

## Coping Styles among College Students During COVID-19 Pandemic

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v3i2.489>

| Pearl Theniel Escultor<sup>1</sup> | Roselyn Galinato<sup>2</sup> | Roselyn Labadan<sup>3</sup> |  
| Lynvin Liwa<sup>4</sup> | Felix E. Arcilla Jr.<sup>5,\*</sup> |

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> College of Teacher  
Education, Saint Michael  
College of Caraga, Nasipit  
Agusan del Norte, Philippines

<sup>5</sup>Research Department, Saint  
Michael College of Caraga,  
Nasipit Agusan del Norte,  
Philippines

\*[felixarcilla2@gmail.com](mailto:felixarcilla2@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Coping styles are essential for those with mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. This could result in either positive or negative mental health outcomes. It includes cognitive and behavioral efforts used by an individual to solve problems and reduce stress caused by these problems. This paper explores the coping styles among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers utilized a descriptive-quantitative research design to identify the coping styles used by BSED students in the new normal due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The respondents were 101 BSED English Students from the second year to the fourth year. The survey questionnaire was used as a data-gathering instrument in the quantitative approach. Based on the findings of the study, the coping styles are moderately used by the BSED students. This means the students practiced coping styles sometimes during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, it indicated that students' most popular coping styles, such as seeking social support and avoidance, followed by mental disengagement and humanitarian. The study was anchored on the theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which stated that a person's conscious and unconscious efforts solve problems and relieve stress. To help students cope with the stress of the pandemic and build resiliency, the school should offer stress management workshops and webinars. The students require assistance from the school. These stress management training sessions aim to recognize common emotions and issues associated with the ongoing pandemic.*

### KEYWORDS

*coping styles; college students; COVID-19 pandemic; descriptive-quantitative; Philippines.*

## INTRODUCTION

The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt across a wide range of socioeconomics, sectors, and institutions. Especially for education sector, among others, was confronted with a major challenge in the form of lockdowns, which had a variety of ramifications in educational activities (Nyathi, & Mathwasa, 2022). School closures move to online study and the reduction of social and networking possibilities, for example, have all impacted college students. Early research indicates that the resulting lack of routine and isolation has exacerbated mental health issues in an already susceptible group (Hamilton et al., 2020; Hamza et al., 2020). Several recent studies provide compelling evidence of the pandemic's far-reaching consequences on college students. Browning et al. (2021) discovered that many college students were unmotivated, anxious, stressed, and isolated. Indeed, the emerging literature paints a bleak picture of university students' experiences

during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, despite the rapid emergence of those critical studies, we know little about how university and college students dealt with adversity.

University and college students are especially susceptible to feelings of isolation. They are more vulnerable to anxiety and unhappiness than the common population (Awoke et al., 2021). During COVID-19 pandemic, college students are at risk of worsening those emotions because of social isolation, uncertainty, and abrupt transitions (Prowse et al., 2021). Alsoufi et al. (2020) said that the COVID-19 outbreak is expected to affect those college students' mental health. As a result, college students must continue to face their anxieties, stresses, and insecurity. Their physical health, medical conditions, and emotional well-being are all affected by how they react to a traumatic event such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Villani et al., 2021).

Moreover, coping styles play a crucial role for people with mental health issues throughout pandemics because this can result in high-quality or terrible mental health outcomes. Coping styles encompass cognitive and behavioral efforts a person uses to resolve the problems and decrease the pressure due to those problems. Therefore, the modern look at sought to a research university and college students' perceived pressure degrees, associated factors, and pressure coping strategies throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This study hypothesizes that COVID-19-associated activities grow the hazard of excessive perceived stress levels and extrude pressure coping strategies. Other significant stress coping styles included emotional and instrumental support from family, friends, and teachers. Senior High School college students at Parañaque National High School in Baclaran, on the other hand, have distinct stress coping styles that include seeking social support, mental disengagement, avoidance, and humanitarianism. Students must apprehend themselves better, mainly handling the pressure they're experiencing (Guevarra & Cimanés, 2017).

The study was anchored on Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory (1984). Coping refers to an individual's constantly evolving cognitive and behavioral efforts to manipulate external and internal needs that are deemed taxing or exceeding a person's resources. It refers to an individual's conscious and subconscious efforts to solve problems and relieve stress. According to the theory, coping is custom designed and prompted by character development and perceptual experiences. Lazarus and Folkman's theory stated that effective coping styles are dependent on the emotional capabilities associated with the problem.

