



Teachers' Coping in the New Normal: Basis for an Intervention Plan

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Abstract:

We are complicated beings living complicated lives in which we are not always able to cope up with the difficulties that we face. As an outcome, we are subject to feelings of tension and stress. In other words, coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviors mobilized to manage the internal and external stressful situations. With the global pandemic that is arising most people experienced loss of job, businesses being closed, death and stress. This pandemic challenges every individual especially the teachers, they deal with emotional stress, physical, mental, financial, spiritual, and even in social. May things happened in a span of a year. This study aimed to determine the level of coping of 30 teachers in STI WNU. The study areas include physical, mental and emotional. Results show moderate level in the area of physical while high level in the area of mental and emotional. Also results significant result in terms of highest educational attainment and average family monthly income in the area of mental while the rest shows no significant result. Thus, this study calls for school heads, school administration to school heads to organize a wellness program, implements a "Life Group" an activity and conduct "Time Management" Seminar to help the teacher manage their time wisely as well as create a schedule of activities that will guide them on the things that need to be prioritized.

Keywords: Teachers, coping, new normal, physical, mental, emotional

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

Humans are complicated beings living complicated lives in which we are not always able to cope up with the difficulties that we face. In many professions, it's easy to overstate the significance of the job. But in the case of our teachers, society underrates their importance. Teacher plays an important role especially in the lives of their students. Being front liners in the education of the youth, they need to be resilient in times of crisis. They need to be physically, emotionally and mentally well to be able to deal with the various challenges in the new normal. As an outcome, are subject to feelings of tension and stress. In other words, coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviors mobilized to manage the internal and external stressful situations. Adaptive responses, both of which aim to reduce or tolerate stress (Algorani & Gupta 2020). This pandemic challenges every individual especially the teachers, they deal with emotional stress, physical, mental, financial, spiritual, and even in social.

COVID-19 pandemic has resulted drastic changes in education. Problems encountered about coping caused many teachers from exhaustion, burn out, losing appetite and unmotivated to do things. As per record of the health services department of the university most teachers are suffering from hypertension and diabetes due to this pandemic. Also, the work from home set up have been challenging, the changes in social relations and close relation in particular negatively influenced the well-being of teachers. And at the same time negatively influenced teachers' abilities to effectively cope with the crisis situations (Jakowboski T, 2021).

As the teachers keep on adjusting and adapting the new normal, For these reasons, the researcher' aim to help the teachers on what ways they can cope with the different struggles they are facing everyday just to cater every needs of their students to equip them well and to give quality education without consuming negativities and stress.

Current State of Knowledge

According to Chowdhury (2021) coping is constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. Based on the definition coping involves spending mental energy in a way that can reduce stress, whether conscious or subconscious, the ultimate goal of all coping mechanism is to solve problem and return homeostasis. Coping mechanism can be positive or negative depending on whether they increase or reduce mental wellbeing. It is dependent on personality patterns and perceptual experiences. Importantly, Synder (2021) The Psychology of what works stated in his book that the process of coping was taken for granted as they go they go about their daily activities. In many ways coping is like breathing, an automatic process requiring no apparent effort. In addition, coping skills or coping mechanism are a set of adaptive tools that we proactively administer to avoid burnout. These tools can be our thoughts, emotions, and actions and are dependent on our personality patterns.



Furthermore, coping Mechanism changes in the mental health condition of teachers are possibly associated to changes in their working conditions. Data suggests that most educators were not prepared to face the technological challenges that came with the pandemic due to a lack of preparedness and experience in terms of digital competencies and remote learning pedagogical methods. For others, there is uncertainty on the impact of remote education on academic progress as it has been reported that students experience higher levels of psychological distress due to the pandemic. In this new context, the particularities of each student are now visible to some teachers and this can be a cause of stress and feelings of helplessness. Female teachers have also had to face the consequences of previously existing gender disparities regarding care and household chores that unequally augmented their demands and responsibilities (Bosano, 2021).

