

TEACHERS' STRES AND COPING MECHANISMS IN THE NEW NORMAL

William A. Buquia, Jessica Gador, and Dennis Canete
STI West Negros University, Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines
William.buquia01@deped.gov.ph
jessica.gador001@deped.gov.ph
dennis.canete01@deped.gov.ph

Abstract

Stress is the body's natural response to pressures while coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. In this context, this descriptive study analyzed teachers' stress levels and coping mechanisms in the new normal in a large Division in Central Philippines for the School Year 2020-2021. Data for this study was collected from 114 respondents sampled from a population of 160 elementary teachers using a researcher-made data-gathering instrument that has hurdled the rigorous tests of validity and reliability. The ensuing results showed that teachers experienced low-stress levels in all areas of personal, interpersonal, and emotional factors. Subsequent analysis showed their coping mechanisms to be moderate in task, emotion, and avoidance orientations. Moreover, their levels of stress were found to be significant in interpersonal factors length of service, and emotional factors when compared between age and length of service. The comparative analysis of teachers' coping mechanisms between age and service length was found not significant in all areas. Further analysis also showed no significant relationship between teachers' stress levels and their coping mechanisms. Study results suggest the need for teachers to undergo district-wide stress coping mechanism capability enhancement training through in-service training explicitly focusing on emotional and social mastery.

Keywords: Educational management, stress, coping mechanism, New Normal, Moalboal, Cebu.

Bio-Profiles:

William A. Buquia is a School Principal 1 in Saavedra Elementary School, District of Molaboal, Moalboal Cebu. He holds a degree of Doctor of Education major in Development Education. His research interest is in education, history and other allied fields.

Jessica C. Gador is Head Teacher 2 in Batadbatad Elementary School, District of Moalboal, Moalboal, Cebu. She holds a degree of Doctor of Education major in Development Education. Her research interest is in education, technology, and other allied fields.

Dennis Q. Cañete is a School Principal at Balabagon Elementary School, District of Moalboal, Moalboal, Cebu. He holds a Master of Education degree, majoring in Instructional Supervision. His research interests in Educational Management,

Pedagogical Practices, and Science and Technology.

Introduction

Rationale

The contentions of Schleicher (2012), stating that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers, is inevitably undisputable over time. Hence, the quest to uphold teacher quality performance has always been a continuous goal of the Department of Education. Consequently, it institutionalized the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which defined the parameters of an excellently performing teacher. Nevertheless, quality teacher performance in the country remains an envisaged goal, as evidenced by various local and international assessment results; these are brought about by several contributory factors, and some go unnoticed by authorities. On the contrary, DepEd's desire to elevate teacher performances sometimes becomes inimical by putting in more pressure, which could even be more counterproductive. Cognizant of the immense pressure brought by the desire to achieve excellent teacher performance, Sarabia and Collantes (2020) argued that the highly demanding nature of the teaching job brought by an immense desire to attain excellent quality education led teachers to stress out instead of being productive.

Stress is the body's natural response to pressures. Many different situations or life events can cause stress. It is often triggered when individuals experience something new or unexpected that threatens their sense of self or when they feel little control over a situation (Fink, 2015). Stress usually emanates from personal or work-related factors or an aggregate of it. Stress was an evolutionary tool to ensure human survival during the primitive age, but in the present moment, stress is no anymore helpful as a remnant of the human evolutionary process; thus, it already brings forth countless adverse effects to individuals. Individuals need proper coping mechanisms to do away from the havoc of stress. Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. Coping mechanisms can help people adjust to stressful events while helping them maintain their emotional well-being (Näring, 2017).

Teachers in Third World countries like the Philippines are bombarded with excessive stressors. Sarabia and Collantes (2020) accounted for enormous loads of paperwork needing immediate submission, which are aggregated with personal problems such as financial instability. Bongo (2017) also reported overcrowded classrooms, insufficient salary, simultaneous activities, and overlapping schedules of submission of needed reports as aggregated sources of stress among teachers. Reports in various journals pointed out the effects of stress on the teacher's work performances. The report of Orlanda-Ventayen and Ventayen (2021) pointed to a strong positive correlation between excessive stress levels and teachers' school performances. Another study accounted for absenteeism to stress correlates. Rabago-Mingoa (2017) states that stress is one of the major causes of the failing health of older teachers.

