

Coping strategies of teachers in the face of resource deficiency: Basis for a proposed intervention program

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the coping mechanisms employed by teachers in the context of resource deficiencies at Carmen District schools during the 2023-2024 school year. By understanding these dynamics, the research provided insights into improving the teachers' coping strategies in the context of limited resources. The study used a random sampling design as a way of determine the respondents. The study included 96 respondents. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather data to address the issues related to teachers' coping mechanisms in the context of resource deficiency. The variables to be measured under coping strategies were the following: Initiating Self-Instruction, Forming Support Networks, Developing Interpersonal Skills, Seeking Administrative Support, and Seeking Social Support. The study employed Spearman correlation analysis to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the teachers' profiles and the level of their coping mechanisms to address the problem of resource deficiency at Carmen District schools. The study revealed that the majority of teachers had earned a bachelor's degree and did not pursue their continuing professional growth. Additionally, teachers received less training, which resulted in them not being up to speed on the new strategy that may have enabled them to cope with resource deficits. The grade level taught and training attended had a significant relationship with coping mechanisms, as well as forming support networks and Initiating Self-Instruction. A proposed plan of action has been devised to enhance teachers' coping strategies, focusing on implementing personalized professional development initiatives tailored to meet the specific needs of educators grappling with resource shortages.

Keywords: Coping Mechanisms, teachers' strategies, resource deficiency

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the cornerstone of the intricate education ecosystem, influencing the social and intellectual growth of future learners. Teaching is an astounding profession fraught with difficulties, the most significant of which is the enduring problem of resource scarcity. Resource scarcity poses a significant obstacle to successful teaching and learning, whether due to financial limitations, restricted access to resources, or inadequate support systems. Teachers must work within a complex web of constraints to maintain their dedication to providing high-quality education in the face of these obstacles. Although coping strategies used by teachers have been well researched, there is still a significant knowledge gap regarding how teachers, in particular, deal with and adjust to resource shortages.

Maffea (2020) emphasized that schools are places where learners spend a good portion of their waking hours in different classrooms, waiting to be introduced to new ideas and subjects. The duty of imparting knowledge in foundational topics like English, math, science, and history falls on teachers. However, when basic materials are lacking in schools, this learning process becomes challenging. Lack of resources in classrooms is a global problem that makes it difficult for teachers to teach a variety of subjects. This shortcoming hinders the best possible learning outcomes while also frustrating teachers and learners.

The most significant educational component affecting learners' academic achievement, holistic learning, and advancement is the teachers. The coping abilities of these teachers are correlated with the quality of their personal and professional development. Learners' happiness depends heavily on the teacher, particularly when it comes to fostering a stable learning environment and improving learners' academic performance, as emphasized by Rajesh et al. (2021). Also, Bottiani (2019) provided empirical evidence that even highly skilled teachers may find their decision-making and teaching strategy compromised by demands and limited organizational resources. Literature shows the value of high-quality and appropriate instructional resources in teaching and learning, which influences their practical use in the classroom (Abubakar, 2020).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) prioritizes learning resources through its DepEd Orders and Memoranda. For example, the department recognizes the importance of continuing to provide quality learning resources (LR), which is crucial for the successful implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. The DepEd Memorandum No. 104, s. 2022 emphasized the Guidelines for the Provision of Textbooks, Teachers' Manual, and Supplementary Learning Resources.

The teachers at Carmen Central Elementary School, Rojas Elementary School, Tagcatong Elementary School, Cervantina Elementary School, and San Agustin Elementary School intended to teach learners the necessary basics of fundamental skills, knowledge, socialization, and values that could be applied in real-life situations. Teachers aim to address the main problem of how to cope with the insufficient learning resources in school. This inadequacy hampers the effective teaching and learning experience, hindering teachers and students from fulfilling their educational potential. One of the teachers' abilities is to adapt in the face of limited resources. Different obstacles arise, particularly during this difficult time, and teachers are still adjusting to the shortages of school resources. As a result, teachers employ a range of coping strategies to address the challenges they encounter. These coping mechanisms help teachers overcome obstacles and are a valuable aid in improving the situation.

