

Bridging Fear and Action: The Role of Threat and Coping Appraisals in Strengthening Emergency Preparedness

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Abstract

Low preparedness of teachers in handling school emergencies is a growing concern. I explored the threat appraisal and coping appraisal of MAPEH teachers in relation to their school emergency preparedness using qualitative study. I purposely selected six participants for an in-depth interview and thematically analyzed the data. I found that emotional burden of responsibility during emergencies and developing confidence in emergency response leading to the protective behavior of MAPEH teachers in their emergency preparedness. School leaders and DRRM coordinators may strengthen emergency preparedness by providing psychological support, stress management programs, and realistic emergency simulations that help MAPEH teachers manage emotional burden and build confidence in responding to crisis situations. I see the need for mixed methods and exploratory factor analysis to examine emotional burden, confidence building, and protection behavior among a larger and more diverse group of educators while developing instruments based on the themes and sub-themes identified in this study.

Keywords: Bridging fear and action, threat and coping appraisals, strengthening emergency preparedness

Introduction

Teachers' low preparedness to handle school emergencies is a growing concern. Researchers have identified it as a persistent concern within educational settings. The Researcher was shocked to learn that studies in international contexts found that many teachers are not well prepared to respond effectively during crises, often lacking sufficient knowledge, skills, and confidence to manage emergencies. Researchers have observed that teacher preparedness has consistently been identified across countries as a challenge in ensuring safe and responsive school environments (Alruwaili et al., 2024; Alatawi, 2025).

Researchers have documented that inadequate emergency preparedness among teachers is a persistent issue across countries. Research indicates that many teachers in Japan receive inadequate disaster preparedness training, which affects their ability to respond effectively to earthquakes and typhoons (Kawasaki et al., 2022). Researchers also found that in Indonesia, the teachers often exhibit low confidence and insufficient skills in handling emergencies, making it difficult to ensure student safety (Parrott et al., 2024).

In the Philippines, researchers observed low preparedness among teachers to manage school emergencies, a problem that has also been recognized as significant. Recent studies showed that many Department of Education (DepEd) teachers do not receive adequate training on emergency preparedness,

resulting in difficulties in responding effectively during disasters (Manuel et al., 2025). Furthermore, the Researcher recognized that several teachers were poorly prepared, raising concerns about their ability to safeguard students during crises (Dela Peña, 2025).

Despite these findings, researchers noted that there remains a gap in literature and a need to explore further the experiences of Music, Art, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) teachers regarding their threat appraisal and coping appraisal in school emergency preparedness. I learned that Rogers' (1975) study highlighted the importance of understanding to develop protective actions and preparedness practices for responding to emergencies in schools. It is for this reason that I pushed myself to conduct this study.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it explores the experiences of MAPEH teachers in handling school emergencies, particularly the internal and external factors that influence their readiness, response strategies, and coping mechanisms during crises. The Researcher aligned this study with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 on good health and well-being and SDG 4 on quality education, in support of the Vision, Mission, and Goals of Holy Cross of Davao College, which emphasize discipline and holistic development. The study may also provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of MAPEH teachers in the Davao Region, particularly in Davao City, addressing existing research gaps and strengthening systems that enhance their preparedness practices, improve their confidence in responding to emergencies, and promote safer learning environments for students.

Research Questions

I explored the threat appraisal and coping appraisal of MAPEH teachers in relation to their school emergency preparedness. Specifically, I sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the descriptions of threat appraisal in relation to school emergencies?
2. What are the descriptions of coping appraisal in relation to school emergencies?

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored in the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), which explains how individuals are driven to engage in protective behaviors when faced with perceived emergencies. It highlights two key processes: threat appraisal and coping appraisal. Threat appraisal refers to an individual's perception of the severity of a threat and their vulnerability to its harmful effects. Coping appraisal involves evaluating the effectiveness of protective responses and one's confidence in successfully carrying out the required actions.

In this study, the emergency preparedness of MAPEH teachers is shaped by their perceptions of threat and coping appraisals. Figure 1 presents the framework for understanding how MAPEH teachers develop protective actions and preparedness practices to respond to emergencies in schools.