Several studies were conducted to the end of pointing out the adverse effects of stress on teachers' work performances, yet none of which pointed out the stress coping mechanism adopted by teachers in dealing with stress or the effectiveness of the adapted stress coping mechanism in reducing their stress levels. Noting the abovementioned scenario, the researcher embarked on this study to determine the level of stress

experienced by teachers as well as the level and impact of their adapted coping mechanism in the hope that authorities would recognize and consider programs that would alleviate the stress of teachers, additionally, that teachers could be assisted to lead into appropriate stress coping mechanism to make them more productive, enhance their work performances and prevent the worst outcomes of excessive stress.

Literature Review

Stress is an inherent aspect of human life, manifesting in various situations such as work or leisure. It can have positive and negative impacts depending on how it is managed (Taylor & Francis, 2017). Teaching, in particular, is recognized as a profession associated with significant stress due to teachers' diverse responsibilities beyond academic instruction, including students' emotional and physical well-being (Riley et al., 2016). External factors such as classroom conditions, student behavior, resource availability, workload distribution, and communication challenges contribute to teacher stress (Brown et al., 2002). Stress is subjective, with individuals reacting differently to stressful situations; however, physiological responses to stress follow a predictable pattern and can manifest in various physical symptoms (Wilson, 2018). Symptoms may include headaches, muscle tension, digestive issues, respiratory problems, and skin conditions.

Different individuals employ varying coping mechanisms to manage stress. As defined by Agayon, Agayon, and Pentang (2022), coping mechanisms are strategies used to navigate stressful or traumatic situations, aiding in emotional management and overall well-being. Wadsworth (2015) categorized coping mechanisms into problem-focused and emotion-focused styles. Problem-focused coping addresses the stressor directly, aiming to alleviate stress, while emotion-focused coping tackles the emotional distress resulting from the stressor. Coping strategies can also be classified as active or avoidant. Active coping involves consciously addressing the stressor, whereas avoidant coping entails ignoring or evading the problem. Some coping methods, although providing short-term relief, may be ineffective in the long run and are termed "maladaptive coping." Conversely, adaptive coping mechanisms are considered healthy and effective in managing stress. Utilizing effective coping skills can enhance mental and emotional well-being and mitigate the risk of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues following stressful events.

Teachers must adopt effective coping strategies to prevent burnout and mitigate the risk of depression. Agayon, Agayon, and Pentang (2022) identified challenges teachers encounter in implementing printed self-learning modules, highlighting the need for educators to address issues arising from the ongoing shift in education. Despite difficulties, teachers have demonstrated resilience by employing coping techniques to navigate challenges. Rabago-Mingoa (2017) outlined various stressors experienced by elementary and high school teachers, including work-related factors, personal issues, and economic concerns, leading to high-stress levels. Common coping strategies among teachers include passive entertainment and window shopping, though these methods are predominantly sedentary. Miraflor (2020) emphasized the importance of raising awareness about stress management techniques and practicing their application in specific contexts to reduce stress levels and enhance performance.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is based on the theory of stress and stress coping mechanism by Parker and Endler (1999), which defined stress as the natural body's response to pressures such as encountering something new and unknown or anything unexpected that an individual could threaten the self. It could also emanate from anything which makes an individual feel having little or no control over the situation. They identified sources of stress in the modern environment as personal, social, and innate emotional resiliency to stressors. They also defined stress coping mechanisms as any conceptualized strategy aimed at regulating or controlling emotional responses brought about by the problem.

Recognizing that continuous exposure to excessive stress can lead to physical, emotional, and mental imbalances in individuals is crucial for understanding the importance of stress management. Maladaptive stress coping could lead to certain personality disorders once sustained; they identified three essential stress coping mechanism orientations, which are task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented strategies. According to them, the task-oriented strategy is closely related to Lazarus and Folkman's problem-focused stress coping mechanism wherein an individual attacks the problem, thereby reducing the gravity of its effect or solving it through conceptualizing a logically sound solution. Theoretically, this orientation mainly applies to situations wherein the individual has control over the stressor. However, there are situations beyond individual control, such as the loose of a loved one, which demands other coping mechanism strategies. Emotion-oriented is a coping strategy that aims to control and regulate emotional responses over uncontrollable circumstances such as the loose of a loved one. Emotional maladaptation could lead to a series of personality disorders such as anxiety and depression; regulating emotions is essentially critical when exposed to circumstances beyond individual control. Another coping mechanism strategy that an individual could resort to in uncontrollable situations causing excessive stress is an aggregate of task-oriented and emotion-oriented strategies; the theorists call an avoidance-oriented coping strategy. The side of having task orientation is finding distractions such as partying, drinking, or doing anything that could temporarily take away the thoughts and emotions brought by the stressor. The emotional orientation is seeking temporary mental and emotional relief through social diversion, such as getting out with friends or sharing problems with trusted people.

