

Coping Mechanism in the New Normal: Experiences of Parents and Students in Tertiary Mathematics Education

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic disrupts the status quo. In an instant people from all walks of life are faced with novel situations that need to be tackled head-on. To investigate this disruption, research was conducted to determine how parents and students taking up tertiary mathematics education can cope with the new normal. Because the impact of online learning and work-from-home setup affected both the students and the parents, it is critical to understand how the family dealt with the situation of online learning work-from-home setup. As a result of the abrupt changes, parents and students had to adjust significantly; parents are now devoting their time to work and must provide support to their children during online learning. Parents must set aside time to supplement the school's curriculum. One thousand six hundred sixty - seven students (1,667) who were taking Mathematics in the Modern World (GEMMW), a basic mathematics course for the first semester of the school year 2021 – 2022 of the University of Makati participated in the study. Their parents were also included in the mixed methods study wherein a four-part questionnaire was developed to collect data. The study used frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation in interpreting the quantitative data collected while thematic analysis was used to present the qualitative responses. Findings revealed that some parents of students enrolled in the course became unemployed during the pandemic. However, these did not deter the parents and students from manifesting positive coping mechanisms. Despite the difficulties afforded by the new normal and setbacks in terms of support from concerned agencies, they demonstrated strong coping strategies and a positive outlook.

Keywords: coping strategies, new normal, experiences, tertiary mathematics education

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Introduction

The pandemic resulted in a re-envisioned, re-designed, and re-launched education. As an offset, it became a home-based, technology-enabled, online service (Harris, 2020). These changes created challenges for educational services and providers because they have to overhaul the system. There were substantial and costly revamps in terms of teaching and learning methods to not disrupt the student's learning. Among the changes was the mode of delivery so there were the options of utilizing printed materials or modules, and multimedia such as TV, radio, and online platforms like computers and cell phones. In addition, there was concern about connectivity such as network services and providers, and the cost it will entail to students. Aside from the health concerns brought by the

pandemic, the previously mentioned factors contributed to the anxiety experienced by teachers, students, and their parents. Thus, anxiety was prevalent during the pandemic (Cheng et al., 2021).

A particular concern is the mathematics course taught in tertiary education because of its area of content teaching. Much of teaching the course is through inquiry-based approaches. As instructors of this course, there are observed challenges in teaching the content in a face-to-face setup and the concern it will be exacerbated with the shift to online instruction. However, this was resolved by teachers by creating instructional videos wherein explicit teaching and practice are provided for students. Woods et al., (2020) suggested that instructors could prepare explanations of concepts and model practice exercises appropriate to

the student's level. These videos are prepared in advance and shared through a weblink. On the part of the student, however, this created problems. The shift to home learning environments brought problems like internet connectivity and power outages. Alongside is the physical space for learning. Some students lived in areas where noise is prevalent, and a distraction as well as the presence of other residents in the house may interrupt their learning time. These disruptions are the most cited in the studies conducted by Baticulon et al. (2021) and Bringula et al. (2021). In their studies, they mentioned the elements affecting the self-concepts of online mathematics learners. In general, these were reported as both positive and negative self-concepts which are influential in the learning of mathematics via an online platform. Data revealed that students experienced technological, personal, home, assessment, pedagogical, consultation, and examination anxiety issues during online classes and in particular during mathematics sessions (Bringula et al., 2021). Tyaningsin (2021) conducted a survey wherein students make known the constraints or difficulties they experienced from the Learning from Home (LFH) survey questionnaire. Their responses include connectivity or network troubles, the toll on their physical and mental health, added costs in terms of increased power consumption, time management, and the home learning space especially those who are renting houses.

The shift to online learning had to have a significant impact on parents as well as students. Parents transformed their homes into classrooms and offices. The impact of online learning and work-from-home setup affected both the student and the parents, so it is important to understand how the family dealt with the situation of online learning and work-from-home setup. The abrupt changes have caused a significant adjustment for parents and students; parents now are devoting their time to work and must provide support to their children during online learning. Parents must make time to supplement the lessons provided by the school. Parents had the chance to take part in a virtual learning environment. According to Bhamani et al. (2020), the main concern of parents was their children experiencing difficulties as a result of sudden school closures and a complete ban on social gatherings. As a result, home learning has emerged as an alternative to traditional schooling methods, which should be made effective in order to provide essential learning skills to children at home using the limited resources available.

