

The Coping Mechanisms of First-Year Students in the Online Classes

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Received: 21 Apr 2022; Received in revised form: 19 May 2022; Accepted: 24 May 2022

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine the coping mechanisms of first-year college students taking Bachelor of Special Needs Education in a state university in the online class setting. It utilized Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method which followed his seven-step method. Three emergent themes were revealed (1) coping mechanisms, (2) adjustment of 1st-year students to online classes, (3) perception of the effects of coping mechanisms. Most participants applied three coping mechanisms, and these were (1) meditation and (2) spirituality which are considered adaptive coping mechanisms, and (3) late-night internet usage, a maladaptive coping mechanism. The participants expressed their vulnerability as a 1st-year student in terms of unfamiliarity due to the absence of face-to-face interaction, being unaccustomed to the new college environment, pressure due to unfamiliar teacher-student dynamic, and pressure in studying at a state university.

Keywords— *Coping mechanisms, online classes, 1st-year students, student coping.*

I. INTRODUCTION

It had been a common situation for students who had undergone online classes since the past school year to experience bulked stress due to the challenge of balanced academic and home responsibilities, slow internet connection, and lack of motivation and determination. For these reasons, the researchers investigated how the first-year students managed their first year of online classes inside a virtual learning environment and the coping mechanisms they developed to complete the academic year.

According to the Journal of Social Studies Education Research, the results showed that management, technical, and financial issues were the main difficulties that hindered e-learning system usage. Similarly, English language students from Jadara University in Jordan revealed that their challenges were scarcity of effective training, the lack

of accessibility, and the inconsistent teaching styles of instructors (Juradat & Ajlouni, 2021).

According to the Asian Journal of Distance Education, in the Philippines, remote learning reveals a digital divide among Filipino students (Santos, 2020). The current situation highlighted inequalities that affect accessibility to devices to adequately tune in to online class meetings and immediately

turn in assignments in the online system (Santos, 2020). Despite the efforts to make education accessible for all, many difficulties were still confronting Filipino university students in the practice of distance education (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020).

According to Cebu Normal University, most students were undergoing adjustments in recent events. Some were dealing with stress and anxiety over the uncertainty of things. Some have families heavily impacted by the COVID outbreak where their livelihood and day-to-day subsistence were a problem (Gacasan, 2020).

The study aimed to describe the applied coping mechanisms of the first-year students who are undertaking online classes in a state university in Cebu.

According to Albert Bandura's discussion of Self-Efficacy under the Social Cognitive Theory, a major source of an individual's belief about their efficacy was their ability to reduce reactions, emotions, and physical taxation from stress. Students' belief in their coping capabilities affects their ambitions, interest in academic activities, confidence in participation, and ultimately, their academic achievements.

The theoretical underpinning of this study was the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Coping was defined as an individual's constant effort to change one's behavior and cognitive effort to deal with external and or internal demands that were stressful and perceived as exceeding their capacity and or resources. The transactional model proposed that when individuals identified an essential event, they engaged in coping mechanisms to deal with the perceived challenges, threats, or loss. It had two dimensions: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping mechanisms usually result in great success towards adapting to transition-related stressors. Meanwhile, emotion-focused coping was usually maladaptive and did not result in long-term freedom from stressors.

Conceptual Framework

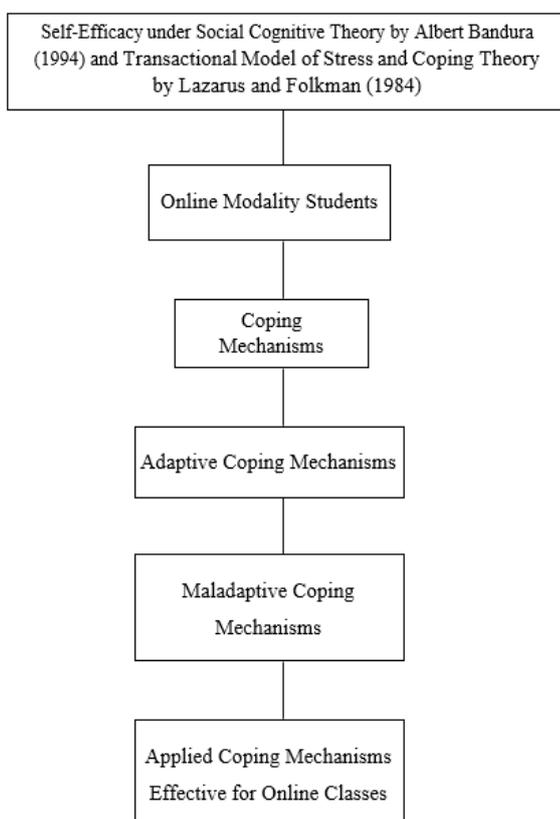


Fig.1: Conceptual framework of the study

II. METHODOLOGY

The researchers of this study used a phenomenological study design and integrated it into a qualitative research method. This research aimed to determine the coping mechanisms of first-year students taking up Bachelor of Special Needs Education in a state university in Cebu. Upon conducting the study, the researchers used Google

