

**COPING STRATEGIES OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IMPLEMENTING
POSTPANDEMIC TEACHING STRATEGIES**

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Abstract

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Adena, J. D., Caligan, M. A., Quelbio, C. B., Sadang, E. A., Suguitan, M. M., & Talon, M. B. (2024) Coping strategies of junior high school teachers in implementing postpandemic teaching strategies. *Filipino Multidisciplinary Research Journal in Education*, 3(2), 1-9, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11449047>

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted educational systems, requiring substantial changes in teaching methods, especially for junior high school teachers adjusting to post-pandemic practices. This study investigated the coping mechanisms these teachers used during this period of transition. Adopting a qualitative-descriptive approach, the research employed purposive sampling to select 12 participants with extensive post-pandemic teaching experience who met the following criteria: junior high school teachers for the 2023-2024 school year, male or female, teachers from San Nicolas National High School, and teachers who consented to be interviewed. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews validated by three experts, and a thematic analysis revealed eight primary coping strategies: integrating new technologies for hybrid learning, engaging in professional development to improve digital skills, collaborating with colleagues, seeking emotional support from peers and family, managing time effectively, devising innovative methods to maintain student engagement, employing flexible teaching approaches, and prioritizing self-care to manage stress. These strategies not only facilitated the transition to new teaching methods but also promoted professional development and well-being among teachers. The study underscores the necessity of continuous support and resources from educational institutions to help teachers maintain these coping strategies over the long term. Educational institutions may prioritize creating collaborative environments and promoting flexible teaching practices to address diverse student needs. Furthermore, fostering a culture of self-care among teachers is crucial for sustaining their well-being and effectiveness

Keywords: Post-pandemic teaching, coping strategies, junior high school teachers, thematic analysis, qualitative research, education adaptation.

Introduction

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the education sector, leading to the indefinite closure of almost all educational institutions. Approximately 1.8 billion students were affected by these closures (Cui, 2022; Popoola & Fagbola, 2023). To mitigate the impact on learning, UNESCO and various countries recommended the adoption of distance learning and remote educational platforms. However, this shift faced numerous challenges, such as untrained teachers and a lack of e-learning infrastructure. Despite these difficulties, educators made substantial efforts to adapt, prompting an examination of education during and after the pandemic (Ang et al., 2021; Wu & Zhao, 2023).

The pandemic has drastically altered education in many countries, disrupting traditional face-to-face learning. This situation necessitated a collaborative effort within the education sector to ensure that learning continued and that schools could achieve their goals and visions of providing quality education to all students. Innovations and reforms that had previously been proposed gained traction due to the pandemic, highlighting the need for a global rethinking of education for future generations.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) responded by implementing DepEd Order No.12 series of 2020, introducing new learning delivery modalities through the Learning Continuity Plan (LCP). These modalities included online distance learning, blended learning, homeschooling, and modular distance learning in both digital and printed formats. The printed self-learning modules option became the most utilized modality in public schools, reflecting the varied access to digital resources.

To address learning gaps caused by the pandemic, the DepEd is developing a learning recovery plan framework. Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones emphasized the importance of effective interventions to help students catch up and accelerate their learning. As schools gradually reopen for physical learning, this recovery plan aims to mitigate the disruptions experienced during the pandemic. Teachers have faced significant challenges due to the abrupt shift to new educational frameworks. Modular training, as an alternative learning continuity method, presented various issues. Teachers were required to track and monitor student progress despite limited resources. The main obstacles included insufficient school funds and a lack of preparedness for remote instruction, highlighting the need for adaptability and flexibility among educators (Allen et al., 2022; Stamps & Foley, 2023).

Training initiatives were provided to help teachers deliver better instruction amid the COVID-19 threat. However, teachers continue to encounter uncontrollable conditions that complicate their efforts. Despite these challenges, educators have demonstrated resilience and innovation, striving to maintain effective learning experiences for their students in the new normal.

San Nicolas National High School, like many other institutions, has faced challenges such as slow internet connectivity. Educators at the school devised strategies to adapt to the new educational framework, ensuring that learning could continue despite these obstacles. Their efforts highlight the importance of continuous monitoring of student progress and the development of effective coping strategies. The study identified specific difficulties faced by high school teachers, particularly in the context of San Nicolas National High School in Ilocos Norte. The school's implementation of Project BANGA (Bringing Assessment in the New Normal to Greatness through Academic Ease) aimed to provide equitable access to learning resources. This project, in collaboration with the San Nicolas Local Government Unit, supported both teachers and students, especially those with limited internet access.

