

Teaching Competencies and Coping Mechanisms Among the Selected Public Primary and Secondary Schools in Agusan Del Sur Division: Teachers in the New Normal Education

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Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak presented various obstacles for teachers to overcome. This study set out to identify the difficulties Filipino teachers faced in the new normal and their coping techniques or mechanisms. Teachers have thus been forced to work despite situations and tensions that would have harmed their mental health. The goal of the study was to identify and assess the coping skills and teaching abilities of the chosen public primary and secondary teachers in Agusan del Sur in the context of the new normal education. The study employed a descriptive-correlation research approach to investigate the challenges, teaching abilities, and coping mechanisms experienced by the teacher participants in the Division of Agusan del Sur. The 40 items on teaching competencies and coping strategies or mechanisms have average Cronbach's alpha values of 0.945 and 0.878, respectively. The research approach is viewed as exceptional and highly acceptable as a result. According to the results, the respondents believe that each of the aforementioned criteria will have a major impact on an instructor's ability to teach in the new normal. Additionally, formative evaluation or assessment ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.13$) has the lowest level while personal competences and techniques ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.48$) have the highest competencies. Additionally, problem-focused coping is employed by the instructors in the schools selected by the Division of Agusan del Sur more frequently than emotional coping ($M=4.75$, $SD=0.51$) and less frequently ($M=3.92$, $SD=0.33$). The significance of the relationship between the responses and the coping and teaching skills-related variables. The range of the calculated correlation coefficient for teaching competencies, and it ranges from -0.039 to $+0.079$. The p-values (sig.) are higher than the 0.05 level of significance. Furthermore, there is no connection between the teaching skills and coping mechanisms of public elementary and secondary school teachers and the new normal education.

Keywords: Teaching Competencies, Coping Mechanisms, Challenges, Correlation, COVID-19

Introduction

The COVID-19 effect on educational institutions has been disastrous, leading to the shutdown or non-operation of schools, leaving teachers stranded at home with limited or no access to digital platforms. For students and educators, particularly those who lack technology literacy, the abrupt shift from conventional to ICT-integrated systems as the principal tool in carrying out the teaching-learning process has brought various obstacles. The abrupt switch to online education in the Philippines ignited a contentious debate because it fundamentally altered schooling. Change to distance learning to complete your education since face-to-face instruction in a classroom is not possible (Indrawati, 2020).

The global impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on educational systems is ongoing, and the Philippines is seeing a significant paradigm shift as a result. In light of this, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that pupils learn effectively. Schools, instructors and teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders were put to the test when the COVID-19 occurred. To continue instruction even

when schools were closed, many school systems switched activities online (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). In addition to online education, most public schools, particularly those in rural areas, used printed self-learning modules for modular training. The majority of parents and students (Cos et al., 2021; Manlangit et al., 2020) chose the modular distance learning method over other available alternatives.

The DepEd's catchphrase, "no child left behind," communicates inequality, yet promoting learning must be prioritized over advancing the economy. As a result, schools now must adhere to stricter regulations in order to operate. Classes are a huge issue despite the closure order. Online learning is ideal since in-person learning has a higher spread risk. Both teachers and students are challenged by this new platform. This circumstance necessitates an "adapt rapidly" reaction to the pandemic's new normal in education. Academic institutions need to move more quickly to speed up the unexpected shift to online learning (Sagales et al., 2021). The ability of teachers to provide students with high-quality instruction and preparation suffered as a result. In spite of obstacles and modifications to the

educational system, where learning takes place at home, the pandemic compelled teachers to play a major role in encouraging and overseeing students' development. Quality learning opportunities can, however, take place outside of the classroom's four walls, at any time, and from any place. Therefore, these dramatic changes in the new educational system present unique challenges for teachers. Using modular instruction as a substitute for continuing education presented a number of difficulties (Pentang, 2021; Llego, 2021).

A well-structured curriculum, ample e-learning, and e-teaching resources, internet connection, and technology are requirements for new normal educators. For them to instruct with assurance, efficacy, and efficiency, they need topic knowledge. Teaching and learning cannot take place if teachers lack e-learning resources and instructional materials, home learning resources and robust technology, positive/constructive feedback, and coworker support. The government has ruled that face-to-face lessons cannot begin until the COVID-19 vaccine is ready and the majority of students have received it. This has created a challenge for educational institutions as a result of the epidemic. The Department of Education (DepEd) responded by issuing Department Order Nos. 007, 12, 13, and 14 series of 2020, directing all basic education institutions to create a Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) and health and safety procedures for the pandemic. The difficulty facing public elementary and secondary schools has increased. As a result of difficulties in the delivery of learning, the Bureau of Curriculum Development has identified key learning competencies and condensed them into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC), where certain steps in the process determine whether a learning competency is to be retained, were combined, deleted, or reworded to make it clearer and more appropriate for the needs of the learners (Talahiban et al., 2022).

