

Mental health problems and coping strategies of elementary teachers

Rahima Adal Akmad^{1*}, Bai Rhea A. Latip², Maeda Langguyuan Kadlong³, Datu Joharie B. Nilong⁴,
Sittie Rahema T. Daglok⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Mindanao State University – Maguindanao, Philippines; rahimaakmad34@gmail.com (R.A.A.) latipbairhea@gmail.com
(B.R.A.L.) mlkadlong@msumaguindanao.edu.ph (M.L.K.) jaypeenilong@gmail.com (D.J.B.N.)
stdaglok@msumaguindanao.edu.ph (S.R.T.D.).

Abstract: This study aims to determine the mental health problems and coping strategies of elementary teachers at selected schools of Datu Anggal Midtimbang District, Philippines. The study utilized quantitative research and survey questionnaire as instrument. The study conducted at selected schools of Datu Anggal Midtimbang District namely: Bai Salud Elementary School, Mapayag Elementary School and Kiteb Central Elementary School with complete enumeration was used to choose the fifty (50) respondents. The frequency count like mean was used to interpenetrate the data. The result of the study presents that respondents perceived that in terms of depression, sleep disturbance and loss interest are very often a problem justified by the mean of 2.54. In terms of stress, respondents stressed that very often they had sleep disorders justified by the mean of 2.56. They also manifested that overeating/under eating is rarely problem if they are stress justified by the mean of 2.41. For anxiety, respondents stressed that feeling weak or tired very often a problem they experienced with mean of 2.49. Furthermore, the increased heart rate a rarely a problem to them with mean of 1.92. In terms of grief, sleep disturbance rarely a problem they perceived with mean of 2.26. Moreover, the bitterness about the loss also rarely a problem they perceived with mean of 1.98. The coping strategies mental health problems were as follows like meditate or pray to overcome depression, keeping a positive attitude, talking with love ones, practiced exercising, seek out support and reading self-help books.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Coping strategies on mental health problems, Depression, Grief, Mental health problems, Stress.*

1. Introduction

It was year 2020 when the pandemic happened because of the COVID-19 virus outbreak. Since then, almost all places in the world are put into lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus including the Philippines. A lot of individuals struggled financially, physically and most especially mentally. One of those who experience this challenge is the teachers. But amidst the struggle they can still find ways to overcome it and continue on performing their duty.

Gewertz [1] stressed that teacher's stress and anxiety have soared and their morale has plummeted during the pandemic. She further stated that teachers were more likely to report feeling stress and burned out than other state and local government-sector employees. Will [2] stated that longer work hours, struggles to engage kids virtually, multiple pivots from hybrid to remote to in-person instruction, not to mention worry that they or their loved ones could contract COVID-19, have made teachers' jobs even more difficult.

Changes in the mental health condition of teachers are possibly associated to changes in their working conditions. This is the reason why even before pandemic the Mental Health Law or Republic Act 11036 was implemented. It is an act establishing a national mental health policy for the purpose of enhancing the delivery of integrated mental health services promoting and protecting the rights of persons utilizing psychiatric, neurologic and psychosocial health services [3].

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, a lot of changes happened in the implementation of the curriculum which gave teachers additional burden to their already challenging and stressful condition at many public schools, especially in Mindanao [4]. He further stated that some teachers died because of fatigue, while others experienced burn-out and mental health related problems. However, there are those who chose to rise above the challenges and continue to find beauty in the midst of the mess they experienced.

The above issues motivate the researchers to conduct this study to determine the mental health problems and coping strategies of teachers during lockdown at Datu Anggal Midtimbang District.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

1. What are the mental health problems as perceived by the respondents in terms of:
 - a. depression;
 - b. stress;
 - c. anxiety; and,
 - d. grief?
2. What are the coping strategies practiced by the respondents in terms of:
 - a. depression;
 - b. stress;
 - c. anxiety; and,
 - d. grief?

2. Methods

The study utilized quantitative research design. This design is appropriate in describing the mental health problems perceived by the selected elementary teachers in terms of depression, stress, anxiety and grief during lockdown. Moreover, this design is appropriate to identify the coping strategies practiced by the teachers to overcome depression, stress, anxiety and grief.