The primary goal of this study was to identify the coping styles of BSED students at Saint Michael College of Caraga in the new normal due to COVID-19 Pandemic. Coping styles would assist students in remaining intellectually positive. Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic impacts the mental well-being of every student, causing loss of interest in online learning, peer pressure, and anxiety, which may lead to depression. The significance of this study would be to enhance the different coping styles that college students used during this complicated situation. The result of this study would assist the researchers in discovering and being aware of the current conditions of other students. It could help college students know how to deal with anxiety and stress during this pandemic.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### ***The Research Design***

The researchers utilized a descriptive-quantitative research design to identify the coping styles of BSED students in the normal due to COVID-19 Pandemic. The survey questionnaire was used as a data-gathering instrument in the quantitative approach. The information gathered will be interpreted based on the statistical analysis results. This research aimed to explore the perceived stress level, associated factors, and stress coping styles among College Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

### **Research Locale**

The researchers conducted the study at Saint Michael College of Caraga, located at Atupan St. Barangay 4, Nasipit, Agusan Del Norte, alongside the Cathedral of Saint Michael Parish and behind the Nasipit Plaza.

### **Research Instrument**

The researchers adopted and modified the questionnaire from Nurunnabis' (2020) study, "Coping strategies of students for stress during the COVID-19 pandemic in China: a cross-sectional study". During the first stage of scale construction, they used open-ended questions to elicit strategies and examined the relationships between the named methods and age in descriptive terms.

The research questionnaire has two parts. The first part is the respondents' demographic profile, such as age, gender, year level, and economic status. The second part is the coping styles, a survey on how students cope during the COVID-19 pandemic using avoidance, seeking social support, mental disengagement, and humanitarian.

### **Ethical Standards**

The respondents in this survey should participate willingly, without being forced or influenced. Autonomy must be recognized and adequately safeguarded. All of the information acquired about the responders might be kept private. Informed consent indicates that respondents must be fully informed about the research method and purposes at all times and must provide their approval to participate in the study. Furthermore, the researchers will be genuine in their interpretations of the findings. As a result, the researchers will notify the respondents about the survey being courteous.

The researchers protected the confidentiality of the respondents throughout the study procedure and implied the ethical principle of the human subject's protection. Accordingly, the rights for privacy data of the respondents were protected by the Republic Act 10117 "Data Privacy Acts of 2012". Thus, safety and involvement were placed differently. The researchers aim to ensure that the respondents should not set at risk of harm of any kind.

Significant adjustments in lifestyle and daily routines are necessary to avoid infections, such as regular hand washing, face masks outside the home, avoiding touching the face, nose, and eyes with hands, and social separation. Regrettably, this may substantially influence the development of mental problems. According to Ahorsu et al. 5, fear of COVID-19 corresponds with melancholy, anxiety, perceived infect ability, and germ aversion in Iranians. When Li et al. 6 analyzed the activities of Weibo (a central social media platform in China) users before and after the COVID-19 outbreak. They discovered increased negative feelings such as anxiety, despair, anger, and a greater sensitivity to social hazards. There was also a drop in pleasant feelings and life satisfaction.

The researchers were also aware of the school's strict anti-plagiarism policy. Researchers recognize that plagiarizing from the works of other authors without attribution is a serious crime.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The researchers observed the following process in gathering the data needed for this study. First, the researchers submitted a letter to the school registrar for the list of primary English students and then to the Dean of the College of Teacher Education office for the letter of approval. Also, the researchers submitted a letter of consent to the office of Academic Affairs to conduct the said research. In addition, the researchers distributed survey questionnaires online via messenger and Google form due to the pandemic situation to follow the safety



protocols implemented. The link to the state was emailed to each respondent. Their responses were recorded and saved in Google Drive automatically. Following that, the data were analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated by the researchers.

### Statistical Treatment

The researchers used the frequency and percentage and weighted mean as the statistical tools to interpret the data gathered.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Extent of the Coping Styles in terms of Seek Social Support

Seek Social Support	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. I ask someone for advice.	3.16	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
2. I talk to someone about how I feel.	3.10	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
3. I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives.	3.05	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
4. I discuss my feelings with someone.	2.95	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
5. I get sympathy and understanding from someone.	2.94	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
Average Weighted Mean	3.04	Sometimes	Moderate Extent

Table 1 shows the extent of the coping styles in terms of seek social support. As to the statement, *I ask someone for advice*, which has a weighted mean of 3.16 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. While the statement *I get sympathy and understanding from someone* has a weighted mean of 2.94 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent.