This study identified the respondents' stress coping mechanism in response to the excessive personal and career-oriented stressors based on task-oriented and avoidance-oriented coping strategies. In this note, the researcher finds it most appropriate to use this study.

Objectives

This study aimed to assess the level of stress among teachers and explore their coping mechanisms within a large division in Central Philippines. Specifically, the research sought to determine: 1) the extent of stress experienced by teachers across personal, interpersonal, and emotional factors; 2) teachers' coping mechanisms, focusing on task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented strategies; 3) the significant difference, if any, in the stress levels and coping mechanisms among teachers based on age and length of service; and 4) the relationship between teachers' stress levels and their coping mechanisms.

Hypothesis

This paper assumed no significant difference in teachers' stress and stress coping mechanisms and that there was no significant relationship between the levels of stress and coping mechanisms of teachers in the new normal.

Methodology

The research methodology is the backbone of this study, providing a systematic approach to gathering and analyzing data to address the research objectives.

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research design in determining the levels of stress and stress-coping mechanisms of teachers, ascertaining whether or not a significant difference exists between these variables based on the respondents' demographic profiles, and finally in determining a significant relationship, if any, between the stress of teachers and their coping mechanisms. This research design is deemed most appropriate for this paper, which aimed to determine teachers' stress and coping mechanisms in the new normal.

Respondents

The study respondents were determined using proportionate random sampling courtesy of the lottery method ($N=160$; $n=114$).

Data-gathering Instrument

A 60-item survey questionnaire was used to gather the data to determine the level of teachers' and stress coping mechanisms in the new normal. Part I deals with the profile of the respondent in terms of age and length of teaching experience; Part II deals with the stress levels of teachers in personal, interpersonal, and emotional factors, and Part III deals with the levels of stress coping mechanism of teachers in task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented factors.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The instrument used to collect the data hurdled the tests of validity (4.37= Excellent) and reliability (.971=Excellent; .842=Good).

Data-gathering Procedures

Prior approval was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent after establishing the instrument's validity and reliability. After that, the researcher sought clearance from the school principal to administer the questionnaire through Google Forms, which included a comprehensive introduction explaining the purpose of the study. The researcher also communicated to the respondents online to explain and guide them in answering the instrument. They were similarly assured of the total confidentiality of the data.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

This paper used the descriptive-analytical-relational scheme and mean as a statistical tool to determine teachers' stress levels in areas of personal, interpersonal, and emotional factors and their level of coping mechanisms in tasks, emotions, and avoidance-oriented factors. Additionally, it used a comparative-analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine the significant difference in teachers' stress levels and coping mechanisms when grouped by age and length of service. Finally, the paper used a relational-analytical scheme and Spearman *rho* to determine a significant relationship between stress levels and teachers' coping mechanisms in the new normal. These chosen statistical tools are deemed most appropriate in determining the study's objectives.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured the voluntary participation of the respondents in this study. Their names were not included in the data, their identity was not disclosed, and they were assured of complete confidentiality of the data, with the researcher being the sole person who had data access. After the data were tabulated and analyzed, electronic data were discarded, and print-outs were discarded to preclude unauthorized access to the information.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the overall results relative to the objectives of the study. The areas covered are teachers' stress levels in personal, interpersonal, and emotional, as well as their level of coping mechanisms in task, emotional, and avoidance orientations.

Stress of Teachers in the New Normal

This section presents the discussions and interpretations of the stress levels among teachers in the new normal setting, considering personal, interpersonal, and emotional factors.

Table 1

The Stress of Teachers in the New Normal in Personal Factor

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. experience mood switching when exposed to stressful situations, especially during the uncertainty of the pandemic.	3.47	0.85	Moderate Level
2. sweat excessively when having conversations with superiors or during observations.	1.49	0.98	Very Low Level
3. I feel desperate due to school contributions, the need to spend for classroom structuring, and the insufficiency of my salary.	3.19	0.96	Moderate Level
4. I am pressured to achieve the planning standards of the DepEd, especially during the new normal setting, which led to excessive eating and massive weight gain.	2.59	1.19	Moderate Level
5. I tend to bite my nails when I feel uneasy, reprimanded by superiors, or like offending other people.	1.53	0.91	Low Level
6. I feel frustrated and helpless due to an insufficient budget for my family and personal needs, especially due to the economic crises brought about by the pandemic.	2.73	1.12	Moderate Level
7. feel confused or unable to decide and react due to stressful situations.	2.75	1.08	Moderate Level
8. I cannot stop myself from eating, which results in weight gain when exposed to pressure.	2.53	1.21	Moderate Level
9. I am fueled by personal problems and stress wh, which makes me less functional in school	2.24	1.03	Low Level
10 am affected by family problems, which also affect my thinking and work functionality.	2.38	1.06	Low Level
Overall Mean	2.49	0.77	Low Level

Table 1 discusses teachers' stress levels in the new normal setting regarding personal factors with an overall mean equivalent low level ($M= 2.49$, $SD=0.77$). The lowest mean is on item 2, "sweat excessively when having conversations with superiors or during observations," with a mean of 1.49, which is interpreted as a very low level.