Meet to cater online interviews with the participants taking classes in an online environment.

The researchers used a stratified purposeful sampling of the non-probability method to select the sample of the population eligible for this study. Stratified purposeful sampling was applied in this study as the researchers seek to identify the characteristics that may influence how the phenomenon has occurred. The researchers chose a semi-structured interview as their research instrument so that the participants could orally communicate about their coping mechanism and their experiences in the new standard-setting.

After the finalization of the research, the selected participants received a surprise gift for willingly volunteering to answer the researchers' guide questions honestly. Not one of the participants was expected nor required to pay expenses during their participation. It was the researchers' initiative to pay the costs as a contribution to the participants' compensation. The researchers did not elicit any monetary gain in the study but only voluntary participation of the research subjects. The surprise gift was only given after the finalization of the research, thus, no conflict of interest may be present in this token of appreciation. This was done through GCash, an e-wallet application or cellular load as a token of appreciation for their voluntary participation in the study.

Before conducting the interview, informed consent forms were prepared and given to the participants, including their rights and responsibilities for this study.

The gathered data based on the participants' answers were analyzed and interpreted using Colaizzi's Descriptive Phenomenological Method, which discussed Colaizzi's seven-step method of data analysis. In Colaizzi's method, the transcriptions were read thoroughly, and key statements that expressed direct relevance to coping mechanisms were identified. The researchers formulated the meaning from these identified statements. The formulated meanings were clustered into themes and further concentrated to emergent themes that occurred throughout most of the participants' accounts. From the emergent themes, a full and in-depth description of the phenomenon was written. It was condensed to identify the aspects that were essential to the fundamental structure of coping mechanisms that the first-year students employed during online classes. The last step of data analysis was the verification of the fundamental structure, wherein the participants confirmed if the produced structure represented their experience adequately. Throughout this study, the researchers observed confidentiality to protect each participant's private information and experience. The researchers do not mean any harm in the entire course of the research. It was stated

in the informed consent form for the participants that their participation only involved answering experience-based questions through an online interview. The participants may decline to answer or withdraw to participate from the study at any time if they no longer feel comfortable answering the questions. The researchers ensured the participants involved that their answers remained anonymous throughout the progress and submission of the study. Their identity remained confidential and exclusive between the researchers and participants only.

All personal information given by the participants found in the informed consent form or through the online interviews will remain confidential to the public. Their answers in the study will remain anonymous. Their identity will remain exclusive between the researchers and participants alone. All recorded names, addresses, contact numbers, and e-mail addresses will not be shared unless given the permission of the specific participant.

All answers found in this study will remain anonymous.

III. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The researchers thoroughly read the interview transcripts, which identified 47 key statements that were significant to the study. By analyzing the formulated meaning of the critical statements, the researchers initially came up with six clustered themes. These themes were adjustment to online classes, 1st-year students' vulnerability to stress, perceived healthy coping mechanisms, perceived unhealthy coping mechanisms, stress-reliever, and coping mechanisms as an aide to academic adjustment. *Table 1* illustrates the frequency of the coded clustered themes.

Table 1: Clustered response frequency

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Adjustment to Online Classes	1	1	4	1	0	7
1st-year students' vulnerability to stress	1	2	1	2	0	6
Perceived healthy coping mechanisms	3	1	2	6	0	12
Perceived unhealthy coping mechanisms	1	3	2	1	2	9
As a stress-reliever	1	1	0	4	1	7
As an aide to academic adjustment	3	1	1	0	0	5

Participant Code Names: 1 – Mary Elizabeth 2 – Rena 3 – Edgar 4 – Jam 5 – Francine

The clustered themes were analyzed further and grouped into emergent themes that encompassed the primarily produced themes. The analysis ultimately delivered three emergent themes relevant to the coping mechanisms of the first-year students in online classes. These themes were adjustment of 1st-year students to online classes, coping mechanisms, and perception of the effects of coping mechanisms.