According to Bacow (2020), the extraordinary preventive measures that have been taken in most higher education institutions to limit exposure to the pandemic will essentially change the ordinary way that classes take place. In the same line, Blumenstyk (2020) argues that global crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic would prompt colleges and universities to stop distinguishing between the classroom and online programs. These are the reasons to pay more attention to teachers and to provide regular psychological support and special one during the organizational changes in order to avoid professional deteriorations that closely connect with disturbing impact.

Thus, school closures, home quarantine, and social distancing implemented worldwide caused a sudden anxiety even among teachers. A designed online survey collected data from Filipino teachers' practices on how they dealt with anxiety due to the COVID - 19 outbreak. The practices included information seeking, preventive measures, and other coping mechanisms to deal with anxiety during the quarantine period. Results revealed that teachers practiced virtual learning, communicated with the professional community, adhered to quarantine requirements, and tried to find for purposeful activities to deal with anxiety due to the suspension of national school-related activities in the country brought by the pandemic (Talidong, 2020).

Amidst the threat of COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, the educators, students, and the school were still coping and adjusting to the distance learning education. The study which explored teachers' awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic and their opinion on their respective schools' readiness, readiness to implement the school's curriculum, as well as their response to the challenges of conducting distance learning education in the Philippines. The results showed that the teachers were highly aware of the presence and consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Only the teachers' gender had a significant difference in their awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect in the curriculum. In contrast, teachers' gender, length of teaching experience, and geographic location had significant differences with their readiness to distance learning education (Lapada, 2020).

Theoretical Underpinnings

The study fastened on the theory of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) which states that coping is an effort to explain people's method in dealing with stress that is an environmental and internal demand that exceeds a person, resources and endangers his or her well - being. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. The transactional model is built on the assumption that stress is a person- situation interaction, one that is dependent on the subjective cognitive judgment that arises from the interplay between the person and the environment. No event or situation in itself is stressful; instead, the stressor is defined by the subjective judgement of the situation that is appraised as threatening or harmful.

Hence, this theory is related to the present study of the researcher that the person and the environment is involved. This theory supported the researching in determining the coping mechanism of teachers in the area of physical coping, mental coping and emotional coping. This theory best fits in this study because, in the current context, it represents the coping mechanisms of the teachers. These mechanisms are needed to identify how the teachers cope in this new normal. The effects of stress on a person are likely based more on that person's feelings of threat, vulnerability, and ability to cope than on the stressful event itself. In this theoretical context, in the presence of a stressful situation, an individual has the innate motivation to adjust or to remove from that stressful or uncomfortable situation.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the level of teachers coping in the new normal at STI-West Negros University, Philippines as basis for an intervention plan. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions: 1) the level of teachers coping in the new normal according to the areas of physical, mental and emotional; and 2) the significant difference in the level of teachers coping in the new normal when grouped and compared according to the variable age, highest educational attainment, length of service, and average family monthly income.

Methodology



This section presents the discussion of the research methodology used, the subjects and respondents of the study, the research instruments used, the validity and reliability of the instruments, the procedure for data gathering, and the statistical tools and procedure for data analysis.

Research Design

The descriptive method of research was used to determine the level of teachers coping with the new normal at STI WNU during the School Year 2020-2021 as basis for an intervention plan. Descriptive research (Creswell, 2017) is fact-finding with adequate interpretation. Beyond simply data gathering, it involves analyzing, classifying, and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, beliefs, cause and effect relationships, and then making an appropriate interpretation about such data. Hence, descriptive design is appropriate for this study as it aims to gather more information about the characteristics in the present field of investigation as well as it aids in making professional judgments. Likewise, the descriptive research design was used since it is a type of non-experimental research in which it gives freedom to the researcher to measure and assess their statistical relationship with little effort to control extraneous variables. Data was gathered, categorized, tabulated, treated, analyzed, and interpreted to come up with findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Study Respondents

The respondents of this study were the 30 SHS teachers of STI WNU. Since the number of respondents is quite manageable, purposive sampling was utilized. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling that is selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Crossman, 2020).