The highest mean is "experience mood switching when exposed to stressful situations, especially during the uncertainty of the situations during the pandemic," which scored 3.47, interpreted as a moderate level. It indicated that the emotional stability of the teachers within the research venue was adversely affected by the horrid events depicted by various newscasts during the height of the COVID-19 surge. This result could indicate heightened emotional and psychological strain.

Brymer, Taylor, Escudero, et al. (2019) confirmed this assertion as they found a significant increase in the levels of stress teachers experienced during the pandemic before the virulent occurrence. Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Santxo, Mondragon, et al. (2021) pointed out certain levels of anxiety experienced among teachers. Their study concluded that teachers are most vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic.

Table 2

Stress of Teachers in the New Normal Interpersonal Factor

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. stress out when I feel taken for granted by my friends.	2.32	1.08	Low Level
2. overthink and experience anxiety out of family conflicts.	2.51	1.02	Moderate Level
3. I am bothered by the undesirable treatment of my superiors.	2.78	0.74	Moderate Level
4. cannot control speech acceleration due to undesirable treatments of colleagues, superiors, and misbehaved learner attitudes.	2.29	0.78	Low Level
5. gain only a few friends due to overthinking.	2.11	1.05	Low Level
6. I am bothered by misunderstandings with colleagues.	2.44	0.85	Low Level
7. feel irritated by uncooperative colleague attitudes.	2.61	0.85	Moderate Level
8. get offended easily.	2.32	1.02	Low Level
9. feel uneasy with stressful relationships with stakeholders.	2.32	0.97	Low Level
10. usually manifest accelerated speech when exposed to provocative situations.	2.50	0.97	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.42	0.64	Low Level

Table 2 shows teachers' stress levels in the new normal setting in the area of interpersonal factors, revealing an overall mean equivalent of low level ($M=2.42$, $SD=0.64$). The lowest mean is obtained for item number 5, gaining only a few friends due to overthinking, with a mean of 2.11, which is equivalent to a low level.

This area underscored the item on being bothered by the undesirable treatment of superiors, which garnered the highest rating with an overall mean of 2.78 or an equivalent moderate level. This area demands attention as it indicates unprofessionalism among school heads and master teachers in treating teachers. This would develop teachers' ambivalence toward authorities, which would develop an uncooperative attitude later on. Data indicates the lack of Human Resource Management training for school principals and other school personnel holding leadership and managerial positions based on designation, such as Master Teachers, Department Heads, and Grade leaders. The attention of the Schools Division HR section is called upon the data revealed; HR management training for school heads is essential. Likewise, school heads should gear towards conducting HR training for designated and prospective school personnel handling school-level leadership based on designation.

This result confirms the statements of Mahmoudi and Yzkanb(2016) upon finding out the sources of stress among preservice teachers. Stress among preservice teachers through quantitative data analysis and random interviews is traced to the pressures mentors give them. Most of them accounted for improper treatment by school authorities. The same trend is tracked in the data accounted for in this area; it could be noted that inappropriate treatment by higher authorities like school principals generates tremendous stress, which is counterproductive to the organization.

Table 3*Stress of Teachers in the New Normal in Emotional Factor*

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. have irritable feelings when exposed to stressful situations like the Covid-19 outbreak.	2.74	1.01	Moderate Level
2. have a short temper when I am busy, problematic, or worried.	2.96	1.03	Moderate Level
3. Experience mood swings due to immediate deadlines of reports	2.89	0.72	Moderate Level
4. Am negatively affected by the nature of my work which includes my perceptions of life and my profession.	2.37	0.95	Low Level
5. think and feel negatively about life and my situation.	2.27	0.99	Low Level
6. experience irritable feelings in managing misbehaved learners due to pressures.	2.42	0.89	Low Level
7. have a very short temper in dealing with misbehaved learners and undesirable colleague attitudes.	2.46	0.88	Low Level
8. think restlessly, overthink, and experience anxiety due to the expectations of higher-ups, colleagues, and community of me as a teacher.	2.56	1.10	Moderate Level
9. feel confused, unable to decide and react to situations due to sudden changes in management and guidelines related to teaching duties makes me	2.61	1.10	Moderate Level
10. keep grudges against people who offended me in any way	1.90	0.99	Low Level
Overall Mean	2.52	0.75	Moderate Level

Table 3 discusses the levels of teachers' stress in the new normal setting regarding emotional factors, which indicated an overall mean equivalent Moderate Level ($M=2.52$, $SD=0.75$). The least mean recorded is on item number 10. keep grudges against people who offended me in any way with an average of 1.90, equivalent to a low level.