Conceptual Lens

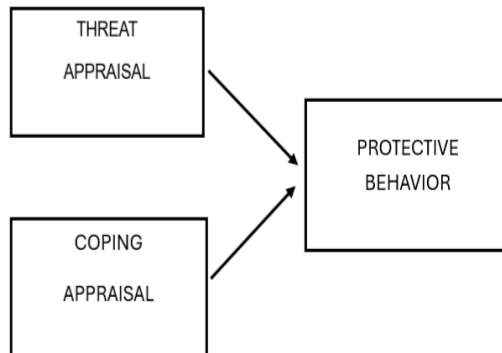


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Assumptions

In this study, the Researcher believes that reality is not fixed but constructed through the unique lived experiences of MAPEH teachers, and that each teacher's threat appraisal and coping appraisal in relation to school emergencies represents a distinct reality shaped by personal perceptions, training, and school context. This knowledge is best understood through the personal stories and insights of teachers, co-constructed between the Researcher and participant through dialogue and reflection, making it subjective and contextual. The best way to understand these experiences was to listen to teachers' narratives through interviews and immerse myself in their perspectives to identify how they perceive threats and assess their ability to respond, and also framed this study using Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers, 1975), as it explains how threat appraisal and coping appraisal influence protective actions during emergencies. Lastly, The Researcher assumed that teachers' preparedness is influenced by school policies, training, and the institution's overall safety culture, which is shaped by both personal and contextual factors.

Methodology

In this section, the steps and methods used in this study are presented. These include the research design, the study locale, the sample and sampling technique, the data-gathering technique, the data-analysis technique, and the study's trustworthiness.

Research Design

In this study, the researcher employed qualitative phenomenological research design, a method for exploring and understanding participants lived experiences in relation to a particular phenomenon. Phenomenological research focuses on describing the meanings individuals attach to their experiences while staying close to their personal realities and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design is commonly applied when researchers aim to examine participants' perceptions, feelings, and responses regarding a specific experience, especially in educational settings where understanding lived experiences is essential.

Locale of the Study

This research was conducted at a public secondary school in the Davao Region, specifically in Davao City. The school offers both junior and senior high school education and actively implements school safety and emergency preparedness activities for teachers and students. I chose this setting because it provides a meaningful environment where Junior High School (JHS) MAPEH teachers experience and respond to different school emergencies in their everyday teaching responsibilities. This made the school an appropriate setting for exploring their lived experiences, particularly their threat appraisal and coping appraisal in relation to school emergency preparedness.

Sample and Sampling Technique

In this study, six MAPEH teachers who are actively engaged in teaching and handling academic and school-related responsibilities. They were selected because of their direct experience in managing and responding to school emergencies within the school setting. Teachers who did not meet the inclusion criteria or were not actively involved in emergency-related situations were excluded to ensure that the data gathered was relevant to the study.

I utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are intentionally selected based on their relevance to the research problem (Bell & Bryman, 2023). Through in-depth interviews (IDIs), I was able to gather detailed narratives regarding their experiences allowing for a deeper and more understanding in school emergency preparedness.

Data Gathering Technique

In this study, I employed IDIs as the primary method of data collection. IDI is a qualitative research technique that involves one-on-one interviews designed to explore participants' personal experiences, perspectives, and meanings in detail (Boyce & Neale, 2006). This approach allowed my participants to freely express their thoughts and experiences regarding MAPEH teachers' preparedness for school emergencies, yielding rich, detailed, and meaningful data. An interview guide with open-ended questions was used to facilitate the conversation, allowing flexibility for follow-up and probing questions as participants' responses unfolded. This method encouraged honest and in-depth sharing in a private setting, enabling the capture of authentic narratives and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Turner, 2010)

Data Analysis Technique

The data collected from the in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). In this process, I carefully transcribed the interview data, read and re-read the transcripts to become familiar with the content, and generated initial codes from meaningful segments of the participants' responses. These codes were organized into potential themes, reviewed, and refined to reflect the data patterns accurately. I further defined and named the final themes to capture the essence of participants' experiences regarding MAPEH teachers' preparedness for school emergencies. This systematic process allowed the researcher to interpret the data in a way that remained grounded in the participants' narratives while providing a clear and coherent understanding of the phenomenon under study.