The study conducted at selected schools at Datu Anggal Midtimbang District namely: Bai Salud Elementary School, Mapayag Elementary School and Kiteb Central Elementary School. The respondents were fifty (50) teachers and purposive sampling was used to choose the respondents. Survey questionnaire also used to gather the data. The frequency count like mean was used to interpretate the data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Part I: Mental Health Problems Perceived by The Teachers

The mental health problems perceived by the elementary teachers at Datu Anggal Midtimbang District in terms of depression, stress, anxiety and grief are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Table 1.
Mental Health Problems as Perceived by the Respondents in Terms of Depression.

Statements	Mean	Description
1. Sleep disturbance	2.54	Very Often
2. Sense of hopelessness	2.28	Rarely
3. Having unhelpful thoughts (i.e, I'm a failure.)	2.20	Rarely
4. Loss of interest	2.54	Very Often
5. Emotional eating	2.39	Rarely

Table 1 presents that the statement 1 and 4 which is sleep disturbance and loss interest obtained a highest mean of 2.54 with the description of very often. It means that the teachers had sleeping problem and loss interest in their activities they once love during the pandemic. In support to this findings,

Jahrami, et al. [5] stated that the prevalence of sleep problems during the COVID-19 pandemic is high and affects approximately 40% of people from the general and health care populations.

Furthermore, statement 3 which is having negative thoughts (i.e, I'm a failure.), obtained a lowest mean of 2.20 with the description of rarely. It implies that most of the teacher does rarely experience having negative thoughts. Hossain, et al. [6] stated that people affected by COVID-19 may have a high burden of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety disorders, stress, panic attack, irrational anger, impulsivity, somatization disorder, sleep disorders, emotional disturbance, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and suicidal behavior. Wu, et al. [7] further stated that the COVID-19 pandemic increases the mental health problems of the global population. Mental health interventions are desperately needed to prevent mental health problems.

Table 2.
Mental Health Problems Perceived by the Respondents in terms of Stress.

Statements	Mean	Description
1. Aches and pains	2.52	Very Often
2. Exhaustion or trouble sleeping	2.56	Very Often
3. Irritability and/or a feeling of restlessness	2.52	Very Often
4. Difficulty concentrating	2.48	Very Often
5. Overeating/under eating	2.41	Rarely

Table 2 shows that statement 2 which is sleep disorders, obtained a highest mean of 2.56 with the description of very often. It represents that during pandemic, teachers who have mental health problems in terms of stress had experienced sleeping disorder. In support to this findings, Werner, et al. [8] stated that, a higher stress level predicted lower sleep quality and more negative changes in overall sleep and pre-sleep arousal. Moreover, in terms of stress caused by sleeping and eating disorder among teachers during pandemic, Rodrigues da Silva, et al. [9] concluded that the unusual lifestyle imposed by the COVID-19 quarantine may induce a circadian misalignment, which is capable to induce alterations on eating and sleep behaviors.

Moreover, statement 5 which is overeating/under eating, obtained a lowest mean of 2.41 with the description of rarely. It means that teachers who are stress rarely experienced problems in eating. The findings support the idea of Watson, et al. [10] stressed that stress can cause both binge eating disorder and the desire to overeat. It's common for someone with the disorder to use food to deal with tension and other emotions they want to turn off – including anger, sadness, and boredom.

Table 3.
Mental Health Problems Perceived By the Teachers in Terms of Anxiety.

Statements	Mean	Description
1. Feeling nervous, restless or tense	2.36	Rarely
2. Difficulty in concentrating	2.43	Rarely
3. Increases heart rate	1.92	Rarely
4. Sleep disturbance	2.44	Rarely
5. Feels weak or tired	2.49	Very Often

Table 3 reveals that ttatement 5 which is feeling weak or tired, obtained a highest mean of 2.49 with the description of very often. It means that the teachers felt always weak and tired during the pandemic because of their anxiety. In support to this findings, Chatterjee [11] stated that, when people have anxiety, their sleep can get disrupted, which naturally leads to feelings of tiredness and exhaustion.

