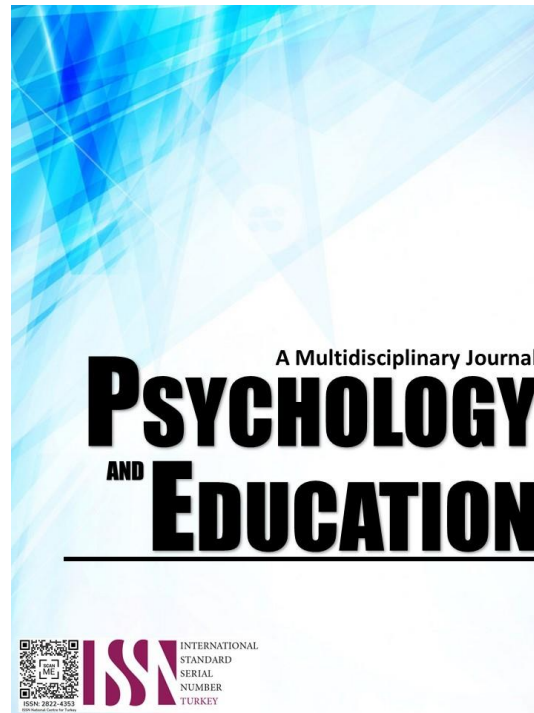


**LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS OF PUBLIC
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LEARNING MODALITY IN THE NEW LEARNING
LANDSCAPE: BASIS FOR ACTION PLAN**



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Level of Preparedness of Public Elementary School Teachers to Modular Learning Modality in the New Learning Landscape: Basis for Action Plan

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Abstract

The study determined the level of preparedness among the teachers in the new normal setting and its relationship to their anxiety and coping mechanisms in public elementary schools in Munai, Lanao del Norte in the school year 2020-2021. The study was conducted at Munai District, wherein purposively selected seventy-nine (79) teachers were utilized as participants. Moreover, the study made use of adapted questionnaires validated by the thesis committee of St. Peter's College. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution, mean and standard deviation, and Pearson's Correlation Analysis. Findings revealed that the teachers moderately agreed with their level of anxiety in the new normal including assessment of modules, adaptation on the new normal, and distribution and retrieval of modules. Also, results revealed that they were oftentimes coping in terms of spiritual means. On their level of preparedness in blended learning, they were moderately ready in terms of utilizing modules. Further, result showed that the level of anxiety and coping mechanisms of the respondents were highly associated. Results also showed that the teachers' level of anxiety was not significantly associated to their level of preparedness. Also, result disclosed that the coping mechanisms of the teachers were not significantly correlated to their level of preparedness in the new normal.

Keywords: *preparedness, new normal education, anxiety, coping mechanism, public school*

Introduction

Flexible learning approaches were adopted by many education institutions in the Philippines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The absence of face to face instruction brought difficulties and challenges to teachers, parents, and learners. It copes with the demands of the new learning delivery modes mandated by the Department of Education. This continuously provides quality education to learners despite the pandemic (Toquero, 2020).

DepEd transitioned the modality of teaching from the conventional "face-to-face" learning to flexible learning continuity plans. These learning modalities were combinations of online distance learning and modular, or in-person delivery of learning materials to the homes of the learners. Radio-based and modular learning instructions were also applied for with places with no access to computer or the internet (Tupas & Laguda, 2020).

However, some localities employed only the modular learning option due to unavailability of technology and infrastructures to adopt to online learning situations. Learning modules are printed or non-printed materials. These guide both teachers and learners through the content of and learning activities for a subject matter, for example, subject matter modules in text or video format (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020).

Modular learning was the most favored type of learning option adopted among public schools. This was highly supported by parents. Aside from it provides equal opportunities for learning, some poor families were provided with free access to learning to the printed modules. The parents also were saved from the expenses of technology learning (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020).

Consequently, problems on preparedness among schools in these learning transitions have been a continuous topic in the country. Some of the teachers experience challenges and difficulties in adapting to the new normal and to the preparation and distribution of the self-learning materials among the learners. As a public school teacher, the researcher observed that within her school district, they were only able to adopt the modular learning aided with handheld radio due to poor internet infrastructures and frequent power interruptions. Problems on connectivity and geographical situations of the schools in Munai District caused challenges and difficulties among most of the teachers and families. Thus, this study determined the level of preparedness of public elementary school teachers in Munai District to modular learning modality in the new learning landscape as a basis for action plan.