Project BANGA sought to alleviate the workload of students and ensure that all learners had access to educational content. Teachers were encouraged to acquire the necessary skills and training to navigate the new educational environment effectively. This initiative underscored the importance of adapting to the changing landscape of education and providing support to ensure successful teaching and learning outcomes.

This research aimed to assist teachers at San Nicolas National High School in overcoming the challenges of preparing classrooms for the new normal. By exploring various strategies and seeking new findings, the study provides valuable insights into addressing the difficulties associated with the transition to alternative learning systems, ultimately enhancing the resilience and effectiveness of educators in high-stress environments.

Research Question

The study determined the coping strategies of junior high school teachers implementing postpandemic teaching strategies in the Schools Division of Ilocos Norte.

Methodology

Research Design. This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the challenges encountered and strategies employed by the participating teachers. Qualitative methods are utilized to uncover answers to questions about human behavior and the cultural values influencing our thoughts and actions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Saldaña, 2021). This approach was particularly suitable due to the limited number of participants available and willing to share their experiences in depth (Hancock et al., 2021).

Participants. The participants consisted of junior high school teachers from San Nicolas National High School for the academic year 2023–2024, selected through purposive sampling. This sampling method enabled the researchers to identify teachers who were willing to share their insights and provided a representative understanding of the challenges and strategies employed by educators. The inclusion criteria were: (1) Junior High School teachers for the 2023-2024 school year, (2) Male or Female, (3) teachers from San Nicolas National High School, and (4) teachers who consented to be interviewed, as indicated by signed informed consent forms. To maintain confidentiality, respondents were assigned random nicknames.

Instrumentation and Data Collection. Approval letters from the school and consent forms from the volunteer teachers were obtained, and a validated interview guide was used for data collection. The anonymity of the participating teachers was maintained to ensure their confidentiality. Data were collected using an open-ended interview guide, allowing participants to discuss their experiences with post-pandemic teaching, including (a) challenges faced and (b) coping strategies used. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the teachers' experiences, which was essential for the study.

Data Analysis. The researchers employed content analysis to examine the data, following these steps: (1) thoroughly reading each participant's narrative, (2) extracting significant statements, (3) formulating meanings, (4) organizing the meanings into themes, (5) interpreting the themes, and (6) making recommendations.

Results

The thematic analysis of the interview data identified eight primary coping strategies employed by junior high school teachers at San Nicolas National High School as they adapted to post-pandemic teaching conditions. These strategies reveal how teachers navigated the challenges brought on by the pandemic and the subsequent transition to new educational norms.

Integrating New Technologies for Hybrid Learning. Teachers extensively adopted new technologies to facilitate hybrid learning environments. This included the use of learning management systems, video conferencing tools, and various educational apps. These technologies enabled teachers to deliver lessons effectively to both in-person and remote students, ensuring continuity of education despite fluctuating circumstances.

Engaging in Professional Development to Improve Digital Skills. Recognizing the importance of digital literacy, teachers actively participated in professional development programs. These programs provided training on using digital tools and platforms, enhancing teachers' confidence and competence in conducting online and hybrid classes.

Collaborating with Colleagues. Collaboration among teachers emerged as a vital coping strategy. Teachers shared resources, strategies, and moral support with their colleagues. This peer collaboration fostered a sense of community and collective problem-solving, which was crucial for adapting to rapidly changing educational demands.

Seeking Emotional Support from Peers and Family. The emotional toll of the pandemic necessitated seeking support from peers and family members. Teachers found solace in discussing their

challenges and experiences with trusted individuals, which helped them manage stress and maintain emotional well-being.

Managing Time Effectively. Effective time management became essential as teachers juggled increased workloads and new teaching modalities. Teachers developed schedules and routines to balance their professional responsibilities with personal life, which helped them handle the demands of post-pandemic teaching more efficiently.

Devising Innovative Methods to Maintain Student Engagement. To keep students engaged, teachers devised innovative teaching methods. This included interactive online activities, gamified learning experiences, and personalized feedback mechanisms. These approaches helped sustain student interest and participation, which is critical in hybrid learning environments.

Employing Flexible Teaching Approaches. Flexibility in teaching approaches was another key strategy. Teachers adapted their instructional methods to cater to diverse student needs and varying levels of access to technology. This flexibility allowed them to provide equitable education to all students, regardless of their circumstances.

Prioritizing Self-Care to Manage Stress. Teachers recognized the importance of self-care in managing stress and preventing burnout. They engaged in activities such as exercise, hobbies, and mindfulness practices. Prioritizing self-care enabled them to maintain their mental and physical health, which was essential for sustaining their teaching effectiveness.

