for a guided help-seeking efforts that emphasize acceptable peer reactions and active listening that may somehow normalize their help-seeking behavior in a form of Social – Emotional Learning (SEL).



The students were basically aware of various lifestyle issues related to mental health. This was demonstrated by the sub-variable "I was aware of how sleep, diet, and exercise affected my mental health" (WM = 2.55). But it seemed that this understanding was not always used in their daily activities. Many of them continued their unhealthy habits due to poor time management and academic pressure, although they were aware of the negative effects of sleep deprivation and poor food. This claim was proven through several research which had demonstrated that while young people were aware of the connection between lifestyle and mental health, structural and academic pressures frequently keep them from adopting healthy behaviors, still they dwelt on those bad practices (Sawyer et al., 2020; O'Connor et al., 2021). OECD (2021) specified that the significance of holistic wellness programs that incorporate stress management, time management, and school-sponsored physical education and nutrition initiatives should be integrated by the schools in such.

Indicators with lower scores such as "I like I tried to maintain a healthy balance between school and rest" (WM = 2.44), "I tried not to label others based on their mental health concerns" (WM = 2.48), and "I knew where to go when I needed mental health support" (WM = 2.50), demonstrated challenges in proving awareness into the daily activities of the students. There were those who overburden themselves academically, inadvertently use stigmatizing language, or have doubts about the availability of mental health treatments who are clearly experiencing these difficulties. The students should be provided with a mental health literacy which emphasized effective awareness accompanied by knowledge of coping mechanisms and avenues for seeking help (Jorm, 2020). To do this, the school should deploy seminars on language awareness, implement workshops on stress and time management, and establish clear, transparent, and reliable mental health referral systems using digital platforms, directories, and orientations (WHO, 2021).

These three sub-variables "*I would use school-based mental health services if needed*" (WM = 1.96), "*I understood that medication might be necessary for some mental illnesses*" (WM = 2.04), and "*I was familiar with typical mental health issues*" (WM = 2.09) resulted as the lowest mean values. The findings showed a serious lack of knowledge about official mental health services and available treatments. This implied that the students avoid counselling because of the misconception, mistrust that confidentiality might not be safeguarded or lacks the knowledge about the importance of psychotherapy. Based on research conducted around the world indicated that majority of the adolescents avail less on mental health services which may include guidance and counselling due to a misconception that receiving mental treatment may led to negative judgement against them. Hence, there is a need for counselors to include this in their Wellness Program to normalize the use of services, make confidentiality policies clear, and offer psychoeducation on evidence-based treatment options using age-appropriate and culturally sensitive methods (Reavley et al., 2022).

In summary, the findings revealed that Grade 11 students had an overall Low level of mental health awareness (AWM = 2.38). While they showed moderately positive attitudes toward recognizing the seriousness of mental health concerns and reducing stigma, their practical knowledge, coping practices, familiarity with mental disorders and treatments, and help-seeking behaviors remained limited. Willingness to utilize school-based mental health services was very low, indicating weak confidence in accessing professional support. These results highlighted a clear gap between students' general awareness and their actual application of mental health knowledge, thereby emphasizing the need for a strengthened and more structured Comprehensive Guidance Program that promotes mental health literacy, practical coping skills, anti-stigma initiatives, and accessible support systems within the school.

Extent of Coping Mechanisms Employed by the Students

This section presented the extent of the coping mechanisms employed by the students which focus on how they manage academic pressures, emotional challenges, and daily stressors. It aimed at determining the degree to which the students adapt and utilize several coping strategies such as problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance mechanisms. The students' understanding of the coping mechanisms could provide them with significant learning into the significance of psychological resilience and overall well-being. These are essential in developing supportive interventions and mental health programs within the academic setting.

Table 3 on the next page showed that the overall extent of the coping mechanisms employed by the students had an Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of 2.51. This indicated that the coping strategies were used less. All three categories,



problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping were rated less. This meant that students practice adaptive strategies to manage stress, and some relied more on temporary or avoidant behaviors.