This study explored the teachers' coping mechanisms in meeting the learners' needs within the constraints of instructional material availability for elementary teachers. It also determined the level of coping mechanisms, which aided in addressing resource deficiencies in teaching and learning activities, and examined how this coping strategy correlated with teachers' profiles. By understanding these dynamics, the research provided valuable insights into improving the teaching and learning environment, particularly in the context of limited resources.

Theoretical framework

The study employed Albert Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory. Self-efficacy theory is a fundamental concept in social cognitive psychology. It centers on the belief in one's ability to carry out the actions necessary to achieve specific objectives. It essentially comes down to one's self-assurance in one's ability to complete tasks and overcome obstacles in various aspects of life. According to Bandura, individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to pursue challenging activities with resilience, optimism, and tenacity. In contrast, those with low self-efficacy may shy away from obstacles and give up easily.

Problem statement

The study examined the coping strategies employed by teachers in response to resource deficiencies in Carmen District schools. Specifically, attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the teachers?
2. What is the level of coping strategies of the teachers to address the resource deficiency?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the teachers' profile and their coping strategies to address resource deficiency?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to determine the level of coping strategies among elementary teachers and to examine the relationship between their demographic profiles and their coping mechanisms in the context of resource deficiencies. The design was chosen for its effectiveness in exploring relationships among variables and uncovering patterns and trends in the data. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool, consisting of two main parts: the first part gathered essential background information on the respondents, while the second part focused on assessing their coping strategies when faced with limited resources. This research design enabled a thorough analysis of how demographic characteristics such as gender, teaching experience, and educational attainment relate to the coping mechanisms employed by teachers.

Population and respondents of the study

The study involved a total of 96 elementary teachers from five selected schools in the Carmen District, Carmen, Agusan del Norte, during the school year 2023–2024. The respondents included 19 males and 77 females. The schools that participated were Carmen Central Elementary School, Rojas Elementary School, Tagcatong Elementary School, San Agustin Elementary School, and Cervantina Elementary School. Carmen Central had the highest number of respondents, followed by Tagcatong, Rojas, and Cervantina with an equal number, while San Agustin had the fewest participants. These teachers were selected to represent a diverse range of experiences and teaching contexts within the district.

Sampling design

A random sampling design was employed to select the respondents from the five participating schools. All 96 teachers within these schools were included in the survey to ensure the data collected would be comprehensive and reflective of the broader teaching population in the district. This sampling method was intended to validate the study's findings and enhance its generalizability within the research locale.

Research instrument

The primary data collection tool used in the study was a researcher-made questionnaire that incorporated a five-point Likert scale to quantify responses. The scale options were as follows: Always (5 points), Often (4 points), Sometimes (3 points), Rarely (2 points), and Never (1 point). The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part I collected demographic data from the teachers, including sex, educational attainment, teaching experience, and grade level taught. Part II focused on the coping strategies utilized by teachers in response to resource deficiencies. These strategies included self-instruction, forming support networks, developing interpersonal skills, and seeking administrative and social support.

Validity and reliability of the research instrument

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed and validated by three field experts: one master teacher, the district-in-charge, and the dean of graduate studies. Based on their feedback, revisions were made to improve clarity and allow respondents to elaborate on their experiences by adding blank lines at the end of each section. For reliability testing, the questionnaire was pilot-tested in neighboring schools—Gosoon Elementary School, Cahayagan Elementary School, and Doña Josefa Antillon Elementary School. The instrument achieved a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.892, which indicates a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

Data gathering procedure

The data collection process began with the submission of a formal request to the Division Superintendent for permission to conduct the study. Upon receiving approval, the researcher proceeded to secure consent from the District Supervisor and the principals of the participating schools. The administration of the questionnaire was scheduled during the teachers' break times to avoid disruption of classes. Respondents were provided with clear instructions and ample time to complete the questionnaire at their convenience.