Thus, the extent of the coping styles in terms of seeking social support has an average weighted mean of 3.04 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. This means that students do seek social support sometimes.

Providing social support refers to presenting and expressing assistance to others. This conduct permits others to acquire care and pleasure and has an effective mental impact on the provider (Bokszczanin, 2012).

**Table 2.** Extent of the Coping Styles in terms of Avoidance

Avoidance	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. I get used to the idea that it is happening.	3.17	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
2. I accept the reality of the fact that it is happening.	3.10	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
3. I accept that this is happening, and it can't be changed.	3.08	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
4. I learn to live with it.	2.97	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
5. I try to make myself feel better by eating/drinking/smoking.	2.31	Seldom	Less Extent
Average Weighted Mean	2.92	Sometimes	Moderate Extent

Table 2 presents the extent of the coping styles in terms of avoidance. As to the statement, *I get used to the idea that it is happening* has a weighted mean of 3.17 with a verbal description of agree and the verbal interpretation of moderate extent. While the statement *I try to make myself feel better by eating/drinking/smoking* has a weighted mean of 2.31 with a verbal interpretation of seldom and a verbal interpretation of less extent.



Thus, the extent of the coping styles in terms of avoidance has an average weighted mean of 2.92 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. This means that students are doing avoidance sometimes.

Hagemann (2010) said that avoiding through self-medication, he agreed that such methodologies are a Band-Aid solution to the underlying trauma. Still, they'll have an adaptive detail by supporting an individual hinge upon small fulfillment understandings. In other words, avoidance might also additionally permit us to gather sources to rebuild their existence and manage distinctive challenges.

**Table 3.** Extent of the Coping Styles in terms of Mental Disengagement

Mental Disengagement	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. I turn to my academic work.	3.14	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
2. I watch TV.	2.99	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
3. I play video games.	2.83	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
4. I express myself on Facebook.	2.82	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
5. I exercise indoor.	2.69	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
Average Weighted Mean	2.90	Sometimes	Moderate Extent

Table 3 displays the extent of the coping styles in terms of mental disengagement. As to the statement, *I turn to my academic work* has a weighted mean of 3.14 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. While the statement *I exercise indoors* has a weighted mean of 2.69 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent.

Thus, the extent of the coping styles in terms of mental disengagement has an average weighted mean of 2.90 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. This means that students are doing mental disengagement sometimes.

In line with the findings, mental disengagement becomes the best coping style expected with video game play, demonstrating that video games are used to escape everyday problems (Van Ingen et al., 2016).

**Table 4.** Extent of the Coping Styles in terms of Humanitarian

Humanitarian	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. I call/text/video my friends to give them emotional support.	3.05	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
2. I hug or give a tap on my friends' shoulders.	2.92	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
3. I call/text/video my family and relatives to give assurance.	2.82	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
4. I buy my friend's favorite food.	2.41	Seldom	Less Extent
5. I donate for COVID-19 charitable organizations.	2.28	Seldom	Less Extent
Average Weighted Mean	2.70	Sometimes	Moderate Extent

Table 4 reveals the extent of the coping styles in terms of humanitarian. As to the statement, *I call/text/video my friends to give them emotional support* has a weighted mean of 3.05 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. While *I donate to COVID-19 charitable organizations* has a weighted mean of 2.28 with a verbal description of seldom and verbal interpretation of less extent.

Thus, the extent of the coping styles in terms of humanitarian has an average weighted mean of 2.70 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. This means that students are doing humanitarian sometimes.



mmunicating with family and friends via phone calls and video chats is a form of self-care that can make you and your loved ones feel less alone or isolated during stressful situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Mayberry et al., 2021).

**Table 5.** Summary of the Extent on the Coping Styles

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
Seek social support	3.04	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
Avoidance	2.92	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
Mental disengagement	2.90	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
Humanitarian	2.70	Sometimes	Moderate Extent
Average Weighted Mean	2.89	Sometimes	Moderate Extent

Table 5 illustrates a summary of the extent of the coping styles. As to Seek social support has a weighted mean of 3.04 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. While Humanitarian has a weighted mean of 2.70 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent.

Thus, the summary of the extent of the coping styles has an average weighted mean of 2.89 with a verbal description of sometimes and a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. This means that students are doing coping styles sometimes.

