

## **MENTAL WELL-BEING OF GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENTS OF THE NUEVA VIZCAYA STATE UNIVERSITY: IT'S CORRELATION WITH COPING STRATEGIES**

By

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the coping strategies and mental well-being of 77 graduate school students from the College of Teacher Education at Nueva Vizcaya State University for the academic year 2024-2025. Employing a quantitative research design using the descriptive-correlational method, data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using statistical procedures such as mean, analysis of variance (F-test), and Pearson-r correlation, with hypotheses tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicate that the overall mental well-being of graduate students is generally positive, with social and professional well-being rated as very good, while emotional and physical well-being received the lowest ratings of good. Coping strategies were found to be effective, with a strong preference for focus on positives and support coping, while evasive coping was the least utilized. Statistical analyses reveal no significant differences in mental well-being and coping strategies across academic programs, suggesting that students experience similar challenges and employ comparable coping mechanisms. Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between mental well-being and coping strategies, indicating their independence. Based on these insights, a training program was developed to enhance key areas of well-being and coping, ensuring sustained support for students' academic and personal resilience.

**Keywords:** coping strategies, intervention program, mental well being

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Wellness encompasses a healthy body, a sound mind, and a tranquil spirit. Enjoy the journey as you strive for wellness. – Laurette Gagnon Beaulieu*

The quote above captures the essence of holistic well-being, which is particularly pertinent for teachers who face unique stresses and demands in their profession. Maintaining optimal mental well-being is essential for teachers, given the multifaceted demands and pressures inherent in their profession. Teachers often contend with significant emotional and cognitive challenges, from managing diverse classroom dynamics to meeting academic expectations and addressing individual student needs. These responsibilities can lead to emotional exhaustion and stress, particularly when compounded by administrative pressures and societal expectations. To mitigate these challenges, teachers benefit from adopting effective coping strategies that encompass various aspects of well-being.

The current researcher strongly believed that prioritizing self-care and physical health is foundational. Regular exercise, nutritious eating habits, and adequate sleep are vital for sustaining energy levels and enhancing resilience against stress. Teachers should incorporate moments of relaxation and physical activity into their daily routines to alleviate tension and promote overall well-being. Additionally, maintaining a healthy work-life balance is crucial. Establishing boundaries between professional responsibilities and personal time allows teachers to recharge and prevent burnout, ultimately contributing to greater job satisfaction and longevity in their careers.

Furthermore, it is the assumption of the researcher that by prioritizing mental well-being and implementing proactive coping strategies, teachers can navigate the complexities of their profession with greater resilience and effectiveness. Emphasizing self-care, maintaining boundaries, fostering mindfulness, seeking support, and cultivating positivity are integral to sustaining mental health in the demanding field of education. By investing in their own well-being, teachers not only enhance their personal fulfillment but also positively impact the learning environments and experiences of their students.

In relation to the above, the World Health Organization (WHO) member states are dedicated to implementing the "Comprehensive mental health action plan 2013–2030." This initiative aims to enhance mental health through bolstering effective leadership and governance, establishing comprehensive, integrated, and responsive community-based care systems, implementing strategies for promotion and prevention, and reinforcing information systems, evidence, and research.

In response, WHO's "World mental health report: transforming mental health for all" urges countries to expedite the action plan's implementation. The report advocates for significant strides in mental health improvement by focusing on three transformative pathways: prioritizing mental health within societal values and commitments, reshaping environments to safeguard mental well-being and prevent mental health issues, and enhancing mental health care through accessible, affordable, and quality community-based services.

Central to WHO's approach is the protection and promotion of human rights, empowerment of individuals with lived experience, and the promotion of a multisectoral, multistakeholder

approach. The organization continues to collaborate globally and within humanitarian contexts, providing governments and partners with strategic leadership, evidence-based insights, tools, and technical assistance. This collective effort aims to foster a holistic transformation towards improved mental well-being outcomes for all populations (WHO, 2022).