Research Questions

This study determined the level of preparedness among the teachers in the new normal setting and its

relationship to their anxiety and coping mechanisms in public elementary schools in Munai, Lanao del Norte during the school year 2020-2021. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the teachers' level of anxiety and coping mechanisms?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the teachers' level of anxiety and coping mechanisms and their level of preparedness in modular learning?

Literature Review

Blended learning is also known as the integration of face-to-face and online instruction. According to Graham et al. (2018), it is widely adopted and utilized across higher education. Some scholars referred to it as the new traditional model or the "new normal" delivery of instruction. This pertains to a learning delivery that combines face-to-face with any or a mix of online distance learning, modular distance learning, and TV or Radio-based Instruction. Blended learning would enable the schools to limit face-to-face learning. It would ensure social distancing and decrease the volume of people outside the home at any given time.

As defined in DepEd Order 21, s. 2019, instructional flexibility as adaptations in terms of the time and duration, the place or method of instruction. Available pedagogies and learning resources can be used at the outset. As a response to the crisis, DepEd and its partners modify existing flexible learning methods. These partners are the in-school and off-school approaches, the Enhanced Instructional Management by teachers, parents and community, Alternative Learning System (ALS), the open high school programs, and homeschooling. They also developed new flexible learning options to suit present demands including the unprecedented number of students, teachers, and families who would migrate from formal education to flexible learning programs. They also designed instructional frameworks that show how aspects of education delivery would be workable and that these new programs may be developed locally or nationally.

According to Sintema (2020), COVID-19 pandemic has altered human engagements, resource allocations, and system allocations. It presents a different direction for priorities and future plans. Education is constrained to navigate the world of teaching and learning using this. Amidst these changing dynamics, meeting the educational needs of learners remains the priority.

Learners' rights to education remain protected and non-negotiable. The ultimate objectives and goals of education remain the same but the processes through which the goals can be achieved. These should be re-imagined and done in a different way. It has already affected 32.1 million learners across levels including technical-vocational education and training. As education stakeholders redesign their respective learning continuity plans, they considered that learners, teachers, and schools come from diverse situations and contexts; thus, a one-size-fits-all approach would disadvantage others since the dynamics have indeed changed. Curriculum goals are not expected to be achieved using the same timelines, modalities, or platforms.

The learning delivery modalities that schools can adopt may be one or a combination of the following, depending on the COVID-19 restrictions and the particular context of the learners in the school or locality. Cahapay (2020) mentioned that online distance learning is one of the new alternative learning options of the Department of Education. This features the teacher as facilitator. It engages learners' active participation through the use of various technologies. This can be accessed through the internet while they are geographically remote from each other during instruction. The internet is used to facilitate learner-teacher and peer-to-peer communication. Online learning allows live synchronous instruction. It requires participants to have good and stable internet connection and is more interactive than the other types of distance learning methods. The responses are also real time. The learners may download materials from the internet, attend webinars and virtual classes, and complete and submit assignments online. The DepEd Commons and LR Portal fall in this category.

Meanwhile, radio-based and television-based instruction were also implemented where learners have different capacities to stay engaged in lessons. Education stakeholders believe that what helps sustain their satisfaction and attention are creative and diversified platforms and strategies, use of combination of print and broadcast, and digital media with different levels of interactivity to sustain student participation. It goes without saying that developmentally appropriate principles must guide the selection of these platforms and strategies. Printed media includes learning materials such as textbooks and learners' modules which have been modified for home learning situations while broadcast media includes radio and television (Llego, 2020).

Remote learning takes place whenever a student and a

teacher or sources of information are separated by distance or time. They are not confined in a physical learning space such as a classroom. It can be done asynchronous or synchronous. While remote learning does use web-based platforms, the range of learning delivery goes far beyond this. It includes learning kits delivered to homes, TV broadcast, radio programs, WIFI-connected devices, and micro-content deliveries (e.g., texting, and messaging through applications like Whats App, Viber, or FB Messenger). Regardless of modalities to be used on the field, what is important is for the paradigm of education delivery to evolve, because the face-to-face norm may no longer be a viable teaching-learning option in the near future (Ferri et al., 2020).

