

Stress and Coping Strategies of Preservice Teachers amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This research was conducted to find the most common sources of underlying stress and what coping strategies encountered by teaching staff amid the Covid-19 pandemic at West Visayas State University Lambunao Campus. Descriptive research methods such as survey and interview techniques were used. An adapted and modified survey questionnaire was used. There were 104 respondents who were specifically selected with consent. Lack of study materials, heavy academic workload, and poor performance on assessment tasks were found to be the most common causes of academic stress. In the psychosocial category, the presence of financial problems, worries about the future, fear of completing assigned tasks, and lack of time to relax were noted. In addition, lack of sleep, irregular eating habits, and lack of a healthy diet were sources of health-related stress. The most common coping mechanisms used by respondents in the face of stress were positive reframing- seeing something good in the situation, learning from the experience, laboriously managing- doing commodity about the situation, taking action to undo or help stressors, and supplicate and meditate. Eventually, it was also discovered that the respondents also suffer from an unstable internet connection.

Keywords: Stress, Coping Strategies, Online Class

1. Introduction

The rise in Covid-19 cases in the Philippines has caused all educational institutions to adjust the way they teach to combat the virus (Licayan, Chierife & Kim, 2021). The Western Visayas region has utilized various teaching approaches, such as online, mobile, modular, distance, blended or distance learning and combinations of these for higher education institutions (HEIs) (Moralista & Oducado, 2020; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). Tupas & Linas-Laguda (2020) emphasize that these changes have had a significant effect on stakeholders involved in managing the situation. Cordero (2022) observed that the pandemic and these modifications to the educational system have brought about anxiety among teachers, administrators and students.

Mazo (2015) states that stress can manifest in many contexts - at home, in the office, with friends, or even at school. It's a reality that affects people regardless of age, marital status, gender, faith, job, or financial situation (González- Cabanach et al., 2016; Kwaah & Essilfie, 2017). Decision-makers such as politicians, executives, and students are also not immune to its effects (Yaribeyg et al., 2017). Recently, the world has experienced upheavals resulting from the coronavirus pandemic which has had an immense health impact and has reverberated through the socio-economic realm (Wang et al., 2020). Salari et al. (2020) pointed out that the virus is one of the leading causes of stress with a significant effect on mental health.

Researches have shown the impacts of COVID-related stress factors on scholars, faculty, administrators, and parents due to new conditions required for learning and teaching (Dela Fuente et al., 2021). The sudden shift of academic life to distance learning has been more taxing than usual on learners and instructors (Saho, 2020). Hasan et al. (2020) stated that the numerous adjustments needed in a short time frame, such as changing from conventional teaching to remote or blended learning, adjusting curricula, holding online exams, and modifying attendance policies have been stressful.

Studies have demonstrated the effects of COVID-induced stressors on students, teachers, administrators, and even parents concerning significant changes in the teaching and learning process (de la Fuente et al., 2021). The unexpected disruption of academic life and its usual face-to-face teaching and learning dynamics had to be replaced with online instruction (de la Fuente et al., 2020). Stressors related to the teaching process include dissatisfying teaching styles, poor classroom climate, and unsuitable content. Stressors related to the learning process include an overload of instructional material (perceived as a great workload), student participation in class, and an assessment system leading to a lack of control over their progress (González-Cabanach et al., 2016). Thus, these stressors were all intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic (Anzaldo, 2021).

Over time, COVID-19 has become a part of everyday life as people realize that things will not be the same at work, home, and school (Whiteside, 2022). Thus, an attempt was made to adapt to the situation and coping strategies were adopted as part of the training (Hidalgo-Andrade, Hermosa-Bosano, Paz, 2021).

Accordingly, coping strategies are described as the approaches in which students and teachers anticipate, prepare for, perceive, control, react to, and modify their behavior when under stress (Institute of Teacher Aide Courses, 2021). In this section, the focus is on the teacher's coping strategies and how they embrace the new normal.

MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Mercer (2020) found that across Europe, North America, South America, Asia, and the Middle East, the most commonly employed coping strategy among language preceptors was acceptance, followed by planning and transforming situations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as using work or other activities as a distraction. Klapproth et al. (2020), meanwhile, identified two types of managing strategies among preceptors in Germany: functional like planning and seeking social support; and dysfunctional like giving up or drinking alcohol. The results indicate that most preceptors used functional managing strategies. Similarly, Hidalgo-Andrade et al. (2021) noted that language preceptors in Ecuador primarily employed functional strategies such as seeking social support and engaging in sports or recreational activities.

