



COPING MECHANISM IN THE COVID-19 ERA OF TEACHERS THROUGH SAFE (SEMINAR AND FOCUS GROUP ENHANCEMENT)

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**Coping Mechanism in the COVID-19 Era of Teachers Through SAFE
(Seminar And Focus group Enhancement)**

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Abstract

This action research delves into the coping mechanisms employed by teachers during the COVID-19 era, facilitated by the SAFE (Seminar and Focus Group Enhancement) approach. Utilizing the Work Habits Inventory, the study evaluates the working habits of 20 educators from Naga National High School. The investigation focused on addressing emotional distress, anxiety encountered, and the life of teachers in their professional roles, with a specific emphasis on the pandemic-induced challenges. As numerous authors have demonstrated, the epidemic is linked to a variety of medical and mental conditions that have an impact on teachers' personal lifestyles and completely upend them. Every aspect of the teacher's personality is affected by the pandemic, including changes in values and interests. Employing a quantitative descriptive-survey methodology, data was collected through a tailored questionnaire and guide questions administered to 20 teachers (comprising 8 males and 12 females) from the institution. The study's findings provide insights into the stressors faced by educators and contribute to sustainable interventions for enhancing coping mechanisms within their work context.

Keywords: *Coping Mechanism; COVID-19; Teachers*

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To my brethren in the Lord, who always include me in their prayer time.

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Context and Rationale

Every industry in the globe has been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including education. The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on every sector in the world, including education. Above 98 million COVID-19 infections had been reported globally as of the second half of January 2021, resulting in the deaths of more than 2.1 million people. The worry of contracting an infection, the potential for spreading it to loved ones, the possibility for a longer quarantine, the fear of a relative's passing, worries about scholastic advancement, and other fears have increased significantly. As a result, COVID-19 could have a terrible effect on people's mental health, especially kids and teachers all across the world (Abdelhafiz et al. 2020, 881).

As we consider the new normal in the post-COVID-19 age, it is necessary to re-appraise education in light of a new set of challenges and opportunities. The COVID-19 era is being prepared for in educational systems, which is characterized by the "new normal. It served as a warning against analysts' expectations that industrial economies would recover from the recession and return to normalcy (El-Erian 2020,1). Since then, the word "typical" has been used in a variety of settings to indicate that something that was once unusual has evolved into the norm. In 2009, the Urban Dictionary defined "new normal" as the state of affairs following a significant change. Since then, the phrase has been used in different situations to denote that something that was once unusual has become ordinary. It replaces the accepted, habitual, or normal state.

It appears that we are experiencing a sense of time crisis; a week feels like a day, and a day feels like a week. There doesn't seem to be any hope for the future, and many find it difficult to accept that "this too shall pass." The economy is looming, and it appears that we are experiencing a sense of time crisis. It appears that we are experiencing a sense of time crisis; a week feels like a day, and a day feels like a week. There doesn't seem to be any hope for the future, and many find it difficult to accept that "this too shall pass." There seems not to be any hope for the future, and many find it difficult to accept that "this too shall pass." The economy, an impending recession or worse, our own employment position, the risk of contracting disease, and most of those things seem to be beyond our control. Many people have these feelings, especially when teaching and learning. Being in denial or having given in to fear and fury makes it difficult to think rationally.

Teachers' daily routines were already stressful enough, given their standard heavy workloads, time constraints, and challenges integrating duties (MacIntyre et al. 2019, 26). With the arrival of COVID-19, the sources of teacher stress have increased. The quick shift to modular delivery, for which many teachers were unprepared but whose impacts appear certain to persist for years to come, has complicated workloads that were once thought to be large. Teachers should visit students who require assistance or remediation at home (Llego 2021, 1). Many teachers find it challenging to balance their personal and professional responsibilities, which used to be unheard of but have now become common.

Considering the new normal COVID-19 period, Naga National High School is rethinking how its Learning Continuity Plan is appropriate and enduring for the learners it serves. Mindful of the challenges the school faces from the learners', parents', and teachers' perspectives are important. With the changes in our educational situation due to COVID-19, teachers are facing different stress and anxieties in dealing with their work. It needs to be dealt with to be more effective and productive in their work.