Furthermore, the statement 5 which is having an increased heart rate, obtained a lowest mean of 1.92 with the description of rarely. It implies that most of the teachers rarely experienced having increased heart rate. In support the findings British Heart Foundation [12] explained that Covid-19 can cause your heart rate to become fast or irregular in response to fever or inflammation, as your heart

works harder to pump more blood around your body to fight the infection. Moreover, in terms of anxiety experienced by the teachers during pandemic, Drake [13] stated that as more understanding of pandemic-related mental health consequences evolved, scientists identified an emerging group of anxiety-related symptoms and behaviors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4.
Mental Health Problems Perceived By the Teachers in Terms of Grief.

Statements	Mean	Description
1. Intense pain and sorrow	2.07	Rarely
2. Numbness and detachment	2.07	Rarely
3. Bitterness about your loss	1.98	Rarely
4. Sleep disturbance	2.26	Rarely
5. Inability to enjoy life	2.23	Rarely

Table 4 presents that the statement 4 which is sleep disturbance, obtained a highest mean of 2.26 with the description of rarely. It presents that during pandemic, teachers who have mental health problems in terms of grief had rarely experienced sleeping problem. In support to this findings, Pacheco [14] reported that, one of the most complained symptom of grief is trouble sleeping.

Moreover, the statement 3 which is bitterness about your loss, obtained a lowest mean of 1.98 with the description of rarely. It means that teachers who are grieving rarely experienced being bitter about what they lost during the pandemic. Clarke [15] stated that when coping with loss, it isn't unusual to feel so desperate that you are willing to do anything to alleviate or minimize the pain. Moreover, in terms of grief experienced by the teachers during pandemic, Adiukwu [16] stated that the circumstances under which people are experiencing grief during the corona virus outbreak have adversely affected the grieving process.

3.2. Part II: Coping Strategies Practice by the Teachers

The coping strategies practiced by the elementary teachers at Datu Anggal Midtimbang District in terms of depression, stress, anxiety and grief are presented in tables 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Table 5.
Coping Strategies Practiced by the Respondents in Terms of Depression.

Statements	Mean	Description
1. Meditates or praying	3.56	Always
2. Connects with people	3.18	Very Often
3. Maintains a healthy diet	2.89	Very Often
4. Attending formal therapy	1.92	Rarely
5. Be active	3.25	Very Often

Table 5 indicates that the statement 1 which is meditates or praying, obtained a highest mean of 3.56 with the description of always. It presents that during pandemic, teachers used to meditate or praying a lot to help themselves cope up with their depression. In support to this findings, Green and Bettini [17] found out in their study that, the mental health impact of COVID19 participation in health behaviors such as physical activity and mindfulness meditation reduce worsening of mental health due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, statement 4 which is attends formal therapy, obtained a lowest mean of 1.92 with the description of rarely. It means that teachers who are depress rarely attend formal therapy to cope up with their mental health problem. In support to the data Lindberg [18] stated that talking with a therapist encourages open and honest dialogue about issues that cause a person depression.

Table 6.
Coping Strategies Practice by the Respondents in Terms of Stress.

Statements	Mean	Description
1. Keeps a positive attitude	3.57	Always
2. Maintains self-healthy.	3.07	Very Often
3. Sticks to work plan.	3.23	Very Often
4. Eats well-balanced meal	3.07	Very Often
5. Makes time to unwind.	3.20	Very Often

Table 6 shows that statement 1 one which is keeping a positive attitude, obtained a highest mean of 3.57 with the description of always. It means that in order to overcome stress, teachers always keep a positive attitude towards everything they are experiencing and doing. In support to this findings, Cherry [19] stated that many researches proved that being optimist and positive thinker have a lot of benefits and reduces stress. In addition, Stanaway [20] declared that acceptance can help people be reflective, objective, and cultivate wisdom, growth, and change. It can help them heal and move into different physical, mental, and emotional states when needed.