Mental health constitutes a fundamental component of overall well-being, intricately linked with physical health, shaping individuals' daily lives. It fluctuates similarly to physical health, influencing one's capacity to function optimally and feel secure in their environment. When individuals experience sound mental health, they are better positioned to realize their potential and navigate life's challenges with resilience, fostering a sense of safety and fulfillment in their endeavors.

Moreover, mental well-being extends beyond mere absence of illness, encompassing an internal resilience and positive outlook. It reflects individuals' ability to effectively manage psychological stressors, maintain productivity, and derive satisfaction from their personal and professional pursuits. It is characterized by a state of happiness, autonomy in decision-making, and the ability to live authentically according to one's values. Ultimately, mental well-being empowers individuals to lead fulfilling lives, marked by contentment and the capability to thrive amidst life's pressures (WHO, 2022).

The Scottish Government (2023) stressed that mental health constitutes a fundamental component of overall well-being, intricately linked with physical health, shaping individuals' daily lives. It fluctuates similarly to physical health, influencing one's capacity to function optimally and feel secure in their environment. When individuals experience sound mental health, they are better positioned to realize their potential and navigate life's challenges with resilience, fostering a sense of safety and fulfillment in their endeavors.

Moreover, mental well-being extends beyond mere absence of illness, encompassing an internal resilience and positive outlook. It reflects individuals' ability to effectively manage psychological stressors, maintain productivity, and derive satisfaction from their personal and professional pursuits. It is characterized by a state of happiness, autonomy in decision-making, and the ability to live authentically according to one's values. Mental well-being underpins fulfillment and resilience, enabling individuals to navigate life's challenges effectively (Scottish Government, 2023). Coping strategies like mindfulness, social support, and proactive problem-solving empower individuals to maintain psychological balance and thrive amidst pressures, fostering a sustainable and fulfilling life.

Coping strategies are crucial for teachers to manage the various challenges they face in their profession, ranging from heavy workloads and student behavior issues to administrative pressures and emotional demands. According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2018), effective coping strategies can significantly enhance teachers' resilience and overall well-being.

Teachers often employ problem-focused coping strategies to tackle specific stressors related to their job. This approach involves actively addressing the sources of stress, such as implementing innovative teaching methods, organizing classroom activities efficiently, and

seeking professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge. By taking proactive steps to manage their workload and improve their teaching effectiveness, teachers can regain a sense of control over their professional responsibilities (APA, 2018).

Emotion-focused coping strategies are also prevalent among teachers, helping them regulate their emotions and maintain psychological well-being in challenging situations. Techniques such as mindfulness meditation, deep breathing exercises, and seeking social support from colleagues or mentors can help teachers manage stress, anxiety, and burnout. Additionally, maintaining a positive outlook and practicing gratitude can foster resilience and enhance job satisfaction.

Furthermore, according to the American Psychological Association (2018), seeking organizational support and promoting a supportive work environment are critical coping strategies for teachers. Schools can implement policies that prioritize teacher well-being, provide resources for professional development and mental health support, and encourage open communication between teachers and administrators. By fostering a sense of community and mutual support among staff members, schools can create an environment where teachers feel valued, respected, and empowered to face the challenges of their profession effectively.

This study is anchored in the National Research Agenda for Teacher Education of 2018 by addressing key aspects related to the professional development, well-being, and resilience of educators, which are central themes of the agenda. The National Research Agenda emphasizes the importance of enhancing the quality of teacher education through research that supports teacher well-being, mental health, and coping strategies. By focusing on the mental well-being and coping mechanisms of graduate school students—who are prospective teachers and educational leaders—this study contributes to the broader goal of improving teacher preparation and sustaining their long-term effectiveness in the classroom. Additionally, the research aligns with the agenda's objective to develop evidence-based strategies that foster a supportive and resilient teaching workforce, ensuring that educators are equipped not only with pedagogical skills but also with the mental and emotional resilience necessary to thrive in challenging educational environments.