Furthermore, coping mechanisms can be described as thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors that support mental health and aid in coping with psychological stress,

empowering people to face problems of everyday life. It also refers to our efforts to avoid or lessen danger, harm, and loss, as well as to lessen the sadness that is frequently connected to those events. These stresses are typically events or conditions that are outward but cause emotional anguish (Campbell et al. 2022, 10).

Thus, this action research attempts to determine the coping mechanism of (20) teachers of Naga National High School. The effects of the continuing crisis, specifically the coping mechanism of the teachers towards their work, there are some arising possibilities convincingly regarded from these components' perspectives.

In addition to the psychological problem, this action research suggests that other facets of instruction ought to be explored further for the betterment of teaching-learning during this new period of human history.

Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy

This action research used the SAFE strategy (Seminar And Focus group Enhancement). The strategy gathered feedback from the respondents, who were the 20 teachers. Focus group discussion was done once a week, sharing about different problems encountered in checking, retrieving modules, and other anxieties met by the teachers. LAC sessions were held twice a month with different topics because of the working habits inventory. INSET was done focusing on Psychosocial Support. The researcher used a revised work habits inventory and guide questions to modify individual monitoring plans.

On Work Habits Inventory. This instrument is used to determine the work habits of teachers and provide technical assistance should the need arise. It is grouped into 12 components, namely Courtesy, Cooperation, Initiative, Attitude, Accuracy of Work, Work Accomplished, Time Usage, Adaptability, Personal Appearance, Attendance, and Punctuality. Moreover, the results will be used to determine what kind of Learning Action Cell be proposed.

On Learning Action Cell. A Learning Action Cell in the DepEd is a group of educators who engage in collaborative learning activities to address recurring issues in the classroom. The chosen LAC Leader oversees these sessions. LACs will develop into positive, tender, and secure practice communities built in schools. Self-directed learning, reflective practice leading to action and self-evaluation, ongoing collaborative learning or problem-solving within a shared professional interest domain, and collective competency are the core elements of the process.

On INSET/Seminar. In-service training has for many years been the driving force in solving the coping mechanism of teachers in the field of instruction and learning throughout this pandemic. Teachers must continue to maintain a positive attitude toward their work habits, just like in any other career. In turn, this encourages their "lifelong learning" as educators, professionals, and people in charge of educating the future generation.

Action Research Questions

The ultimate objective of this action research is to explore the implementation of SAFE (Seminar, And Focus group Enhancement) as an intervention to help teachers cope with the challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic at Naga National High School during the School Year 2020-2021.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following inquiries:

1. What are the working habits of the teachers of Naga National High School in the time of pandemic?
2. How does the intervention SAFE (Seminar, And Focus group Enhancement) help the teachers cope with the different difficulties?

Action Research Methods

Research Design

The researcher employed the mixed method since it utilized descriptive-quantitative data and qualitative data. The quantitative research method was employed in describing the extent of the work habits of the teacher-participants. Moreover, the qualitative research method was utilized in describing the challenges faced by teachers in their teaching work, especially in printing and distributing modules and other tasks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants and Other Sources of Data Information

This action research was conducted on twenty (20) teachers who were selected randomly from Junior and Senior High School. Before the study was conducted, permission from the researcher to the school head was sought. Then, the researcher asked for the approval of the teachers to be in the program. During the administering of the assessment tools, the proponent handled it personally to ensure accuracy and honest results. This action research attempts to address the coping mechanism of teachers at Naga National High School for the School Year 2020-2021.

Research Instrument

The researcher used the checklist about the Work Habits Inventory and a guide question. This research instrument captures the work habits of the teachers in terms of courtesy, cooperation, initiative, attitude toward constructive criticism, supervision, accuracy of work, work accomplished, time usage, adaptability, and appearance. The questionnaires were delivered by the researcher herself. Each item in each category is graded on a scale of 4 to 1, with 4 being Very Highly Observed and 1 being Occasionally Observed.

Data Gathering Procedure

In collecting data to complete the action research, the following steps were carried out:

1. The researcher sought permission from the school head for the conduct of the study.
2. The researcher selected twenty (20) teachers from the Junior and Senior High Schools of Naga National High School.
3. The researcher asked for consent or approval of the teachers to be in the program.
4. Implemented the project SAFE (Seminar And Focus group Enhancement) as an intervention to help teachers cope with the challenges.
5. Administer the Work Habits Inventory tool to the research participants.
6. The surveys were gathered, and the information was tallied.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the quantitative data, descriptive statistics such as mean were utilized to summarize teachers' work habits. The following continuum was utilized in the interpretation: Weighted mean under 1.00 – 1.50 as sometimes observed; Weighted mean under 1.51 – 2.00 as moderately observed; Weighted mean under 2.01 – 2.50 as highly observed; and Weighted mean under 2.51 – 3.00 as Very highly observed. To gauge the efficiency of the intervention, a quasi-experiment design through simple arithmetic mean was used in the study where results from the pre-test and post-test of twenty-eight (28) Grade 11 learners and twelve (12) Grade 12 learners were sought and treated.