Accordingly, in order for pupils and learners to benefit the most from the modules that are taught to them during the pandemic, teachers are essential. The lack of experience among teachers with the current scenario was noticed (Tosun et al., 2021). The study of Pentang (2021), asserted that teachers must employ appropriate and readily available pedagogy to successfully deliver their teachings in all situations. Despite the difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, educators continue to assist students by creating modules that serve as learning guides (Robosa et al., 2021). In that passage, Macaraeg et al., (2021) cited the 'Teachers Dignity Coalition' of the nation's assertion that

modular distance learning has increased workload, health hazards, and expenses, leading teachers to ask for donations of bond paper and ink to print. Additionally, the process of teaching and learning separates the delivery of education into its own activity. Different teaching strategies, such as inquiry, hands-on learning, social engagement, and constructivism, have been utilized to teach a variety of subjects. Teachers don't feel fully equipped and capable of teaching the subject remotely, and such approaches seem challenging to apply in a distant learning environment (Lichoro, 2015). In the Philippines has been shocked by the possibility of a COVID19-related worldwide pandemic. As a result of the abrupt cessation of economic activity, systems now need to be adjusted to the "new normal." The Department of Education's educational system has changed as a result of changes in the economy and way of life during the epidemic, introducing new modalities of instruction and learning. To ensure that schooling can go on despite the pandemic threat, the Department of Education has been researching alternatives. The epidemic caused a great deal of anxiety among individuals who work in the education field, especially public teachers who are responsible for making sure that teaching takes place regardless of the consequences or issues (Granthorn, 2020; Dangle, 2020). The style of life in the Philippines has changed, but it hasn't just affected Filipinos; as COVID-19 is already a global issue, it has affected everyone's way of life (Dangle, 2020).

The purpose of the study was to determine and evaluate the teaching competencies and coping mechanisms among the selected public primary and secondary teachers in Agusan del Sur in the new normal education. To adjust in the face of difficulty is one of the teachers' skills. Teachers are still getting used to the new normal as various difficulties develop, especially at this challenging period. As a result, teachers use a range of coping mechanisms to manage the challenges they encounter. These coping skills help teachers get through difficulties and greatly aid in the improvement of the situation. This study identified the difficulties faced by high school teachers and elementary teachers using the aforementioned facts and observations that the Division of Agusan del Sur added to the literature about the experiences of schools in the province of Agusan del Sur, the Philippines, with modular distance learning. Additionally, it described their coping strategies, which will help in resolving problems that can develop during the implementation of the new normal alternate learning system. Last but not least, it aims to recommend a course of action based on the participant's coping

technique to prevent these difficulties.

Research Objectives

The study examined the experiences of high school and elementary teachers in the Division of Agusan del Sur with regard to teaching competencies, challenges, and coping mechanisms. In particular, the study:

1. To determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, position, number of relevant seminars and trainings attended and years in service, frequency and percentage distribution were used;
2. To evaluate and assess the level of teaching competencies in the new normal education among public elementary teachers and secondary teachers in Agusan del Sur division when it comes to instructional and curriculum delivery, classroom management and formative assessment, and personal competencies;
3. To attest to the coping mechanisms and challenges of teachers manifested in the new normal education; as to problem-focused, appraisal-focused, emotion-focused, and occupation-focused; and
4. To investigate whether there is a significant relationship between the level of teaching competencies and coping mechanisms in the new normal education among the Division of Agusan del Sur's selected primary and secondary teachers.

Methodology

The goal of the study was to identify and assess the teaching competencies, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the chosen public primary and secondary teachers in Agusan del Sur in the context of the new normal education. The average Cronbach's alpha for the 40 items on teaching competencies and coping techniques or mechanisms is 0.945 and 0.878, respectively. As a result, the research treatment is regarded as excellent and extremely acceptable. The questionnaire was manually fielded and distributed to the intended respondents by the researchers.

Research Design

To identify the difficulties, teaching competencies, and coping mechanisms utilized by the teacher participants in the Division of Agusan del Sur, the study used a

descriptive-correlation research approach. In order to document the teachers' struggles and coping techniques as the epidemic continued to cause changes in the educational system, it was thought necessary to conduct an extensive investigation. The strategy is also necessary because there aren't enough participants who are available and eager to share their experiences.