Instruments

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used in gathering the data to determine the level of teachers coping in the new normal at STI WNU as basis for an intervention plan. It was subjected to validity (4.15-very good) and reliability (0.854-good). All of them were interpreted as worthy and good; respectively. The questionnaire was divided into 2 parts wherein part I deal with the profile of respondents in terms of age, highest educational attainment, length of service, and average family monthly income. Part II of the questionnaire is a 30-item statement for the areas, 10 for physical, 10 for mental, and 10 for emotional which measures the coping using a 5-point Likert scale rating with 5 as always, 4 as often, 3 as sometimes, 2 as rarely and 1 as almost never.

Data Gathering Procedure

After establishing the validity and reliability of the instrument, the researcher wrote a letter to the HR Manager thru the Principal and Vice President for Academic Affairs to ask permission the conduct the study. Upon approval, the researcher sets a schedule for the data gathering with a letter of request to the Academic Coordinator. In the conduct, the researcher explained the purpose of the study using Microsoft Teams, personally and forwarded the link of the MS Forms of the questionnaire to the respondents to guide them carefully in answering and giving the needed data. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the data gathered. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the processing of the encoded data.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No. 1, used descriptive-analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of teachers coping in the new normal according to the areas, physical, mental, and emotional.

Objective No. 2, utilized the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine whether or not a significant difference exists in the level of teachers coping in the new normal when grouped and compared according to the variable age, highest educational attainment, length of service, and average family monthly income.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations in research are principles that guide your research designs and practices. Scientists and researchers must always adhere to a specific code of conduct when collecting data from people (P. Bhandari, 2022). Voluntary participation, Informed consent, confidentiality, and plagiarism will be strictly considered. Study participants will not be forced or pressured; they can withdraw at any time without giving any reason to withdraw. The study participants will be thoroughly informed about the purpose and nature of the study, including the benefits, risks, and consequences. The study participants will be assured of the confidentiality of all information relevant to their personal information or any form of identifying information relating to their person.

Results and Discussion



This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data gathered to carry out the objectives of this study. All these were made possible by following certain appropriate procedures so as to give the exact data and solution to each specific problem.

Table 1

Level of Teachers Coping in the New Normal according to the area of Physical Coping

Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. I do physical exercise such as walking, jogging, swimming, etc.	3.47	Moderate Level
2. I go out with my colleagues/friends shopping.	3.63	High Level
3. I sleep more than usual.	3.80	High Level
4. I go with friends to Zumba.	1.77	Low Level
5. I drink alcohol /beverages to make myself better.	2.13	Low Level
6. I work overtime to finish assigned work.	4.27	High Level
7. I keep myself busy with activities.	4.10	High Level
8. I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things.	4.03	High Level
9. I travel to other places to forget my problems.	3.43	Moderate Level
10. I hang out with my colleagues and friends.	4.10	High Level
Overall Mean	3.47	Moderate Level

Table 1 showed that the Coping of teachers in the area of physical coping displayed that the overall mean is 3.47 interpreted as a moderate level. On the other hand item 6, "I work overtime to finish assigned work" obtained the highest mean of 4.27 interpreted as a very high level, while item 4, "I go with friends for Zumba" got the lowest mean of 1.77 interpreted as a low level.

This implies that the teachers are busy doing their school works or disinterested in Zumba as a form of exercise. And maybe they prefer other physical activities like hiking, traveling, gastronomy or going to the gym. They spent most of their vacant time accomplishing other tasks and finding another way to enjoy themselves.

The study is in contrast with Leshar (2020) which states that Zumba provides both physical and psychological benefits. Studies show that moderate-intensity dance is linked to better cardiovascular health and cognitive benefits. People who practice Zumba, in particular, tend to feel more independent and purposeful in life.