Having a short temper when I am busy, problematic, or worried, rated 2.96 or an equivalent moderate level, is the paramount concern in this area. This entails the frequency of irritable emotional experiences when exposed to stressors. If left untreated, this could complicate various ailments, such as hypertension, aside from possibly hurting the children and other people by uncensored remarks. Legg (2018) pointed out that many factors can cause or contribute to irritability, including life stress, a lack of sleep, low blood sugar levels, and hormonal changes. Extreme irritability, or feeling irritable for an extended period, can moderately indicate an underlying condition, such as an infection or diabetes.

This assertion confirms the claims of Ssenyonga, Hermenau, Nkuba, et al. (2019) upon associating stress with certain violent behaviors. They called it a

maladaptive response to tremendous stress that often individuals manifest feelings of irritability, mood swings, fickle. -mindedness, and even violence.

Teachers' Coping Mechanism in the New Normal

This section presents discussions of the teacher's stress coping mechanisms when exposed to various stressors or when experiencing certain stress levels. Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and/or trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. Coping mechanisms can help people adjust to stressful events while helping them maintain their emotional well-being. There are three stress coping mechanism orientations accounted for in this study. These are task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented strategies.

Table 4

Teachers' Coping Mechanism in the New Normal in Task Orientation

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I try to keep a sound mind to see myself through when confronted with problems and stressful situations.	3.61	0.70	High Level
2. conceptualize ways and means to solve the problems causing me stress.	2.64	0.58	Moderate Level
3. set things in order through prioritization.	3.02	0.72	Moderate Level
4. sort the ways I thought of based on achievability and practicality.	2.65	0.96	Moderate Level
5. apply or use the best method and ways I thought of to address the cause of stress.	3.00	0.69	Moderate Level
6. consult friends and family members if I need more ideas.	3.11	0.76	Moderate Level
7. arrange a dialogue to talk things over if the cause of stress is conflict with people.	2.98	0.75	Moderate Level
8. apologize to clear my conscience if I get mistaken.	2.47	1.02	Low Level
9. seek help if the problem is too huge for me to solve.	2.60	0.88	Moderate Level
10. accept things that are unsolvable much more than inevitable.	2.72	0.94	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.88	0.56	Moderate Level

Table 4 presents the discussions on teacher task-oriented stress coping mechanisms, which recorded an overall mean equivalent of Moderate Level (M=2.88, SD=0.56). The highest mean is on item 1, "try to keep a sound mind to see me through when confronted with problems and stressful situations," with a mean of 3.61, which is interpreted as a high level.

The lowest mean is on item 8, "apologize to clear my conscience if I get mistaken," which is 2.47 or a low level. This is a connotation of towering pride, in which a person is aware of the mistakes committed yet remains unapologetic. Maxwell (2015)

stated that pride is normal to every individual being human, but so much of it makes one arrogant. It harms every relationship and creates even more stressful situations. Nappo (2020) advocated smooth interpersonal relationships to prevent significant stress levels within the family and the workplace. The opposite of it is conflict, on the other hand, is a tremendous source of stress among individuals. A task-oriented approach to dealing with conflict involves lowering one's pride by seeking an apology. The art of apologizing effectively reduces the negative effects of conflict and relationship stress because apologies help individuals put the conflict behind them and move on more quickly.

This result contradicts the assertion of Sharma and Shakir (2017), who found that teachers find solace in establishing smooth interpersonal relationships among colleagues. Having friends and individuals to lean on during distress relieves teachers from stress. Social relationships and social activities were also pointed out as major stress relievers identified by most teachers.

