**Coping Strategies and Their Relationship to Academic Performance of Elementary Pupils in The New Normal**

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ABSTRACT

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| The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented changes in the education system, compelling schools to adopt modular learning and distance education. This shift raised concerns about learners’ academic performance and their ability to cope with new learning challenges. This study aimed to determine the relationship between learning difficulties and coping mechanisms of intermediate pupils during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected schools in the Northern Conner District. A descriptive survey method was employed, involving 371 Grade 4, 5, and 6 pupils from ten public elementary schools. Results showed that most respondents were from central schools, with parents primarily engaged in farming and having attained up to high school education. Most pupils lacked ICT gadgets and access to strong internet connectivity. Learning difficulties identified include challenges with modules, psychological effects, and financial constraints. Pupils were generally undecided regarding their ICT skills, expectations, and time management. In terms of coping mechanisms, emotion-focused and avoidant strategies were perceived as mostly true, while task-focused strategies were viewed as somewhat true. The pupils’ academic performance for S.Y. 2020–2021 was described as satisfactory. No significant relationship was found between learning difficulties, coping strategies, and academic performance. Although the height of the COVID-19 crisis has passed, its long-term effects on learners' academic experiences, especially those heavily affected during the pandemic, remain evident and relevant today. The study recommends strengthening partnerships between schools and local government units to improve internet access, encouraging parents to provide ICT gadgets, and enhancing pupils’ ICT skills through joint teacher-parent efforts. A similar or comparative study in other districts is also encouraged. |

*Keywords:* *new normal education, learning difficulties, coping, coping strategies, academic performance*

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a pandemic as the worldwide spread of a disease across international boundaries, typically affecting a large number of people. In December 2019, the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was first detected in Wuhan, China, and declared a public health emergency of international concern in January 2020. By march of the same year, it was elevated to pandemic status due to its rapid and widespread transmission across countries and continents. To curb the spread of the virus, governments around the world implemented strict measures, including the temporary closure of schools and universities. According to UNESCO (2020), more than 1.2 billion learners globally were affected by these closures, with over 28 million learners in the Philippines alone transitioning from face-to-face to remote or distance learning. The Philippine government, particularly in Luzon, implemented an enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), forcing students and teachers to stay at home and adopt online learning platforms (Crawford et al., 2020). This sudden shift brought forth challenges not only in the delivery of quality education but also in the mental, emotional, and social well-being of learners.

The abrupt transition to online and modular learning due to the covid-19 pandemic introduced multiple stressors to the students’ academic lives. Most learners were unprepared for the educational shift, especially in remote and marginalized communities. In addition to academic stress, students encountered emotional, social, and economic difficulties. These compounded issues affected their learning abilities, performance, and general well-being. There is also limited empirical data comparing the coping strategies of urban and rural learners, especially in specific local settings like conner district, which experienced the same global crisis but possibly with different degrees of resiliency due to varied socio-environmental contexts.

To address this gap, this study aims to investigate the coping mechanisms employed by both urban and rural pupils in conner district in response to the educational, emotional, and psychosocial challenges brought by the covid-19 pandemic. Understanding their coping strategies will help provide insights for educational institutions, mental health professionals, and policy-makers to design support systems that are more responsive to the differentiated needs of learners based on their locality and lived experiences.

Numerous studies worldwide have acknowledged the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on education. Bao (2020) noted that higher education institutions faced risks and setbacks in the transition to digital instruction. Jacobsen (2020) pointed out that the lack of preparedness among students and families highlighted the need for global systems for educational continuity. Shaikh et al. (2004) emphasized that students under academic pressure experience stress that affects their performance, especially when coupled with family and emotional issues. Meanwhile, De Guzman et al. (2020) discussed how Filipino students coped with pandemic-induced challenges, including reducing expenses, using social media for communication, relying on family support, and finding solace in spiritual activities. Carter et al. (2003) and Gnilka et al. (2012) differentiated between positive and negative coping strategies, warning against harmful behaviors like substance use and highlighting the benefits of healthy mechanisms like physical activity, structured routines, and mindfulness. Yet, despite these contributions, limited research focuses on the urban-rural comparative lens, particularly in specific Philippine districts like Conner.

This study focuses on grade-level pupils from selected urban and rural schools within the conner district during the height of the covid-19 pandemic. It investigates and compares their coping mechanisms as influenced by educational disruptions and socio-environmental settings. The justification for this research lies in the pressing need to document and analyze how different learners navigated the challenges posed by the pandemic, especially in geographically diverse contexts. The findings can inform future educational interventions, mental health programs, and community-based responses for both ordinary and crisis-induced learning disruptions. By contributing localized data to the broader discourse on educational resiliency, the study supports more context-sensitive educational planning and policy formulation, ensuring that no learner is left behind in times of crisis.