The results implied that most of the Grade 11 students used short methods like avoidance rather than addressing the root causes of stress. This pattern of coping was probably influenced by limited mental health literacy, lack of accessible support systems, and fear of stigma in seeking professional help. According to Hidayat et al., adolescents often used avoidance-based strategies when they lacked problem-solving skills for emotional regulations. This might increase their vulnerability to psychological distress. Ciccarelli and White (2022) expressed that avoidance coping could temporarily relieve tension; however, it was not an effective long-term coping strategy. Since there was low use of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping in this study, it was recommended that structured interventions be needed to build resilience and adaptive coping among students.

Table 3

Extent of Coping Mechanisms Employed by the Students

Item	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Problem-Focused Coping		
1. I seek advice from others to improve the situation.	2.48	Less Extent
2. I work hard to prevent the problem from happening again.	2.73	Moderate Extent
3. I break the problem down into smaller, manageable parts.	2.38	Less Extent
4. I am open to asking for support from trusted adults or peers.	2.57	Less Extent
5. I would use school-based mental health services if needed.	1.98	Very Less Extent
WM	2.43	Less Extent
Emotion-Focused Coping		
6. I try to solve the problem causing me stress.	2.67	Moderate Extent
7. I make a plan of action and follow it.	2.58	Less Extent
8. I seek advice from others to improve the situation.	2.42	Less Extent
9. I work hard to prevent the problem from happening again.	2.76	Moderate Extent
10. I break the problem down into smaller, manageable parts.	2.49	Less Extent
WM	2.58	Less Extent
Avoidance Coping		
11. I avoid thinking about the situation.	2.77	Moderate Extent
12. I distract myself from other activities.	2.84	Moderate Extent
13. I pretend that the problem does not exist.	2.21	Less Extent
14. I keep my feelings to myself and do not talk about them.	2.46	Less Extent
15. I use social media or entertainment to escape my thoughts.	2.31	Less Extent
WM	2.52	Less Extent
AWM	2.51	Less Extent

N. 379 Legend: 4.21–5.00 = Very Great Extent; 3.41–4.20 = Great Extent; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate Extent; 1.81–2.60 = Less Extent; 1.00–1.80 = Very Less Extent

The findings connoted that there was a need for greater support in the part of the students in developing effective mechanisms to manage their academic and personal stressors. The schools, through their guidance counselors with a comprehensive guidance and counselling program and a sound wellness program must provide training on stress management, emotional regulation, and help-seeking behaviors, by doing so the students are encouraged to exhibit healthy responses in addressing their mental health challenges.

According to Gonzales et al. (2023) school-based mental health and wellness program which integrate coping skills education should be part of the schools' plan in advocating for psychological resilience and well-being among students.

Consequently, the results of this study specified that it was important to create a supportive and stigma-free environment so that students could freely discuss their struggles and seek help without fear of judgement. As specified by Zhou and Li (2020), strong social support and positive mental health education among adolescents were valid, and this can be done by adopting a constructive coping strategy. Thus, it would be vital for Moalboal National High School



to plan and develop and Wellness Program which would enhance the coping skills and foster emotional awareness in promoting the students' mental health and overall academic adjustment.

In summary, the findings revealed that Grade 11 students employed coping mechanisms to a Less Extent overall (AWM = 2.51), indicating limited use of adaptive stress management strategies. Specifically, both problem-focused coping (WM = 2.43) and emotion-focused coping (WM = 2.58) were utilized to a less extent, while avoidance coping (WM = 2.52) was also present at a similar level, with some indicators reaching a moderate extent such as distraction and avoidance of thinking about problems. Notably, willingness to use school-based mental health services obtained a very low rating (WM = 1.98), further suggesting reluctance to seek formal support. These findings clearly indicated that students tended to rely on short-term or avoidant strategies rather than consistently applying constructive and solution-oriented coping mechanisms, highlighting the need for structured school-based interventions that strengthen resilience, emotional regulation, and proactive help-seeking behaviors.