The variance between each quarter with intervention and no intervention was analyzed. A positive result means that the intervention was successful. The bigger the positive variance, the more efficient the intervention was.

Results and Discussion

Working Habits of Teachers. Describing the working habits of teachers during the pandemic is crucial for understanding their experiences, adapting to new teaching environments, improving student outcomes, supporting teacher well-being, and informing education policies and practices in a post-pandemic world.

Table 1: Teachers Working Habits

Work Habits of Teachers	Mean	Description rating
1. Courtesy	1.55	Moderately Observed
2. Cooperation	1.40	Sometimes Observed
3. Initiative	1.75	Moderately Observed
4. attitude	1.50	Moderately Observed
5. Supervision	1.35	Sometimes Observed
6. Accuracy of work	1.60	Moderately Observed
7. Work accomplished	1.50	Moderately Observed
8. Time Usage	2.05	Highly Observed
9. Adaptability	1.30	Sometimes Observed
10. Physical Appearance	2.50	Highly Observed
11. Attendance	2.50	Highly Observed
12. Punctuality	2.35	Highly Observed
Average	1.77	Moderately Observed

Table 1 shows that the total mean on the working habits of the teachers during the pandemic is moderately observed. It also shows that three work habits of teachers were rated high, specifically Physical appearance, attendance, and punctuality. The lowest work habits that are interpreted as sometimes observed were Attendance, Supervision, and Adaptability. competitive in a job. If you are open and willing to learn new things and take on new tasks, you have adaptability skills. Developing additional skills can also mean improving your adaptability (Kozlowski et al. 2001, 59). You become a better employee if you can change the environment and work processes.

Overall, the working habits of the teachers were moderately observed based on the results due to the pandemic. Through the support of the intervention SAFE, teachers

were able to cope with their working habits, especially through the help of Psychosocial Support, which was discussed during the seminar and followed up with the focus group discussion, talking about their different working habits that need to improve.

Most of these teacher-participants were outstanding in their work before the pandemic, but if you look at the table above based on the result of the work habits inventory, there are three work habits that got low scores: adaptability, supervision, and cooperation. Teachers could hardly adapt to the situation; it was difficult for them to supervise their own work, and sometimes they didn't cooperate in other tasks.

Intervention SAFE and Teachers' Coping Mechanisms. The SAFE intervention helped teachers in coping with the different difficulties they were given inputs and different activities for them to be positive thinkers and to go on in their work even though they had undergone difficulties in facing the pandemic. Through SAFE, they can express and pour out their problems in their core group. Hence, the teachers articulated below how project SAFE enabled them to cope with the different difficulties.

"The S.A.F.E intervention helps me cope with the different difficulties because it helps me give solutions to the problems encountered." (T1)

"It helps me to de-stress myself." (T15)

"Yes, it helps me to cope with the needs in the new normal that I am facing." (T6)

"When I was Infected with the COVID-19 virus, I was able to share my experience on how to face my fears with the help of my core group." (T8)

"Yes, a lot I was tired of printing modules, collecting, and the worst was checking of modules of the 300 students. I was refreshed when we had activities during our PSS time." (T16)

"The use of S.A.F.E intervention in school helps a lot in different aspects... through SAFE, teachers will be de-stress." (T17)

The Psycho Support System of the SAFE strategy indeed helped in minimizing the stress and other negative experiences of the teachers. The capacity to offer comfort and confidence to others is a potent tool that teachers can utilize at this time. Reaching out is the key word. This is especially crucial for those who live alone. These outcomes put a premium on tiny acts of kindness to be performed for the lonely folks and let them know that other people are thinking of them (Zhou 2023, 668).