Moreover, this study is also anchored on the Basic Education Research Agenda of the Department of Education, particularly emphasizing the third theme: human resource development and employee welfare. In alignment with the current research on mental well-being and coping strategies among graduate school students, understanding career development involves a comprehensive examination of the nature and effectiveness of existing employee welfare provisions (Basic Education Research Agenda, 2016). The Department of Education recognizes the importance of both monetary and non-monetary strategies, as well as innovative and nontraditional mechanisms, to support the mental well-being of its personnel. By keeping teachers and other staff motivated and resilient, these welfare provisions play a crucial role in enhancing overall job performance and satisfaction. This study contributes to this ongoing discourse by exploring how these welfare initiatives impact the mental well-being and coping strategies of graduate school students, who are future educators and leaders in the educational sector.

This research is also anchored on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, which aspires to ensure health and well-being for all, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 3 emphasizes the importance of promoting both physical and mental health as essential components of overall well-being, recognizing that well-being is integral to sustainable development. By focusing on the mental well-being and coping strategies of graduate school students, this study directly contributes to the broader objective of SDG 3. Graduate students, particularly those in education, are future leaders and educators who will influence the health and well-being of future generations. Understanding and enhancing their mental health and coping mechanisms not only supports their academic and professional success but also aligns with the global commitment to promote mental health as a critical element of public health. This research highlights the importance of mental well-being within educational contexts, advocating for interventions and support systems that align with SDG 3's vision of ensuring that all individuals have the resources and support needed to maintain their mental health. By addressing these issues, the study contributes to a holistic approach to health that is vital for achieving the 2030 Agenda's goals, ultimately fostering a more resilient and healthy society.

Research on coping strategies and mental well-being among graduate school students often identifies gaps in understanding specific to this demographic. These gaps may include the exploration of effective coping mechanisms tailored to the unique stressors of graduate studies, such as academic pressure, financial strain, and career uncertainty. Additionally, the research may highlight the need for culturally sensitive approaches and interventions that address diverse student populations within the College of Teacher Education.

This investigation is also aligning with the College of Teacher Education's research agenda by prioritizing the holistic development and support of graduate students, who are future school administrators and master teachers. Understanding effective coping strategies can enhance student resilience, academic performance, and overall well-being, thereby contributing to their preparation as educators capable of managing stress and fostering positive learning environments. By addressing these gaps, the research supports the college's commitment to nurturing competent and emotionally resilient teachers equipped to meet the demands of their profession.

## **THE ORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored in two foundational theories that provided a comprehensive framework for understanding mental well-being and coping mechanisms.

Firstly, the Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (2000) underpins the exploration of mental well-being as a research construct. This theory posits that the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—is crucial for fostering intrinsic motivation and achieving positive psychological health. By emphasizing these core needs, the theory offers a robust lens through which mental well-being can be understood and nurtured, particularly in educational settings.

Secondly, the Coping Theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) offers critical insights into how individuals navigate stress and adversity. This theory delves into the cognitive and behavioral strategies that people employ to manage challenging situations, shedding light on the ways

these coping mechanisms influence mental well-being and adaptation. By integrating these two theories, the study not only examines the foundational elements of mental well-being but also explores the dynamic processes through which individuals cope with stress, offering a holistic perspective on the interplay between motivation, psychological health, and resilience.

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for examining the factors influencing mental well-being, including both the intrinsic motivations driving personal growth and the adaptive strategies employed in response to stressors.

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (2000) posits that individuals are intrinsically motivated to pursue activities that fulfill three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the desire to have control over one's actions and choices, while competence involves feeling effective and capable in interactions with the environment. Relatedness pertains to the need for connection and a sense of belonging with others. According to SDT, when these needs are satisfied, individuals experience enhanced well-being, motivation, and overall psychological health. Conversely, when these needs are thwarted or unmet, it can lead to reduced well-being and motivation. SDT has been widely applied in research on mental health and well-being, underscoring the significance of fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness to promote positive outcomes. It has been instrumental in studying motivations for academic achievement, workplace satisfaction, and personal growth.

Self-Determination Theory provides a strong framework for understanding the factors that contribute to mental well-being by highlighting the importance of intrinsic motivation and fundamental psychological needs. Its application continues to inform interventions aimed at enhancing individuals' quality of life and promoting psychological flourishing across various life domains and contexts.