2. Statement of the problem

The study aimed to determine the coping strategies of pupil respondents in selected schools in Northern Conner District during the COVID-19 pandemic and its relationship to academic performance for the school year 2020-2021.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the pupils respondents in terms to:

1.1. Age

1.2. Sex

1.3. School

1.4. Parent’s educational background

1.5. Parent’s occupation

1.6. Ownership of ICT gadgets

1.7. Type and level of connectivity at place of residence

1. What is the mean academic performance of the intermediate pupils for S.Y. 2020-2021?
2. What are the difficulties of the pupils related to their academic performance during the new normal in regards to:
   1. Use of modules
   2. Psychological effects

3.3. ICT skills

3.4. Learning expectations

3.5. Study time management

3.6. Financial problem

1. What are the coping mechanisms of the pupils along their learning difficulties?
2. Is there as significant difference in learning difficulties coping strategies of the pupils when grouped according to school?
3. Is there a significant relationship of the academic performance and profile of the pupil respondents?
   1. **Hypothesis**

H01: There is no significant difference in the covid-19 coping strategies of the pupils when grouped according to profile.

H02: There is no significant relationship of the coping strategies of the pupils to their academic performance for S.Y. 2020-2021.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used of the descriptive correlational method of research. It determined the learning difficulties and coping strategies of pupils’ respondents on academic related effects of the covid-19 pandemic in selected schools of northern conner district, school year 2020-2021.

**3.2 Locale of the Study**

The study was conducted in ten (10) elementary schools in northern conner district. Five (5) elementary schools were from remote schools and five (5) were from non-remote elementary schools.

**3.3 Respondents of the Study**

The respondents of the study were grades 4, 5, and 6 (intermediate pupils) of the selected schools enrolled S.Y. 2020-2021. There was a total of three hundred seventy-one (371) comes from five (5) non remote schools and five (5) remote schools to serve as respondents of the study. Total enumeration was used in the sample size of the respondents.

**3.4 Research Instrument**

The main instrument used in the study was a survey-questionnaire. The questionnaire has three parts: Part 1 gathered the demographic profile of the pupils; Part 2 were on the difficulties related to academic performance due to covid-19 pandemic. Part 3 were the coping strategies of the pupils. The questionnaire wasmodified from the coping style questionnaire by Hamby, Banyard, & Grych (2013) & coping inventory stressful situation (CISS-21).

Informal interviews with the pupil in the presence of the parent or guardian further enhanced the pupil’s understanding of the questionnaire. Also, the interview cross-validated the understanding of the pupil of the questionnaire to ensure accuracy and validity of the pupil’s answers.

Grades were obtained from the permanent records of the pupils with the permission of the pupil, guardian/parent and the classroom adviser. Secondary data analysis was used to discuss and interpret the mean academic performance of the pupils for S.Y. 2020-2021.

**3.5 Data Gathering Procedures**

The researcher sought the approval of the conduct of the study to the school district supervisor (PSDS) and school principals or teacher-in-charge of the selected schools of northern conner district. Upon approval, the researcher located the pupils randomly selected and had an appointment scheduled in the administration and retrieval of the questionnaire. The current implementation of general community quarantine in the region and the municipality with the observance of health protocols prompted the researcher in administering and retrieving the questionnaires in the respective homes of the pupil respondents.

**3.6 Statistical Analysis**

**Descriptive statistics such as frequency, ranking and percentage used in the profile of the pupils.**

**A 5pt. Likert criterion scale was used to provide descriptive statistics on the academic related effects of covid-19 pandemic to the pupils’ academic performance. `**

**Table 1: A 5pt. Likert criterion scale**

**Scale Mean Range Scale Description**

5 4.20-5.00 Much Agree (Ma)

4 3.40-4.19 Agree (A)

3 2.60-3.39 Undecided (U)

2 1.80-2.59 Disagree (D)

1 1.00-1.79 Strongly Disagree (Sd)

Weighted means was used in the discussion of the coping strategies of the pupils to the academic related effects of the pandemic.

One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test significant difference coping strategies of the pupils when grouped according to profile. Moreover, chi-square test was used to test significant relationships of the coping strategies of the pupils to their academic performance for S.Y. 2020-2021.

