

## Conference Paper

# Coping Mechanism and Academic Performance Among Filipino Undergraduate Students

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## Abstract

A descriptive - correlational research was done to determine relationship between teacher's philosophy, teaching style, and performance. The teacher-respondents is dominated by female with the age of early fortys up to late fiftys and finished graduate studies. Further, majority of them are at most Assistant Professors and serving the institution for more than three decades now. More than 50% of the teacher-respondents got a Common Criteria Evaluation and Qualitative Contribution Evaluation points of 65 to 87 and 89% to 91% respectively. Almost 50% of the teacher respondents are progressivists who strongly believe that teaching should prepare students for analyzing and solving the types of problems they will face outside the classroom. More than half of the respondents have somewhat individualized style of teaching which clearly means that majority of the teacher respondents focused to approximately individualized or student-centered instruction and assessment. It was found out that teacher-respondent's performance differs significantly when they were grouped according to highest educational attainment, academic rank, and years in service. However, the data are not sufficient enough to support the existence of significant correlations between teacher's philosophy, teaching style, and performance.

**Keywords:** teaching and learning; educational philosophy; teaching style; performance.

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## 1. Introduction

We are complex beings living complex lives in which we are not always able to cope up with the difficulties that we face. As a result, we are subject to feelings of tension and stress. Anspaugh, Hamrick, and Rosato (2003) shared the view that stress came in several forms and affected people of all ages and walks of life. This implies that stress is a part of life and has many causes, and that the degree of stress in our lives is

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greatly dependent on factors such as the physical health of the individual, the quality of interpersonal relationships, the number of commitments and responsibilities we shoulder, the degree of others' dependence on and expectations of us, the amount of support we receive from others, and the number of changes of traumatic events we go through. This means that life itself is stress related, depending on the individual's lifestyle and the level of cultural development.

College students are not exempted to this scenario. Oftentimes, most students struggle in their academic preparation. College is a stressful time for many students as they go through the process of adapting to new educational and social environments. However, it is believed that certain factors may allow some students to succeed academically, such as stress coping skills. Coping skills are factors that determine how a person responds to a task and how well they succeed (Pajares, 2002). When an individual has a sense of control over the stressful situation they are more likely to respond to the situation with confidence (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992).

College can be a very stressful period in the lives of most students; however, some students cope with stress better than others. Many students who are able to handle stress well have effective stress coping skills. When college students are facing stressful life events, they typically use many kinds of coping strategies to deal with them. They use various coping strategies simultaneously, and strategies are also likely to change over time, depending on the effectiveness of the applied strategy.

Earnest and Dwyer (2010, p. 3) define stress coping skills as "the ability to apply strategies that minimize and manage the stress response." There are different types of coping styles, and the two major coping methods discussed are problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992).

Lenz (2010, p. 69) defines problem-focused coping as "individuals directly confronting and managing the source of their stress. Individuals prefer to deal directly with the stress by confronting, controlling, or managing stressful tasks." Problem-focused coping is a form of active coping (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992). Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989, p. 268) define active coping as "the process of taking active steps to try to remove or circumvent the stressor or to ameliorate its effects."

Lazarus (1988) and his colleagues identified eight types of coping strategies which include planful problem solving, seeking social support, confrontive coping, distancing, self-control, escape-avoidance, accepting responsibility, and positive reappraisal. These eight (8) ways of coping were further categorized as active coping strategies and passive coping strategies.

Confrontive coping (taking action and confronting the problem), seeking social support (seeking informational and emotional support), planful problem-solving (planning to solve the problem), and positive reappraisal (creating a positive meaning and focus on personal growth) constitute the active coping strategies. Meanwhile, distancing (expecting that the problem solves itself - involves emotional detachment), self-controlling (making efforts to regulate feelings and actions), accepting responsibility (accepting one's own role in the problem), and escape-avoidance (trying to avoid the problem by wishful thinking and behavioral efforts) comprise the passive coping mechanism.

The link between coping strategies and academic performance has been documented. Khan (2013) discovered that the relationship between stress coping skills and Grade Point Average (GPA) was not strong. This is in contrary to the results of the study of (Kadhiravan & Kumar, 2012) which revealed that coping strategies can help undergraduate students to enhance their academic performance.