According to Seligman (2018), mental well-being signifies a state of flourishing marked by positive emotions, active engagement in life, meaningful relationships, a sense of achievement, and ongoing personal development. It transcends the absence of disease, encompassing emotional stability, social connections, and a sense of purpose. This holistic perspective underscores the significance of physical fitness, mental resilience, and strong social support networks in fostering overall well-being. It highlights how a balanced approach to health, encompassing physical, mental, and social dimensions, enables individuals to effectively navigate life's challenges and lead fulfilling lives.

Understanding mental well-being across its various dimensions provides a holistic perspective on individuals' overall health and quality of life. Emotional well-being, as described by Keyes (2015), encompasses not only the presence of positive emotions but also the ability to effectively manage negative ones, fostering resilience in the face of adversity. Psychological well-being, as conceptualized by Ryff (2019), extends to personal growth, self-acceptance, and the capacity to navigate life's challenges with a sense of purpose and autonomy. Social well-being, according to Keyes (2018), emphasizes the importance of strong social connections, community involvement, and a sense of belonging, which contribute significantly to mental health.

Professional well-being, as outlined by Diener, Oishi, and Tay (2018), focuses on satisfaction and fulfillment in one's career or academic pursuits, influencing overall life satisfaction and stress management. Physical well-being, addressed by Huppert and So (2013), includes factors such as physical health, fitness levels, nutrition, and sleep quality, all of which impact mental health and overall well-being.

Cognitive well-being, discussed by Greenspoon and Saklofske (2018), highlights mental processes like decision-making, problem-solving, and intellectual curiosity, which contribute to cognitive flexibility and lifelong learning. Finally, environmental well-being, also considered by Diener et al. (2018), reflects satisfaction with one's physical surroundings, including safety, access to nature, and a sustainable living environment, all of which influence psychological health.

This multidimensional approach underscores that mental well-being is not merely the absence of illness but a complex interplay of emotional, psychological, social, professional, physical, cognitive, and environmental factors. Each dimension interacts with others to shape individuals' overall quality of life and resilience in the face of challenges. By understanding and supporting these dimensions, researchers and practitioners can develop comprehensive strategies to promote mental health and well-being across diverse populations and contexts.

According to Birni (2023) in his study entitled "Exploring the Effects of Academic Achievement, Class Engagement, and Its Motivations on University Students' Mental Well-Being," modern educational institutions are increasingly expected to facilitate students' thriving. The study found that class engagement not only contributes to improved academic performance but also plays a crucial role in enhancing students' overall mental well-being. Birni's research specifically investigated how class engagement, its motivations, and academic achievement influence the mental well-being of university students. The results of his study indicated a positive correlation between class engagement, its motivations, academic achievement, and mental well-being among the participants. Furthermore, the study revealed that class engagement and its motivations were significant predictors of mental well-being, while GPA (academic achievement) did not show a significant association. This suggests that, within the context of senior university students studied, the active involvement and motivations in classes had a more pronounced impact on their mental well-being compared to their GPA.

The present research study is also grounded in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Coping Theory, which defines coping as dynamic cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage both external and internal demands perceived as overwhelming or exceeding one's available resources. According to this theory, coping involves the allocation of mental energy aimed at reducing stress and restoring equilibrium, whether through conscious or subconscious processes. The ultimate objective of coping mechanisms is to effectively address challenges and restore homeostasis.

Coping strategies can vary widely and may be categorized as either positive or negative, depending on their impact on mental well-being. This impact is influenced by individual personality traits and subjective perceptions of the situation. Therefore, the strategies individuals choose to employ are highly personalized and may differ significantly between

individuals, reflecting their unique coping styles and experiences.

This framework underscores the importance of understanding how individuals adapt to stressors and challenges in their lives, emphasizing the diverse and individualized nature of coping strategies in promoting mental well-being.

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory posit that effective coping depends on emotional functions related to the problem at hand. They identified eight primary functions used for active coping: self-control, confrontation, social support, emotional distancing, escape and avoidance, radical acceptance, positive reappraisal, and strategic problem-solving. These functions serve as the foundation of how individuals behave when faced with stressors, influencing their coping strategies.

