

Challenges and Coping Strategies of BPED Students in Times of the Pandemic

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Abstract

The pandemic has presented significant challenges for the BPED students at Holy Name University. The transition to online learning has posed particular difficulties for these students, as practical courses traditionally involve hands-on activities that are not easily replicated in a virtual environment. This study aims to determine the Challenges in terms of Internet Connection and Performance Task and the Coping Strategies employed by the said respondents. The respondents of the study were 80 BPED students of Holy Name University. These respondents were enrolled in highly practical courses requiring skill development and were compelled to adapt to online classes during the pandemic.

This study used a descriptive survey design and used a researcher-made survey questionnaire to determine the challenges encountered and students' coping strategies. Results show that the majority of respondents encountered challenges such as Internet Connection issues, Home Responsibilities, Lack of Study Partners, Academic Overload, and Unavailability of Learning Resources. Additionally, a significant number of respondents reported employing coping strategies, including effective Time Management, Taking Breaks, and Seeking Support, to address these challenges. The researchers concluded that Home Responsibilities emerged as the most prevalent challenge faced by students. Interestingly, Taking a Break was identified as the primary coping strategy employed by the students. These results highlight the diverse array of challenges students confront due to the new normal and the various coping mechanisms they utilize to navigate these challenges effectively.

Keywords: Challenges; Coping Strategies; Pandemic

1. Introduction

As the number of confirmed Covid-19 instances continues to climb, students and teachers at all levels of education are shifting from the classroom to the computer. As both students and educators have realized, not every subject lends itself to an easy transition to distant learning. Teachers attempting to adapt to lecturing online have faced issues as a result of distance learning (O'Keefe, 2020). The researchers chose to conduct this study to investigate the issues faced by BPED students in learning and the coping strategies used to deal with these difficulties. Furthermore, the study's findings would be utilized as a basis to plan activities that may help students handle the challenges encountered in online learning and improve their coping strategies.

2. Literature Review

This study is anchored on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Coping Theory. Coping is a person's continually changing efforts, both cognitive and behavioral, to manage external and internal demands that are deemed to be taxing or surpassing a person's resources. It refers to a person's conscious and unconscious efforts to solve difficulties and alleviate stress. Coping is highly customized and based on a person's personality characteristics and perceptual experiences. Effective coping techniques are dependent on the emotional functions associated with the problem.

The eight emotional functions identified are self-control, confrontation, social support, emotional distancing, escape and avoidance, radical acceptance, positive reappraisal, and strategic problem-solving. (Folkman, 1980) (Lazarus, 1993)

According to the Biopsychosocial Model of Stress, stress involves three components: an external component, an internal component, and the interaction between the external and internal components (Bernard, 1994). In this study, we are going to focus on the interaction between the external and internal component. The third component of the biopsychosocial model of stress is the interaction between the external and internal components, involving the individual's cognitive processes. Lazarus (1984), have proposed a cognitive theory of stress which addresses this interaction. They refer to this interaction as a transaction, taking into account the ongoing relationship between the individual and the environment. Their theory places the emphasis on the meaning that an event has for the individual and not on the physiological responses. Lazarus et al. believe that one's view of a situation determines whether an event is experienced as stressful or not, making stress the consequence of appraisal and not the antecedent of stress. According to this theory, the way an individual appraises an event plays a fundamental role in determining, not only the magnitude of the stress response, but also the kind of coping strategies that the individual may employ in efforts to deal with the stress.

According to Kwaah and Essilfie (2017), students employed a variety of stress-reduction tactics, including praying/meditating, as well as self-distracting activities like watching TV and listening to music. Emotional and instrumental support from family, friends, and instructors were also crucial stress coping mechanisms.

In a technologically advanced world where we live, most aspects of human life are adapting to changes in order to prevent hardship as a result. Institutions, as much as humans, are affected by these changes. Information technology, computers, and the internet have been extremely beneficial to schools and students in particular. On the other side, it has caused difficulties for some students. Most students lack computer skills and the ability to access to a reliable internet connection for academic purposes. Unfortunately, the majority of the curriculum in our modern schools mainly involves the use of computers, which presents several obstacles and discomforts for students, causing them to begin to think and finally become agitated (Essel and Owusu, 2017).

Of all the theories incorporated in this study, the researchers chose the Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman. This theory is a very solid support to our study. It explains what the process of coping and how important are coping up to one's mental health. It also highlights the effective coping strategies in order to have a positive mental health.