Parents are primarily the health and safety guardians of their children. They should inform their family about COVID-19. They should also train them to acquire new habits like regular hand washing, face mask wearing, physical distancing, and proper food handling. Additionally, whether schools use print, radio or television, or web-based technologies; most distance learning programs rely on parents to take the role of tutors. Their indigenous and personal knowledge can be supported with flexible learning programs that their natural capacity to nurture and teach children would result in meaningful learning interactions. The following suggestions aim to help parents fulfill the above responsibilities (Owusu et al., 2020).

As mentioned by Li et al., (2020), since instruction and assessment need to be flexible, the learning environment must be flexible as well. Provided learning options should appropriately respond to the learners' context. The learning environment may be in the school, at home, or in the community, and it should consider time and space for learning. Infrastructure for modern schools are not only limited to physical spaces but also includes ICT infrastructures that are relevant to support teaching, learning, and administration in schools. The provision of technological infrastructure is crucial for learning continuity and efficiency of services especially during a global health crisis. When implemented properly, technology can boost engagement and produce significant gains in student achievement. However, two important elements should be emphasized to achieve this outcome: 1) the pre-requisites of adequate technological infrastructure, and 2) teachers' competence in utilizing appropriate pedagogical approaches using technology.

However, in the event where schools do not have technological infrastructures, they may utilize flexible,

low-technology learning options. For radio/television broadcast, distance learning, and print-based learning, a home environment plays a vital role in the learning processes of students at any level (UNESCO, 2020). Tria (2020) mentioned that parents or guardians of children in basic education play a vital role in preparing a conducive learning space. Parental supervision is crucial in establishing routines for students to finish their learning tasks at home. For rural and spacious communities, infrastructures can be safe learning spaces for students who do not have access to high-technology. In delivering instruction, schools should work with barangay units that have communication facilities.

Teaching is a challenging profession and is regarded as a highly stressful job. Indeed, teachers experience extreme stress due to their various tasks and responsibilities. Researchers explained that stress has negative impacts on classroom performance, job satisfaction, and teacher attrition. There are a lot of instances where teachers are placed in a position of highly stressful responsibilities for the actions of young individuals in a school setting. Add to this is the burden of choosing the right learning activities that would lead to the attainment of the educational goals is also noted (Archibong & Out, 2020).

Stress is a phenomenon that has an impact on people and affecting their behaviors, job performances, and communication with their co-workers. It is an undetermined reaction demonstrated by physique against pressure. Stress, regardless of giving or not giving pleasure or pain, signifies a non-special reaction of the body toward any request implied on it for its adaptation. With a general definition, stress is a physiological and psychological reaction of an individual toward him/herself and the external environment as a result of being affected by the involved environment and working conditions. Stress does not occur automatically. It is developed by the effect of the transformations that occurred in individuals' environments (Akhlq et al., 2010).

Stressors are commonly associated with a variety of personal, social, and physical events, including interpersonal experiences in schools or classrooms. The human body, however, cannot differentiate between the various types of stressors. This explains why physical stress cannot be separated from mental stress, just as personal stress cannot be separated from professional stress. Because individual responses to and discernments of similar situations vary significantly. Factors responsible for stress in one person may also be responsible for sparking

enthusiasm in another (Alhija, 2014).

Symptoms of teacher stress are almost as varied as the individuals themselves. Since stages of stress are related to the symptoms of stress, most stress manifests itself in one of three ways: attitude, physical well-being, or performance. A general feeling of dissatisfaction about one's work is a common, low-key indicator of stress. Sources of stress for teachers included workload, the relationship between teacher-administration, the structure of the group, relationship with co-workers, and occupational illiteracy. However, sources of stress for teachers are indicated as administrative support, monetary security, occupational problems, and disciplinary problems of students (Tahir, 2011).

On the other hand, researchers had classified sources of stress in terms of the educational system, administrators and supervisors, student and job-related sources. They had examined sources of stress for teachers under different categories and these are facilities of school and supervision, school administration, the teaching profession, colleagues, students, and intervention of parents. They also observed that a high level of stress causes low job-fulfillment and, in the long run, low commitment. Undoubtedly, sources of stress stated in the literature may not have the same impact on every teacher. However, these might cause different problems and affect the school environment negatively by expending gradually (Mazo, 2015).