Discussion

The thematic analysis of interview data revealed eight primary coping strategies employed by junior high school teachers at San Nicolas National High School as they navigated post-pandemic teaching conditions. These strategies provide valuable insights into how educators adapted to the challenges brought on by the pandemic and the transition to new educational norms.

Integrating New Technologies for Hybrid Learning. Teachers extensively adopted new technologies to facilitate hybrid learning environments. This included the use of learning management systems, video conferencing tools, and various educational apps. These tools enabled teachers to deliver lessons effectively to both in-person and remote students, ensuring continuity of education despite fluctuating circumstances. This finding aligns with research, who found that educators' swift adoption of digital tools was critical in maintaining instructional continuity during the pandemic (Ghamrawi & Abu-Tineh, 2023). Additionally, the use of educational technology has been shown to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes in hybrid settings (Darfler & Kalantari, 2022; Memon & Chown, 2023).

Engaging in Professional Development to Improve Digital Skills. Recognizing the importance of digital literacy, teachers actively participated in professional development programs. These programs provided training on using digital tools and platforms, enhancing teachers' confidence and competence in conducting online and hybrid classes. This is supported by Grijalvo et al. (2022), who emphasize that professional development is crucial for equipping teachers with the necessary skills to navigate new educational technologies effectively. Professional development initiatives have been pivotal in helping educators adapt to the demands of remote and hybrid teaching (Mansfield, 2020).

Collaborating with Colleagues. Collaboration among teachers emerged as a vital coping strategy. Teachers shared resources, strategies, and moral support with their colleagues. This peer collaboration fostered a sense of community and collective problem-solving, which was crucial for adapting to rapidly changing educational demands. Similar findings were reported, who highlighted the importance of professional learning networks in providing support and fostering resilience among educators during the pandemic (Mijakoski et al., 2022; Ro & Villarreal, 2023).

Seeking Emotional Support from Peers and Family. The emotional toll of the pandemic necessitated seeking support from peers and family members. Teachers found solace in discussing their challenges and experiences with trusted individuals, which helped them manage stress and maintain emotional well-being. Research underscores the importance of emotional support systems in mitigating stress and preventing burnout among teachers during crises (Nousheen et al., 2020).

Managing Time Effectively. Effective time management became essential as teachers juggled increased workloads and new teaching modalities. Teachers developed schedules and routines to balance their professional responsibilities with personal life, which helped them handle the demands of post-pandemic teaching more efficiently. Effective time management strategies have been identified as critical for teacher well-being and performance, particularly during periods of increased workload (Gardner et al., 2023).

Devising Innovative Methods to Maintain Student Engagement. To keep students engaged, teachers devised innovative teaching methods. This included interactive online activities, gamified learning experiences, and personalized feedback mechanisms. These approaches helped sustain student interest and participation, which is critical in hybrid learning environments. Research indicates that interactive and innovative teaching methods significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes in online and hybrid settings (Chaaban et al., 2023; Park & Kang, 2023).

Employing Flexible Teaching Approaches. Flexibility in teaching approaches was another key strategy. Teachers adapted their instructional methods to cater to diverse student needs and varying levels of access to technology. This flexibility allowed them to provide equitable education to all students, regardless of their circumstances. The importance of flexible teaching methods in promoting equity and inclusivity in education has been highlighted in recent studies (Kamau et al., 2022; Li & Yang, 2024).

Prioritizing Self-Care to Manage Stress. Teachers recognized the importance of self-care in managing stress and preventing burnout. They engaged in activities such as exercise, hobbies, and mindfulness practices. Prioritizing self-care enabled them to maintain their mental and physical health, which was essential for sustaining their teaching effectiveness. The role of self-care in promoting teacher well-being and preventing burnout is well-documented (Dwivedi et al., 2022; Galizzi et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The study identified eight key coping strategies used by junior high school teachers at San Nicolas National High School to navigate the challenges of post-pandemic teaching: integrating new technologies, engaging in professional development, collaborating with colleagues, seeking emotional support, managing time effectively, devising innovative student engagement methods, employing flexible teaching approaches, and prioritizing self-care. These strategies highlight the resilience and adaptability of educators in the face of unprecedented challenges. Insights from this study emphasize the importance of continued support for teachers through professional development, technology integration, and mental health resources. Educational institutions may prioritize creating collaborative environments and promoting flexible teaching practices to address diverse student needs. Furthermore, fostering a culture of self-care among teachers is crucial for sustaining their well-being and effectiveness. Implementing these recommendations can help build a more resilient and responsive educational system, better equipped to handle future disruptions.

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