Psychologists acknowledge that coping mechanisms and strategies are highly individualized and can vary significantly from person to person and across different life circumstances. Even within the same individual, coping strategies may differ when confronting similar stressors at different times. This variability highlights the dynamic nature of coping processes and underscores the importance of understanding how individuals adapt emotionally to challenges. The functions identified by Lazarus and Folkman are pivotal in shaping active emotional coping strategies, reflecting diverse approaches individuals use to manage stress and maintain psychological well-being.

Coping strategy refers to the conscious or unconscious methods individuals use to manage stress, adversity, or challenging situations they encounter in life. These strategies can encompass various cognitive and behavioral approaches aimed at reducing the emotional burden or perceived threat associated with stressors. According to Carver (2017), coping strategies are deliberate efforts to manage stressful events that tax or exceed a person's resources. These strategies may involve problem-solving, seeking social support, cognitive restructuring, or emotional expression, among others. Carver emphasizes that effective coping strategies are adaptive and can facilitate adjustment and well-being in individuals facing adversity.

Focus on positives as a coping strategy involves directing attention towards optimistic aspects of a situation, emphasizing strengths, and finding silver linings amid challenges. According to Taylor and Stanton (2017), this approach fosters resilience by promoting a sense of hope and optimism, which can buffer against stress and enhance psychological well-being. Individuals employing this coping strategy often reframe difficulties as opportunities for personal growth or learning experiences.

On the other hand, support coping involves seeking emotional, informational, or instrumental support from others during times of stress. According to Cohen and Wills (2015), social support can serve as a crucial buffer against stressors, providing comfort, advice, or practical assistance. This coping strategy enhances resilience by fostering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation or overwhelm, thereby promoting mental well-being.

Active coping which is another coping strategy considered in this study involves taking direct action to address stressors or problems. Lazarus and Folkman (2014) argue that this strategy

is effective in situations where the stressor is controllable and action can lead to resolution or reduction of the stress. This approach includes problem-solving, planning, and assertive communication, aimed at altering the stressful circumstances and restoring a sense of control and efficacy.

Furthermore, evasive coping as a strategy refers to strategies aimed at avoiding or minimizing direct confrontation with stressors. According to Skinner, Edge, Altman, and Sherwood (2018), evasive coping may include denial, avoidance, or distraction techniques. While sometimes helpful in temporarily reducing distress, over-reliance on evasive coping can hinder problem resolution and lead to long-term psychological consequences.

Each dimension of coping strategy plays a distinct role in how individuals manage and adapt to stressors in their lives, influencing their psychological resilience and overall well-being. Understanding these strategies helps researchers and practitioners develop targeted interventions to promote effective coping and enhance mental health outcomes.

Drawing on foundational theories and concepts of mental well-being and coping strategies, this research investigation aligns with a comprehensive paradigm detailed in the following pages. Theoretical frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (2000), which emphasizes intrinsic motivation and psychological needs satisfaction, provide a lens through which to understand how individuals thrive and maintain well-being. Additionally, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Coping Theory underscore the dynamic processes individuals engage in to manage stressors effectively. By integrating these research frameworks, this study aims to explore the probable interactions between mental well-being and coping strategies, offering insights into enhancing psychological resilience and promoting positive outcomes in diverse contexts.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES: A SYNTHESIS**

The current researcher conducted an extensive review of various foundational concepts and theories on well-being from leading scholars in the field. Seligman's (2018) work on mental well-being emphasized the importance of positive emotions and ongoing personal development as key components of flourishing. Keyes (2015) contributed to understanding emotional well-being, focusing on the presence of positive emotions and life satisfaction. Ryff's (2019) conceptualization of psychological well-being highlighted dimensions such as self-acceptance, personal growth, and purpose in life.

Additionally, Keyes (2018) explored social well-being, emphasizing the significance of positive social relationships, social integration, and social contribution to overall well-being. Diener, Oishi, and Tay (2018) provided insights into professional well-being, which includes satisfaction and fulfillment in one's career or academic pursuits.