According to Ekundayo et al. (2013), personal stressors, despite their intensity, have to be dealt with in the life of each teacher. It may be as simple as balancing wearing a pair of shoes that hurt to more severe stressors, divorce, or accident. A teacher's perception to communicate either socially or professionally is closely a checkbook or such as death, of the capacity related to feelings of frustration. When personal stress becomes coupled with other types of stress, the main health problem among teachers may be stress-related.

Additionally, Ferguson (2017) added that professional stressors tend to be divided into four basic sources including working conditions, professional responsibilities, student-teacher situations, and student discipline. In addition to low salaries, limited professional advancement opportunities exist at the secondary level. A disheartening scenario evolves when the relationship between professional preparation, length of the workday or week, and complexity of services rendered and individuals served

is potential in most school systems. Form of recognition for good work; pride in their work or any degree of achievement often becomes the responsibility of the individual teacher. Although classrooms may be lacking adequate materials, teachers are expected to maintain quiet classrooms while remaining apprised of recent announcements, fire drill procedures, field trips, and student absenteeism.

The purpose of coping with stress or, in other words, stress management is not avoiding stress completely but is to create optimal, middle-level stress. The base of coping with stress is the transformation of the thought system of the individual and the individual's negative ideas that are not accurate. When stress management is handled in educational organizations; it becomes important to find a way to decrease stress levels in an educational environment in line with the perspectives of students, teachers, and families. A few attempts on this matter included transforming the educational system, changing attitude toward students and personnel, changing emotional state in similar situations, changing perspective toward incidents, and gaining an ability to communicate between people (Aydin & Kaya, 2016).

Coping behaviors or resources come in the form of physical, psychological, social, or material factors. These help teachers overcome job-related stressors and achieve their valued outcomes with students. The problem of stress management is not to eliminate stress but to learn how to cope with it. Stress currently provides one of the most challenging and most demanding health problems in modern medical practice (Osagie, 2018).

Guevarra and Cimanés (2017) mentioned techniques that can be used against stress. These are managing time including physical and breathing exercises, meditation, biological feedback, relaxation, nutrition, social support, participation in social, cultural, and sports activities, massage, praying, and worshipping. The outcomes of the inefficiency of the teacher working in a stressful environment might be reflected upon students, co-workers, families, and steadily to the whole society. In this sense, it is important to know the sources of stress for teachers that are causing stress most to intervene with those sources. Additionally, revealing how teachers will cope with the stress might enable them to develop solutions to initiate the effects of stress.

As mentioned by Tahir (2011), the common positive strategies teachers use to alleviate stress include

exercise, social resources, avoidance, reading, hobbies, movement, and meditation. These coping strategies used by teachers affect their outlook on the situation, thereby altering the perception of stress. To alter the perception of stress, teachers may invoke inward or outward coping strategies. Inward strategies, such as concentrating on something narrow in the field of stimuli around oneself, including seeking stillness and focus. Outward strategies, such as exercise, involve seeking connections, distractions, and movement. Although there are many common coping strategies available. Most teachers rely on social support, active planning, restorative experiences, and suppression of competing behaviors. Active planning, although a part of the normal workload, allows teachers to take their mind off stress and focus on their work. The process of active planning involves concentrating efforts, developing a plan, taking some action, coming up with strategies, trying to take steps, and doing what has to be done to keep their attention on the students rather than the stressor.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized descriptive correlation design since it tried to determine the relationship between the anxiety and coping mechanisms and level of preparedness of teachers in blended learning.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were seventy-nine (79) public elementary school teachers in Munai District. The study employed purposive sampling method due to its inclusion of the entire elementary teachers in Munai District. The distribution of respondents were listed below.

Research Instruments

The study utilized survey questionnaire on anxiety adapted from the study of Ekundayo and Kolawole (2013) and Osagie (2018). Meanwhile, the questionnaire on the level of preparedness of teachers in modular learning was self-made. The questionnaires were subjected to pilot testing prior to the actual data gathering. The study distributed the questionnaires to thirty (30) selected teacher-participants from Munai National High School.

The questionnaire was divided into two (2) parts. Part I included the level of stress and coping mechanisms

among teachers. Part II presented the level of preparedness among teachers in blended learning. The scoring range of the questionnaire was scored using the Likert scale, where four (4) was the highest and one (1) was the lowest to get quantitative data on the stress and coping mechanisms and level of preparedness in blended learning. For the stress and coping mechanisms of teachers, the scoring range was 4- extremely stressful, 3-highly stressful, 2-less stressful, and 1-never stressful. For the level of preparedness in modular learning, the scoring range was 4- always, 3-oftentimes, 2-rarely, and 1-never.