Table 5
Teachers' Coping Mechanism in the New Normal in Emotion-oriented Strategies

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. share my problems with family members and trusted friends.	3.48	0.72	Moderate Level
2. use meditation to regulate my stressful emotion.	3.59	0.65	High Level
3. pray to seek God's help and guidance.	3.03	0.70	Moderate Level
4. attend bible studies	2.61	0.98	Moderate Level
5. spend time with a friend in a bar or restaurant	2.96	0.75	Moderate Level
6. accept performance anxiety as normal	3.04	0.80	Moderate Level
7. just nurture relationships and build support community	2.92	0.80	Moderate Level
8. just cry alone in a room or secluded place to relieve myself from emotional tensions.	2.53	1.06	Moderate Level
9. cry with friends or family members.	2.64	0.95	Moderate Level
10. I use arts such as writing poems, composing songs, painting, singing, dancing, etc., to relieve myself from stress and tension.	2.67	0.98	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.95	0.58	Moderate Level

Table 5 presents the discussions on emotion-oriented stress coping mechanisms used by teachers, showing an overall mean equivalent Moderate Level (M=2.95, SD=0.58). The highest rating is attained on item number 2. I use meditation to regulate my stressful emotions with a mean of 3.59 or equivalent to a high level. It recorded the lowest mean on item 8. cry alone in a room or secluded place to relieve myself from emotional tensions with a rating of 2.53 or equivalent to a moderate level.

In as much as the frequency of teachers resorting to meditation is the scarcity of time bought by hectic schedules and overlapping responsibilities brought by work and personal concerns, they attend bible studies, which rated the lowest mean of 2.61 or Moderate Level. This data depicts the hectic schedules of teachers in doing their instructional and ancillary duties, which gives them less time to gather for a bible study.

They still find time to do bible studies, but not as frequently as doing meditation, which could be done at home before bed. Attending bible studies is the beauty of having socio-spiritual support in surmounting distress.

This result supports the claims of Agayon, Agayon, and Pentang (2022) that although teachers reported a tremendous amount of stress brought by the virulent outbreak and the challenges they faced in implementing the new normal education, they were able to look at the positive side of things. Although they perform their duties amid the constant threat of getting infected or infecting learners, often they dedicate everything to servicing the children and community, and the rest are entrusted to the holy creator.

Table 6

Teachers' Coping Mechanism in the New Normal in Avoidance-oriented Strategies

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. distance myself from the source of stress.	3.60	0.69	High Level
2. go partying to forget the stressors.	3.11	0.86	Moderate Level
3. drink with friends to forget stress.	3.02	0.75	Moderate Level
4. accept the reality that life is full of challenges and there is nothing I can do.	2.82	0.92	Moderate Level
5. play games to entertain myself.	2.98	0.79	Moderate Level
6. file a leave if the cause of stress is my work.	3.09	0.83	Moderate Level
7. spend a vacation to seclude myself from stressors.	3.09	0.70	Moderate Level
8. distance myself from people, which causes me stress.	2.62	1.03	Moderate Level
9. avoid confrontation with people	2.73	0.93	Moderate Level
10. relax and sleep for quite a while to relieve myself from stressful tensions.	2.71	1.02	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.98	0.59	Moderate Level

This area presents the discussions on avoidance-oriented stress coping mechanisms used by teachers, revealing an overall mean equivalent Moderate Level ($M=2.98$, $SD=0.59$). The highest mean rating is also recorded on item number 1. I distance myself from the source of stress, with a mean of 3.60, equivalent to a high level.

Data also revealed the lowest mean rating on item number 8, which distanced me from people. This caused me stress, with a mean of 2.62, interpreted as a Moderate Level. This trend is suggestive that most of the time, teachers often face sources of stress to continue pursuing what they do and continuously be efficient in working their duties and responsibilities, which often require synergy. This indicated that teachers are more inclined to use task-oriented coping mechanisms than to avoid sources of stress. Despite accountable misunderstanding and socialization discomforts brought by unhealthy colleague relationships, they still strive to perform their teacher duties.

These findings did not conform to the assertions of Rabago-Mingoa (2017), who quoted that most of the causes of work-related stress among teachers are too much paperwork, oversized classes, further studies, non-teaching duties, and incompetent superiors. Their most common coping strategies are passive entertainment like watching

television, going to the movies, and window shopping; most of them resort to avoidance-oriented coping strategies.

Comparative Analysis of the Teachers' Stress in the New Normal When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

This area presents the discussions of the results for the test of significant difference between the levels of stress experienced by teachers on area personal, interpersonal, and emotion-related factors. The variable groupings compared are age and length of service. **Table 7**

Test of Difference in Teachers' Stress in the New Normal in Personal Factor When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	63	55.15	1458.50	.398	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	51	60.40				
Length of Service	Shorter	58	52.58	1338.50	.105	0.05	Not Significant
	Longer	56	62.60				

Table 7 presents the test results examining the difference in teachers' stress in the new normal, focusing on the personal factor and grouped by age and length of service. For the age, the analysis indicates no statistically significant difference in teachers' stress levels between younger and older age groups ($p\text{-value} = 0.398 > 0.05$). This suggests that age does not significantly impact personal stress levels among teachers in the new normal context. Similarly, when considering the variable of length of service, the analysis reveals that there is no statistically significant difference in teachers' stress levels between those with shorter and longer lengths of service ($p\text{-value} = 0.105 > 0.05$). This implies that length of service alone may not be a significant determinant of personal stress among teachers in the new normal educational environment.