Respondents

The study's respondents were 30 secondary teachers from three public high schools and 30 primary teachers from three public elementary schools in the Agusan del Sur Division, Caraga Region, Philippines. Each school also had two (2) volunteers who took part in the study depending on their availability, willingness, and voluntarism, using a non-probability availability sampling technique. The participants voluntarily filled out and signed a consent form, and all of their personal and academic information was handled in the strictest of confidence and anonymity.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The participating schools among the selected public primary and secondary teachers and volunteer teachers signed consent forms and a request letter that were approved by the appropriate authorities. The schools and teachers who took part in the study were kept anonymous throughout the entire manuscript in order to ensure confidentiality. In addition, the study's goal was explained to each participant. After completing all the necessary preliminary steps, data was collected between July 2022 and August 2022. The participants' experiences with three (3) elements highlighted: (a) teaching competencies and (b) coping mechanisms were gathered. The researcher was utilized the Pearson correlation coefficient and descriptive statistics. More so, IBM SPSS software was used to encode, process, and interpret the study's data.

Respondents' Rights, Ethical Protection and Consideration

Three different perspectives were taken into consideration while addressing and prioritizing the ethical consideration of respondents' rights and ethical concerns. Initially supplied to safeguard the individuals' (the study's dependent variable) identities. By compiling all the information related to the evaluation, this issue was addressed. The teachers' participants successfully agreed to participate in the survey by signing a consent or waiver form. The acquired data will also be deleted by the researchers once the study is finished.

Results and Discussion

When the COVID-19 epidemic hit, the educational system was put to the test, and teachers had to deal with a number of obstacles. The findings showed that the COVID-19 epidemic presented a variety of difficulties for teachers in Agusan del Sur division's primary and high schools. According to Table 1, nearly all of the respondents (38.34%) are between the ages of 26 and 30 and in the prime of their careers (OECD, 2022). There were more female respondents (55%) than male respondents (45%). The vast majority (51.66%) are married, and 30.34% have master's degrees with MA units. Only 18.34% of teachers are master teachers 1, 15%, and master teachers 2, 8.34%, whereas 42.3% of teachers are teachers 1, 36.66% of teachers 2, and 21.66% of teachers 3.

Table 1. *The frequency and percentage distribution on the demographic profile of the respondents in the division of Agusan del Sur (n=60)*

Demographic Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20 to 25 years	23	38.34
26 to 30 years	17	28.34
30 to 45 years	12	20
46 to 50 years	8	13.32
Sex		
Male	27	45
Female	33	55
Civil Status		
Single	18	30
Married	31	51.66
Widow/Widower	11	18.34
Educational Level		
Doctor of Philosophy (CAR)	6	10
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD. Units)	7	11.66
Master's Degree (CAR)	16	26.66
Master's Degree (M.Ed. Units)	18	30.34
College Graduate	13	21.34
Teachers' Designation		
Teacher I	22	36.66
Teacher II	13	21.66
Teacher III	11	18.34
Master Teacher I	9	15
Master Teacher II	5	8.34
Length of Service in DepEd		
0 - 5 years	19	31.66
5 - 10 years	25	41.66
10 - 15 years	8	13.34
15 - 20 years	1	2
20 - 25 years	4	6.34
25 - 30 years	3	5
Number of relevant Trainings and Seminars		
1 - 10	30	50
11 - 20	23	38.34
21 - 30	5	8.34
31 - 40	2	3.32
Total	60	100

Additionally, 38.34% of responders had between 11 and 20 relevant hours of training. The fact that the majority of them have already started their own kids and are active working group members suggests that

teaching is their main source of income for raising them. The fact that female respondents made up the vast majority is evidence of the feminization of the teaching profession. Through graduate study, they have already begun to advance in their field. Furthermore, it can also be explained that many are still considered at the beginning of their academic careers, as manifested in their academic rank. The fact that the majority of respondents have only a few years of service can be used to explain the number of pertinent training sessions attended and the length of service. The fact that the majority of respondents have only brief periods of service can be used to account for the number of pertinent training sessions attended and the length of service. It may be concluded from the study that public elementary school teachers and secondary teachers have given themselves the best possible chance to become qualified and competent educators who can meet the needs and demands of the new normal education.