Scoring and quantification of data

The responses to the coping strategies section were quantified using the following interpretative scale: scores ranging from 4.50 to 5.00 were interpreted as indicating an excellent level of coping strategies; 3.50 to 4.49 as very satisfactory; 2.50 to 3.49 as satisfactory; 1.50 to 2.49 as poor; and 1.00 to 1.49 as very poor. This scoring scheme allowed the researcher to categorize and analyze the effectiveness and frequency of various coping strategies used by teachers.

Statistical treatment

The collected data were organized, tallied, and subjected to appropriate statistical treatments to ensure accuracy and meaningful interpretation. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents, including their sex, highest educational attainment, teaching experience, related trainings, and the grade level they taught. Weighted mean was employed to determine the average responses concerning the level of coping strategies used by the teachers. Lastly, the correlation coefficient was computed to examine the relationship between the demographic profiles of the teachers and their coping strategies in addressing resource deficiencies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the teachers

The majority of the 96 teacher-respondents in the Carmen District were female. Out of the total, 77 teachers or 80.2% identified as female, while only 19 teachers or 19.8% were male. This gender disparity reflects a broader trend in the teaching profession where women dominate, particularly in elementary education. According to Schieder and Gould (2022), the predominance of women in teaching roles stems from long-standing societal norms that associate the profession with caregiving, empathy, and nurturing—traits traditionally linked to women. Additionally, the perceived family-friendly nature of teaching, with regular schedules and breaks, has historically attracted women balancing both career and family responsibilities. This enduring gender imbalance continues to shape classroom dynamics and may influence how teachers approach resource management and student engagement.

In terms of highest educational attainment, the majority of the respondents held a bachelor's degree, which accounted for 67.7% of the sample. About 30.2% of teachers had

completed a master's degree, while only 1% each held either a doctoral or a professional degree. This trend indicates that while many teachers meet the minimum qualifications required for their roles, fewer pursue advanced degrees. The findings support Haleem et al. (2022), who emphasized that further academic qualifications can enhance teachers' ability to handle classroom challenges, including managing limited resources and improving student learning outcomes. Continued professional development through higher education could therefore be encouraged to strengthen teaching effectiveness.

When it comes to teaching experience, the results revealed that a significant portion - 57.3% of the teachers - had been in the profession for more than 11 years. Meanwhile, 20.8% had six to ten years of experience, 17.7% had two to five years, and only 4.2% had been teaching for a year or less. These findings suggest that the teacher workforce in the district is largely composed of seasoned educators with substantial classroom experience. Graham et al. (2020) assert that experienced teachers tend to possess deep knowledge of the curriculum, classroom management techniques, and learner-centered strategies. Their ability to adapt to educational changes, reflect on teaching practices, and innovate makes them vital assets in ensuring the quality of instruction and in responding to challenges like resource constraints.

Regarding training attendance, most teachers had participated in one to two training sessions, accounting for 36.5% of the respondents. This was followed by 34.4% who had attended three to four trainings, 15.9% with five to six trainings, and only 11.3% who had undergone more than six. Notably, 2.1% of the respondents reported not having attended any training at all. The relatively limited exposure to professional development could be attributed to several factors, including teachers' length of service, interest levels, and institutional support. Hafeez (2021) emphasized the importance of professional training in equipping teachers with modern pedagogical techniques, encouraging inclusivity, and enhancing their capacity to address student needs. Increasing training opportunities may thus help teachers stay current and resilient amid evolving classroom demands.

The respondents taught across all elementary grade levels. About 10.4% were assigned to kindergarten, 13.5% each taught grades 1 and 2, and 11.5% handled grade 3. The highest concentration of teachers was in grade 4, comprising 17.7% of the sample, followed by grades 5 and 6 with 16.7% each. The concentration of teachers in grade 4 suggests a strategic placement to support students at a transitional stage of learning. This grade marks a shift from foundational skills to more complex cognitive tasks, requiring teachers to provide both academic rigor and emotional support. Ensuring teacher availability at this level is crucial for sustaining student progress and literacy development.