In Europe, North America, South America, Asia, and the Middle East as well as in the Filipino setting, Agayon, Agayon & Pentang (2022) pointed out that secondary academy tutors have overcome the difficulties and stress brought about by the shift in literacy quality, the distribution and retrieval of modules, scholars' difficulty in abiding by instructions and health risks associated with the pandemic via different management methods. Malabad and Mamauag (2022) argued that educators also try to learn from their experiences in order to address apprehensions caused by unknown modifications in the new normal schooling approach through novel teaching techniques. Makabenta (2021) stated that facilitators created a management system for battling with difficulties involved in adapting various tutorial styles during COVID 19 such as better mental well-being, time management, openness to transformation, flash teaching, and teamwork.

Studies discussing schoolteacher stress, management strategies, and the COVID 19 epidemic (Klapproth, et al, 2020; Hasan, et al, 2021; de la Fuente, et al 2021; Moralista and Oducado, 2020; Makabenta 2021; Malabad and Mamauag 2022) have been widely discussed. However, there has been no study conducted on students or trainee teachers studying in public higher education institutions. Thus, this current investigation is being conducted.

Additionally, this research endeavor is posited to determine the most prevalent cause of stress and coping strategies of preservice teachers of West Visayas State University-Lambunao Campus amidst COVID 19 pandemic.

2. Objective of the Study

This research will determine the most prevalent cause of stress and coping strategies of preservice teachers of West Visayas State University-Lambunao Campus amidst COVID 19 pandemic.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the most prevalent cause of stress among preservice teachers amidst Covid-19 pandemic in having an online class?

2. What are the coping mechanisms frequently used in facing stress?

3. Methodology

The methods use of this is descriptive inquiry, and uses different data collection such as survey and interview will be employed. The researcher modified a survey questionnaire to determine the most prevalent cause of stress and coping strategies of preservice teachers amidst Covid-19 pandemic of West Visayas State University-Lambunao Campus. Documentary and Narrative analysis will be used in the interview.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were 104 purposively selected officially enrolled preservice teachers of West Visayas State University-Lambunao Campus for the school Year 2021-2022.

Data Gathering Instrument

The researcher modified a survey questionnaire used by Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) in their study entitled *Stress and Coping Strategies among Distance Education Students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana* in order to determine the most prevalent cause of stress and coping strategies of preservice teachers amidst Covid-19 pandemic of West Visayas State University-Lambunao Campus which was adapted from the Dental Environmental Stress (DES) and Brief COPE used by Folkman and Lazarus (1980). In addition, the overall reliability of the test items was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha (0.89), which indicates significant internal consistency based from the study.

The survey questionnaire undergoes re-validation by experts. The survey questionnaire has the following parts: Part 1 elicits the profile of respondents; to identify their sex, course, year level and major. Part 2, determined the factors causing stress; Part 3, coping strategies and Part 4, Interview for thorough validation of causes of stress as well as their coping strategies. The information gathered from the interview was dealt using documentary analysis and narrative data analysis.

To determine the most prevalent cause of stress, responses of the respondents' used the following scale:

The items indicate the responses with the following description and weights: 5- Extremely stressful; 4 –Very stressful; 3 – Quite stressful; 2 – Somewhat stressful and 1 – Not stressful at all.

Rank was used to determine the most prevalent cause of stress and coping strategies among the respondents.

Data Analysis Procedures

The accumulated information have been analyzed the usage of descriptive statistics together with mean and standard deviation for the have a look at have been subjected to a laptop processed facts. The qualitative information have been respectively offered in a matrix and analyzed the usage of a narrative data analysis.

4. Result and Discussion

This study presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the respondents of the study.

Descriptive Data Analysis

Most Prevalent Cause of Stress among Preservice Teachers amidst Covid-19 Pandemic in an Online Class under Academic stressors

Data in Table 1 reveal that lack of learning materials/resources and academic workloads were the most prevalent causes of stress under academic stressors. This implies that pre-service teachers were having limited resources/learning materials at home. Poor/unstable internet connection was also a factor for them most especially those who were in the far flang areas unlike when in school that there is a Library, Teachers, Librarian and Librarian staff that could help and offer lots of resources to answer all their queries and could give additional knowledge about their lessons and topics which hinders them not to be connected during

discussion. With such, this also leads them of having difficulty in answering their modules and other school related tasks which sometimes resulting to late submission of requirements and poor performances in their subjects. With regards to psychosocial stressors financial problem was the most prevalent. Lack of budget is the reason behind why some of the respondents could not be able to submit their requirements and pass it on time resulting to low grades. Some of the respondents' parents lost their jobs due to minimal number of persons allowed to report on site and closure of some establishments. Another one is that some of the respondents could no longer work/ find extra jobs during weekends to sustain their daily needs most especially their education and others are not yet vaccinated. On the other hand, sleep problems is the most prevalent health related stressor among the respondents. Eventhough respondents are given ample time in doing their school tasks, some of them still sleep late just to have stable internet connection and in order to submit their tasks online but in return wake up late as well. Furthermore, others also engage in part time job in order to help their parents who losts jobs.