These difficulties aggravated by the pandemic resort people to seeking redress by building coping mechanisms. Strategies for coping were designed to calm minds and bodies. A coping strategy is a conscious

effort to solve a personal or interpersonal problem that will help in overcoming, minimizing, or tolerating stress or conflict. He added that the two main categories of coping strategies are emotion-focus and solution-focus. Moreover, coping is normative because people can naturally adapt to stressors. There is also the observation that stress brought by human interactions can benefit people through improved thinking and confidence (Calbi, 2021). But not all are gifted with positive coping mechanisms, people have different ways of handling stress. Collectively or individually, people's responses to managing stress differ in terms of physiological, psychological, social, and cultural resources.

The process is another feature of coping. Coping strategies are helpful in processing transactions, interactions, and episodes over time. As noted by White (1974, p.50) "coping is described not inappropriately in military metaphors, adaptation often calls for delay, strategic retreat, regrouping of forces, abandoning of untenable positions, seeking fresh intelligence, and deploying new weapons".

Supporting this feature, Aldwin (2007), Skinner, and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007) described coping as changing over developmental time. Further, they stressed that the means of coping as well as the personal and social resources brought to bear during coping manifestations show radical changes and qualitative shifts across the lifespan.

Some of the studies about coping is that of Finlay et al. (2022), who explained that coping involves mental exercises to combat stress. As all individuals are equipped with coping mechanisms the goal is to face the stressors and solve the problem via homeostasis or any self-regulating process by which an organism tends to maintain stability while adjusting to conditions that are best for its survival (ibid). Additionally, the researcher posited that coping strategies can be positive or negative, depending on whether they increase or reduce mental well-being. It is also determined by personality patterns and perceptual experiences because the strategies used to adapt to a situation are individual actions and decisions.

In another study, Barrot, Lenares, & Del Rosario (2021) revealed that the online learning challenges of college students varied in terms of type and extent. The learning environment at home is the foremost challenge while being technologically skilled is the least concern. Further, it reported that the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic had the greatest impact on the quality of the learning experience and students' mental health. The students' coping strategies are help-seeking, technical aptitude enhancement, time management,

learning environment control, resource management, and utilization, the latter two as the most useful and frequently used strategies. The researchers suggested further investigation of these strategies to improve classroom practice and policymaking.

A positive view of the pandemic was presented by Wang, Zhang, Zhao, Zhang, & Jiang (2020) wherein they cited the observation of parents to schoolwork. Parents who were forced to work from home noted that their relationship with their children improved because they were able to bond with each other. The parents were obliged to sit down with their children to assist them with schoolwork such as online assignments and modules. The time spent with the parent helped the children to cope with the challenges brought by the stay-at-home orders and online shift to learning. Parents can provide not only a helping hand to their mental development but served as emotional anchors, especially to the most vulnerable children. While children reported emotional release of anxieties toward their parents the latter suffered too from mental stress. Aside from adapting to the new normal work set-up they also had to equip themselves with knowledge and strategies to teach their children. They have to play the roles of providers, teachers, and support systems for the emotional and mental demands of the new normal. Thus, it was recommended that parents be given webinars or training on coping mechanisms.

Sociodemographic and psychosocial predictors are the focus of Fluharty & Fancourt (2021) study. They revealed that sociodemographic and psychosocial predictors of coping align with usual predictors of coping styles not occurring during a pandemic. However, even when controlling for the wide range of these previously known predictors specific adversities were associated with the use of specific strategies. The worries about finances, basic needs, and events related to COVID-19 were associated with a range of strategies, while the experience of financial adversities was associated with problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping. Furthermore, the study reported that there were no associations between coping styles and experiencing challenges in meeting basic needs, but Covid-19-related adversities were associated with lower use of socially supported coping.

The cost of the pandemic took its toll on the most vulnerable sector of the country thus, aid was given to parents and students. Hernando-Malipot (2020) reported that nearly 860 students in secondary and tertiary levels in need were provided with financial aid amidst the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to the education system nationwide coursed through the municipal or city government. The Aboitiz Group and its foundation extended help to the affected students who

are under their scholarship program. Aside from the subsidies, they provided monthly allowances which included financial assistance for online learning such as procurement of gadgets like laptops. This social action from a private group offered a lifeline to students who are on the bottom rung of the income ladder and specifically provided a coping mechanism to the challenges presented by a “hybrid” type of schooling.