**4. Results and Discussion**

**4.1 Profile of The Pupil’s Respondents**

**TABLE 2. Distribution of the Respondent’s According to Age, Sex and School.**

| **Profile** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age** |  |  |
| 9 years old | 5 | 1.35 |
| 10 years old | 133 | 35.84 |
| 11 years old | 115 | 30.99 |
| 12 years old | 116 | 31.27 |
| 13 years old | 2 | 0.53 |
| **Sex** |  |  |
| Male | 184 | 49.59 |
| Female | 187 | 50.40 |
| **Mono-grade/ Central School** |  |  |
| Paddaoan ES | 51 | 13.7 |
| Manag ES | 55 | 14.8 |
| Ili ES | 60 | 16.2 |
| CCS | 63 | 17.0 |
| Cubet ES | 51 | 13.7 |
| **Multi-grade/ Non-Central School** |  |  |
| U. Katablangan ES | 23 | 6.2 |
| Liwan ES | 10 | 2.7 |
| Mabaguio ES | 17 | 4.6 |
| Nabuangan ES | 23 | 6.2 |
| Buneg ES | 18 | 4.9 |

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of the profile of the intermediate pupils according to age, sex and school. As can be seen from the table, 133 pupils or 35.84% are aged 10 years old, 116 or 31.27% are 12 years old, 115 pupils or 30.99% are 11 years old, 5 or 1.35% are 9 years old and only 2 or 0.53% are 13 years old. The frequency distribution of age within 10-12 years old. This implies that most of the respondents who participated in the study are from grades 4 and 5 and they are in the right age respectively.

as gleaned in the table 2, 187 or 50.40% female pupils and 184 or 49.59% male pupils. The data shows that there is almost equal ratio of female and male pupils of grade 4,5 and 6 pupils’ respondents at the very slight difference.

The profile in terms of pupil’s sex implies that there is equal distribution of sex of grade 4, 5 and 6 pupils in the selected schools.

The distribution of pupil respondents of the study in the participating public elementary schools. As can be gleaned, conner central school ranks 1st with 63 pupil respondents followed by Ili Elementary School with 60 pupils, 3rd school with the highest number of pupil respondents is Manag Elementary School with 55 pupils. Cubet ElementarySschool and Paddaoan Elementary School ranked 4th with equal number of pupil respondents of 51. Similarly, Nabuangan Elementary School and upper Katablangan Elementary School ranked 5th with equal number of pupils of 23. The school with the least number of pupils who participated in the study is Liwan Elementary School with 10 students.

Further analysis of the data reveal that there are far more pupil respondents from central schools (accessible) than non-central (far flung) who participated in the study.

**4.2 Table 3. Distribution of the pupils’ according to parent’s educational background.**

| **Educational Background** | **Mother’s Educational Background** | | **Father’s Educational Background** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **F** | **%** | **F** | **%** |
| Elementary level | 12 | 3.2 | 24 | 6.5 |
| Elementary Graduate | 28 | 7.5 | 29 | 7.8 |
| High School Level | 85 | 22.9 | 136 | 36.7 |
| High School Graduate | 115 | 31.0 | 80 | 21.6 |
| College level | 46 | 12.4 | 58 | 15.6 |
| College Graduate | 61 | 16.4 | 33 | 8.9 |
| with Masteral Units | 10 | 2.7 | 9 | 2.4 |
| Masteral Graduate | 12 | 3.2 | 2 | 0.5 |
| Doctorate Graduate | 2 | 0.5 | 0 | 0.0 |
| **Total** | **371** | **100** | **371** | **100** |

As presented in table 3, (136 or 36.7%) of the pupils’ fathers attained high school level of the eight identified level of educational level is college level attained with 58 fathers. High school graduate is the 2nd educational background among the respondent’s fathers. This is followed by 80 fathers who attained high school graduate background. The least educational background is at the master’s graduate.

The data implies that majority the pupils’ fathers have attained average to above average level of education being at the high school level to college graduate.

As presented in table 3, the three (3) top education background of the pupils’ mothers are: high school graduates (1st), high school level (2nd) and college level (3rd) respectively. The data shows that the educational backgrounds of the pupils’ mothers are one step higher than the pupils’ fathers.

The data implies that in terms of educational background, mothers of the pupils have higher educational background than the fathers of the pupils.

**4.3 Table 4. Distribution of the respondent’s according to parent’s occupation.**

| **Occupation** | **Father’s Occupation** | | **Mother’s Occupation** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **F** | **%** | **F** | **%** |
| Farming | 234 | 63.1 | 230 | 61.99 |
| Daily Laborer | 66 | 17.8 | 58 | 15.63 |
| Businessman/woman | 7 | 1.9 | 8 | 2.2 |
| Self-employed | 27 | 7.3 | 13 | 3.5 |
| Government Employee | 5 | 1.3 | 17 | 4.6 |
| Employed in firm/organization | 12 | 3.2 | 20 | 5.4 |
| OFW | 0 | 0 | 14 | 3.77 |
| Not Employed | 15 | 4 | 11 | 3 |
| **Total** | **371** | **100.0** | **371** | **100.0** |

As gleaned in table 4, in terms of parent’s occupation, farming is the top occupation of the pupils’ fathers with (234 or 63.1%). Similarly, farming is the dominant occupation of the pupils’ mothers with (230 or 61.99%). The 2nd most occupation for the pupils’ fathers is being a daily laborer (17.8%) which is also the same with the mothers (15.63%). Of the identified occupations, only OFW mothers were identified and no OFW father. Also, there are more mothers employed in the government than the father parents. There are 15 unemployed fathers as compared to 11 unemployed mothers.