In addition, the results of the survey and interview from the respondents coincide with each other which reveal that academic workload and lack of learning materials are the most prvalent.

The end result additionally concurs with the end result of American Psychological Association, 2017 which states that forty- percentage of Americans surveyed stated that strain has prompted them to lose sleep and 33% stated that it has them to overeate withinside the closing month. Some of their responses:

- “The number one is high academic workload, and lack of materials/resources, the other is poor internet connection to attend online discussion.”
- “Based from my experience, the academic stressors I have encountered during our online class are about high academic workload, lack of learning materials or resources and difficulty in reading and understanding of modules.”
- “We suffer lack of sleep due to unstable signal to pass all our task and activities in the middle of the night.”
- “High academic overload, lack of learning materials/resources.”
- “Financial is the one reason that I can't catch up the lesson. Because I don't have money to buy a load.”
- “Being a student it is hard to concentrate during online class because of unstable data connection and financial problems, also to manage our time as a child, student and a part-time worker.”

Table 1: Most Prevalent Cause of Stress among Preservice Teachers amidst Covid-19 pandemic in an online class under academic stressors

CATEGORY	STRESSORS	Mean	Rank
Academic Related	High academic workload	3.24	2
	Dissatisfaction with the lectures/topics	2.89	4
	Poor performance in assessment tasks	3.07	3
	Lack of learning materials/resources	3.25	1
	Difficulty in reading and understanding of modules	2.76	5
Psychosocial	Inability to manage time	3.22	3
	Inability to concentrate during online class	3.00	6
	Anxiety about performance in tasks assigned	3.08	4.5
	High parental expectations	2.79	8

	Worries about future	3.43	2
	Loneliness	2.85	7
	Financial problems	3.49	1
	Lack of time for relaxation	3.08	4.5
	Difficulty in relating to members of opposite sex Within your family, friends or classmates	2.31	9
Health-related	Lack of healthy diet	2.62	3
	Irregular eating habit	2.71	2
	Sleep problems	3.35	1
	Illness/health problems	2.60	4

Coping Mechanism frequently used in facing Stress

Data in Table 2 revealed that positive reframing, active coping-learning from experiences, and praying and meditating were the frequent coping mechanism used by the respondents in facing stress. This implies that the respondents are still having a positive outlook in life despite all odds/problems. Believing that behind every problem there is still goodness into it. They are not afraid to fail rather they used it as a weapon. Learning from own mistakes and applying it in order to survive. Finally, the respondents believed that prayer is the most powerful weapon in facing stress.

The result of the study also concurred with the study of Mazo, 2015, which reveal that females used the power of prayer when they are under stress and he asserted that both male and females never use illegal drugs, using cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and smoking when they were under stress.

Some of their responses:

- “Praying and keep reminding myself that everything that I am encountering right now will serve for its good purpose someday.”
- “Unwinding, travelling, taking selfies, reading funny jokes in fb, shared posting, listening to a music, wandering around, playing outdoor activities, watching funny videos, and most especially praying.”
- “Positivity, prayer and taking action about the situation.”
- “Think positive, Avoid bad habits that can affect to your health, Seek for support, Do healthy ways of living and Divert your attention that will make you happy.”
- “Take time to rest, praying, watching funny movies and reading motivational quotes.”

Table 2: Coping Mechanism frequently used in facing Stress

COPING STRATEGY	Mean	Rank
Active coping Doing other stuff to prevent stress	97.09	2
Positive Reframing Learning from Experiences	98.06	1
Alcohol, Cigarette/substance abuse Using cigarette/alcohol/substance abuse	8.74	12

Humor Making fun of the situation	51.46	8
Giving up Give up on stressful situation.	32.04	10
Emotional support Emotional Support from family and friends	82.52	6
Instrumental support Supports from Teachers and advices	75.73	7
Self-distraction Chasing rainbows just to get rid of the stress such as watching Netflix, TV, movies, shopping or listening to Music.	93.20	4.5
Religion Praying, meditating	96.12	3
Venting Expressing negative feelings: showing anger at things/people	38.83	9
Acceptance Learning to live with the situation, accepting it	93.20	4.5
Denial Ignoring and refusing the situation	18.45	11

5. Conclusions

1. In the result it was concluded that lack of learning materials, high academic workload and poor performance in assessment tasks were the most prevalent related academic cause of stress. Under psychosocial category, it was concluded that the financial problem, worries about future, anxiety about performance in tasks assigned and lack of time for relaxation. Furthermore, lack of sleep, irregular eating habit and lack of healthy diet were health related cause of stress.