A report by Carbungco (2021) in the conference where CHED Chairperson J. Prospero De Vera III was a speaker, the Higher Education Institutions or HEIs were instructed to look after the welfare of students. The instructions cited flexibility in the teaching and learning delivery as well as tolerance since most students were also directly stressed by the sudden shift in learning mode. The chair also directed state colleges and universities to respond to the needs and concerns of students. While there was a problem of limited resources to provide for gadgets like laptops and internet usage, they tapped the help of some school administrators to address these needs. They also lobbied for a bigger budget to expand their coverage and increase the assistance to the beneficiaries of the Tertiary Education Subsidy.

The assumptions are laid that coping mechanisms are inherent in every individual and parents as well as educational and social organizations are some of the support systems of those affected by the pandemic. Thus, this study aimed to determine how parents and students in tertiary mathematics education can cope with the new normal. This study also presented the profile of the parent respondents' employment status before and during the pandemic. Additionally, the investigation of the coping mechanisms utilized by the parents and students during the pandemic with a focus on the latter's coping strategies with the learning demands of tertiary mathematics education because of the new normal setup. Lastly, respondents were asked to articulate their expectations from the City Government of Makati in terms of assistance during the pandemic. The purpose of the study is to determine how parents and students in tertiary mathematics education can cope with the new normal.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the parent respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 employment status before the pandemic?
 - 1.2 employment status during the pandemic?
2. What are the experiences encountered by parents and students in tertiary mathematics education in the new normal?

3. How do the students in tertiary mathematics education cope with the new normal setup?
4. How do parents cope with the new normal?
5. What assistance did they expect from the City Government of Makati during the pandemic?

Methodology

The students who are taking Mathematics in the Modern World were the respondents of the study. The researchers used convenience sampling to identify the respondents of the study. Since the researchers are handling Mathematics in the Modern World, their students and the parents of their students were selected as respondents. One thousand six hundred sixty - seven students (1, 667) who were taking Mathematics in the Modern World (GEMMW), a basic mathematics course for the first semester of the school year 2021 – 2022 of the University of Makati participated in the study. The parents of the students were also tapped as participants in this mixed-method research. As a quantitative and qualitative research study, a four-part questionnaire was developed by the researchers to collect data. The first part of the questionnaire inspected the demographic profile of the parent respondents' employment status before and during the pandemic. The second part sought to reveal the experiences of students while taking up tertiary mathematics education. What coping mechanisms were utilized by the students when faced with stress is the content of the third part of the questionnaire. The last part aimed to reveal the expectations of the respondents in terms of assistance from the City Government of Makati in response to the pandemic.

For the statistical treatment of data, the study used frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation in interpreting the quantitative data collected while thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative responses.

Results and Discussion

Employment Before and During the Pandemic

The table below presents the employment status of the parent respondents before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data revealed that before the pandemic 76.10 % or 1269 parents were employed, while a total of 398 or 23.90 % of parents were unemployed. However, when the pandemic struck the number of employed fell to 1049 or 62.90%. Further, there was a rise in unemployed parents at a total of 618, or 37.10%.

The result suggested that the number of employed parents decreased during the pandemic.

Table 1

Parents' Employment Status Before the Pandemic

Employment Status	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	f	%	f	%
Employed	1269	76.10	1049	62.9
Unemployed	398	23.90	618	37.10
Total	1667	100.00	1667	100.00

Table 2 shows the experiences of parents and students under the new normal as well as the lived-through occurrences of the students while taking up the course in tertiary mathematics education. Items listed in the questionnaire that is physical needs or learning environment showed that the parents “always” provide enough food for the family despite the pandemic with a rating of ($\bar{x}$ =3.29, SD=0.55). Students reported that they “always” continue their studies despite the pandemic with ($\bar{x}$ =3.34, SD=0.51) rating. However, to disrupt not their studies the parents and students “sometimes” spend money on computer shops that offer better internet connectivity for online classes with ($\bar{x}$ =2.59, SD=0.84) and ($\bar{x}$ =2.89, SD=0.76) resulting in a composite or combined rating of “sometimes” ($\bar{x}$ =3.01, SD=0.09) for parents and ($\bar{x}$ =3.09, SD=0.08) for students. The composite standard deviation of 0.09 for parents and 0.08 for students showed that the parents and students expressed similar experiences under the new normal. From the data gathered the parents and students are aware that provisions for the needs for the physical or learning environment in tertiary mathematics education especially in the new normal are important