Table 2

Level of Coping of Senior High School Teachers in the New Normal according to the area of Mental

Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. I approach my heads and colleagues for technical help.	4.30	High Level
2. I think about how I might best handle the problem.	4.57	Very High Level
3. I make an action plan.	4.30	High Level
4. I try to grow as a person as a result of the experience.	4.50	Very High Level
5. I manage my time properly.	4.13	High Level
6. I put aside other activities to concentrate on the important ones.	4.53	Very High Level
7. I deal with problems one step at a time.	4.43	High Level
8. I take additional action to get around the solution.	4.43	High Level
9. I concentrate my efforts on doing something helpful to my well-being.	4.60	Very High Level
10. I try to see problems in a different light, to make them seem more positive.	4.37	High Level
Overall Mean	4.42	High Level

As shown in table 2, Teachers Coping in the area of mental coping showed that the overall mean was 4.42 and interpreted as high level. With this item 9, "I concentrate my efforts on doing something helpful to my well-being" obtained the highest mean of 4.60 interpreted as very high level, while item 5, "I manage my time properly" obtained the lowest mean of 4.13 interpreted as high level.

This denotes that out of the workloads of teachers they failed to manage their time properly as they're entangled with the task given and assigned to them.

The study is in contrast with Claessens et al. as cited in Sahito et al (2016), which state that the time management behaviors were found positively related to perceived control of time, job satisfaction, health, and negatively to stress. Time management training helps the teachers to enhance their time management skills but does not support directly and automatically the performance to become better.



Table 3

Level of Teachers Coping in the New Normal according to the area of Emotional

Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. I try to get emotional support from friends and relatives.	3.97	High Level
2. I discuss my feelings/problems with someone.	3.57	High Level
3. I put my trust in God.	4.93	Very High Level
4. I talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.	3.83	High Level
5. I try to get advice from someone about what to do.	3.90	High Level
6. I try to find comfort in my religion.	4.10	High Level
7. I accept the reality of the fact that it happened.	4.43	High Level
8. I get sympathy and understanding from someone.	3.83	High Level
9. I ask people who had similar experiences and what they did.	3.93	High Level
10. I laugh or make fun of the situation.	3.97	High Level
Overall Mean	4.05	High Level

Statistics on table 3 revealed that teachers coping in the area of emotional coping showed that the overall mean was 4.05 interpreted as high-level item 3, "I put my trust in God" obtained the highest mean of 4.93 interpreted as a very high level, while item 2, "I discuss my feelings/problems with someone" obtained the lowest mean of 3.57 interpreted as high level.

This infers that these pandemic challenges teachers to become isolated. Social distancing and other health protocols hinder them to share what they feel to others concerning the safety of everyone.

The findings of the study agree with Fabello (2014) as she states that effective communication is hard. Especially when one is dealing with a topic as sensitive as feelings. In addition, Bennett (2018) agreed that talking about feelings is no easy feat. Doing so means putting oneself in a vulnerable situation that one doesn't necessarily want to be in—but which one will ultimately benefit from. However, he suggested that it is important that one open up about their feelings, as opposed to keeping those emotions bottled up inside.

Table 4

The difference in the Level of Teachers Coping in the New Normal in the area of Physical when grouped according to the Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	19	15.29	100.500	0.863	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	11	15.86				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	20	14.50	80.000	0.378		Not Significant
	Higher	10	17.50				
Length of Service	Shorter	14	14.61	99.500	0.603		Not Significant
	Longer	16	16.28				
Average family Monthly Income	Lower	14	13.89	89.500	0.349		Not Significant
	Higher	16	16.91				

Result presented in table 4 on the difference in the level of teachers coping in the new normal in the area of physical when grouped according to the variables, age, highest educational attainment, length of service, and an average family monthly income as the computed p-value of 0.863, 0.378, 0.603 and 0.394 are greater than the level of significance 0.05.

Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of coping of senior high school teachers in the area of physical when grouped and compared according to variables is not rejected.

This implies that regardless of all the variables, teachers were able to keep themselves healthy. They may show a lack of interest in doing fitness activities they still were able to cope with the changes through taking time to stress out.



The results of the study agree with (Ackerman, 2021) who states that coping mechanisms are a vital part of human behavior; they are necessary for successfully navigating through the challenging and often murky obstacle course that is life.