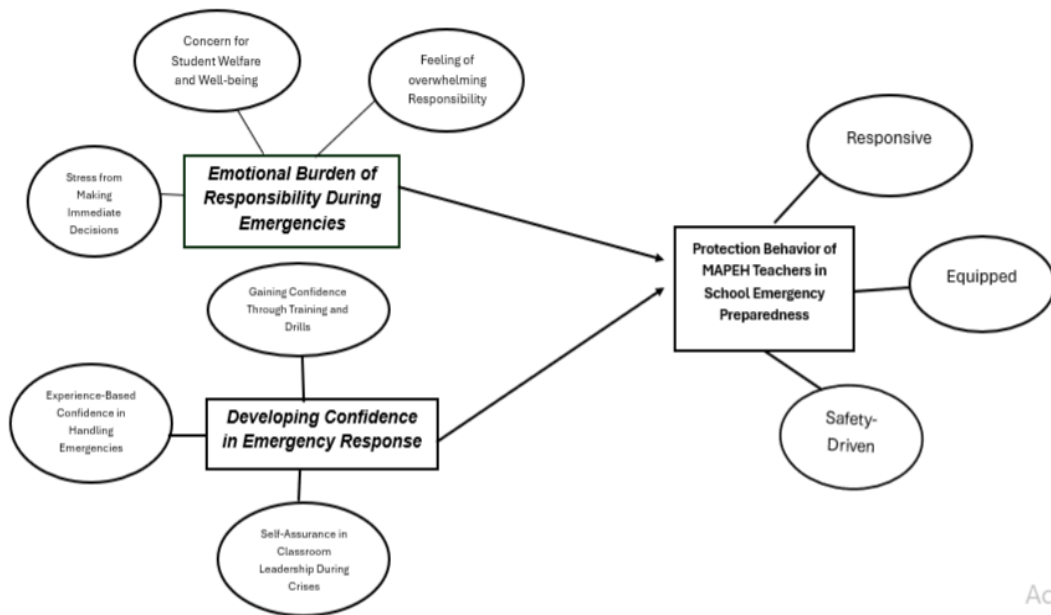
Trustworthiness of the Study

In conducting this study, I strictly adhered to the ethical standards outlined in Republic Act No. 10532 and the guidelines of Holy Cross of Davao College's Society for Moral Integration and Legal Ethics (HCDC-SMILE). To ensure the trustworthiness of my study, I established credibility through in-depth interviews, member checking, and peer debriefing to accurately reflect participants' voices. Transferability was enhanced by providing clear descriptions of the research context and participants. Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of data collection and analysis, while confirmability was strengthened through reflexive journaling and an audit trail to minimize researcher bias. This process helped present authentic findings on MAPEH teachers' experiences in school emergency preparedness.

Results

In this section, I presented the modified paradigm and narrated my conversation with my participants. At the end of this section, I presented the summary of findings.

Modified Paradigm



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Threat Appraisal in School Emergencies

As I listened to the voices of MAPEH teachers, I heard them describe emergencies in the school setting as situations that require immediate attention. At the same time, they still manage their assigned responsibilities. One participant shared:

When there is an emergency, I really think it is very dangerous, especially when I am handling many students, because the situation is hard to control. (P1, Line No. 18–20)

Similarly, another participant noted:

I notice that when something sudden happens, it is very difficult to immediately assess what to do, especially when students are already panicking. (P2, Line No. 45–47)

This idea was also reflected when another participant shared:

During drills or real emergencies, I always think that I need to act first because the risk for the students is very high. (P3, Line No. 102–104)

One participant stated:

I really get scared, especially when it happens unexpectedly, because I always think that I might not be able to protect the students. (P1, Line No. 21–23)

Supporting this, another participant shared:

There are pressure and fear because I am the teacher, I am responsible for what will happen to the student. (P2, Line No. 48–50)

Another participant further expressed:

During emergencies, I feel overwhelmed because fear comes first that a student might get hurt. (P3, Line No. 105–107)

As I listened to the participants and observed our conversations, I often heard words like "fear," "pressure," and "urgency" when discussing student safety during emergencies. I clearly saw in their serious expressions, reflective pauses, lowered voices, and tense gestures the emotional weight of their responsibility. From these responses, I realized that teachers view emergencies as high-risk situations that demand immediate action and accountability. At the same time, I felt their strong anxiety, concern, and commitment to protecting their students.