Table 2

Experiences Encountered by the Parents and Students Under the New Normal

Physical Needs/ Learning Environment	Parents			Students		
	WM	SD	Interpretation	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. Enough food for the family despite the pandemic.	3.29	0.55	Always	3.24	0.59	Sometimes
2. Pay bills. (Electricity, internet, water, etc.)	3.17	0.60	Sometimes	3.18	0.56	Sometimes
3. Continue studies despite the pandemic.	3.27	0.59	Always	3.34	0.51	Always
4. Secured internet to	3.14	0.61	Sometimes	3.17	0.60	Sometimes
5. Provide necessary gadgets for online classes.	3.07	0.63	Sometimes	3.10	0.62	Sometimes
6. Area that is suitable for the need in online classes.	2.98	0.68	Sometimes	3.04	0.63	Sometimes
7. Reading materials that are of help in lessons.	2.94	0.66	Sometimes	2.94	0.66	Sometimes
8. Look for a better place that has a better signal for an internet connection.	2.99	0.66	Sometimes	3.04	0.63	Sometimes
9. Ask relatives/ friends for a place or space in their house to be used when having online classes	2.61	0.81	Sometimes	2.91	0.75	Sometimes
10. Pay for a place that has better internet connectivity for online classes.	2.59	0.84	Sometimes	2.89	0.76	Sometimes
Composite Mean	3.01	0.09	Sometimes	3.09	0.08	Sometimes

Legend: 3.26-4.00 (Always), 2.51-3.25 (Sometimes), 1.76-2.50 (Rarely), 1.00-1.75 (Not at All)

The experiences encountered by parents and students while the latter are taking up the course of tertiary mathematics education are presented in Table 3. Data collected show that the parents are “always” encouraging the students to study hard with a rating of ($\bar{x}$ =3.35, SD=0.57), and the rating ($\bar{x}$ =3.33, SD=0.56) which shows that students are “always” encouraged to study hard. These ratings mean that despite the challenges of the pandemic they are unperturbed. In addition, it can be gleaned from the table that parents and students are “sometimes” discussing ideal conditions for internet usage, sleep affordances, study needs, and work schedules with a rating of ($\bar{x}$ =3.09, SD=0.65) and ($\bar{x}$ =3.05, SD=0.64). This results in a composite or combined rating of “sometimes” ($\bar{x}$ =3.21, SD=0.03) for parents and ($\bar{x}$ =3.13, SD=0.03) for students. The composite standard deviation of 0.03 for both parents and students showed that the parents and students are alike in terms of the experiences they lived through under the new normal. These results indicate that the parents and students are aware of the need to be psychologically prepared in dealing with the challenges afforded by the disruption of normal activities like attending classes in person or working outside the homes. In particular, the data collected show that they are cognizant of facing head-on tasks in the course they are taking which is tertiary mathematics education.

Table 3

Experiences Encountered by the Parents and Students Under the New Normal

Moral / Psychological Climate	Parents			Students		
	WM	SD	Interpretation	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. Developing a study habit to follow.	3.11	0.63	Sometimes	3.02	0.65	Sometimes
2. Encouraging to study hard despite the educational setup.	3.35	0.57	Always	3.33	0.56	Always
3. Checking problems in school or others.	3.19	0.62	Sometimes	3.10	0.65	Sometimes
4. Showing support for studies.	3.33	0.60	Always	3.25	0.61	Always
5. Helping whenever there is a need in the studies.	3.18	0.64	Sometimes	3.06	0.67	Sometimes
6. Offering emotional support for the performance, ability, and efforts for studies.	3.20	0.64	Sometimes	3.11	0.65	Sometimes
7. Helping to balance the time spent on studies, friends, and other activities during the pandemic.	3.17	0.62	Sometimes	3.09	0.65	Sometimes
8. Expressing concern and interest, empowering to seek appropriate kinds of help, when necessary, to make good choices, and to learn from experience.	3.24	0.59	Sometimes	3.17	0.58	Sometimes
9. Giving reminders in dealing with the time of studies because they know that students do not get enough sleep and get sick because they are committed to too many groups and/or projects.	3.26	0.59	Always	3.18	0.61	Sometimes
10. Discussing ideal conditions for using internet such as times of day, and days of the week that respect each member of the family's sleep habits, study needs, work schedules, etc.	3.09	0.65	Sometimes	3.05	0.64	Sometimes
Composite Mean	3.21	0.03	Sometimes	3.13	0.03	Sometimes

Legend: 3.26-4.00 (Always), 2.51-3.25 (Sometimes), 1.76-2.50 (Rarely), 1.00-1.75 (Not at All)

Table 4 shows the physical coping strategies used by parents and students while in the new normal setup. Walking with a friend is an “agree” for parents.