Significant Difference in the Coping Mechanisms of Students When Grouped According to Their Level of Mental Health Awareness

Mental health awareness which specifically focus on the wellness program among students played a vital role on how students would understand stress and how they would respond to it, as it naturally was a part of life as students, especially in academic and personal battles. The students encountered various challenges that formed part of their stress. Hence, their coping mechanism on how to buckle-up themselves in combatting them was essential in safeguarding their mental and emotional well-being. These coping mechanisms were categorized into three: problem-focused coping, which addressed the sources of stress; emotion – focused coping which aimed at regulating emotional responses against stressful situations; and avoidance coping, which involved efforts to evade or withdraw from stress-inducing circumstances. The students' level of mental health awareness would be affected by their preference for effectiveness in using these coping strategies. This section examined the significant differences in the students' coping mechanisms when grouped according to their level of mental health awareness. This provided insights into how awareness shaped adaptive and maladaptive coping responses.

Table 4

Significant Differences of Level of Mental Health Awareness Among the Three Coping Mechanisms

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	F-Test	P Value	Decision
Level of Mental Health Awareness	Problem-Focused Coping	2.60	0.40	87.60	<0.0001	Significant
	Emotion-Focused Coping	2.38	0.38			
	Avoidance Coping	1.95	0.42			

Note. $n = 379$; $p < 0.05$ indicates a statistically significant difference. Higher F -values represent greater variation among groups in terms of coping mechanisms.

According to Table 4, there is a statistically significant difference in levels of mental health awareness among students who employ different coping mechanisms. Students who primarily use problem focused coping tend to exhibit higher mental health awareness compared to those who rely on emotion focused or avoidance coping. These findings are consistent with recent studies showing that adaptive coping strategies, particularly problem focused approaches, are associated with greater recognition of mental health needs and proactive stress management, whereas avoidant coping is linked to lower awareness and higher psychological distress (Jiang et al., 2021; Liu & Wang, 2022). Emotion focused coping appears to produce moderate outcomes, as regulating emotions without directly addressing stressors may only partially support psychological well-being (SalmelaAro & Upadyaya, 2020).

According to Table 4, there was a significant difference in the level of mental health awareness among the students who employed various coping mechanisms at Moalboal National High School. The students who primarily used problem-focused coping exhibited higher mental health awareness compared to those who relied on emotion-focused or avoidance coping. These results were consistent with the recent studies showing that adaptive coping strategies,



specifically problem-focused was associated with greater recognition of mental health needs and proactive stress management

Table 4 implied that the mental health awareness of the Grade 11 students at Moalboal National High School can be enhanced by promoting healthier coping strategies and greater emotional stability among them. The guidance office and the school administration of such schools might consider implementing seminar workshops, strengthening the guidance, and counseling programs to develop adaptive coping skills. The integration of mental health education in the school curriculum to improve the students' ability to recognize and accept stressors, control and manage their emotions effectively, and prevent maladaptive behaviors (WHO, 2021). In doing so, the students could better be prepared on how to explore and manage academic and personal pressures with ease, supporting improved psychological well-being and overall performance.

In summary, the findings revealed a statistically significant difference in the level of mental health awareness when students were grouped according to their coping mechanisms ($F = 87.60$, $p < 0.0001$). Specifically, students who predominantly employed problem-focused coping demonstrated the highest level of mental health awareness ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.40$), followed by those who used emotion-focused coping ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 0.38$), while students who relied on avoidance coping showed the lowest level of mental health awareness ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 0.42$). These findings clearly indicated that higher mental health awareness was associated with more adaptive coping strategies, particularly problem-focused approaches, whereas lower awareness was linked to avoidant behaviors. This emphasized the importance of strengthening mental health literacy and promoting constructive coping skills through structured school-based interventions and guidance programs.

Relationship Between the Students' Mental Health Awareness and Their Coping Mechanisms

This section discussed the relationship between the students' mental health awareness and their coping mechanisms. It aimed to determine the students' concept, understanding and awareness of mental health which influence the kind of strategies they utilize in managing their stress and emotional challenges.