Aun et.al (2011) opined that coping skills improve class attendance, participation, persistence even when faced with setbacks or failure in general, and arm them with stronger more resilient self who can lead to a much more positive learning experience. Similarly, academic coping strategies helped undergraduate students to perform in their academic through academic coping strategies factors i.e. approach, avoidance, and social support (Sullivan, 2010). In addition, academic coping strategies was also design to help undergraduate students to cope their life those that include physical well-being, emotional, spiritual, and psychological well-being (Yasin & Dzulkifli, 2009). Normally, emotional coping strategy is usually practiced in the first year of undergraduate students while in later years the trend is changing towards cognitive, confrontive and painful problem solving (Mahajan, 2010).

Stemming from these perspectives, this study therefore explored how College of Teacher Education students of the Laguna State Polytechnic University cope with academic related stress and its relationship to their academic performance.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

. This study generally aimed to explore the coping mechanisms of selected College of Teacher Education students at the Laguna State Polytechnic University, Los Baños Campus, Los Baños, Laguna.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following:

1. What is the profile of the student-respondents in terms of age, sex, course, year level, and major field of specialization?
2. What is the mean assessment of the student-respondents on coping mechanism inventory in terms of
  - 2.1. Active Coping Strategies
    - 2.1.1. Confrontive coping
    - 2.1.2. Seeking social support
    - 2.1.3. Planful problem-solving, and
    - 2.1.4. Positive reappraisal
  - 2.2. Passive Coping Strategies
    - 2.2.1. Distancing
    - 2.2.2. Self-controlling
    - 2.2.3. Accepting responsibility, and
    - 2.2.4. Escape-avoidance
3. What is the academic performance of the student-respondents?
4. Is there a significant relationship between student's coping mechanism and academic performance?

### 3. Materials and Methods

This is a descriptive-correlational study that examined the coping mechanisms and its relationship to academic performance among Filipino undergraduate students. The respondents of this study were the 60 randomly selected College of Teacher Education students of the Laguna State Polytechnic University - Los Banos Campus, Los Banos Laguna.

The research instrument used in this study was the modified Ways of Coping Questionnaire of Folkman and Lazarus (1988) originally composed of 66 items. The researchers designed the coping mechanism questionnaire with a total of 32 items, consisted of four (4) indicators from each dimension of coping skill. The modified questionnaire reported a cronbach alpha of 0.85 which can be interpreted as high reliability coefficient. This questionnaire is a 4-point likert scale, 0 as the lowest and 3 as the highest rating. The student's mean assessment was interpreted as

2.50 - 3.00 = Used a great deal

- 1.50 - 2.49 = Used quite a bit
- 0.50 - 1.49 = Used somewhat
- 0.00 - 0.49 = Does not apply or not used

Frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to statistically treat the data.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, course, year level, and major field of specialization

The results revealed that majority (51 or 85%) of the respondents are in their ideal age as college students. The remaining 9 or 15% belong to a more mature group of students. There is an overwhelming majority (46 or 77%) of future female teachers in the distribution of respondents for a reason that teaching includes a measurable degree of nurturing, a trait of greater expression in females (Johnson, 2016).

There is a larger number of BSEd than BEEd students in the College of Teacher Education who are pursuing Biological Science, English, Filipino, MAPEH, Mathematics, Social Science, and Technology and Livelihood Education as their major field of specialization.

### 4.2. Results of coping mechanism self – report survey on the respondents' personal view of confrontive coping

As an active component of coping mechanism, the four (4) items of this factor indicate personal views on how they directly confront or face the issue or the problem they encounter. The College of Teacher Education students report their degree of agreement on indicators of coping mechanism that apply to them.

The respondents reported that they sometimes did something that I didn't think would work, but at least I was doing something; that they sometimes expressed anger to the person(s) who caused the problem; that they sometimes took a big chance or did something very risky to solve the problem; and that they sometimes stood their ground and fought for what I wanted.