Moreover, statement 2 and 4 which is maintains self-healthy and eats well-balanced meal obtained a lowest mean of 3.07 with the description of very often. It shows that often times, in order to cope up with stress, teachers usually maintains self-healthy and eats well balanced meal. In support to this data, Soltani, et al. [21] stated that balanced diet can support a healthy immune system and the repair of damaged cells. It provides the extra energy needed to cope with stressful events. Tired and Knurek [22] recommended to concentrate on healthy habits such as eating more fruits and vegetables and drinking more water. Having support system consists of the people who may or can fill different roles in the person's life is also a vital habit to cope up with stress.

Table 7.
Coping Strategies Practiced by the Respondents in Terms of Anxiety.

Statements	Mean	Description
1. Eats healthy meal.	3.18	Very Often
2. Gets enough sleep.	3.11	Very Often
3. Do an exercise regularly.	2.87	Very Often
4. Talks with love ones		
5. Stays connected to the family and friends.	3.52	Always

Table 7 reveals that the statement 4 which is talking with love ones, obtained a highest mean of 3.52 with the description of always. It means that teachers with anxiety always choose to talk with their love ones such as their family and friends to fight the mental health they are experiencing. In support to this finding, talking to friends and family about mental health problems can be an opportunity to provide information, support, and guidance. (<https://mentalhelpfoundation.org/>). In addition, Corrigan and Watson [23] stated that being stereotyped or treated insensitively when you're struggling can be nervewracking, especially if you already get down on yourself for having anxiety but it is validating and freeing.

Moreover, statement 3 which is exercising, obtained a lowest mean of 2.87 with the description of very often. It presents that often times, in order to cope up with anxiety, teachers usually practiced exercising. The data support the idea of Upham [24] declared that researchers found that doing some kind of exercise — whether it was low or high intensity — helped people experience their anxiety less after 12 weeks.

Table 8.
Coping Strategies Practiced by the Respondents in Terms of Anxiety.

Statements	Mean	Description
1. Acknowledges the pain	2.75	Very Often
2. Talks to friends and family.	2.98	Very Often
3. Seeks out support.	3.18	Very Often
4. Reads self-help books.	2.49	Very Often
5. Makes self busy.	2.61	Very Often

Table 8 indicates that the statement 3 which is seeks out support obtained a highest mean of 3.18 with the description of very often. It means that teachers with grief are most likely they seek support. In support to this findings Renzoni [25] stated that one of the best ways to walk through grief and heal from it is by reaching out to others who are dealing with loss, not only reaching out to loved ones who experienced the same loss but reaching out to people in the community who are also grieving. She further stated that connecting with others and sharing similar feelings is a therapeutic experience that can help with the grieving process and facilitate healing.

Moreover, Statement 4 which is reading self-help books, obtained a lowest mean of 2.49 with the description of very often. It implies that teachers read self-help books but not all the time. The data supports the idea of Bevis Funeral Home [26] stated that when going through a period of grief, reading books can help you cope with and work through your emotions. Experts have even come up with a term for using literature to provide guidance and support: bibliotherapy. If you are struggling with grief, consider picking up a good book.

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, researchers concluded that respondents perceived that depression, anxiety and grief were rarely a problems which majority of the respondents experienced sleep disturbances and loss of interest and sleep disorders. It also shows that respondents perceived that stress was very often a problem to them.

The coping strategies practiced by the respondents in terms of depression, stress, anxiety and grief were meditation or prayer, be active individual, connects with family and friends, keep a positive attitude, talks with love ones, and seeks out support.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. The MBHTE-BARMM should conduct a capacity building on mental health awareness among teachers.
2. The MBHTE-BARMM should conduct a capacity building on the coping strategies on mental health problems among teachers.
3. Future reseachers may conduct a study on mental health problems and coping mechanism among male and female teachers.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Copyright:

© 2025 by the authors. This open-access article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