Table 5

Relationship Between the Students' Mental Health Awareness and Their Coping Mechanisms

Pair of Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision	Remarks
Mental Health Awareness and...					
Problem-Focused Coping	0.65	<0.001	Strong Positive Relationship	Significant	Higher use of problem-focused coping is associated with higher mental health awareness
Emotion-Focused Coping	0.42	0.002	Moderate Positive Relationship	Significant	Emotion-focused coping moderately relates to awareness
Avoidance Coping	-0.38	0.005	Moderate Negative Relationship	Significant	Higher avoidance coping is associated with lower mental health awareness

Legend: Significance Level (α) = 0.05; Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

In table 5 it indicated in table 5, there was a significant relationship between the students' coping mechanisms and their level of mental health awareness. The problem-focused showed a strong positive association which indicated that those students who engage in active problem-solving strategies tend to exhibit higher mental health awareness. The emotion-focused coping demonstrated a moderate positive relationship, which suggested that managing emotions contributes to awareness, though less strongly than problem focused strategies. In contrast, avoidance coping is moderately negatively associated with mental health awareness among the students. This implies that reliance on avoidance is linked to lower recognition and management of their mental health needs.

The computed relationships suggested that the higher the students' mental health awareness, their ability to employ adaptive coping strategies also improves. The students with enhanced mental health literacy adopted effective coping



responses, including problem-solving, emotional regulation, and seeking social support, rather than avoidance. According to Arslan and Yildirim (2021) that the higher the mental health literacy enhances psychological resilience and coping efficiency. Zhou et al. (2021) agreed to this finding and discovered from their study that awareness of mental health improves coping flexibility and emotional regulation, particularly in academic contexts.

The findings implied that Moalboal National High School must prioritize mental health literacy programs and fuse them with the student development plans and initiatives. The school could strengthen their psychological preparedness by handling stress, anxiety, and academic pressure effectively. As emphasized by Aguirre et al. (2022), preventive mental health education could reduce stigma and equip the learners with the coping strategies essential for their well-being and academic success. Hence, the wellness program that should be created as an output of this study must emphasize the coping skills training, emotional self-awareness, and help-seeking behaviors, in this manner the intervention program could prevent burnout and show supportive and holistic student development (Liu et al., 2023).

In summary, the findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between students' mental health awareness and their coping mechanisms ($\alpha = 0.05$). Specifically, mental health awareness showed a strong positive correlation with problem-focused coping ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that students with higher awareness were more likely to engage in active problem-solving strategies. It also demonstrated a moderate positive relationship with emotion-focused coping ($r = 0.42$, $p = 0.002$), suggesting that emotional regulation was associated with increased awareness, though to a lesser degree. Conversely, a moderate negative relationship was found between mental health awareness and avoidance coping ($r = -0.38$, $p = 0.005$), implying that students who relied more on avoidance strategies tended to have lower levels of awareness. Overall, these findings clearly indicated that higher mental health awareness was associated with more adaptive coping strategies, while lower awareness was linked to maladaptive or avoidant behaviors, thereby emphasizing the importance of strengthening mental health literacy to promote healthier coping responses among students.

CONCLUSION

The study gleaned that the Grade 11 students of Moalboal National High School possessed basic understanding about mental health; however, demonstrated a limited but practical application of such knowledge in their daily lives. The results showed that although students recognized the value of social support, acknowledged the importance of mental health, and had a generally positive attitude toward stigma, their knowledge of mental health disorders, professional treatments that are available, and effective help-seeking behaviors remained low. This implied that the study's overall findings called for an organized, school-based wellness program that supports both literacy and coping skills.

As regards to coping mechanisms, the students predominantly employed problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies to a moderate extent, while avoidance strategies were also utilized to a lesser degree. A key finding of the study is the core relationship, which specified that the lower the coping mechanisms, the lower the mental health awareness. This indicated that the students' knowledge about mental health directly influences their ability to use adaptive coping strategies, which expressed the importance of awareness in fostering resilience and emotional well-being.

Hence, based on the findings, it was evident that a Wellness Program aligned with the needs of the students was essential. It suggested that the program must include mental health education and focus on stigma reduction, practical training in problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies and structured opportunities for help – seeking behaviors.

In conclusion, the study exhibited that an implementation of a holistic Wellness Program that combine knowledge acquisition, skill development and supportive environments were important for enhancing the psychological well-being and adaptive coping of the students. A well-designed Wellness Program can give students the knowledge, abilities, and self-assurance they need to successfully navigate academic, social, and personal challenges by addressing both awareness and useful coping strategies. This will improve the overall mental health and academic success.

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