Coping Appraisal in Emergencies

As I listened to the participants, I noticed that their coping appraisal in emergencies was shaped by their confidence, preparedness, and the support available at the school. One participant shared:

Even if I know the basic steps in emergencies, I still sometimes think whether my actions would be correct if it really happens. (P1, Line No. 25–27)

In a similar emotional tone, another participant expressed:

I sometimes find it hard to decide when things happen suddenly because there is really a worry that I might do something wrong. (P2, Line No. 58–60)

This idea was also reflected when another participant openly shared:

I feel nervous during emergencies because I feel my training is still lacking, but I try my best to learn. (P3, Line No. 110–112)

One participant stated:

I feel more confident when there is regular training because I feel more prepared to respond during emergencies. (P1, Line No. 28–29)

Supporting this, another participant shared:

If I have fellow teachers to help, I don't feel too overwhelmed, especially when there are many students to assist. (P2, Line No. 61–63)

Another participant further expressed:

Drills are really important because that is where I can practice how to react when a real emergency happens. (P3, Line No. 113–115)

During the interviews, I commonly heard the words "uncertainty," "nervousness," "growing confidence," and "appreciation" for support and training in handling emergencies. I noticed their thoughtful pauses, sincere expressions, slight hesitation in their voices, and calm but reflective gestures, showing both self-doubt and willingness to improve. These observations made me realize that teachers' coping appraisal is shaped by their confidence in their abilities, preparedness through training, and reliance on teamwork. At the same time, I felt their sense of vulnerability, determination, and commitment to becoming more capable in responding to emergencies.

Summary of Findings

1. The threat appraisal of MAPEH teachers in school emergencies includes (1) perceived danger awareness, which refers to the teachers' recognition of how serious, unpredictable, and high-risk emergencies are in school especially when handling students, and (2) emotional fear and responsibility, which reflects the teachers' feelings of fear, worry, and pressure about their ability to protect learners and manage emergency situations properly.
2. The coping appraisal of MAPEH teachers in school emergencies include (1) self-confidence in emergency response which refers to the teachers perceived ability to act, decide, and respond during emergencies although sometimes accompanied by doubt and hesitation and reliance on preparedness, and (2) support which refers to training, drills, school protocols, and assistance from colleagues that help strengthen their readiness and confidence in handling emergencies.

Discussions

My findings in this study are discussed in this chapter, and I also presented the future directions and implications for practice.

Emotional Burden of Responsibility During Emergencies

In my study, I found out that threat appraisal of MAPEH teachers in school emergencies includes perceived danger awareness, which refers to the teachers' recognition of how serious, unpredictable, and high-risk emergencies are in school, especially when handling students and emotional fear and responsibility, which reflects the teachers' feelings of fear and worry. Another threat is the pressure on their ability to protect learners and manage emergencies properly. This finding agrees with Sonmez and Gokmenoglu (2022), who stated that teachers with their experience heightened anxiety and emotional stress when they feel unprepared for emergencies, particularly when student safety is at risk. Similarly, this study supports Dela Peña (2025), who emphasizes that limited preparedness increases emotional pressure among teachers during school emergencies, making them more vulnerable to fear and worry in actual scenarios.

However, my findings contradict those of Smith and McGowan (2023) and Johnson et al. (2024), contradicting the idea that continuous emergency drills, institutional support, and structured preparedness programs significantly reduce teachers' perceived threat and emotional distress during emergencies. While their study emphasizes reduced fear due to strong training systems, my findings focus on MAPEH teachers who still experience strong threat appraisal, suggesting that limited training and support in some local contexts continue to intensify their perception of danger and emotional vulnerability during school emergencies.