Table 2: First theme

First Theme		
Emergent Themes	Adjustment of 1st year students to online classes	
Theme Clusters	Adjustment to Online Classes	1st-year students' vulnerability to stress
Subjects derived from the formulated meanings	Comfortable in online classes	Unfamiliarity due to absence of face-to-face experience
	Difficulty in adjusting due to unfamiliar online setting	Unaccustomed to new college environment
	Continuous adjustment on online classes	Pressure due to difference of interaction between teachers and students in college
	Difficulty due to slow internet connection	Pressure in studying at a state university

Theme One: Adjustment of 1st-year Students to Online Classes

This theme described the participants' adjustment to online classes, each according to their own experience. Edgar explained that he had face-to-face classes during his high school years, unlike today, an online class in college, and he had difficulty adjusting to this kind of learning approach.

Rena also explained the vulnerability of 1st-year students to stress because they did not undergo face-to-face college experience and feel even more unfamiliar with the setting, the teachers, and even their classmates.

"lahi rajud siya sa high school, kay sa high school f2f man gud siya dayun karon na college kay online na gani? so mao to naglisud jd ko ug adjust pa." (P3, lines 20-21)

English Translation: "it's very different from high school, because high school was f2f, and then college now is online,

you know? So, it's still hard for me to adjust" (P3, lines 20-21)

"like nag adjust pa jd ko karon na college na ko kay lage lahi ra jud siya sa high school pako nga f2f class." (P2, lines 2-3)

English Translation: "like, I'm still adjusting right now that I'm in college because it's really different from when I was in high school with f2f class" (P2, lines 2-3)

Jam explains that she had adjusted a bit, but not that much, and that her adjustment is still continuous. She also explains the vulnerability of 1st-year students by sharing that she felt taken aback by college due to its unfamiliar environment outside of their comfort zone. Jam's experience is similar to that of Rena.

"out of a one hundred if we if put lang sa percent kay 70% percent kay still kuan paman ko adjusting, on classes gihapon akong pag adjust pero atleast naka adjust ko gamay" (P4, lines 4-6)

English translation: "out of a hundred percent, if we put it, I'm at 70% because I'm still currently adjusting during classes. But at least, I've adjusted a bit." (P4, lines 4-6)

"Uhhh.. naka adjust pud ko not that much... bitaw mura ra kang nakalitan kag college... on process gihapon akong pag adjust" (P4, lines 7-8)

English Translation: "Uhm... I've adjusted but not that much... It's like I was taken aback of college... I'm still on the process of adjusting" (P4, lines 7-8)

"as a 1st year student kanang I could experience the real stress as really a 1st year student like the way nga kanang naa ka sa bag-ong nga dimension inga ana naa ka sa wala sa imong comfort zone na your in a real life na gud" (P2, lines 5-10)

English Translation: "as a 1st year student, I could experience the real stress as a 1st year student in a way that you're in a new dimension, that you are outside of your comfort zone and now you're really in real life" (P2, lines 5-10)

Mary Elizabeth described that she was pressured due to the difference in interaction as the teacher-student dynamic in college is different than in high school.

"Kuan te kaning maka kuan siya makapressure sad siya kay labi nag naanad ka pag elementary nga, ay pag highschool nimo, senior high nga ma okay ra imong maestra nga unya unyaon ra nimo nya matabi tabian ra nya karon dapat kung muingon deadline, deadline jud. Nya lisud ba kay di man gud siya tanan kay masearch nimo ba." (P1, lines 3-10)

English Translation: "It's pressuring, especially when from elementary, to high school, to senior high, you've been used to the teachers that are okay with pushing deadlines further

and you can just talk them through. While now, if they say this is the deadline, it really is the deadline and it's hard because not everything can be searched." (P1, lines 3-10)

Meanwhile, Edgar feels pressured because he studied at a state university and questions his learnings and adequate actions. Edgar also expressed that after he experienced difficulty, he has now grown some comfort, has gotten used to the challenges, and has adjusted quite well. He also said that he was expecting more pressure as he moves up to 2nd year in the future.