TABLE 1: Mean and Standard Deviations of Responses on Confrontive Coping.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. I did something that I didn't think would work, but at least I was doing something.	1.90	0.75	Used quite a bit
2. I expressed anger to the person(s) who caused the problem.	1.53	0.85	Used quite a bit
3. I took a big chance or did something very risky to solve the problem.	1.98	0.77	Used quite a bit
4. I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.	2.15	0.84	Used quite a bit
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.89</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>Used quite a bit</b>

### 4.3. Results of coping mechanism self – report survey on the respondents’ personal view of seeking social support as another form of coping mechanism

As an active dimension of coping mechanism, the four (4) items of this factor indicate personal views on seeking social support as a source of coping mechanism, where the College of Teacher Education students give their degree of agreement on indicators of coping mechanism that apply to them. Their responses reflect their effort of seeking tangible, emotional, and informational support.

TABLE 2: Mean and Standard Deviations of Responses on Seeking Social Support.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. I talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.	2.35	0.76	Used quite a bit
2. I asked advice from a relative or friend I respected.	2.52	0.72	Used a great deal
3. I accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.	2.45	0.65	Used quite a bit
4. I talked to someone about how I was feeling.	2.28	0.78	Used quite a bit
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>Used quite a bit</b>

Generally, the respondents reported that it is “always true” that they ask advice from a relative or friend they respected. It is “mostly true” that they accept sympathy and understanding from someone; that they talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem; and that they talk to someone about how they were feeling.

#### 4.4. Results of coping mechanism self – report survey on the respondents’ personal view of planful problem solving as a manner of coping

As an active construct of coping mechanism, the four (4) items of this factor indicate personal views on planful problem solving as a source of coping mechanism, where the College of Teacher Education students report their degree of agreement on indicators of coping mechanism that apply to them. Their responses reflect their problem-focused efforts in altering the situation combined with a systematic approach to resolve the problem.

TABLE 3: Mean and Standard Deviations of Responses on Planful Problem Solving.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. I just concentrated on what I had to do next – step by step.	2.25	0.70	Used quite a bit
2. I changed something so things would turn out all right.	2.25	0.68	Used quite a bit
3. I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts to make things work.	2.35	0.58	Used quite a bit
4. I came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.	2.25	0.60	Used quite a bit
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>Used quite a bit</b>

The respondents reported that they “sometimes” know what to do, so they double their efforts to make things work; that they just concentrate on what to do next – step by step; that they change something so things would turn out all right; and that they come up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.

#### 4.5. Results of coping mechanism self – report survey on the respondents’ personal view of positive reappraisal as a form of coping

As an active component of coping mechanism, the four (4) items of this factor indicate personal views on positive reappraisal as a source of coping mechanism, where the College of Teacher Education students indicate their degree of agreement on indicators of coping mechanism that apply to them. Their responses reflect their efforts of creating positive meaning by concentrating solely on personal growth. It also has its religious dimension.

TABLE 4: Mean and Standard Deviations of Responses on Positive Reappraisal.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. I was inspired to do something creative about the problem.	2.15	0.68	Used quite a bit
2. I changed or grew as a person.	2.42	0.67	Used quite a bit
3. I rediscovered what is important in life.	2.07	0.71	Used quite a bit
4. I prayed.	2.38	0.76	Used quite a bit
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>Used quite a bit</b>

The respondents reported that they “usually” change or grow as a person; that they pray; that they are inspired to do something creative about the problem; and that they rediscover what is important in life.

#### 4.6. Results of coping mechanism self – report survey on the respondents’ personal view of distancing as another form of coping mechanism

As a passive construct of coping mechanism, the four (4) items of this factor indicate personal views on distancing as a source of coping mechanism, where the College of Teacher Education students, report their degree of agreement on indicators of coping mechanism that apply to them. Their responses reflect their cognitive efforts of detaching oneself and minimizing the importance of situations.

At large, the respondents stated that it is “always true” that they are trying to look on the bright side of things. They reported that it is “almost true” that they make light of the situation and refuse to get too serious about it; that they try to forget the whole thing; and that they go on as if nothing had happened.