This aligns with the findings of Yang et al. (2019), who stated that teachers are exposed to high-risk occupational stress much more when they age when their health also deteriorates, and they are more susceptible to stress.

Table 8

Test of Difference in Teachers' Stress in the New Normal in Interpersonal Factor When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	63	52.79	1309.50	.090	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	51	63.32				
Length	Shorter	58	51.14	1255.00	.036		Significant

**of
Service** Longer 56 64.09

Table 8 presents a comparative analysis of teachers' stress in the new normal, explicitly focusing on the interpersonal factor when Grouped according to age and length of service.

Regarding age, the analysis shows no statistically significant difference in teachers' stress levels between younger and older age groups ($p\text{-value} = 0.090 > 0.05$). This suggests that age alone may not be a significant determinant of interpersonal stress among teachers in the new everyday context.

However, when considering the variable of length of service, the analysis indicates a statistically significant difference in teachers' stress levels between those with shorter and longer lengths of service ($p\text{-value} = 0.036 < 0.05$). This suggests that length of service may play a role in influencing interpersonal stress among teachers, with those with shorter lengths of service experiencing significantly different stress levels than their more experienced counterparts.

This conforms to the findings of Foley and Murphy (2015), who stated that seasoned teachers were given more responsibilities in school due to higher expectations. This resulted in more frequent burnout from the more experienced teachers.

Table 9

Test of Difference in Teachers' Stress in the New Normal in Emotional Factor When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	63	51.90	1253.50	.044	0.05	Significant
	Older	51	64.42				
Length of Service	Shorter	58	51.20	1258.50	.038	0.05	Significant
	Longer	56	64.03				

Table 9 reveals the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, showcasing a statistically significant difference in teachers' emotional stress factors based on age ($p\text{-value} = 0.044 < 0.05$) and length of service ($p\text{-value} = 0.038 < 0.05$). These findings reject the null hypotheses, indicating distinct emotional stress levels among teachers of varying ages and levels of experience. Specifically, younger and older teachers and those with less and more experience exhibit differing levels of emotional stress.

This finding conforms to the contention of Foley and Murphy (2015) that the more experienced and older teachers were more prone to exhaustion as brought by stress. This is brought about by the overlapping responsibilities and sources of stress from both personal, social, and work-related environments, not to mention health concerns among older adults.

Comparative Analysis of the Teachers' Coping Mechanism in the New Normal When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

This area presents the discussions of the results for the test of significant differences between the levels of stress coping mechanisms used by teachers in areas of task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented strategies. The variable groupings compared are age and length of service.

Table 10

Test of Difference in Teachers' Coping Mechanism in Task-Oriented When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	63	53.98	1385.00	.203	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	51	61.84				
Length of Service	Shorter	58	52.67	1344.00	.110	0.05	Not Significant
	Longer	56	62.50				

Table 10 shows the comparison using the Mann-Whitney U test for the teachers' coping mechanism using task-oriented when compared according to age and length of service had p-values greater than the alpha. The null hypotheses were rejected, showing no significant difference in the levels of teachers' coping mechanisms using task-oriented despite their age and years of experience.

This agrees with the contentions of Hidalgo-Andrade, Hermosa-Bosano, and Paz (2021) that all of the teachers experienced the same levels of stress and employed the same levels of resiliency despite the horrible scenarios they witnessed in Ecuador. The teachers proved their ability to bounce back upon the reopening of classes despite their age, rank, and experiences.

Table 11

Test of Difference in Teachers' Coping Mechanism in Emotion-oriented Strategies When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	63	56.22	1526.00	.645	0.05	Not Significant

	Older	51	59.08			
Length of Service	Shorter	58	53.71	1404.00	.210	Not Significant
	Longer	56	61.43			

Table 11 reveals that the comparison using the Mann-Whitney U test for the teachers' coping mechanism using Emotion-oriented Strategies when compared according to age and length of service had p-values greater than the alpha. The null hypotheses were rejected, showing no significant difference in the levels of teachers' coping mechanisms using emotion-oriented despite their age and years of experience.