Republic Act (RA) 10650, otherwise known as the "Open Distance Learning Act," was signed into law in order to expand and further democratize access to quality tertiary education and technical educational services

in the country with the use of open learning services. Under RA 10650, open distance learning in the Philippines for higher educational institutions (HEIs) and technical-vocational courses have the goal of providing accessible, quality education through the use of open educational resources (OER) and delivery of learning materials via print, audio-visual, electronic/computer and virtual classrooms, and face-to-face sessions.

3. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the challenges and coping strategies of the Bachelor of Physical Education student in Holy Name University in times of Pandemic in the School Year 2021-2022.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1.) What are the challenges of the students during pandemic in terms of;
 - 1.1 Internet connection; and
 - 1.2 Performance task?
- 2.) What are the coping strategies used by the students in dealing with problems related to school works in times of pandemic?

4. Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey research design to determine the challenges encountered and coping strategies of the Bachelor of Physical Education students of Holy Name University in times of pandemic. The study was conducted at the Holy Name University. The researchers chose the BPED students of Holy Name University as the participants in the said study for the reason that this program is more on demonstration which incorporates the use of an internet connection for participants' online learning.

The sampling method that was used is the convenience sampling technique for selecting forty (40) students from the second year, twenty (20) students from the third year, and twenty (20) students from the fourth year. The chosen respondents were enrolled in highly practical courses requiring skill development and were experiencing online classes during the pandemic. A researcher-made survey questionnaire was utilized with various items that ask about challenges encountered by students as well as their coping strategies employed

This study adhered to a series of steps to reach out to the participants and collect the required data. First, the researchers wrote a letter to the Administration, the COED Program Head, requesting permission to perform the study. Respondents were contacted via an online channel, which explained the study's voluntary nature as well as the anonymity of all data collected.

Each respondent got an informed consent form from the researchers. All participants have signed an informed consent form. An approved consent has been received then a link of the Google form has been sent through email or messenger.

Respondents gave their full consent after reading the informed consent form before answering the questions. Participants had the choice to withdraw from the study, and the data obtained was treated with highest secrecy and respect. After the study was completed, the data obtained from it had been properly disposed of. As a result of this action, respondents were not exposed to any vulnerabilities or hazards. Respondents were not compensated in any way for their participation in this study.

In determining the problems encountered by the students in dealing with school works and coping strategies employed by the students during the pandemic, this study used the weighted mean formula. To

determine the significant relationship between the BPED students' challenges and the coping strategies they employed, the Pearson – r was used.

5. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Internet Connection Challenges

Items	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Late submission due to poor signal.	2.55	Always
2. Internet speed can be reliable during taking classes online.	2.29	Sometimes
3. Looking for a space where I could find better internet connection, like for example, I will be studying outside the house.	2.25	Sometimes
4. The status of my internet connection is strong.	2.01	Sometimes
5. Our internet connection is weak/poor which frustrates me.	2.00	Sometimes
OVERALL	2.22	Sometimes

Legend: Interpretation

1.00-1.76 – Never

1.77-2.33- Sometimes

2.34- 3.00- Always

Table 1 presents the data on the challenges of BPED students in terms of internet connection during the time of pandemic. The students rated the overall internet connection challenges as “Sometimes” with a mean of 2.22. The item which got a high rating of 2.55 or “always” was late submission due to poor signal. While, the item “our internet connection is weak/poor which frustrates me” were rated as low with a mean rating of 2.00 or sometimes. The data indicate that the respondents feel that a strong internet connection is vital in submitting classwork. Therefore, It is very important to have a strong internet connection when passing tasks online because it offers a lot of conveniences and allows us to feel less hassle in downloading and uploading our tasks online. The faster the speeds are, the easier it is to upload them and it can make also make video calls (e.g. Zoom, Google Meet).

This result was supported by the study of Fawaz (2021) that students were concerned mainly with unconducive learning environment and internet connectivity problems which are the primary reasons they are unable to finish their assigned work.