The gathered information in the study shows that farming is the most occupation of the parent fathers and mothers as conner is undeniably an agriculture community and considering their educational background as revealed according to parents’ educational background in table 3.

This implies that education background does not guarantee better occupation in life. Also, occupation is affected by the community’s resources or the level of living in the community.

**4.4. Table 5. Distribution of the respondent’s according to ICT gadgets.**

| **ICT Gadgets** | **F** | **%** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Laptop | 35 | 9.4 |
| Printer | 23 | 6.2 |
| Wi-Fi | 14 | 3.8 |
| Tablet | 18 | 4.9 |
| Desktop | 12 | 3.2 |
| None | 269 | 72.5 |
| **Total** | **371** | **100.0** |

As gleaned in table 5 majority or (72.5%) of the pupils don’t own ICT gadgets. 18 pupils’ own tablets, (35 or 9.4%) of the pupils’ own laptops while 12 of the pupils have desktops. Of these pupils who own laptops and desktops, (23 or 6.2%) of these pupils own their printer. In terms of internet connectivity, fourteen (14) pupils have wifi’s to use.

The data in table 5 imply that the pupils in public elementary schools of Northern Conner district don’t have personal ICT gadgets to use or support them in their modular learning.

**4.5. Table 6. Distribution of the respondent’s according to type and level of connectivity at place of residence.**

| **Connectivity Status** | **F** | **%** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No Connectivity | 129 | 34.8 |
| Weak Connectivity | 158 | 42.6 |
| Strong Connectivity | 84 | 22.6 |
| Total | 371 | 100.0 |

As shown in table 6, only (22.6%) of the pupil respondents have strong connectivity at their place of residence while 34.8% do not have internet connectivity. Has internet connectivity but weak is experienced by 42.6% of the respondents. The data gathered is expected of the status of internet connectivity in the municipality.

Though the data is not something unexpected, it shows that internet connectivity needs to be improved in the municipality to provide better access to learners towards improved learning.

**4.6. Table 7. Mean academic performance of the pupil respondents,  
 S.Y. 2020-2021.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade Level** | **Quarter 1** | | | **Quarter 2** | | |
| **Mean** | **SD** | **DI** | **Mean** | **SD** | **DI** |
| Grade 4 | 84.62 | 3.89 | S | 85.73 | 4.03 | S |
| Grade 5 | 83.69 | 4.62 | S | 83.52 | 4.76 | S |
| Grade 6 | 85.35 | 3.75 | S | 82.87 | 4.52 | S |

Table 7 shows the summary of the level of academic performance of the pupils for the first and second quarter of S.Y. 2020-2021. Data revealed that the academic performance of the pupils in all grade levels in both quarters range from 82 to 85 which is described as Satisfactory. The mean academic performance of grade 4 pupils improved in the 2nd quarter as compared to the 1st quarter. Grade 5 pupils have at par or almost same mean of academic performance in both quarters. Grade 6 pupils, however, had academic performance means that declined in the 2nd quarter from the 1st quarter. This scenario can be attributed to the fact that modules during the 1st quarter are a little bit easier but as the quarter progresses the number of modules decrease but the module content increases in terms of difficulty. Also, they tend to have backlogs in doing their previous modules which develop among the pupils’ attitudes of laziness or cramming.

The data on academic performance of the pupils implies that the pandemic has no severe effect on the academic performance of the pupils. Generally, it can be assumed that the pandemic and modular learning has no significant effect to the students in achieving satisfactory level of academic performance.

**4.7. Table 8. Mean of pupils’ learning difficulties related to their academic performance during the new normal along use of modules.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **X** | **DI** |
| 1. **Use of Modules** | | |
| 1. I can easily read the contents or lessons contained in the modules. | 1.2 | SD |
| 1. I can easily understand the contents or lessons contained in the modules. | 2.0 | D |
| 1. I gain sufficient learning from the modules alone without additional support from my teacher or parents. | 3.3 | U |
| 1. Modules promote learning equal or at par with face-to-face learning. | 3.4 | U |
| 1. Modules are good learning or instructional materials. | 2.3 | D |
| **Category Mean** | **2.43** | **D** |

Table 8 shows the learning difficulties of the pupils during the new normal education that affects their academic performance. The study has identified six (6) areas of learning difficulties for the pupils: use of modules, psychological effects, ICT skills, learning expectations, study time management and financial problem. These areas of difficulties are measured with the level of agreement of the pupils to the statements provided per area.