Giving and sharing their ideas and experiences to lessen the burdens brought on by the pandemic. Although everyone responds to stress differently, people frequently do better in the long run. They experience a sense of security, community, peace, and hope. They can get social, physical, and emotional assistance and regain control by being able to take care of themselves. It can assist in using some straightforward techniques to improve your mental health and well-being. This can involve reaching out to individuals who are supportive of you, requesting help from professionals or school administration, getting more physically active, picking up new skills, and keeping in mind the small pleasures in life.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Teachers now face new challenges as a result of these abrupt changes in the new educational system. As an alternate strategy for learning continuity, modular training had a number of drawbacks. Nevertheless, teachers must monitor their students' progress and development. The teachers' work commitment in terms of commitment to their work in teaching and in their profession is observable. Due to the pandemic, the

productivity of the teachers in their workplace lessened based on the outcomes due to many factors. The SAFE intervention helped teachers in coping with the different difficulties they were given inputs and different activities for them to be positive thinkers and to go on in their work even though they had undergone difficulties in facing the pandemic. Through SAFE, they can express and pour out their problems in their core group. Giving and sharing their ideas and experiences to lessen the burdens brought by the pandemic.

The SAFE intervention is effective and needs to be institutionalized and shared with others in order to address the psychological and mental aspects of teachers and other stakeholders who need this intervention.

Action Plan

Activity	Target Date	Resources Needed
1. LAC Session presentation	Second week of April 2021	ppt, laptop, TV, speaker, bond paper
2. Integration to the Learning Continuity Plan/Modification	July 2021	LCP of the School
3. Integration of the findings to the AIP or AIP	August 2021	AIP of the previous year, project design, and activity profile
4. Sharing research to other schools	Sept. 2021-December 2021	Ppt, laptop, research copy

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Financial Report

Material and Activity	Cost Estimates	Source
Bond paper for the printing of instruments	P1,000.00	MOOE
Printer Ink	P1,000.00	MOOE
Communication	P 1,000.00	BERF
Folders and Other Instructional for instruments	P 500.00	MOOE
Plan for Research Advocacies	P1,000.00	MOOE
Total	P 4 ,500.00	

Appendix A

Informed Consent

1.	I have read and understood the information about the research, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been allowed to ask questions about the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalized for withdrawing, nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g., use of names, pseudonyms, anonymization of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate consent terms for interviews, audio, video, or other data collection forms have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing, and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	I understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications, and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognized	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Along with the Researcher, I agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick the box as appropriate):

Participant:

Name of Teacher

Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix B

Research Instruments

Instrument on the action research title “COPING MECHANISM IN THE COVID- 19 ERA OF TEACHERS THOUGH SAFE”

Work Habits Inventory

Name (Optional) _____ Position _____

Length of Service (DepEd) _____ Department _____

Directions: Read the descriptions given for each of the qualities listed below. Place a check (/) mark on the space provided before each statement that most accurately describes you. (A Scale of 4 very high to 1 sometimes observed).

WORK HABITS	4	3	2	1
1. COURTESY I am courteous and considerate.				
2. COOPERATION (Ability to get along with other) I get along well with others, I am friendly and helpful.				
3. INITIATIVE (Tendency to go ahead) I am resourceful, look for things to learn and do.				
4. ATTITUDE TOWARD CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM I accept constructive criticism and improve greatly.				
5. SUPERVISION I do not supervision while during routine tasks.				
6. ACCURACY OF WORK I seldom make errors and do work of very high quality.				
7. WORK ACCOMP I am work rapidly: Output is well above average.				
8. TIME USAGE I waste time occasionally but am usually reliable.				
9. ADAPTABILITY I adjust to change readily.				
10. APPEARANCE (neatness and personal care) I care about my appearance; I look neat most of the time.				
11. ATTENDANCE (to work, or organization to which I belong) I am never absent except for an unavoidable emergency.				
12. PUNCTUALITY I am always early in going to school.				

Appendix C

Interview Guide Questions

Entrance

1. Do you know SAFE intervention? If yes, how did you know about it?
2. Can you tell us about it?

Exploratory

3. What are the difficulties or challenges that you encounter in relation to your work?
4. Do you think the S.A.F.E intervention help you cope with the different difficulties or challenges? How?

Exit

5. If there is one problem that has been resolved or at least minimized due to the S.A.F.E intervention, what do you think is it?
 6. Do you recommend for the use of S.A.F.E intervention in school? Why?
25. Suzie rolled her eyes at Ernest's story for she knew he was lying.