
COPING MECHANISMS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS DURING THE NEW NORMAL

Virginia Natividad-Franco, Archie Nel B. De Jesus

Bulacan State University, Philippines

Email: virginia.franco@bulsu.edu.ph, archienel.dejesus@bulsu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Information Technology (I.T.) and the net have transformed people's approach to life and educational access. These changes brought pressures and challenges to students to adapt to the new normal. The study aimed to determine the coping mechanisms of the I.T. students during the new normal era. The study utilized a mixed-methods type of research, which develops a novel theoretical perspective by combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods. The study's respondents are the 515 students from the College of Information and Communications Technology at Bulacan State University, Philippines. A validated survey instrument was disseminated through messenger to randomly selected students in the college. Furthermore, a focus group discussion with the college organization officers was done via google meet. The findings revealed a 3.27 weighted mean on their coping behavior, which means that the Information and Technology students experienced this behavior sometimes. Moreover, to cope up with the challenges in the new normal education, the coping mechanisms they did enable them to survive in their studies are time management, self-determination, giving oneself to rest and to relax through mobile games, communicating with friends. Lastly, change of environment. Furthermore, appropriate behavior in managing the stress brought by the new normal education makes studying lighter and enjoyable. Recommendations as regards coping mechanisms were submitted to the administrators.

KEYWORDS Coping Behavior, Coping Mechanism, Information Technology, New Normal



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INTRODUCTION

Coping is cognitive and behavioral efforts made in response to a threat. A typical model of coping set forth by Lazarus & Folkman (1984) stresses that coping choices are dependent on both the appraisal of the danger (primary assessment) and the appraisal of one's resources to address the threat (secondary assessment). The COVID19 Pandemic interrupted activities across the world, posing health and economic problems in each afflicted nation (Velavan & Meyer, 2020). It led to the closure of schools, colleges, and institutions across the globe so that students could adhere to social distancing measures (Toquero, 2020).

These tremendous challenges and issues affect the education system in the Philippines. The country faced a critical situation due to the rise of health crisis. To avoid and limit the risks of infection for the academic community, higher education institutions; they suspended classes during the implementation of public quarantine.

However, despite the school shutdown order, lessons continue. People are urged to study and work from home during this unusual and unpredictable period, while companies and organizations adjust to the new normal (Xie, Siau, & Nah, 2020). Because face-to-face classes are more likely to transmit the virus, teaching and learning online is the most effective alternative. Both instructors and students will be challenged by this podium since it exposes them to something new (Koldobskiy et al., 2021).

Online learning has become an important consideration, particularly in higher (Al-Adwan & Smedley, 2012) and adult education (Michaud, 2017). These organizations are involved in efforts to make online learning engaging and effective for learners.

However, the sudden shift to online learning created a hot debate in the Philippines, citing the poor living conditions of the learners. Magsambol (2020) cites an apparent gap between those who can and cannot afford the new education platform's resources. The new normal education brought stress to students to adapt to the new learning modalities and appreciate the science of learning.

But the findings of the study of Penley, Tomaka, & Wiebe (2002) showed that emotion-focused coping has a positive correlation with psychological distress. In contrast, coping strategies that focus on problem-solving have a weak correlation with psychological distress. Henceforth, when a student knows the appropriate coping mechanisms, he can succeed in the new normal education challenges.

Thus, this study aims to answer questions about how information technology students' coping behavior can be explained and how information technology students' coping mechanisms are used during the new normal.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study utilized a mixed-methods type of research. This research method is an extension of rather than a replacement for the quantitative and qualitative methodologies to research, as the latter two research approaches will continue to be valuable and vital (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Using mixed research methods draws from the strengths of the qualitative and quantitative research methods. It likewise provides an opportunity to develop novel theoretical perspectives by combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods (Renner, Borgwardt, Coyle, Moeschler, & Bhagra, 2022).

The subject of the study is the 515 students enrolled in the 2nd semester of S.Y. 2020-2021 from the College of Information and Communications Technology at Bulacan State University. The university is located at the province of Bulacan, Philippines. The

researchers used a validated survey questionnaire based on the study conducted by Savitsky, Findling, Erel, & Hendel (2020).

The data from Google Forms was delivered through messenger, and a focus group discussion among the college organization's leaders that was held via Google Meet. The mean and weighted mean were used to tabulate and evaluate the data. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the FGD results. Thematic analysis is a technique for discovering, evaluating, and reporting data patterns (themes). It organizes and explains a data collection in (rich) detail at a minimum (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Coping Behavior of Information Technology Students