Table 2. Performance Task Challenges

Items	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Home Responsibilities		
• I can't concentrate when someone in our family asks me to help with housework.	2.36	Always
• I can't focus/ concentrate on my assignments because I also got responsibilities at home.	2.16	Sometimes
Academic Overload		
• My teachers upload too many videos in which they explain the week's assignments, while other teachers upload files and texts which causes us burnout.	2.26	Sometimes
• The teacher does not demonstrate the proper execution of a specific dance/sports term (like backhand stroke), adding more responsibilities for us to analyze.	1.93	Sometimes
Study Partner		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's nearly impossible to catch up with my group mates whenever we have practice via video call. 	2.14	Sometimes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are not available, and you must wait for a response. As a result, I seek help from my classmates. 	2.13	Sometimes
Learning Resources		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't have electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, and cameras for the assigned performance task. 	2.30	Sometimes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For my performance task, I don't have appropriate sport-related equipment. 	1.91	Sometimes
OVERALL	2.14	Sometimes

Table 2 shows the challenges that BPED students had in terms of performance tasks throughout the pandemic. It is evident in the table that the item which earned the highest mean rating of 2.26 or Sometimes talked about the teachers uploading too many videos in which they explain the week's assignments, while other teachers upload files and texts, which causes students burnout. On the other hand, the items that garnered the lowest mean rating of 1.91 or Sometimes talked about inavailability of appropriate sport-related equipment for the students performance task. The overall mean rating for performance task challenges assessed by the students is 2.14 or Sometimes encountered. Based on the gathered results, the students experienced difficulties from the uploaded teachers' materials, responsibilities at home, communication with classmates, and the equipment needed to perform the highly practical courses.

Therefore, it shows that students couldn't concentrate on their assigned tasks due to their household duties. The fact that students are expected to help with domestic tasks could be due to the fact that they stay at home all of the time. Although it is typical for students to be given responsibilities at home in many Filipino households, the new normal in which the home also acts as a classroom has perplexed students because studying and household activities have become mixed-up.

This finding is similar to the study of Fawaz (2021), which found that the learning environment have the greatest challenge that students needed to hurdle, particularly distractions at home (e.g., responsibilities, noise) Also, according to him, students also raised their concerns about teachers giving overwhelming task loads and limitations in equipment.

Table 3. Coping Strategies

ITEMS	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Taking a Break		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do positive self-talk to motivate myself in my leisure time whenever I feel unmotivated in doing my tasks. 	2.49	Always
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do enjoyable activities to unwind from the hectic school works. 	2.36	Always
Time Management		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the group activity, I will suggest that each member must have a specific task to minimize wasting of time. 	2.45	Always
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I make a time management plan to balance the time with the school works and responsibilities at home. 	2.23	Sometimes
Seeking Support		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I seek assistance from a classmate in order to better comprehend the instructions. 	2.41	Always
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When I don't know how to do a certain dance step, I browse through YouTube. 	2.38	Always

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I accept that teachers aren't available 24/7 so I use Google to research topics that I don't fully comprehend. 	2.38	Always
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I interact with my group mates via video call to avoid misunderstandings and to allow others to catch up. 	2.20	Sometimes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I request a favor from a friend or relative in order to connect to their high-speed internet connection. 	2.01	Sometimes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I borrow some available devices either from my friends or relatives. 	1.88	Sometimes
OVERALL	2.04	Sometimes

Table 3 shows the coping strategies BPED students had throughout the pandemic. The table shows that items which got a high rating of 2.49, 2.45 and 2.41 or "always" were: students do positive self-talk to motivate themselves; During the group activity, a student will suggest that each member must have a specific task to minimize wasting of time; and student seeks assistance from a classmate in order to better comprehend the instructions. On the contrary, the item that garnered the lowest mean of 2.01 or Sometimes talked about the respondents borrowing some available devices from their friends or relatives. The overall weighted mean rating for coping strategies associated with the BPED students is 2.04 or Sometimes encountered. Based on the results, students' way of coping in this new way of learning was to motivate themselves, do activities that can unwind them from hectic school work, and seek support in talks about specific tasks in order to have a good outcome. Students will no longer see it as a problem since they already know or have the initiative to do something about it. Having a coping strategy helps the students minimize and deal with stressful situations in life. Also it helps them feel better physically and psychologically and it can impact their ability to perform their best.

This finding was supported by the study of Fawaz (2021). According to him, students cope their academic problems through seeking help from their teachers, peers and relatives and engaging in any recreational activities.

7. Conclusion

The researchers concluded that the most common challenge faced by students was home responsibilities, and the most common coping strategy employed was taking a break. Students have expressed difficulty balancing school and home commitments during distant learning, which helps them split their time. However, their focus is affected by responsibilities at home, as the home environment differs from the academic setting at school. While schools provide a quiet atmosphere conducive to studying, homes can be noisy, leading students to lose attention or not work at all. Taking a break is crucial for recovering from stress and improving performance. Engaging in recreational activities during free time serves as significant support for those struggling academically.

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