With regards to the use of modules, the pupils generally disagree with the statements provided with a category mean of 2.43. They disagree if they easily understand the modules, the time to answer the modules is sufficient and if modular learning is at par with face-to-face learning. On the other hand, they agree that they easily read the contents of the modules and that they are good for learning or as instructional material. This finding implies that the pupils are still adapting to the modular learning and are not yet aware of the long-term effects or changes of modular learning to their education.

**4.8. Table 9. Mean of pupils’ learning difficulties related to their academic performance during the new normal along psychological effects.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **B. Psychological Effects** | **X** | **DI** |
| 1. I feel happy or excited during module release or distribution. | 3.33 | U |
| 1. Answering modules have developed negative attitude or behavior in my personality. | 3.35 | U |
| 1. I have fear that I might have a low academic performance during this modular learning. | 3.97 | A |
| 1. Modular learning has reduced my social interactions with my classmates and the community. | 3.41 | A |
| 1. Module distribution/release causes uncomfortable feelings for me. | 3.64 | A |
| **Category Mean** | **3.54** | **A** |

In terms of psychological effects of modular learning, it gained a category mean of 3.54 which is described as ‘Agree’. The pupils agreed and view that modular learning has reduced their social interactions in the classroom and community. Also they feel uncomfortable with regards to module distribution. Moreover, they are undecided along three statements related to being happy or excited during module distribution, development of negative attitude towards answering module and the fear of having low academic performance during modular learning.

**4.9. Table 10. Mean of pupils’ learning difficulties related to their academic performance during the new normal along ICT skills.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **C. ICT Skills** | **X** | **DI** |
| 1. I am not familiar in using search engines such as Google, Yahoo, YouTube, etc.… | 3.05 | U |
| 1. Internet connection or data connection in our place is very low or there is none. | 3.12 | U |
| 1. I have difficulties in communicating with my teacher and classmates thru social media like SMS, Online Platforms (FB, Messengers, Emails, etc.…) | 3.17 | U |
| 1. I have no sufficient ICT skills to use in browsing the internet for answers or other examples. | 3.74 | A |
| 1. I have limited ICT skills to help me in modular learning. | 3.03 | U |
| **Category Mean** | **3.22** | **U** |

Of the five (5) statements under ICT skills, the pupils only agreed that they have no sufficient ICT skills to use in browsing the internet for answers and other examples. This finding is consistent with the results of low ICT ownership among the pupils. All the four statements revealed that pupils are undecided. They are undecided on their familiarity in using search engines, low or no internet connectivity, difficulties in communicating with teachers and classmates thru social media and having limited ICT skills to support modular learning. Over-all the category mean is 3.22 which is interpreted as ‘Undecided’. The findings in this area of difficulty are logical because non-possession of sufficient ICT gadgets, none to weak internet connectivity determines their ICT skills.

**4.10. Table 11. Mean of pupils’ learning difficulties related to their academic performance during the new normal along learning experience.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **D. Learning Expectations** | **X** | **DI** |
| 1. My teacher provides support about the modules and takes time assist the pupils or parents. | 3.75 | A |
| 1. Modular learning is better than face to face learning. | 3.63 | A |
| 1. Modular learning promotes to the teachers understanding of the pupil’s performance during the pandemic. | 2.86 | U |
| 1. My teacher cares about my academic and social well-being during the new normal education. | 3.41 | A |
| 1. My teacher is sensitive to the needs of the pupils during the new normal education. | 2.97 | U |
| **Category Mean** | **3.32** | **U** |

As shown from table 11, the study revealed that the respondents are undecided whether their learning expectations of modular learning is a difficulty related to their academic performance during the pandemic. The category means for this area of difficulty as revealed in the table 7 is 3.28 interpreted as ‘Undecided’.

**4.11 Table 12. Mean of pupils’ learning difficulties related to their academic performance during the new normal along study time management.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **E. Study Time Management** | **X** | **DI** |
| 1. I am able to distribute accordingly the time of my home and module activities due to the pandemic. | 2.97 | U |
| 1. My parents have enough time to help or assist me or work with my modules. | 3.35 | U |
| 1. I spend more time working or answering my modules than playing. | 2.78 | U |
| 1. I have less or no work at home because I need to work and study with my modules. | 2.89 | U |
| 1. My study time has increased so much during the modular learning. | 3.51 | A |
| **Category Mean** | **3.10** | **U** |

As can be gleaned from table 12, the result is similar to the result on the learning expectation, the pupils are undecided if their study time management is a learning difficulty related to their academic performance. The category mean for this area of difficulty is 3.10 which mean ‘Undecided’.