Developing Confidence in Emergency Response

I learned that the coping appraisal of MAPEH teachers in school emergencies includes self-confidence in emergency response, which refers to teachers' perceived ability to act, decide, and respond during emergencies, though sometimes accompanied by doubt and hesitation and by reliance on preparedness. Another coping appraisal is support, which refers to training, drills, school protocols, and assistance from colleagues that help strengthen their readiness and confidence in handling emergencies. My findings align with Parrott et al. (2024), who note that teachers' confidence in handling emergencies improves when they receive proper training and practical experience. This exposure helps them become more familiar with procedures and increases their self-efficacy in emergencies. Additionally, my current study supports the claim of Manuel et al. (2025), emphasizing that continuous training and school-based disaster preparedness programs strengthen teachers' ability to respond effectively and reduce uncertainty during emergencies.

However, my findings contrast with those of Johnson and Saunders (2023), who argue that increased confidence derived from drills does not always translate into effective performance during real-time crises, as simulated environments fail to replicate the extreme psychological stress of actual danger. While their study emphasizes that confidence does not always translate into effective performance during real-time crises, my findings emphasize that MAPEH teachers can build genuine self-confidence and a reliance on preparedness through these very same mechanisms.

Future Directions

Future researchers may employ mixed methods design to investigate further how the identified themes of emotional burden and confidence building manifest across a larger, more diverse population of educators. This approach seeks to quantify the levels of protection motivation among MAPEH teachers and subsequently utilize qualitative interviews to explain the nuances behind high or low coping appraisals.

Additionally, an Exploratory Factor Analysis may be conducted to develop instruments for emotional burden, developing confidence and protective behaviors during emergencies as variables extracted from the themes of this study. The corresponding sub-themes may be utilized as indicators of the variables mentioned.

Implications for Practice

School leaders may implement psychological support programs and stress management workshops for MAPEH teachers to effectively manage students' emotional burden during emergencies through psychological first aid and decision-making strategies. Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) coordinators may conduct regular, high-fidelity emergency simulations and practical skills-based workshops to build teachers' and students' confidence in responding to various crises.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire

Research Title: Bridging Fear and Action: The Role of Threat and Coping Appraisals in Strengthening Emergency Preparedness

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Probing Questions
What are the lived experiences of MAPEH teachers in understanding the perceived severity of emergencies in the school setting?	Share some of your thoughts on how serious emergencies can be in a school setting.	What specific situations or factors made you feel the severity of the emergency?
	What would make an emergency situation critical for you as a MAPEH teacher?	How did you assess the urgency of the situation you faced?
What are the lived experiences of MAPEH teachers regarding their perceived vulnerability within the school environment during emergencies?	Share some experiences when you felt vulnerable during a class or activity.	What factors contributed to that sense of vulnerability?
	How did you feel about the safety of your students and yourself in that moment?	How did the environment or activity make you feel more exposed or less prepared?
		In those moments, how did you respond or take action to manage the situation?
What are the lived experiences of MAPEH teachers in developing self-efficacy in responding to emergencies?	Share some experiences when you had to respond to an emergency during a class.	What specific skills or knowledge made you feel more capable during that response?
	How confident did you feel in your ability to handle the situation?	How did your training or past experiences prepare you for handling the situation?
		In reflecting on the experience, what would you have done differently, if anything?

What are the lived experiences of MAPEH teachers in applying response efficacy through preparedness measures?		In reflecting on the experience, what would you have done differently, if anything?
	Share some of your experiences with the emergency preparedness measures in place at your school.	How did the existing preparedness measures support you during the situation?
	How effective do you think they were in helping you respond during an emergency?	What specific parts of the preparedness plan did you find most useful in responding to an emergency?
		Based on your experiences, what parts of the preparedness measures would you keep or change?
What are the lived experiences of MAPEH teachers that reflect their emergency preparedness in the school?	Share some of the most helpful tools, resources, or strategies you've had access to during emergencies in your MAPEH classes.	How did these tools or resources impact your ability to manage the emergency?
	How did they contribute to your sense of preparedness?	Think of a moment where a particular resource or tool made a difference in how you responded.