Table 1. Coping Behavior of Information Technology Students

	Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	I can alter the situation and deal with the changes	3.14	<i>Sometimes True</i>
2	I believe that coping with stress can strengthen me	3.34	<i>Sometimes True</i>
3	I can stay focused under pressure	2.89	<i>Sometimes True</i>
4	I Perceive myself as a strong person	3.26	<i>Sometimes True</i>
5	I try to get advice from someone about what to do	3.52	<i>Sometimes True</i>
6	When I have a question about the situation, I seek information	3.79	<i>Often True</i>
7	I use alcohol or drugs to make myself feel better	1.70	<i>Not at All</i>
8	I put my trust in God when I am under stress	3.87	<i>Sometimes True</i>
9	I focus on work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things	3.61	<i>Sometimes True</i>
10	I have a positive outlook regarding the situation	3.35	<i>Sometimes True</i>
11	I use alcohol or drugs to make myself feel better	3.03	<i>Sometimes True</i>
12	I enjoy the jokes about the situation	3.04	<i>Sometimes True</i>
13	I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives	3.30	<i>Sometimes True</i>
14	I eat more than usual to calm myself down	3.40	<i>Sometimes True</i>
15	When I have a question about the situation, I use social networks to get information	3.78	<i>Often True</i>
	Weighted Mean	3.27	Sometimes True

Table 1 shows that Information Technology students' coping behavior has a weighted mean of 3.27 and a verbal interpretation of sometimes or occasionally true. The most significant indication is statement 8: *I trust God when I am under stress*. The Philippines is very well known for being a God-fearing nation. It has more than 80% Catholics who have a strong faith in God (Pangalangan, 2010). This faith enables people to trust God in every situation.

The second important indication is statement 6, which says that *I seek information when I inquire about a problem*. Obtaining information is extremely easy nowadays. It just takes one tap to obtain information. The internet has altered people's views on life and educational possibilities, as Siau (2018) said. It's now simple to get a conversation from a friend or an expert in the field regarding a particular issue. Essential data and information regarding specific problems may also be obtained on the internet. Because of the advancement of low-cost data storage and processing, data stored in databases is becoming more affordable to access (Bloom et al., 2009).

Finally, point 15 shows that when a student has a query about a problem, he seeks knowledge via social media. Students get academic teaching through online education via computers, smartphones, or other mobile devices (Siau, 2018).

B. Coping Mechanisms of Information Technology Students During the New Normal

The officials of the college organization, the Society for the Welfare of Information Technology Students (SWITS), participated in a focus group discussion through Google Meet. The researchers obtained authorization to perform the FGD from the school organization's advisor. The following themes emerged from the interviews.

Time Management. Kibar, Fidan, & Yıldırım (2014) define time management as a method for improving personal performance that is deemed necessary in order to accomplish set objectives, oversee completed work, and increase one's own effort.

Similarly, the leaders of the student group handle their academics throughout the new normal by using excellent time management. They spend nearly the whole day in front of their computers, studying their courses, viewing video presentations, and perusing their teachers' posted teachings in the new normal. They only struggled in the first quarter of the course, but they are able to adapt to the circumstances after that. Despite their high workloads, students manage to complete their assignments one at a time.

Self-Determination. The student leaders said during the interview that learning in the new normal is difficult. They do, however, want to graduate, therefore they are motivated to study and pass the courses. Their families are also supportive of them, which gives them motivation and allows them to concentrate on their academics.

As what Deci and Ryan cited in Lin et al., (2021) stated that self-determination is a characteristic of human functioning that includes the feeling of choice. It is the ability to choose and have those options, to be the ones who decide one's actions.

Self-Study. The code of the programs is difficult to comprehend since the courses are conducted online. To deal with this problem, they decided to study alone. Not everything would be handed to us, as their instructors kept telling them and reminding them. The pupils used to utilize the internet to learn more about how to code and create software.

Give Time to Rest. They are weary and drained from their usual lessons. They believe that if someone is exhausted, his intellectual is not functioning correctly. They allowed themselves time to rest if they were tired. They may take a sleep, relax for a few minutes, and play their favorite online games. This refueled their batteries and prepared them for a new battle. Everyone should have the chance to relax. Otherwise, you'd get bored with your everyday routine.

Communicate with Friends/Families. Many things have altered since the new normal began. The number of places where you can go out is very restricted. In contrast to the face-to-face approach, students must study alone, with no one to speak to about academic problems. As a consequence, students' academics are being hampered. However, thanks to technological advancements, connecting with friends and family has become much more manageable. They may relieve monotony in their life by chatting and video

calling. As a result, they were able to deal with the difficulties of studying thanks to the support of their relatives and friends who communicated with them.

Change of Environment. When you are bored, you need a change of scenery. However, given the circumstances, it is unlikely to happen. They rearranged items in their study space to alter the environment. To destress, they shuffle the furniture in their room. This makes individuals feel happier and more relaxed.

CONCLUSION

Coping attempts to control emotions and change behavior so that we can perform better in a given situation. Dealing with an issue necessitates a shift in people's behavior or perceptions to handle the better situation. Effective coping behavior maintains a balance between the stress-inducing internal and external surroundings. Consequently, the effectiveness of coping behavior changes depending on the situation, decreasing stress' negative impacts. To deal with the negative impact, the information technology students suggested coping strategies are helpful to others in similar situations.

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