**4.12 Table 13. Mean of pupils’ learning difficulties related to their academic performance during the new normal along financial problem.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **F. Financial Problem** | **X** | **DI** |
| 1. I have insufficient ICT equipment (printer/laptop) to use in dealing with the modules. | 3.65 | A |
| 1. I have insufficient ICT gadgets (Wi-Fi, mobile phone, iPad) to use in dealing with the modules. | 3.89 | A |
| 1. My load allowance for internet is limited. | 3.53 | A |
| 1. Printing and photocopying services of academic requirements is costly. | 3.43 | A |
| 1. Modular learning is a burden to our family’s monthly budget. | 3.32 | A |
| **Category Mean** | **3.56** | **A** |

Along financial problems, the category mean is 3.56 described as ‘Agree’. The students have agreed on all the five statements in this area of difficulty as shown in table 13. This implies that financial problem is a learning difficulty for them that can affect their academic performance in this modular learning.

**4.13 Table 14. Summary table on the pupils’ learning difficulties related to their academic performance during the new normal.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning Difficulties** | **X** | **DI** |
| 1. Use of Modules | 2.43 | D |
| 1. Psychological Effects | 3.54 | A |
| 1. ICT Skills | 3.22 | U |
| 1. Learning Expectations | 3.32 | U |
| 1. Study Time Management | 3.10 | U |
| 1. Financial Problem | 3.56 | A |
| **OVER-ALL MEAN** | **3.20** | **U** |

1. **COPING STRATEGIES OF THE PUPILS ALONG THEIR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

In the area on task focused, nine (9) of the statements were identified by the students as “Somewhat True about Me’ with means ranging from 2.95- 3.21. The statement about making an action plan and following it was determined by the pupils to be ‘Mostly True about Me’ with a mean of 3.43. Over-all, task focused as a coping strategy for the pupils has a category mean of 3.09 described as ‘Somewhat True about Me’. The rating of the pupils on this area implies that they don’t utilize task focused as a coping strategy.

**Table 15.** **Mean of pupils’ coping strategy related to their academic performance during the new normal along task-focused.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A. Task-Focused** | **Mean** | **DI** |
| 1. I always try to see things in positive perspectives. | 3.02 | S |
| 1. I take corrective action immediately. | 3.21 | S |
| 1. I consider alternative way of doing my modules. | 3.04 | S |
| 1. I focus more time in answering the hard activities in my module. | 3.08 | S |
| 1. I set positive mindset before I work with my module. | 3.10 | S |
| 1. I plan my time in answering the modules to be able to submit on time. | 2.95 | S |
| 1. I focus first on the easier activities of my module. | 3.08 | S |
| 1. I double my efforts to answer my module. | 2.98 | S |
| 1. I changed some of my study habits so things would turn out all right. | 2.96 | S |
| 1. I prepare a plan of action and followed it. | 3.43 | M |
| **Category Mean** | **3.09** | **S** |

Emotion focused as a coping strategy for the pupils has a category mean of 3.06 interpreted as ‘Somewhat True about Me’. Majority or six (6) of the statements were viewed by the pupils to be mostly true about them. these statements are talking to someone how they feel, seeking God’s help thru prayer, taking the situation light and not being serious about it, wishing the situation to be over, accepting the effects of COVID to learning and knowing what to be done and doubling effort. On the other hand, four (4) statements about asking advice from relative, taking the situation seriously, taking refuge thru dreaming and asking help from someone were viewed by the pupils to be somewhat true to them. The data implies that the pupils are inclined or are more into emotion focus as a coping strategy. This result is consistent to what Mahajan (2010) posits that it is usually normal for students to practice emotional coping strategy.

Moreover, this finding that the pupils are more into emotion-focused strategy is similar with the findings of the study of Matud (2004) and Brougham, et al., (2009) that women’s stress coping strategies are emotion-oriented and tend to display their feelings more overtly/openly whereas men are more likely to inhibit their emotional reaction to stress.