Table 2. *The mean value, standard deviation, and interpretation on the level of teaching competencies of the teachers from primary and secondary schools in the new normal education*

Teaching Competencies	Frequency (n)	Mean Value	SD	Interpretation Scale
Classroom Management	60	5.00	0.15	Competent
Instructional and Learning Delivery	60	4.15	0.26	Competent
Formative Assessment	60	3.98	0.13	Competent
Personal Competencies and Strategies	60	4.22	0.48	Competent
General/Overall Teaching Competencies	60	4.10	0.33	Competent

Legend: SD; Standard Deviation; and Interpretation Scale: 1.00 - 0.49 Not Competent, 1.50 - 2.49 Slightly Competent, 2.50 - 3.49 Moderately Competent, 3.50 - 4.49 Competent, and 4.50 - 5.00 Highly Competent

The mean value, standard deviation, and interpretation for the teachers from elementary and secondary schools who work in the new normal education are shown in Table 2. All computed items have means that are greater than 3.50. The results show that the respondents believe all of the aforementioned elements to some extent to be important in regards to teachers' abilities to teach in the new normal. Additionally, formative evaluation or assessment ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.13$) has the lowest level while personal competencies and strategies ($M=4.22$, $SD=0.48$) have the highest competencies.

Table 3. *The mean value, standard deviation, and interpretation scale on the coping mechanisms in the new normal education among the selected primary and secondary schools in Agusan del Sur Division*

<i>Coping Mechanisms</i>	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Mean Value</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation Scale</i>
Problem-focused	60	4.75	0.51	Strongly Agree
Appraisal-focused	60	4.19	0.98	Agree
Emotional-focused	60	3.92	0.33	Agree
Educational-focused	60	4.07	0.46	Agree

Legend: SD: Standard Deviation; and Interpretation Scale: 1.00 - 0.49 Strongly Disagree, 1.50 - 2.49 Disagree, 2.50 - 3.49 Moderately Agree, 3.50 - 4.49 Agree, and 4.50 - 5.00 Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 3, the selected elementary and secondary schools in the Agusan del Sur Division's coping methods were measured on a mean, standard deviation, and interpretation scale basis. All computed items have means that are greater than 3.50. This finding shows that the respondents believe all of the aforementioned criteria to be rather significant in terms of how teachers would cope with teaching in the new normal. Additionally, problem-focused ($M=4.75$, $SD=0.51$) is the greatest coping strategy utilized by the instructors in the chosen schools in the Division of Agusan del Sur, while emotional-focused ($M=3.92$, $SD=0.33$) is the lowest.

The Pearson's correlation coefficient is performed in this stage of the analysis. To ascertain the significance of the association between two variables, a non-parametric test is performed. The importance of the association between the responses and the variables relating to teaching proficiency and coping skills. The estimated correlation coefficient for teaching competencies, which is shown in table 4, spans from -0.039 to +0.079, and the p-values (sig.) are higher than the 0.05 level of significance. As a result, there is no connection between the respondents' level of teaching expertise in the new standard education and any of the variables (Table 4).

Table 4. *The test for relationship between the variables of the level of teaching competencies and coping mechanisms among the selected teachers in the division of Agusan del Sur*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Classroom Management	0.079	0.414
Instructional and Learning Delivery	-0.039	0.396
Formative Assessment	-0.047	0.122
Personal Competencies and Strategies	0.056	0.957
General/Overall Teaching Competencies	0.081	-0.024
Problem-focused	0.179	-0.416
Appraisal-focused	0.989	0.368
Emotional-focused	0.579	0.777
Educational-focused	0.524	0.853

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, the majority of respondents are involved in a working group. As their own families have already begun, it is clear that teaching is their main source of income for raising their kids. Hence, the fact that female respondents made up the vast majority is evidence of the feminization of the teaching profession. Through graduate study, they have already begun to advance in their field. The findings indicate that the respondents consider each of the aforementioned factors to be rather significant in terms of instructors' capacity to instruct in the new normal. Additionally, personal competencies and techniques ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.48$) have the highest competencies while formative evaluation or assessment ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.13$) has the lowest level. The teachers in the Division of Agusan del Sur's chosen schools also employ problem-focused coping more frequently than emotional-focused coping ($M=4.75$, $SD=0.51$) and emotional-focused coping is less frequently ($M=3.92$, $SD=0.33$). At this point in the investigation, the Pearson's correlation coefficient is run. A non-parametric test is run to determine the significance of the association between two variables. The significance of the correlation between the replies and the teaching ability and coping skill-related variables. The significance of the relationship between the responses and the coping and teaching skills-related variables. The range of the calculated correlation coefficient for teaching competencies is presented in table 4, and it ranges from -0.039 to +0.079. The p-values (sig.) are higher than the 0.05 level of significance. As a result, teachers were less able to prepare and instruct students in a high-quality manner. Despite challenges and adjustments to the educational system, where learning occurs at home, the pandemic required instructors to play a significant role in supporting and supervising students' growth. However, there are excellent learning opportunities available at all times and from anywhere, not just inside the four walls of the classroom. As a result, instructors face particular difficulties as a result of the new educational system's drastic changes. Additionally, there is no correlation between public elementary teachers' and secondary teacher's teaching abilities and coping strategies in the new normal education.

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