"So nakaadjust ra dayun. I know na maybe next year or 2nd year, 3rd year na umm padung ko 2nd year 3rd year, more pressure pa gyud ba...So atleast nakaadjust ko within that time frame." (P3, lines 7-9)

English Translation: "So I've adjusted right now, I know maybe next year, or 2nd year, or 3rd year. I'm almost 2nd year, 3rd year, there would be more pressure, so at least I've adjusted within that time frame." (P3, lines 7-9)

The participants have different experiences adjusting to online classes; most have difficulties, one is well-adjusted, and one is still adjusting. Being a first-year student highlights their vulnerability due to their unfamiliarity with the college environment and teacher-student dynamics that are even furthered by the absence of face-to-face experience.

Table 3: Second theme

Second Theme		
Emergent Themes	Coping Mechanisms	
Theme Clusters	Perceived healthy coping mechanisms	Perceived unhealthy coping mechanisms
Subjects derived from the formulated meanings	Meditation	Relaxation as an excuse for laziness
	Going to nature	Late night internet usage that hurts eyesight
	Spending time with oneself	Suppressing expression of stress
	Spirituality	Emotional outbursts
	Time management	Oversleeping
	Playing with pets	Overeating
	Communicating with family	

Theme Two: Coping Mechanisms

The participants described the coping mechanisms they apply and their perceived healthiness and unhealthiness of their coping mechanisms. Most participants have coping mechanisms that are unique to themselves. Jam shared her coping mechanism meditation as her most applied coping mechanism that she also perceives as healthy. She explains that she can do meditation anywhere and anytime and makes her stress-free.

"Akong pirme jyud kay kuan ate kay having time with myself like meditation and relaxation mas commonly gud since I can do it everywhere man gyud and every time" (P4, line 12-13)

English translation: *"what I always do is having time with myself like meditation and relaxation most commonly since I can do it everywhere and every time" (P4, line 12-13)*

"For me gyud ate healthy gyud siya mas more on healthy jud siya kay makatabang man siya nako like makaiwas jud siya sa stress kanang murag mas stress free ko ing ana" (P4, line 14-15)

English translation: *"for me, it's really healthy and it's more on healthy because it helps me like... avoid stress and like I become stress-free" (P4, line 14-15)*

Edgar also used meditation such that it helps him with having patience, avoiding random burst-outs, and planning his response when he experiences similar situations.

"Meditation...Yes, meditation...Sa akona healthy siya kay maexercise ang imo pagkapatient...Dili ganing mu burstout dayun ba...And of course naa pud kay kanang imong pagka imong meditating kay imong planning pud kanang if mubalik ni nga pagkahitabo naa kay macounter ato ba..." (P3 line 15-19)

English translation: *"Meditation...yes, meditation... For me, it's healthy because it trains your patience... You don't burst out immediately... And of course, being meditating is like planning if this scenario happens again or if I encounter it again..." (P3 line 15-19)*

Both Edgar and Jam also engage in spirituality as a coping mechanism. Edgar listens to music, prayers, and reads the bible. Jam goes to church, participates in ministry and music class for God.

"spending time on things I love such as engaging in spirituality like going to church participating ministry, music class for God" (P4, line 15-16)

English translation: *"I'm spending time on things I love such as engaging in spirituality like going to church participating in ministry, a music class for God" (P4, line 15-16)*

"So what I did is meditation, listen to music and prayer...And of course, sa akona na part, also mag bible reading ko. Kana akong buhaton" (P3, line 23)

English translation: *"So, what I did is meditation, listen to music and prayer...and of course, for my part, I also read the bible. That's what I do." (P3, line 23)*

Other coping mechanisms that Jam engage in are going to nature as a form of self-relaxation and spending time with herself. However, she also admitted that her coping mechanism of relaxation sometimes becomes unhealthy as she uses it as an excuse to idle and escape her tasks.

"having time pud with my self pud" (P4, line 22)

English translation: *"Also having time for myself" (P4, line 22)*

"like mo gawas sa nature kanang a sort of relaxation pud sa akong kaugalingon" (P4, line 21)

English translation: *"Like going out in nature as a sort of relaxation for myself." (P4, line 21)*

"sometimes ma overwhelm ko in a fact nga kanang tamaran nalang sad ko like gusto nalang sad nako nga pirme ko mag meditate and relax" (P4, lines 37-38)

English translation: *"Sometimes, I get overwhelmed in fact I became lazy and I tend to like to meditate and relax only." (P4, lines 37-38)*

Mary Elizabeth enjoyed playing with her pets and time management as her coping mechanisms.