Coping strategies of the teachers to address the resource deficiency

The data reveal that teachers in the Carmen District exhibit very satisfactory levels of coping strategies when faced with resource deficiencies. These strategies include initiating self-instruction, forming support networks, developing interpersonal skills, seeking administrative support, and seeking social support.

Among these strategies, initiating self-instruction emerged as one of the most practiced. The highest-rated item in this category was the statement, "I actively seek opportunities for self-learning and skill improvement to enhance my coping mechanisms in the teaching environment," which received a weighted mean of 4.44. This suggests that teachers are proactive in pursuing self-directed professional development to address challenges related to limited resources. Many

shared their problems and experiences during Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, using these collaborative opportunities to enhance their coping mechanisms. This initiative fosters fulfillment and growth, as exploring one's interests and strengths leads to increased resilience and adaptability in the classroom.

The lowest-rated item in this category, "I effectively use self-reflection and self-directed learning to address and overcome the stressors associated with my teaching responsibilities," still earned a respectable weighted mean of 4.16. This indicates that while self-reflection is practiced, some teachers may be less comfortable expressing personal challenges during group sessions like LAC meetings. Nonetheless, the overall weighted mean of 4.27 signifies that self-instruction is a consistently strong coping mechanism for teachers.

Forming support networks is another effective strategy, with teachers recognizing the value of peer collaboration. The statement, "I believe that collaborating with other teachers and forming support networks is crucial for effective coping," obtained the highest mean of 4.34. This reflects a shared belief that exchanging insights and resources with colleagues is a vital component of managing classroom challenges. On the other hand, "I actively contribute to building a supportive community within my school," received the lowest mean of 4.12, suggesting that while collaboration is valued, not all teachers take an active role in community building.

Despite this, the overall mean score of 4.26 for support network formation indicates a very satisfactory level of coping. These networks help reduce isolation, foster professional relationships, and promote resilience. This finding supports the research of Mora-Ruano et al. (2019) and Kolleck et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of nurturing school communities to address teaching challenges more effectively.

In terms of developing interpersonal skills, teachers also demonstrated competence, with the highest-rated item being, "I am aware of my body's responses (e.g., heart rate, tension) during challenging tasks," receiving a mean of 4.42. This awareness helps teachers manage emotions and maintain focus despite the stress of resource shortages. However, "Physical symptoms of stress or anxiety do not undermine my confidence in my abilities," received the lowest rating at 3.76. This implies that while some teachers experience stress-related symptoms, they do not necessarily allow these to affect their confidence or teaching performance.

The overall mean of 3.69 in this category still reflects a very satisfactory level of coping. It suggests that most teachers have developed resilience and emotional regulation strategies, though some may benefit from further support. This finding aligns with Herman et al. (2020), who found that physical symptoms of stress impact confidence to varying degrees, and support systems can strengthen resilience.

Teachers also reported positive experiences when seeking administrative support. The highest-rated statement in this dimension, "I actively engage in professional development activities suggested by supervisors," received a mean of 4.22, indicating that teachers are open to ongoing learning and feedback from leadership. Conversely, "I actively participate in professional discussions with supervisors," received the lowest mean of 3.83, suggesting that not all teachers are comfortable sharing coping strategies with their superiors.

Nevertheless, the overall mean of 4.06 in this area supports the conclusion that teachers value administrative input. This highlights the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between teachers and administrators to enhance coping strategies. The findings

support research by Skaalvik et al. (2021) and Badri et al. (2019), which underscore the importance of supervisory relationships in supporting teacher well-being.

Finally, seeking social support also scored highly as a coping mechanism. The item “I actively contribute to creating a culture of openness and collaboration with fellow teachers,” earned the highest rating of 4.48. This implies that many teachers recognize the importance of transparency and mutual support in navigating shared challenges. However, the item “I believe that connecting with teachers and sharing experiences about teaching-related challenges in resource deficiency significantly contributes to effective coping strategies,” received the lowest score of 4.26, suggesting some variability in how frequently teachers actually share these experiences.