Data Gathering Procedures

Before conducting the study, the researcher performed the standard research protocol. The researcher requested consent and approval from the adviser for careful assessment and review of the manuscript and the appropriateness of the survey questionnaires. The researcher then submitted a letter to the Division Superintendent of Lanao del Norte, Edilberto L. Oplenaria, CESO V, to allow her to distribute the survey questionnaires to the respective schools of Munai District.

After all permits were signed, the researcher presented the signed letters to the respective school heads of the schools. Likewise, an informed consent form from the school was given to the respondents. The researcher personally conducted the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires during the agreed schedules. Social distancing and other protocols implemented were followed such as wearing masks and face shields. Respondents were assured of the ethics of research and confidentiality of their responses.

Results and Discussion

The significant relationship between the teachers' level of anxiety and coping mechanisms

Table 1. *Relationship Between the Teachers' Level of Anxiety and Coping Mechanisms*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Adaptation on the New Normal	--							
2. Distribution and Retrieval of Modules	0.29*	--						
3. Assessment of Modules	0.205	0.2.60*	--					
4. Anxiety (Total)	0.71*	0.736*	0.680*	--				
5. Physical	0.168	0.066	0.314*	0.255*	--			
6. Emotional	0.26*	0.137	0.038	0.209	0.344*	--		
7. Environmental	0.173	0.314*	0.369*	0.401*	0.594*	0.436*	--	
8. Spiritual	0.147	0.362*	0.323*	0.390*	0.383*	0.448*	0.589*	--
9. Coping Mechanism (Total)	0.24*	0.277*	0.329*	0.400*	0.751*	0.736*	0.830*	0.778*

Note: 1-based on Pearson Correlation *-significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 presents the significant relationship between the teachers' level of anxiety and coping mechanisms using the Pearson correlation analysis. As noticed in the table that the level of anxiety and coping mechanisms of the respondents were highly associated ($r=0.400$). This result suggested that high anxiety level of the teachers could be a result of their high level of coping mechanisms. Meanwhile, the teachers' adaptation on the new normal was positively associated to emotional ($r=0.265$) and the coping mechanisms ($r=0.247$). The teachers' level of anxiety on distribution and retrieval of modules was significantly associated to environmental ($r=0.314$) and spiritual ($r=0.362$) coping mechanisms. The teachers' level of anxiety relative to assessment of modules was significantly associated to the physical ($r=0.314$), environmental ($r=0.369$) and spiritual ($r=0.323$) coping mechanisms. Then, the teachers' level of anxiety (total measure) was significantly correlated to physical ($r=0.255$), environmental ($r=0.401$) and spiritual ($r=0.390$) coping mechanisms. These results indicated that the higher the anxiety level was experienced by the teachers, the higher they developed their physical, environmental and spiritual coping mechanisms. But no association was depicted between anxiety and emotional coping mechanisms. Face to face learning engagement of students and teachers within the school has been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers were found to be experiencing challenges and difficulties from preparation to adaptation of these changes in delivery of learning. They took the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners. Thus, they were experiencing intense stress in adapting and adjusting to these new changes (Llego, 2020).

The significant relationship between the teachers' level of anxiety and their level of preparedness

Table 2. Relationship Between the Teachers' Level of Anxiety and Level of Preparedness

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Adaptation on the New Normal	--						
2. Distribution and Retrieval of Modules	0.299*	--					
3. Assessment of Modules	0.205	0.260*	--				
4. Anxiety (Total)	0.712*	0.736*	0.680*	--			
5. Modules	-0.129	-0.013	0.021	-0.058	--		
6. Radio-based	-0.054	-0.179	0.031	-0.096	0.518*	--	
7. Television-based	-0.052	-0.216	-0.098	-0.173	0.499*	0.639*	--
8. Preparedness (Total)	-0.089	-0.173	-0.022	-0.134	0.770*	0.871*	0.868*

Note: 1-based on Pearson Correlation *significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 illustrates the significant relationship between the teachers' level of anxiety and level of preparedness in modular learning using the Pearson correlation analysis. Result displayed that the teachers' level of anxiety was not significantly associated to their level of preparedness ($r=-0.134$, $p>0.05$). This simply suggested that the teachers' level of anxiety did not influence their level of preparedness. In addition, the teachers' anxiety level did not relate to their preparedness relative to modules ($r=-0.058$, $p>0.05$), radio-based ($r=-0.096$, $p>0.05$) and television-based ($r=-0.173$, $p>0.05$) instructions. Teachers perceived that no matter how high or low their anxiety level was in the new normal of teaching, it did not affect their level of preparedness on modular, radio-based or television-based instruction. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the teachers' level of anxiety and their level of preparedness was not rejected.