**Table 16.** **Mean of pupils’ coping strategy related to their academic performance during the new normal along emotion-focused.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **B. Emotion-Focused** | **Mean** | **DI** |
| 1. I talk to parents and friends about how I feel. | 3.97 | M |
| 1. I pray to God for help during the pandemic. | 3.46 | M |
| 1. I wished that the situation and the pandemic would be over. | 3.78 | M |
| 1. I make the situation light and refuse to get too serious about it. | 3.91 | M |
| 1. I learned to live and accept the effects of COVID-19 to my learning. | 3.51 | M |
| 1. I get advice from a relative or friend. | 2.95 | S |
| 1. I take the situation on pandemic too serious. | 3.08 | S |
| 1. I double my efforts to make things work. | 3.80 | M |
| 1. I day dream and imagine times when it was better than today. | 3.03 | S |
| 1. I ask help and support from family and friends about the module. | 3.06 | S |
| **Category Mean** | **3.66** | **M** |

Along avoidant strategy as coping strategy, it has a category mean of 3.47 interpreted as ‘Mostly True about Me’. Majority or seven (7) of the ten (10) statements in are viewed by the pupils as mostly true about them with means ranging from 3.01 to 3.80. Three (3) statements are viewed by the pupils to be somewhat true to them which are seeing the positive side of modular learning and avoiding being angry or exercising to help get through stress and reminding myself that module problems are not as serious as they seem. The finding along this area is corroborative with the assertion by Saklofske, et al., (2012) who suggested that relaxation, exercises, maintaining good health and time managements are some ways of managing stress. Similarly, the study by Sideridis (2008) which revealed that the five most frequently used coping strategies by students; browsing the internet, sleeping and resting, watching TV shows or movies, and instant messaging.

**Table 17.** **Mean of pupils’ coping strategy related to their academic performance during the new normal along avoidant strategy.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **C. Avoidant Strategy** | **Mean** | **DI** |
| 1. I spend time trying to understand what happened. | 3.75 | M |
| 1. I try to see the positive side of modular learning to avoid getting angry or depressed. | 3.27 | S |
| 1. I avoid answering the module when I have difficulty with the activities my module. | 3.45 | M |
| 1. I often distract myself by watching television, listening to music, to cope up with the stress of modules. | 3.38 | M |
| 1. I avoid answering modules when I am stressed. | 3.91 | M |
| 1. I try to avoid answering first the hard modules. | 3.80 | M |
| 1. I change my habits, such as diet, exercise or staying close with people I care about in dealing with my module. | 3.39 | M |
| 1. I often use exercise and hobbies to help me get through the stress of modular learning. | 3.27 | S |
| 1. I don’t take seriously in answering the modules. | 3.35 | M |
| 1. I often try to remember and remind myself that module problems are not as serious as they seem. | 3.12 | S |
| **Category Mean** | **3.47** | **M** |
| **OVER-ALL MEAN** | **3.41** | **M** |

Over-all, as revealed by the category means, the pupils are most inclined in using avoidant strategy as a coping strategy followed by emotion-focused and last is task-focused.

**Table 18.** **Summary table on the pupils’ coping strategy related to their academic performance during the new normal.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Coping Mechanism** | **Mean** | **DI** |
| 1. Task-Focused | 3.09 | S |
| 1. Emotion-Focused | 3.66 | M |
| 1. Avoidant strategy | 3.47 | M |
| **OVER-ALL MEAN** | **3.41** | **M** |

1. **SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE COVID-19 LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF THE PUPILS WHEN GROUPED ACCORDING TO SCHOOL**

**Table 19. One-way ANOVA Test of significant difference in learning difficulties.**

| **Schools** | **Mean** | **df** | **F** | **P-value** | **Decision** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Liwan ES | 3.86 | 9 | .29 | 0.98 | Accept H0 |
| Manag ES | 3.55 |
| Ili ES | 3.65 |
| CCS | 3.46 |
| Cubet ES | 3.57 |
| Upper Katab. ES | 3.50 | 50 |
| Paddaoan ES | 3.34 |
| Mabaguio ES | 3.30 |
| Nabuangan ES | 3.64 |
| Buneg ES | 3.61 |

The table 19 shows that the computed significant value using One-way ANOVA is 0.98 which is higher than the alpha value of 0.05, thus the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the COVID-19 learning difficulties of the pupils when grouped according to school. This implies that the learning difficulties of the respondents are the same regardless of school where they studied.

**Table 20. One-way ANOVA Test of significant difference in Coping mechanism**

| **Schools** | **Mean** | **df** | **F** | **P-value** | **Decision** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Liwan ES | 3.55 | 9 | 1.84 | 0.123 | Accept H0 |
| Manag ES | 3.29 |
| Ili ES | 3.29 |
| CCS | 3.40 |
| Cubet ES | 3.29 |
| Upper Katab. ES | 3.45 | 20 |
| Paddaoan ES | 3.32 |
| Mabaguio ES | 3.32 |
| Nabuangan ES | 3.33 |
| Buneg ES | 3.35 |

The table 20 shows that the computed significant value using One-way ANOVA between ten groups is 0.123. Since 0.123 is higher than the alpha value of 0.05, thus the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the COVID-19 coping mechanism of the pupils when grouped according to school.