With an overall mean of 4.32, this dimension reflects a strong tendency among teachers to rely on one another for support, insight, and collaboration. This confirms the findings of De Jong et al. (2019) and Janssen et al. (2018), who stress the importance of building communities of support to improve teacher well-being and problem-solving capacity.

Relationship between the teachers’ profile and their coping strategies to address resource deficiency

The study employed Spearman correlation analysis to determine the relationship between teachers’ profile variables and their coping mechanisms in addressing resource deficiencies. The analysis revealed that grade level taught had a significant relationship with coping strategies involving the formation of support networks ($\rho = .277$; $p = .006$). This indicates that teachers handling higher grade levels are more inclined and adept at forming collaborative support systems compared to those teaching lower grades.

This result aligns with field observations that teachers in higher grades often face more complex demands, including heavier workloads, broader curricular expectations, and diverse student needs. To navigate these challenges, they tend to engage more actively in peer collaboration, sharing resources, exchanging strategies, and offering emotional support. These networks foster a sense of camaraderie and resilience, which are essential for sustaining motivation and job satisfaction. The finding supports prior studies by Pozas et al. (2023) and Belay et al. (2022), which emphasize the value of professional communities in improving teachers’ ability to cope with institutional and instructional challenges.

Another significant finding of the analysis is the positive correlation between training attended and coping through self-instruction ($\rho = .230$; $p = .024$). This suggests that teachers who have participated in more professional development activities are more likely to employ self-initiated coping strategies, such as independent learning and self-reflection. The rejection of the null hypothesis in this regard underscores the vital role of continuous training in fostering self-reliance and adaptability among teachers.

Field observations support this result, as teachers who engage in workshops, seminars, and related training programs often exhibit greater confidence and autonomy in tackling classroom challenges. These opportunities not only equip them with practical tools but also promote a mindset of lifelong learning. Literature by Bergmark (2020) and others further validates this relationship, highlighting that training enhances teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, and instructional adaptability. Empowered by professional development, teachers are more capable of adjusting to resource constraints and improving student outcomes through innovative methods.

However, the analysis showed no significant relationship between other demographic factors, such as sex, educational attainment, and teaching experience, and any specific coping mechanism. The p-values for these variables exceeded the 0.05 threshold, suggesting that while these characteristics may influence broader professional experiences, they do not directly predict how teachers respond to resource scarcity.

This finding is consistent with previous research by Jelińska and Paradowski (2021), which suggests that coping strategies are shaped more by situational and contextual factors than by demographic traits alone. Elements such as school culture, administrative support, and availability of institutional resources significantly influence how teachers manage stress and resource limitations. While individual attributes do play a role, the adaptability of coping strategies often depends on the environmental conditions in which teachers operate.

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of grade-level responsibilities and access to professional training as key factors influencing coping mechanisms among teachers. Meanwhile, demographic characteristics appear to have a limited direct impact. These insights emphasize the need for educational institutions to strengthen collaborative practices and provide targeted professional development as proactive strategies to support teachers, especially in resource-challenged contexts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data presented, many of the teachers hold a bachelor's degree and do not pursue further professional development. Teachers had varying coping mechanisms amidst resource shortages. Teachers' profiles had no bearing on the level of coping mechanisms in developing interpersonal skills, seeking administrative support, or seeking social support. It is worth noting that because some indicators had a somewhat lower weighted mean than others, a proposed intervention plan for teachers to improve their coping mechanisms in the face of resource constraints was necessary.

A Proposed Plan of Action

To improve the coping mechanisms of teachers in the field, particularly at the Department of Education, this proposed intervention plan of action describes targeted programs, their key result areas, strategies/activities, persons involved, and success indicators. It may be necessary to adjust the program in response to ongoing assessment and input.

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