Huppert and So (2013) addressed physical well-being, encompassing factors such as physical health, fitness levels, nutrition, and sleep quality, all of which influence mental health and overall well-being. Greenspoon and Saklofske (2018) discussed cognitive well-being, focusing on cognitive processes such as decision-making, problem-solving, and intellectual curiosity.

Furthermore, Diener et al. (2018) posited environmental well-being, which considers satisfaction with one's physical surroundings, including safety, access to nature, and sustainability.

The researcher integrated these diverse perspectives into the conceptual framework of her study, recognizing the multidimensional nature of well-being and its various facets. By synthesizing these theories, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to overall well-being across different domains of life. This conceptualization phase informed the researcher's approach to studying well-being, guiding the selection of variables, measurement tools, and research methodologies relevant to exploring the complexities of well-being in her research study.

The current researcher also examined relevant studies. Reinilä et al. (2023) analyzed the structure and stability of multidimensional mental well-being, focusing on its various dimensions and their long-term consistency. Hoelterhoff et al. (2023) investigated the conceptualization and experiences of mental well-being among frontline educators, exploring their unique perspectives and challenges. Yilmaz and Tunc (2022) explored the mediating roles of hope and its sub-dimensions in the relationship between mental well-being and resilience levels among psychological counselors.

These studies are akin to the current research as they all center on mental well-being as a key research variable. However, they differ in terms of respondent demographics, survey instruments utilized, and research settings compared to the present investigation.

Furthermore, the researcher also reviewed local studies. Diaco (2021) explored the perspectives of Asian college students on globalization and its impact on their traditional cultural beliefs and mental well-being. Dela Rosa et al. (2022) investigated the relationships among generational identity, mental well-being, and life satisfaction among Millennial and Generation X Filipino adult learners. Sandoval (2023) examined the mental well-being of teachers in the Southern Tagalog Region of the Philippines, focusing on its correlation with job satisfaction and coping strategies.

While these studies all examine mental well-being as a key variable, they differ from the present research investigation in terms of the research frameworks utilized, respondent demographics, and research environments.

Furthermore, the researcher thoroughly reviewed and incorporated several seminal concepts and ideas related to coping strategies. Carver (2017) provided insights into various coping strategies used by individuals facing stress and adversity. Taylor and Stanton (2017) emphasized focusing on positives as a coping strategy, highlighting its role in fostering resilience and optimism during challenging times. Cohen and Wills (2015) explored support seeking as a coping strategy, underscoring its importance in receiving emotional, informational, or instrumental assistance from others.

Additionally, Lazarus and Folkman's (2014) discussion on active coping detailed the proactive approach of directly addressing stressors through problem-solving, planning, and assertive communication. In contrast, Skinner et al. (2018) described evasive coping

strategies, such as denial, avoidance, or distraction techniques, which individuals employ to minimize direct confrontation with stressors. These diverse concepts and frameworks provided the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of coping strategies as a central construct in her research. By synthesizing these perspectives, the researcher was able to conceptualize how different coping strategies influence individuals' responses to stress and adversity. This conceptualization phase guided the selection of variables, research methodologies, and analytical approaches relevant to exploring coping strategies in the context of her study.

As a point of reference, the researcher also examined pertinent foreign studies. Terrell et al. (2024) underscored the significance for practitioners on college campuses to comprehend the interplay among stressful life events, depression, and coping strategies. Van Heijst et al. (2024) explored the coping strategies employed by second-career student teachers. Chennamsetti and Khawaja (2023) investigated the challenges faced by Indian international students in American higher education and examined the coping strategies they utilized. Mercer and Thomas (2024) conducted a study highlighting heightened stress levels and increased mental health risks, evaluating coping strategies among their subjects. These studies all delve into coping strategies similar to the present investigation but differ in terms of respondent selection, questionnaire design, research methodology, and study environment.