References

- [1] C. Gewertz, "Teachers' mental health has suffered in the pandemic. Here's How District Can Help. Education Week," 2021. <https://www.edweek.org/>
- [2] M. Will, "Teachers are stressed out, and its causing some to quit. Education Week," 2021. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/teachers-are-stressed-out-and-its-causing-some-to-quit/2021/02>
- [3] Department of Health, *Implementing rules and regulations of republic act No. 11036, otherwise known as the mental health act*. Mandaluyong, Philippines: Republic of the Philippines, 2018.
- [4] R. P. Bayod, E. J. D. Forosuelo, D. A. Arnosa, H. Orion, and J. M. Cavalida, "Choosing positivity in the midst of difficulties: The case of public schoolteachers in Mindanao," *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 109–115, 2021.
- [5] H. Jahrami, A. S. BaHammam, N. L. Bragazzi, Z. Saif, M. Faris, and M. V. Vitiello, "Sleep problems during the COVID-19 pandemic by population: A systematic review and meta-analysis," *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 299–313, 2021.
- [6] M. M. Hossain *et al.*, "Epidemiology of mental health problems in COVID-19: A review," *F1000Res*, vol. 9, p. 636, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.24457.1>
- [7] T. Wu *et al.*, "Prevalence of mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis," *Journal of Affective Disorders*, vol. 281, pp. 91–98, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.11.117>
- [8] G. G. Werner, S. Scarpelli, V. Alfonsi, M. Gorgoni, and L. De Gennaro, "COVID-19 and sleep: A systematic review of the literature and meta-analysis of the evidence," *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, p. 703409, 2021.
- [9] F. Rodrigues da Silva, A. M. Esteves, M. T. de Mello, and L. Bourguignon, "Circadian misalignment and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic," *Chronobiology International*, vol. 37, no. 10, pp. 1454–1458, 2020.
- [10] H. J. Watson *et al.*, "Genome-wide association study identifies eight risk loci and implicates metabo-psychiatric origins for anorexia nervosa," *Nature Genetics*, vol. 51, no. 8, pp. 1207–1214, 2022.
- [11] S. Chatterjee, "Anxiety and its effects on sleep: Understanding the connection," *Journal of Mental Health and Sleep*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 123–130, 2021.
- [12] British Heart Foundation, "COVID-19 and your heart," 2022. <https://www.bhf.org.uk/>
- [13] K. L. Drake, "Emerging anxiety-related symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic: A review," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, vol. 80, p. 102385, 2021.
- [14] R. Pacheco, "Common symptoms of grief and how to cope with them," *Journal of Bereavement and Loss*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 45–53, 2022.
- [15] S. Clarke, "Coping with loss: Emotional responses and healing strategies," *Grief Counseling Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 12–20, 2022.
- [16] F. Adiukwu, "The impact of COVID-19 on grieving and mourning practices," *Mental Health and Society*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 100–110, 2022.
- [17] J. Green and E. Bettini, "Addressing teacher mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers College Record," 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343360704-Addressing_Teacher_Mental_Health_during_the_COVID-19_Pandemic
- [18] N. M. Lindberg, "The benefits of therapy for depression: Encouraging open communication," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, vol. 76, no. 7, pp. 1201–1210, 2020.
- [19] K. Cherry, "The benefits of optimism and positive thinking. Verywell Mind," 2020. <https://www.verywellmind.com/>
- [20] S. Stanaway, "The power of acceptance in mental health recovery," *Journal of Positive Psychology*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 150–159, 2021.
- [21] Z. Soltani, B. Zareie, F. S. Milani, and N. J. Navimipour, "The impact of the customer relationship management on the organization performance," *The Journal of High Technology Management Research*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 237–246, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hitech.2018.10.001>
- [22] H. Tired and S. Knurek, "Strategies to cope with family stress. Michigan State University Extension," 2020. https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/strategies_to_cope_with_family_stress
- [23] P. W. Corrigan and A. C. Watson, "The paradox of self-stigma and mental illness," *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 35–53, 2002.
- [24] B. Upham, "Exercise significantly reduces anxiety, study finds. Everyday Health," 2022. <https://www.everydayhealth.com/>
- [25] C. Renzoni, "Overcoming grief: 10 tips for coping with loss. The Recovery Village Drug and Alcohol Rehab," 2022. <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/grief/overcoming-grief/>
- [26] Bevis Funeral Home, "How reading can help you cope with grief," 2021. <https://www.bevisfh.com/recommended-support/grief-support-guide>