2. It was concluded that the most frequently coping mechanism used by the respondents in facing stress were the following: first, positive reframing-, second, active coping-doing something about the situation, taking action to prevent stressors and third, praying and meditating.

3. It was also found out that respondents are also suffering from unstable internet connection.

6. Recommendation

Based from the research findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were given:

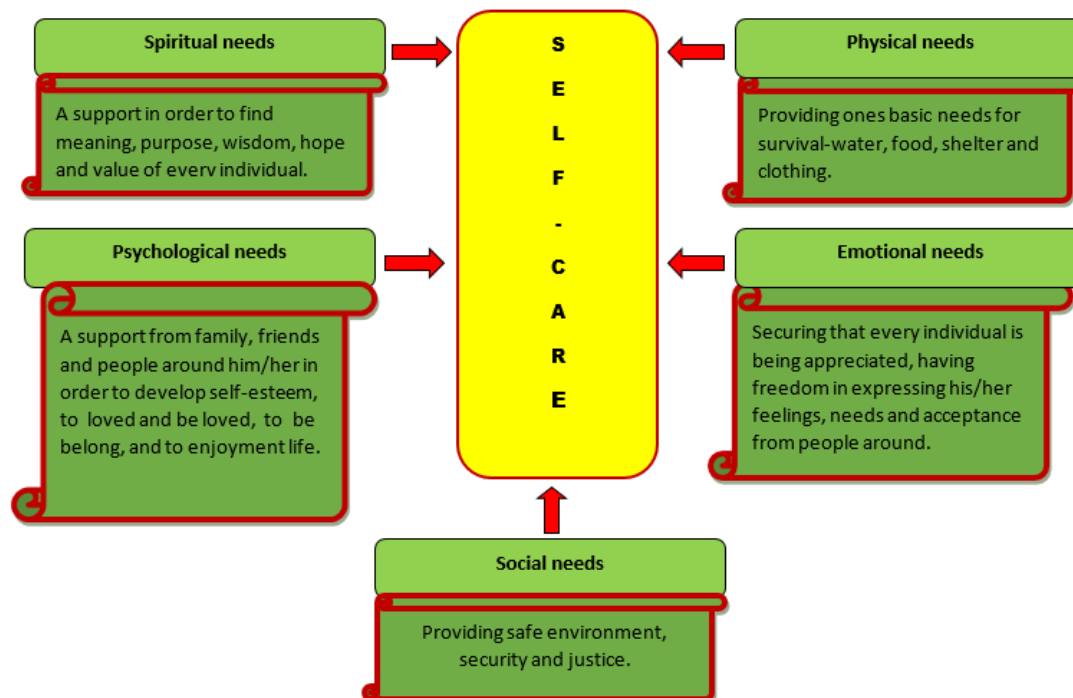
1. The Guidance office are highly encourage to further enhance their services focusing on mental, emotional, physical, psychological, spiritual and others aspects ensuring that students are being catered in all aspects of their lives .

2. Utilize the result of the study for extension activities under the Guidance office and in order to monitor students' well-being.

3. Students are encourage eating healthy and well-balanced meals, plenty of sleep, exercise and atleast spare time for relaxation but should also pay attention when it comes to school tasks. If possible do their tasks ahead of time so that they will not get stress later on.

4. Deans, Directors and Faculty should also be realistic in giving tasks to students. Tasks given should also be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound or SMART.

Training Model/Design



Sample Method of Implementation

In order to develop and empower mental health, emotional and psychosocial aspects of every individual, the matrix below can be used:

Intervention	Two-day training for Pre-service teachers in order to boost and empower one's self.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop self-esteem/self-care and self-worth. 2. To determine the important factors affecting mental health and well-being. 3. Provide tips/coping strategies in coping stress and in maintaining a healthy life style.
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Permission from involved employees may be facilitated. 2. Budget allocation may be facilitated to make certain that every pertinent material and center are in place. 3. Program, certificate, and resource person may be finalized.
Persons Involved	Guidance counselors, Deans and Directors
Time Frame	
Budget	
Success Indicator	

Program Evaluation

Evaluation sheet will be given to every participant to determine if the objectives were achieved.

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