Table 5

The difference in the Level of Teachers Coping in the New Normal in the area of Mental when grouped and compared according to variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	19	14.68	89.000	0.502	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	11	16.91				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	20	12.78	45.500	0.016	0.05	Significant
	Higher	10	20.95				
Length of Service	Lower	14	13.29	81.000	0.195	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	16	17.44				
Average family Monthly Income	Lower	14	11.68	58.500	0.025	0.05	Significant
	Higher	16	18.84				

Result presented in table 5 in the difference in the level of teachers coping in the new normal in the area of mental when grouped according to the variables, age, highest educational attainment, length of service, and an average family monthly income as the computed p-value of 0.863, 0.378, 0.603 and 0.394 are greater than the level of significance 0.05.

Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of coping of senior high school teachers in the area of physical when grouped and compared according to variables is not rejected. However, when teachers are grouped according to highest educational attainment, the computed p-value is 0.016 is less than the level of significance 0.05. Hence, there is a significant difference in the level of coping of teachers in the area of mind when they are grouped and compared according to the highest educational attainment.

This implies that educational attainment and income play an essential role in how teachers deal with the difficulties and their resiliency on how they cope, adapt, and adjust to the new normal. Engaging in professional growth enhances the knowledge and experience of teachers in minimizing stress. Also, high income lessens the burden of teachers in terms of needs and support for their families. Thus, they can focus on other activities that will help them grow.

The result of the study agrees with (Mathis, 2019) states that Mental health and well-being play an important role in one's life, as well as how we deal with stressors and trauma that can negatively impact us. There are all kinds of possible variations when it comes to how individuals manage painful or difficult emotions, and what they do to regain a better mindset when times get rough. The more coping skills we obtain to deal with environmental changes, the more likely we are to maintain a healthier lifestyle and overall better mental well-being.

Table 6

The difference in the Level of Teachers Coping in the New Normal in the area of Emotional when grouped and compared according to variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	19	16.21	91.000	0.560	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	11	14.27				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	20	15.48	99.500	0.982	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	10	15.55				
Length of Service	Lower	14	15.29	109.000	0.900	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	16	15.69				
Average family Monthly Income	Lower	14	16.29	101.000	0.646	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	16	14.81				

Result presented in table 6 in the difference in the level of teachers coping in the new normal in the area of emotional when grouped according to the variables, age, highest educational attainment, length of service, and an average family monthly income as the computed p-value of 0.560, 0.982, 0.900 and 0.646 are greater than the level of significance 0.05.



Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of coping of senior high school teachers in the area of emotional when grouped and compared according to variables is not rejected.

This suggests that teachers are emotionally stable and can adapt to the different changes. They can handle their classes and can set aside emotional struggles from the burdens of work.

The result of the study is in contrast with education (Lapada, 2020) states that teachers' gender, length of teaching experience, and geographic location had significant differences with their readiness to distance learning education.

Conclusions:

In the view of the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn. As the health crisis limits the movement of people, teachers' physical activities were also limited, including going to school. As teachers are used to working on-site, this lessens their physical activities which are also affecting their physical health. As such, teachers are trying to cope by spending much of their time at work and hanging out with friends, but not much with doing physical exercise. Likewise, they are not interested in Zumba. Also, teachers are occupied with tasks in the new normal especially with the changes in the educational system. With a heavy workload, they find it hard to manage their time as they spend much in dealing with problems with school works.

In the light of the findings and conclusions derived from the study, this study calls for the school heads to organize a wellness program such as, "Wellness Center" which includes a relaxation area. Free access to the swimming pool. Another is "Work it out"- a 30 days' beginner workout challenge where teachers can choose their program. Guidance office department should promote "Distress Friday" a mindfulness activity where teachers can take a break from tons of work. School administration implements a "Life Group" an activity where teachers are gathered by a small group to share personal experiences, life updates, and future goals; and conduct "Time Management" Seminar to help the teacher manage their time wisely as well as create a schedule of activities that will guide them on the things that need to be prioritized.

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