"Ang kana jung kuan kanang pag kuan time management. Na kanang kuan pinaka gamit jud nako kay makigbonding sa itoy kay mawa jud imong problema, ing ana." (P1, lines 16-18)

English translation: *"Managing my time. Also, bonding with my puppies can help take away my problems." (P1, lines 16-18)*

Rena communicated with her family, specifically heart-to-heart talks with her mother, as a coping mechanism. She perceived this as a healthy coping mechanism and stated that it makes her feel comfortable.

"kanang ang coping mechanism nako jud kuya kung ma stress na gani kay makig talk ko sa ako mama, like makig heart-to-heart talk gani ko kay sa kana nga way ma feel as ease ko nya ma comfort jud ko sa akong mama" (P2, lines 7-9)

English translation: *"my coping mechanism is when I get stressed, I talk to my mother... like heart-to-heart talk in a way that I feel at ease and I am comforted by my mother" (P2, lines 7-9)*

"Kuan kuya both siya healthy para nako kay sa akong pag talk sa akong mama kay maka feel ko ug comfort then it makes me as ease pd" (P2, lines 22-26)

English translation: "it's both healthy for me because by talking to my mother, I can feel comfort and it also makes me at ease" (P2, lines 22-26)

Rena and Mary Elizabeth engage in late-night internet use as a coping mechanism that they perceive as unhealthy. Mary Elizabeth watches videos on Facebook at night. Similarly, Rena binge-watches K-pop and K-drama videos that last an hour-long late at night, hurting her eyes.

"then unhealthy pd siya sa katong pag tanaw ug kpop videos ug kdrama series in a way of kanang gani mag sge kag tanaw sa imo cellphone the whole time so maka daot jud siya sa mata dayun usa pud ang dugay pd matulog which is also nga unhealthy pd sa lawas." (P2, lines 23-26)

English translation: Then, it is also unhealthy to watch K-pop videos and K-drama series in a way that I tend to watch and use my cellphone the whole time which can lead to eye problems. Also, sleeping late is unhealthy for our body." (P2, lines 23-26)

"sa pag tanaw nakog kpop videos ug kdrama series kuya, kay tag-as man gud ang mga videos sa kpop like mo abot jud siya ug 1hr then murag sa kdrama diay ko mag spend time mostly kay by episode man gud siya then ang episodes kay 1hr pd" (P2, lines 17-21)

English translation: "When I watch K-pop videos and K-drama series, brother... It is lengthy that it will take about one hour and maybe in the K-drama I mostly spend my time because it is by episode and each episode consist of one hour each." (P2, lines 17-21)

"Kuan pud mananaw mga videos labi na sa facebook mag scroll Facebook." (P1, line 20)

English translation: "Also watching videos, especially on Facebook... scrolling on Facebook." (P1, line 20)

Edgar described his unhealthy coping mechanism as keeping to himself and bottling up his stressful emotions. This was, in turn, a precursor to another unhealthy coping mechanism that was emotional outbursts after suppressing his feelings for so long.

"And then ang unhealthy is less social ay kanang social interaction...And unhealthy pud isya is imong gi wala nimo giplabas ba...Wala nimo gi kana ganing...voice out... mao nang unhealthy pud..." (P3, lines 86-88)

English translation: "And for the unhealthy is less social... uhm social interaction... and it is also unhealthy not to express yourself... like you don't voice it out... that's why it is also unhealthy." (P3, lines 86-88)

Coping mechanism...Uhh kuan..negative usa..kuan mechanism nako is madamay imohang surroundings kung mastress ka...For me, sa akong gud, dili kayo ko mu open up para makig kuan, makig ako idamay ako surroundings...Ang negative nako is yeah madamay ang uban, mag moro-moro ka dira... (P3, lines 56-57 and 67)

English translation: "Coping mechanism... Uhm negative. one of my coping mechanisms is my surroundings will be affected when I am stressed. For me, for me I don't really open up because I tend to affect my surroundings. My negative is yeah I affect others in a negative way like making not in the mood faces." (P3, lines 56-57 and 67)

Francine engaged in two unhealthy coping mechanisms that were oversleeping and overeating. She mentioned that she oversleeps because she doesn't go out of her home often. She also expressed that overeating, although unhealthy, serves as her energy booster to continue with academic tasks.