She also examined several local studies focusing on coping strategies as a variable. Ngohayon and Culimay (2023) conducted a descriptive survey examining stress experiences and coping strategies among employed university teachers. Cruz et al. (2023) investigated academic stress and coping mechanisms among college freshmen during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in the context of online education. Yazon et al. (2017) conducted a descriptive-correlational study exploring the relationship between students' coping mechanisms and academic performance among Filipino undergraduate students. These Philippine-based studies all centered on coping strategies as a critical variable. Paclit (2022) studied organizational health of Alfonso Castaneda district and its correlation to instructional leadership styles of school administrators and coping strategies of teachers in the new normal. However, they differ from the present investigation in terms of their research frameworks, participant demographics, and specific research environments. Each study provided unique insights into how coping strategies are employed in different contexts within the Philippines, contributing valuable perspectives to the broader understanding of coping mechanisms and their implications for well-being and academic success.

## METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the coping strategies and mental well-being of graduate school students of the College of Teacher Education at the Nueva Vizcaya State University for academic year 2024-2025 employing quantitative research design using descriptive-correlational method. The dimensions of coping strategies considered in this investigation are focus on positive, support coping, active coping, and evasive coping which is based on the research framework of Carver (1997) and was utilized by Paclit (2022). On the other hand, mental well-being will be studied along the dimension of dimensions of emotional, psychological, social, professional, physical, cognitive, and environmental well-being was based on the research framework developed by Apostol et al. (2024).

The main data-gathering tool was a set of questionnaires. Data collected were subjected to appropriate statistical procedures like mean, analysis of variance or F-test, and Pearson-r. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

This research study aims to achieve several objectives. First, it seeks to explore the perceptions of graduate school students regarding their mental well-being across various dimensions, including emotional, psychological, social, professional, physical, cognitive, and environmental well-being. Second, it aims to assess respondents' perceptions of their coping strategies, focusing on aspects such as focusing on positives, support coping, active coping, and evasive coping. Third, the study investigates significant differences in perceived mental well-being and coping strategies among respondents grouped according to their degree programs. Fourth, it examines the relationship between perceived mental well-being and coping strategies among graduate school students. Finally, the study aims to propose an educational intervention program based on its significant findings to enhance and sustain coping strategies and mental well-being among graduate school students.

### **SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

1. The overall perceived mental well-being of graduate school students at Nueva Vizcaya State University-Bambang Campus is rated as Good, with a grand mean of 3.45. Among the dimensions, Social Well-Being holds the highest rating, with a mean of 3.77 (Very Good), followed by Professional Well-Being at 3.69 (Very Good), reflecting satisfaction with social interactions and professional endeavors. Environmental Well-Being also received a Very Good rating, with a mean of 3.52, indicating supportive surroundings. Cognitive Well-Being (3.44) and Psychological Well-Being (3.43) are rated as Good, suggesting positive intellectual and mental engagement. Physical Well-Being, rated Good at 3.16, indicates moderate satisfaction with physical health, while Emotional Well-Being, with the lowest mean of 3.11, still rated as Good, reflects relatively lower satisfaction in this area.
2. The perceived coping strategies of graduate school students at NVSU-Bambang Campus reveal an overall Grand Mean of 3.23, indicating a good level of coping strategies. Among the specific approaches, Focus on Positives ranks the highest with a mean of 3.78 (Very Good), reflecting the students' strong ability to maintain a positive outlook amidst challenges. Similarly, Support Coping is rated Very Good with a mean of 3.57, emphasizing their reliance on social support and interpersonal connections to manage stress effectively. Active Coping, rated Good with a mean of 3.48, shows that students use problem-solving and proactive measures, though less consistently than the top-rated strategies. In contrast, Evasive Coping, with the lowest mean of 2.11 (Fair), suggests that avoidance or escapism is the least utilized or effective coping mechanism among the students.
3. The analysis reveals no significant difference in the perceived mental well-being of respondents based on their academic degrees. This is supported by a computed F-value of 2.91, which is lower than the critical F-value of 3.12 at a 0.05 level of significance with degrees of freedom (2 and 74). Moreover, there is no significant difference in the perceived coping strategies of respondents when grouped according to their academic degrees. The computed F-value of 0.222 is far below the critical F-value of 3.12, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This confirms that the respondents, regardless of their academic degrees, do not differ significantly in their

coping strategies.