Coping styles play a crucial role for people with mental health issues throughout pandemics because this can cause tremendous or inadequate mental health outcomes. Coping styles consist of cognitive and behavioral efforts a person uses to clear up the problems and decrease the strain resulting from those issues. According to Cornejo (2020), college students are subjected to numerous stresses, which have a robust influence on their gaining knowledge of potential and exercise performance.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the study's findings, the coping styles are moderately used by the BSED students. This means the students sometimes practiced coping styles during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the result of the study revealed that seek social support is mainly used among the four coping styles of the students during COVID-19, which means that the respondents are mostly into seeking social support and or eliciting supportive actions from others and followed by avoidance, mental disengagement and lastly a humanitarian. According to Guevarra & Cimanés (2017), students must better understand themselves, particularly while dealing with the stress they are experiencing.

Furthermore, the study is congruent to Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory (1984) which states coping is extraordinarily customized and influenced by personality traits and perceptual experiences, as well as empirically evident that coping matters and coping styles are effective.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It was recommended that the school should offer stress management workshops and webinars. The students require assistance from the school. These stress management training sessions aim to recognize common emotions and issues associated with the ongoing pandemic. It also includes coping styles, suggestions, and tools to help students and teachers better manage stress, build resiliency, and positively adjust to the difficulties ahead. Coping is vital in preventing a negative academic outcome by lowering, limiting, or tolerating stress.

## REFERENCES

- Alsoufi, A., Alsuyihili, A., Mshergbi, A., Elhadi, A., Atiyah, H., Ashini, A., ... & Elhadi, M. (2020). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on medical education: Medical students' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding electronic learning. *PloS one*, 15(11), e0242905.
- Awoke, M., Mamo, G., Abdu, S., & Terefe, B. (2021). Perceived stress and coping strategies among undergraduate health science students of jimma university amid the COVID-19 outbreak: online cross-sectional survey. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 639955.
- Bokszczanin, A. (2012). Social support provided by adolescents following a disaster and perceived social support, sense of community at school, and proactive coping. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, 25(5), 575-592.
- Britt, T. W., Shen, W., Sinclair, R. R., Grossman, M. R., & Klieger, D. M. (2016). How much do we really know about employee resilience?. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 9(2), 378-404.
- Browning, M. H., Larson, L. R., Sharaievska, I., Rigolon, A., McAnirlin, O., Mullenbach, L., ... & Alvarez, H. O. (2021). Psychological impacts from COVID-19 among university students: Risk factors across seven states in the United States. *PloS one*, 16(1), e0245327.
- Cornejo, J. (2020). *Stress and Coping Mechanisms Among College Students* (Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Northridge).
- Guevarra, R., & Cimanos, R. (2017). Stress coping mechanism and its impact to their age among Senior High School students at Parañaque National High School-Baclaran. *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field*, 3(7), 53-65.
- Hagemann, R. P. (2010). Improving fiscal performance through fiscal councils.
- Hamilton, J. L., Nesi, J., & Choukas-Bradley, S. (2020). Teens and social media during the COVID-19 pandemic: Staying socially connected while physically distant.
- Hamza Shuja, K., Aqeel, M., Jaffar, A., & Ahmed, A. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic and impending global mental health implications. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 32(1), 32-35.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer publishing company.
- Mayberry, L. S., Berg, C. A., Greevy, R. A., Nelson, L. A., Bergner, E. M., Wallston, K. A., ... & Elasy, T. A. (2021). Mixed-methods randomized evaluation of FAMS: a mobile phone-delivered intervention to improve family/friend involvement in adults' type 2 diabetes self-care. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 55(2), 165-178.
- Nyathi, V. S., & Mathwasa, J. (2022). Educational Preparedness for Virtual Teaching and Learning during COVID-19 Lockdowns: Implication for Policy Innovation. *Randwick International of Education and Linguistics Science Journal*, 3(2), 210-220. <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v3i2.473>
- Prowse, R., Sherratt, F., Abizaid, A., Gabrys, R. L., Hellemans, K. G., Patterson, Z. R., & McQuaid, R. J. (2021). Coping with the COVID-19 pandemic: examining gender differences in stress and mental health among university students. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 12, 650759.
- Van Ingen, E., Utz, S., & Toepoel, V. (2016). Online coping after negative life events: Measurement, prevalence, and relation with internet activities and well-being. *Social Science Computer Review*, 34(5), 511-529.
- Villani, L., Pastorino, R., Molinari, E., Anelli, F., Ricciardi, W., Graffigna, G., & Boccia, S. (2021). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on psychological well-being of students in an Italian university: a web-based cross-sectional survey. *Globalization and health*, 17(1), 1-14.