"kuan kanang mostly jud kana rajud oversleeping,over eating ing ana gani labi na di kaayo ko palagawas sa balay " "Nya once or twice a month kay go drinking with friends" (P5, lines 23-24)

English translation: Mostly, it is only oversleeping, overeating like that, especially since I don't really go out in our house. Then, once or twice a month I do go out to drink with my friends." (P5, lines 23-24)

"kuan ate mas na exhibit nako ang over eating" kay kanang magbuhat ko ug assignment ba di nako pwede mohunong so like mukaon nalang ko " "mura kag maboost ingon ana ba" (P5, lines 28-30)

English translation: "I exhibit more in overeating because when I do my homework, I should not quit that's why I tend to eat." "It's like you are energized, just like that." (P5, lines 28-30)

Meditation, engaging in spirituality, and late-night usage of the internet are the most applied coping mechanisms by the participants. Two participants each engage in these coping mechanisms. Two of these-meditation and engaging in spirituality, are healthy coping mechanisms, while the other is unhealthy. The themes discovered show that the participants engage in diverse coping mechanisms unique to them.

Table 4: Third theme

Third Theme		
Emergent Themes	Perception on the effects of coping mechanisms	
Theme Clusters	As a stress-reliever	As an aide to academic adjustment
Subjects derived from the formulated meanings	Gives positive energy	Aides in producing adequate school outputs
	Brings pleasure	Eliminates academic pressure
	Lessens stress	An opportunity to advice classmates
	Stabilizes mental health	

Theme Three: Perception on the Effects of Coping Mechanisms

The participants expressed their perceptions of the effect of the coping mechanisms on them. Every participant shared positive experiences that served as a stress reliever and an aide to academic adjustment. Jam and Mary Elizabeth agreed that their coping mechanisms helped lessen their stress or adverse reaction toward stress. Jam further explained that her most applied coping mechanism, meditation gave her a positive outlook in life and improved her self-esteem.

"Ang insight nako sa iyang healthiness kay it improves kanang myself esteem kanang the positive outlook in life" (P4, line 36)

English translation: *"My insight regarding its healthiness is that it improves my self-esteem in having a positive outlook in life"* (P4, line 36)

"and karon pag gina apply nako and satisfied jyud kay ko garbe gyud kanang unsa na katulong buhay ingana ra siyag in darkness and kani muy lightness ang stress sa pag eskwela kana ra ate" (P4, lines 43-44)

English translation: *"And when I apply it now, I am really satisfied because it really helped me a lot in life, it is like that in darkness and in my lightness, my stress in studying is bearable."* (P4, lines 43-44)

Francine, whose coping mechanisms were oversleeping and overeating, expressed that her coping mechanisms brought her pleasure temporarily that released stress.

"Kuan ate like kuan it brings me pleasure and when I have too much na in my mind kay murag marelease sya kadyot nya when I go out and if I eat and sleep" (P5, line 25)

English Translation: *"Uhm... Like it brings me pleasure and when I have too much in mind, it is like it will release for a while when I go out and if I eat and sleep."* (P5, line 25)

Rena said that her coping mechanism of communicating with her mother about her stress helped her mental health.

"maka help gani sa akong mental health, kanang usa pud ng maka feel kog comfort kay makig talk man jud ko sa akong mama basta ma stress nako sa mga buhatonon." (P2, lines 13-15)

English Translation: *"It can also help in my mental health, just like it is one of the things that I can feel comfortable like talking to my mother whenever I am stressed with my tasks"* (P2, lines 13-15)

Rena further explained that her coping mechanism of watching K-pop and K-drama videos late at night eliminates academic pressure as it diverts her attention temporarily away from the workload.

"then sa pag watch nakog ug kpop videos ug kdrama series kay ma divert gani akong attention ani like mawala kadali sa akong huna2 ang mga activities so mao to" (P2, lines 27-32)

English translation: *"then by watching K-pop videos and K-drama series, I can divert my attention like I forget my activities for a short while"* (P2, lines 27-32)

Mary Elizabeth stated that her coping mechanisms of time management lessened her academic pressure because her time was already divided accordingly. She also expressed that her coping mechanisms were effective because she didn't feel suicidal like other students.

"Ah, so kuan te makatabang siya nga dili gani ka makuan, dili ka kanang mapressure ba. Nga dili ka makahunahuna ug maayo sa imong mga buhatonon. Kay kanang nadivide naman gud imong oras." (P1, lines 24-25)

English translation: *"it helps in a way that I don't get pressured, that I don't think often about the things that I have to do because my time is already divided"* (P1, lines 24-25)

"Effective jud siya nako te kay nigana jud ba wa ko napressure kaayo. Wala koy kanang di kanang stress jud ka di kaayo kay ang uban muingon najud nga pwede na sila mamatay." (P1, lines 30-31)

English translation: *"it's really effective for me because it really worked, I'm not pressured that much. I don't have that much stress compared to others that really say that they could die"* (P1, lines 30-31)

Time management as a coping mechanism also helps Mary Elizabeth produce adequate school works and not crammed.