TABLE 5: Mean and Standard Deviations of Responses on Distancing.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. I went on as if nothing had happened.	1.65	0.73	Used quite a bit
2. I tried to look on the bright side of things.	2.57	0.70	Used a great deal
3. I tried to forget the whole thing.	1.70	0.77	Used quite a bit
4. I made light of the situation; I refused to get too serious about it.	2.07	0.63	Used quite a bit
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>Used quite a bit</b>

#### **4.7. Describes the results of coping mechanism self – report survey on the respondents’ personal view of self-controlling as another form of coping mechanism**

As a passive factor of coping mechanism, the four (4) items of this factor indicate personal views on self-controlling as a source of coping mechanism, where the College of Teacher Education students state their degree of agreement on indicators of coping mechanism that apply to them. Their responses reflect their effort of regulating their actions and feelings.

The respondents reported that they sometimes thought about how a person they admire would handle this situation and used that as a model; that they tried to keep feelings to themselves; that they tried not to act too quickly or follow their instinct; and that they kept others from knowing how bad things were.

#### **4.8. Illustrates the results of coping mechanism self – report survey on the respondents’ personal view of escape-avoidance as a mean of coping**

As a passive dimension of coping mechanism, the four (4) items of this factor indicate personal views on escape-avoidance as a source of coping mechanism, where the College of Teacher Education students evaluate their degree of agreement on indicators of coping mechanism that apply to them. Their responses reflect their efforts and wishful thinking to avoid or escape the problem. Items on this category are contrary in distancing scale that mainly suggest detachment

Generally, the respondents reported that it is “mostly true” that they try to make themselves feel better; that they wish that the situation would go away or somehow be cover with; and that they refuse to believe it had happened. They “seldom” feel that they generally avoided being with people.

#### **4.9. Shows the results of coping mechanism self – report survey on the respondents’ personal view of accepting responsibility as a way of coping**

As a passive coping mechanism, the four (4) items of this factor indicate personal views on accepting responsibility as a source of coping mechanism, where the College of Teacher Education students assess their degree of agreement on indicators of coping

mechanism that apply to them. Their responses reflect their efforts on acknowledging one’s own unique role and trying to put things right. This also includes acceptance.

The respondents reported that it is “mostly true” that they apologize or do something to make up; that they promise themselves that things would be different next time; that they criticize or lecture themselves; and that they realize that they have brought the problem on themselves.

#### 4.10. Academic performance (general weighted average) of the student – respondents during First Semester A.Y 2016-2017

The results clearly indicate that majority of CTE students performed satisfactorily in their academic subjects. The overall general weighted average of 88.88 indicates that they are committed in their studies and continuously strive for excellence.

TABLE 6: Student’s academic performance based on their general weighted average.

General Weighted Average	Freq.	%	Verbal Description
78 to 83	7	16.67	Fairly Satisfactory
84 to 89	23	33.33	Satisfactory
90 to 95	30	50.00	Very Satisfactory
Overall GWA: <b>88.88</b>			
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

#### 4.11. Describes the test of significant relationship between each dimensions of coping mechanism and student’s general weighted average

The results clearly show that each of the dimensions of coping mechanism is positively and significantly related to student’s general weighted average with an r-values ranging from .527 to .705;  $p < .001$ . Hence, with 99% level of confidence, it can be assumed that the more adaptive and tolerable the students to academic and personal stress, the better their academic performance are.

TABLE 7

Pair of Variables	r-value	p-value	Remarks
<b>ACTIVE COPING STRATEGY</b>			
Confrontive Coping and GWA	.667**	<.001	Significant
Seeking Social Support and GWA	.659**	<.001	Significant
Planful Problem Solving and GWA	.616**	<.001	Significant
Positive Reappraisal and GWA	.641**	<.001	Significant
<b>PASSIVE COPING STRATEGY</b>			
Distancing and GWA	.527**	<.001	Significant
Self-controlling and GWA	.683**	<.001	Significant
Accepting Responsibility and GWA	.705**	<.001	Significant
Escape-Avoidance and GWA	.526**	<.001	Significant

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings revealed in this study, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between student's coping mechanism and academic performance is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that as the students positively cope with academic workloads and continuously conquer personal tribulations, better academic performance is achieved.

The researchers strongly recommend that Filipino students need to cope with academic and personal anxiety through active and passive coping strategies. Parents need to nurture their child in a supportive home-environment. When students are in their second home, teachers must continuously provide conducive learning environment to the students to ensure better academic achievement. The Supreme Student Council and Office of Student Affairs may conduct student-development program to sustain student's positive outlook in life.

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