Amidst the pandemic, teachers were challenged by reform initiatives to meet new requirements that had not been part of the conventional repertoire of expectations for effective classroom teaching and for which many teachers had not been adequately prepared during their professional training (Dangle et al., 2020). As the research indicated, the teachers' level of anxiety did not influence their level of preparedness in the blended learning delivery modes implemented since it was their job to perform their responsibilities despite the closure of schools and absence of face to face instruction.

The significant relationship between the coping mechanisms and level of preparedness of the teachers

Table 3. Relationship Between the Teachers' Coping Mechanisms and Their Level of Preparedness

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Physical	--							
2. Emotional	0.344*	--						
3. Environmental	0.594*	0.436*	--					
4. Spiritual	0.383*	0.448*	0.589*	--				
5. Coping (Total)	0.751*	0.736*	0.830*	0.778*	--			
6. Module	0.230*	0.079	0.225*	0.305*	0.268*	--		
7. Radio-based	0.286*	0.156	0.019	0.122	0.196	0.518*	--	
8. Television-based	0.199*	-0.027	-0.059	-0.072	0.017	0.499*	0.639*	--
9. Preparedness (Total)	0.283*	0.081	0.058	0.123	0.180	0.770*	0.71*	0.868*

Note: 1-based on Pearson Correlation *significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 shows the significant relationship between the coping mechanisms and level of preparedness of the

teachers using the Pearson correlation analysis. Results disclosed that the coping mechanisms of the teachers were not significantly correlated to their level of preparedness in the new normal ($r=0.180$, $p>0.05$). This implied that the teachers' preparedness in the different instructional modalities were not influenced by their coping mechanisms. However, the specific physical coping mechanism was significantly associated to their level of preparedness in terms of modules ($r=0.230$, $p<0.05$), radio-based ($r=0.286$, $p<0.05$), television-based ($r=0.199$, $p<0.05$) and the total measure ($r=0.283$, $p<0.05$). Teachers believed that better physical coping strategies against anxiety could lead to better preparation in modules, radio-based, and television-based instruction. The specific emotional coping mechanisms was not significantly associated to the teachers' level of preparation in modules, radio-based, and television-based instruction ($p>0.05$). But the specific environmental coping mechanisms was significantly related to their level of preparedness in terms of modules ($r=0.225$, $p<0.05$) and there was an association between spiritual coping mechanisms and modules instruction ($r=0.305$, $p<0.01$). Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the coping mechanisms and level of preparedness of the teachers was rejected. Despite the coping mechanisms presented, this result entailed that the teachers' preparedness in the different instructional modalities was not influenced by their coping mechanisms which implied that teachers were needed to be ready and perform their duties, despite their coping strategies to alleviate their anxieties caused by the education reforms.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that teachers experienced anxiety in adapting to the new normal delivery of instructions. Their best coping mechanism was spiritual coping strategies. Also, it was found out that of the blended learning delivery modes, they were quite prepared with utilizing modular instruction. Further, despite the challenges they faced in these trying times, it was found out that their level of anxiety and coping mechanisms were not significantly correlated to their level of preparedness in the new normal which concluded that the roles and responsibilities of teachers required them to be prepared anytime despite the anxieties they experienced.

The following were the recommendations drawn based on the results of the study: (1) It is recommended that

school administrators should create a plan focusing management for teachers to enhance their efficiency amidst the flexible learning set up. (2) It is recommended that teachers should equip themselves with stress management skills through outdoor activities and attending webinars to strengthen their readiness on blended learning. (3) It is recommended that barangay officials should provide any assistance in bridging the gaps between education and mental health. (4) It is recommended that future researchers should provide further information in the improvement of strategies and approaches needed in the development of procedures.

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