"Kanang ang mga task nga akong nabuhat kay proper jud siya. Dili gani siya dinalian kay gacramming na siya." (P1, lines 36-37)

English translation: *"the tasks that I do are really proper, it's not done in a hurry like it's crammed"* (P1, lines 36-37)

Edgar expressed his satisfaction with his coping mechanism and took it as an opportunity to advise or share his coping mechanism of spirituality and meditation with his classmates.

"Satisfied sha kay effective bitaw siya...Satisfied pud ko kay pwede nako maadvisan or mashare nako sa ako fellow classmate..." (P3, lines 96-97)

English translation: *"I'm satisfied because it's effective... I'm also satisfied because I can advise or I can share to my fellow classmates"* (P3, lines 96-97)

All participants expressed a positive effect brought by their coping mechanisms. However, some of these only temporarily divert their attention or give pleasure, such as the perceived unhealthy late-night use of the internet, oversleeping, and overeating. The perceived healthy coping mechanisms of meditation, spirituality, and communicating with family have positive effects even on a long-term basis: gaining a positive outlook in life, lessened stress, and stable mental health. Time management lessens academic pressure and aids in producing adequate school outputs. Motivation in sharing advice with classmates is a unique implication of the coping mechanisms exhibited by Edgar.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participants described their perceived adaptive coping mechanisms. The term 'healthy' was used as a layman's term of adaptive during the interview to ensure that the participants understood and could describe their experience thoroughly. Adaptive coping mechanisms are usually problem-focused, which means that they cope by addressing the problem causing stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

From their experience throughout the online classes, they used coping mechanisms that helped them cope with their stressors. The identified subjects that describe their adaptive coping mechanisms are (1) meditation, (2) spirituality, (3) going to nature, (4) spending time with oneself, (5) time management, (6) playing with pets, and (7) communicating with family. Meditation and engaging in spirituality were the most applied adaptive coping mechanisms wherein two of the participants used these

coping mechanisms. A study by Austria-Cruz in 2019 similarly revealed that spiritually inclined coping mechanisms are the most common coping mechanism by Filipino college students in Luzon.

Other adaptive coping mechanisms that were done uniquely by the participants are going to nature and spending time with themselves, time management, playing with their pets, and communicating with their loved ones. Their adaptive coping mechanisms is confirmed by a study conducted by Skinner et al. (2013) wherein self-encouragement, strategizing, comfort-seeking, and help-seeking were identified adaptive ways of coping.

Meditation, spirituality, going to nature and spending time with oneself falls under the self-encouragement adaptive coping mechanism. Time management is form of strategizing which refers to planning ahead for future problems or planning before solving problems.

Playing with pets is a form of comfort-seeking where the participant finds emotional reassurance and cheering from her pets. Communicating with family is a form of help-seeking where the participant refers to adults for instrumental aid in figuring out how to learn more effectively. Holahan et al. (2017) also supports the adaptive coping mechanisms where they stated that adaptive coping includes cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage stressful situations and associated emotional distress.

The participants described their perceived maladaptive coping mechanisms. The term 'unhealthy' was used as a layman's term of maladaptive during the interview to ensure that the participants understood and could describe their experience thoroughly. Maladaptive coping mechanisms that the students had shown throughout the online classes weren't good for them in the long run; however, they helped them temporarily.

Maladaptive coping mechanisms are usually emotion-focused and avoidant. They cope by seeking temporary relief from the stressful emotions brought by stress or avoiding the problem causing stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The identified subjects that describe their maladaptive coping mechanisms are (1) relaxation as an excuse for laziness, (2) late-night internet usage, (3) suppressing expression of stress, (4) emotional outbursts, (5) oversleeping and, (6) overeating. Late-night internet usage is the most applied maladaptive coping mechanism done by two of the participants. Relaxation as an excuse for laziness was another maladaptive coping mechanism identified. Other maladaptive coping mechanisms included suppressing the expression of stress, emotional outbursts, overeating, and oversleeping.

The maladaptive coping mechanisms are supported by Skinner et al. (2013) who stated that escape, concealment,

and projection were maladaptive ways of coping. Relaxation as an excuse for laziness, late-night internet usage, oversleeping and overeating were described by the participants as a form of temporary distraction or escape from their stress. Suppressing expression of stress falls under concealment which is preventing other people from knowing negative reactions. Emotional outbursts where the participant described taking out his stress on other people falls under projection where other people are blamed for their negative outcomes.