4. The analysis shows a very weak negative relationship between the perceived mental well-being and coping strategies of the respondents. This is indicated by a computed  $r$ -value of -0.043, which is significantly lower than the critical  $r$ -value of 0.224 at a 0.05 level of significance with 75 degrees of freedom. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting that there is no significant relationship between mental well-being and coping strategies among the respondents.
5. The researcher developed a training program tailored for graduate school students at NVSU-Bambang Campus, drawing from the significant findings of the study. The program is designed to improve dimensions of mental well-being and coping strategies that were rated as 'good' by respondents. Specifically, it targets enhancements in emotional well-being (3.11), psychological well-being (3.43), physical well-being (3.16), and cognitive well-being (3.44). In terms of coping strategies, the program focuses on strengthening active coping (3.48) as a key area for development. Furthermore, the program incorporates topics to sustain the dimensions evaluated at a 'very good' level, ensuring the continuous reinforcement of strengths across both mental well-being and coping constructs.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The overall mental well-being of graduate school students at Nueva Vizcaya State University-Bambang Campus is generally positive, with a Good rating. Students excel in Social Well-Being and Professional Well-Being, both rated as Very Good, indicating high satisfaction in their social and professional interactions. Other dimensions, such as Environmental Well-Being, Cognitive Well-Being, and Psychological Well-Being, show favorable evaluations. However, Physical Well-Being and Emotional Well-Being are rated as Good, with Emotional Well-Being identified as the lowest-rated dimension.
2. The coping strategies employed by the graduate school students reveal a good level of effectiveness. The highest-rated strategies are Focus on Positives and Support Coping, indicating strong reliance on maintaining positivity and social support. Active Coping is rated as Good, suggesting moderate use of problem-solving approaches. Conversely, Evasive Coping is the least utilized strategy, rated as Fair.
3. There is no significant difference in the perceived mental well-being of students across academic degree programs. Similarly, no significant variation is observed in their coping strategies, indicating that students employ similar coping mechanisms regardless of their academic program.
4. There is no significant relationship between the mental well-being and coping strategies of the respondents, as indicated by a very weak negative correlation. This suggests that the two variables are largely independent of one another.
5. Based on these findings, a training program was developed to address the areas of mental well-being and coping strategies rated as Good, with specific focus on Emotional Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Physical Well-Being, Cognitive Well-Being, and Active Coping. Additionally, the program includes topics to sustain dimensions rated as Very Good, ensuring continuous improvement and support for students' strengths in both constructs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Graduate school administrators and professors should develop targeted programs to improve emotional and physical well-being, as these are the lowest-rated dimensions. Workshops focusing on stress management, emotional regulation, and physical health promotion can be organized to support students in these areas.
2. Students should be encouraged to adopt and practice effective coping strategies, particularly Active Coping, as it demonstrates moderate use. Training sessions or peer mentoring programs could be introduced to teach proactive problem-solving techniques and encourage their application in academic and personal challenges.
3. Efforts should be made to sustain the positive evaluations in Social Well-Being, Professional Well-Being, Environmental Well-Being, Focus on Positives, and Support Coping. Programs that foster a supportive academic environment, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and promote professional growth should be continued and enhanced.
4. Given no significant differences in perceived mental well-being across academic degrees, tailored interventions should be developed to address the specific needs of students in different programs. Faculty and program heads can work collaboratively to identify and implement strategies that best suit their students' unique circumstances.
5. Since there is no significant relationship between mental well-being and coping strategies, further research should be conducted to explore other factors influencing these variables. This can guide the development of more comprehensive interventions to address students' needs holistically.
6. The proposed training program should be implemented and regularly evaluated to ensure its effectiveness in enhancing areas of mental well-being and coping strategies rated as Good while reinforcing those rated as Very Good. Continuous feedback from participants can guide adjustments and improvements to the program.
7. It is strongly recommended to replicate this study in a different research environment to validate and strengthen the reliability and generalizability of the results. Conducting the study in varied settings can provide deeper insights, identify potential contextual differences, and further establish the validity and reliability of the findings.

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