1. **SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP OF THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND PROFILE OF THE PUPIL RESPONDENTS**

**Table 21. Test of significant relationship on the profile of the respondents to their academic performance**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Profile** | **Computed Value** | **P-Value** | **DI** |
| Age | 16.96 | 0.15 | Accept Ho |
| Sex | 11.28 | 0.01 | Reject Ho |
| School | 87.36 | 0.01 | Reject Ho |
| Parent’s educational background |  |  |  |
| Father educational background | 34.02 | 0.04 | Reject Ho |
| Mother educational background | 51.86 | 0.01 | Reject Ho |
| Parent’s occupation |  |  |  |
| Father’s Occupation | 46.19 | 0.01 | Reject Ho |
| Mother’s Occupation | 38.40 | 0.01 | Reject Ho |
| Ownership of ICT gadgets | 223.68 | 0.01 | Reject Ho |
| Type and level of connectivity at place of residence | 61.46 | 0.01 | Reject Ho |

Table 21 shows the test of relationship using chi-square between the profile of the respondents and their academic performance. The computed P-Value of 0.15 of the respondents ages is higher than the significant level of 0.05 which yielded to accept the null hypothesis with no significant relationship. However, the computed P-value of the rest of the profile is lower than the significance level of 0.05 which rejected the null hypothesis, meaning there is a significant relationship on the profile of the respondents along sex, school, parents educational background, parents’ occupation, ownership of ICT gadgets, and Type and level of connectivity at place of residence. This implies that school, parents educational background, parents’ occupation, ownership of ICT gadgets, and internet connectivity have a big impact in the academic performance of the pupils.

Since 0.142 is higher than 0.05, thus the null hypothesis accepted. This therefore means that there is no significant significant relationship of the coping strategies of the pupils to their academic performance for S.Y. 2020-2021.This implies that the coping of the pupils is not enough to provide very satisfactory performance since modular approach is the only mode of delivery. Other factors that relate to academic performance might be affected.

5. CONCLUSION and Recommendation

The academic performance of elementary pupils in Northern Conner District during the first and second quarters of S.Y. 2020–2021 is generally satisfactory. However, several learning difficulties were identified, including challenges with the use of self-learning modules, psychological stress, and financial constraints. These findings are consistent with the Department of Education’s (2020) report which highlighted that modular learning has posed difficulties for learners due to limited guidance, access to resources, and home-based distractions. Moreover, psychological stress brought about by the pandemic has affected learners’ motivation and emotional well-being. This aligns with the findings of Bernardo et al. (2021), who emphasized the growing academic stress and anxiety among Filipino learners during the COVID-19 crisis. These difficulties have required pupils to adopt coping mechanisms to continue learning. Interestingly, even without formal knowledge of psychological theory, pupils in the study displayed coping behaviors such as emotion-focused strategies and avoidant coping, which reflect the framework of Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. This model explains that individuals respond to stress based on cognitive appraisal and available coping resources. In response to these challenges, learners and families have shown resilience by adapting to the modular modality, despite its limitations. Similar insights were shared by Toquero (2020), who emphasized that flexibility, support mechanisms, and coping are essential for learning continuity during health emergencies. The results imply a strong need for the education system to provide mental health support, improved parental guidance, and better-designed learning materials to cater to diverse learner needs. Additionally, the study calls for further teacher-parent collaboration, digital literacy initiatives, and socio-emotional interventions to address both academic and non-academic barriers to learning (UNESCO, 2021).

The study has the following recommendations:

1. The teacher should contextualize and localized the contents of the downloadable modules to improve the satisfactory level of the academic performance of the learners in the new normal education.
2. The teacher should formulate strategies and technique to level up the academic performance of the pupils like regular home visitation to facilitate their learning specially those who have difficulty with the use of modules.
3. Teachers and parents should continue inculcating to the pupils the beauty of learning thru modular learning towards full acceptance that it will be a learning process until COVID-19 is contained or controlled,
4. There should be another study that will use other aspects or dimensions of coping strategies among pupils.
5. Similar study on pupil’s coping strategies on other aspects of learning or involving a comparative study between two or more districts is very much encouraged.

**Ethical Approval:**

The researcher sought the approval of the conduct of the study to the school district supervisor (PSDS) and school principals or teacher-in-charge of the selected schools of northern conner district.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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Details of the AI usage are given below:

1.

2.

3.

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