The participants shared their experience on their vulnerability as a 1st-year undergraduate in an online class and how it explained their coping mechanisms. The participants experienced difficulty at varying levels, such that some expressed comfort in online classes, some were continuously adjusting, and some experienced hardship due to unfamiliarity and slow internet connection. These difficulties that caused stress were exacerbated as the participants expressed their vulnerability to stress as a first-year students due to (1) unfamiliarity due to the absence of face-to-face interaction, (2) unaccustomed to the new college environment, (3) pressure due to unfamiliar teacher-student dynamic, and (4) pressure in studying at a state university.

Denovan and Macaskill (2012) similarly revealed in their study that the transition of first-year undergraduates to university is a significant shift that exposes them to stressors such as study-related concerns. However, despite experiencing such matters, they expressed that their coping mechanisms had helped relieve their stress through positivity, pleasure and stabilizing their mental health.

Similarly, another study states that the lack or presence of coping mechanisms amongst students influences mental well-being. Their coping mechanisms also served as an aid to academic adjustment. They helped produce adequate school outputs, eliminated academic pressure, and presented an opportunity to share advice with classmates. In relation, according to the study of Bustamante et al. (2021), Coping mechanism of students depends on their learning styles, their struggles, and how they control their studies. In support of the positive effects they shared, the use of adaptive coping mechanisms was linked to optimistic expectations and achievement in university. Accordingly, it was found that adaptive coping leads to positive adjustment on academic stress that lasts on a long-term basis (Denovan & Macaskill, 2012).

The participants share their most applied coping mechanism. The participants identify their adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms based on their current situation, which puts them under pressure and stress. The most used coping mechanisms among the participants were

(1) meditation, (2) spirituality, and (3) late-night internet usage. Meditation was one of the most used adaptive coping mechanisms done by two of the participants. Spirituality was also one of the most applied adaptive coping mechanisms done by two of the participants. Another study also found that spiritually inclined coping mechanisms were the most common coping mechanism of Filipino college students in Luzon (Austria-Cruz, 2019). Late-night internet usage was the most applied maladaptive coping mechanism done by two of the participants. It showed that the adaptive coping mechanism was the most applied coping strategy used by the majority of the participants, which helped them continue studying college despite being vulnerable in the online class setting.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study aimed to describe (1) adaptive coping mechanisms of the participants; (2) maladaptive coping mechanisms of the participants; (3) vulnerability of the participants as a 1st-year student; and (4) most applied coping mechanisms by the participants. The adaptive coping mechanisms revealed through the subjects in the formulated meanings were meditation, spirituality, going to nature, spending time with oneself, time management, playing with pets, and communicating with family. The maladaptive coping mechanisms revealed through the formulated meanings were relaxation as an excuse for laziness, late-night internet usage, suppressing the expression of stress, emotional outbursts, oversleeping, and overeating.

The participants expressed their vulnerability as a 1st-year student in terms of unfamiliarity due to the absence of face-to-face interaction, being unaccustomed to the new college environment, pressure due to unfamiliar teacher-student dynamic, and pressure in studying at a state university. There were three coping mechanisms found to be applied most by the participants. These are meditation and spirituality, adaptive coping mechanisms, and late-night internet usage, a maladaptive coping mechanism.

Educators can act as mediators that facilitate students' sharing of their coping mechanisms to prompt a productive discussion on the healthy or adaptive coping mechanisms that are ideally applied by students. There should be an emphasis on helping students understand coping mechanisms through reflecting on the real-life experiences of students with adaptive coping mechanisms that lead to long-term satisfaction and real-life experiences of students with maladaptive coping mechanisms that provide immediate short-term satisfaction but may lead to long-term adverse effects.

This research may be most beneficial to present and incoming undergraduate students as they will have a factual reference that presents the coping mechanisms of the 1st year undergraduate participants in dealing with the online class setting and may apply this knowledge to manage their own stressors through the adaptive coping mechanisms determined. Educators and parents may apply this knowledge in monitoring the learners and guiding them to develop adaptive coping mechanisms.

Further research relating to coping mechanisms that explore on the external influencers or factors that affect the students' choice of coping mechanisms may also be done. Future researchers may also focus on either the maladaptive and adaptive coping mechanisms and how they relate to student achievement.

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