This confirmed the assertion of Bulat (2020) that teachers were experiencing the same levels of work-related stress brought by work pressures and changes in the educational landscape brought by the new normal. The teachers employed the same stress coping mechanisms, which they found comfortable and more efficient in developing stress resiliency.

Table 12

Test of Difference in Teachers' Coping Mechanism in Avoidance-oriented Strategies When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	63	59.56	1477.00	.458	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	51	54.96				
Length of Service	Shorter	58	60.53	1448.50	.317	0.05	Not Significant
	Longer	56	54.37				

Table 12 revealed that the comparison using the Mann-Whitney U test for the teachers' coping mechanism using avoidance-oriented strategies when compared according to age and length of service had p-values greater than the alpha. The null hypotheses were rejected, showing no significant difference in the levels of teachers' coping mechanisms using avoidance-oriented despite their age and years of experience.

This agrees with the assertion of Yazon and Ang-Manaig (2019) that teachers in the Philippines usually stress out due to illness symptoms, self-esteem, and role preparedness. Statistical analysis pointed out parallel coping mechanisms most teachers employ in dealing with work stressors.

Table 13

Correlational Analysis Between the Level of Teachers' Stress and Level of Teachers' Coping Mechanism in the New Normal

Correlates	N	Rho	Level of Sig	p-value	Interpretation
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Level of Teachers' Stress	114	0.117	0.05	0.215	Not Significant
Teachers' Coping Mechanism Level	114				

The p-value of $0.215 > 0.05$ rejected the null hypothesis; therefore, no significant relationship exists between the teachers' coping mechanism and their stress level. The stress experienced by teachers is not reduced nor aggravated upon employing the accounted coping mechanisms. It means their stress level depends on other aspects such as personal resiliency to problems, attitude and pressures from superiors (Bushiri, 2018). It could also be affected by the kind of working environment that they are working in.

Conclusion

It is common knowledge that teachers have been adversely affected by the uncertainties brought by the pandemic. In general, however, they had bearable stress levels relative to personal and interpersonal factors, an indication that they are experiencing a well-balanced and supportive environment both personally and professionally. Additionally, a moderate level of coping mechanisms across all three factors reflects a balanced and adaptive approach to stress management by teachers. Based on this result, they are likely to handle challenges effectively while maintaining their emotional health and overall well-being. Subsequent inferential analyses showed no significant difference in the stress levels of teachers based on personal factors and groupings by age and length of service, an indication that stress is a broadly shared experience among teachers, regardless of these demographic and personal characteristics. Another result showed no significant difference in the stress level of teachers based on age but showed a significant difference based on length of service, with regard to interpersonal factors, suggesting that interpersonal stressors are consistent across ages and that the length of service, in fact, influences stress levels. Moreover, the significant difference in the stress level of teachers based on emotional factors when grouped by age and length of service indicates that both age and length of service influence how emotional factors affect teachers' stress levels. Meanwhile, the result showing no significant difference in coping mechanisms based on age and length of service suggests that teachers across various demographics use similar coping strategies to manage stress. This indicates that task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented strategies are generally applicable and effective for teachers regardless of their age or experience level. Finally, the absence of a significant relationship between stress and coping mechanisms among teachers suggests that the current coping strategies may not be effectively addressing stress or that stress is influenced by factors beyond individual coping methods. This result highlights the need for further exploration into more effective stress management approaches and potentially revising or enhancing existing strategies.

Acknowledgment

We express our profound gratitude to Dr. Randolph Asistido for his unwavering guidance and steadfast support throughout our research journey. His expertise, mentorship, and unwavering dedication have been instrumental in shaping our work and refining our manuscript to its highest standard. We deeply appreciate Dr. Asitido's personal commitment to excellence, which has played a pivotal role in elevating our manuscript to its fullest potential. Our heartfelt thanks are also extended to Mr. Edwardo E. Lasala, Public Schools District Supervisor of DepEd Moalboal District, for graciously granting us permission to conduct our study within the district's educational settings. Mr. Lasala's generous support and collaborative spirit have been indispensable in facilitating our research efforts and ensuring the seamless execution of our study. We are profoundly grateful for his unwavering commitment to nurturing academic exploration and for his invaluable guidance and support throughout the duration of our project.

Conflict of Interest

In relation to our study titled "Teachers' Stress and Coping Mechanism in the New Normal," we hereby declare that there are no conflicts of interest. We have no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could be perceived as influencing the outcomes or conclusions of this research. All aspects of the study, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, have been conducted impartially and solely for the advancement of knowledge in this area.

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