The rating ($\bar{x}$ =3.25, SD=0.63) stated the activity is a good stress reliever. This view was also shared by students in their “strongly agree” response with ($\bar{x}$ =3.33, SD=0.63) rating. One of the challenges of an online class is finding a conducive place thus the data showed that both parents and students “agree” that asking relatives/ friends for a place or space to hold an online class is one recourse. This physical coping strategy yields a rating of ($\bar{x}$ =2.77, SD=0.78) for the parents and ($\bar{x}$ =2.95, SD=0.71) for the students. The composite or combined ratings of “agree” ($\bar{x}$ =3.11, SD=0.07) and ($\bar{x}$ =3.19, SD=0.05) for parents and students, respectively. The results indicate that the physical coping strategies used by parents and students are almost alike because of the standard deviation of 0.07 for the former and 0.05 for the latter.

Table 4

Physical Coping Strategies Used in Dealing with the New Normal

Physical Coping Strategies	Parents			Students		
	WM	SD	Interpretation	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. Sharing a problem to the right person who knows you really well.	3.10	0.71	Agree	3.28	0.61	Strongly Agree
2. Planning for the next semester helps cope better.	3.10	0.69	Agree	3.19	0.63	Agree
3. Going for a walk with a friend is a great way to cut down stress.	3.25	0.63	Agree	3.33	0.63	Strongly Agree
4. Exercising is a great way to feel better about the problems encountered under the new normal.	3.15	0.62	Agree	3.27	0.58	Strongly Agree
5. Being optimistic in the middle of a difficult situation and trying to sort out things in your head helps in thinking more clearly and cut worries down.	3.24	0.56	Agree	3.28	0.54	Strongly Agree
6. Getting involved with my parents and talking or writing about how we feel are all better ways to cope with stress under the new normal.	3.15	0.59	Agree	3.09	0.64	Agree
7. Reading materials are of help for my lessons under the new normal.	3.05	0.59	Agree	3.18	0.55	Agree
8. Talking to a trusted person about how they can be of help in managing financial difficulties under the new normal.	3.17	0.57	Agree	3.21	0.61	Agree
9. Asking relatives/friends for a place or space in their house to be used when there is an online class.	2.77	0.78	Agree	2.95	0.71	Agree
10. Getting involved in the community to know the assistance being given by the government under the new normal.	3.10	0.59	Agree	3.06	0.59	Agree
Composite Mean	3.11	0.07	Agree	3.19	0.05	Agree

Legend: 3.26-4.00 (Always), 2.51-3.25 (Sometimes), 1.76-2.50 (Rarely), 1.00-1.75 (Not at All)

Table 5 shows the moral coping strategies used by parents and students in dealing with the challenges brought by the new normal. Data show that parents “strongly agree” in encouraging the students to continue their studies and offering support to the latter to lessen their anxieties which resulted in a rating of ($\bar{x}$ =3.33, SD=0.55). In turn, the students yield a “strongly agree” response in terms of the encouragement they received from their parents with ($\bar{x}$ =3.28, SD=0.53) rating. The table also shows that the parents “agree” to discuss the ideal conditions in internet usage in consideration to the other members of the family with a rating of ($\bar{x}$ =3.15, SD=0.59). Additionally, the student's response of “agree” means they are to balance the time spent on studies, friends, and other activities with ($\bar{x}$ =3.12, SD=0.60) rating. These findings resulted in a composite

or combined rating of “agree” ($\bar{x}$ =3.25, SD=0.02) for parents and ($\bar{x}$ =3.19, SD=0.03) for students. The standard deviation of 0.02 and 0.03 for parents and students, respectively indicate that the moral coping strategies used by parents and students are closely similar. The studies of Aldwin (2007), Skinner, and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007) supported these findings that the coping mechanisms change over developmental time. Furthermore, they emphasized that coping mechanisms, as well as the personal and social resources mobilized during coping manifestations, undergo radical changes and qualitative shifts across the lifespan.

Table 5

Moral Coping Strategies Used in Dealing with the New Normal Condition in Studying

Moral Coping Strategies	Parents			Students		
	WM	SD	Interpretation	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. Continue developing study habits positively.	3.20	0.54	Agree	3.27	0.53	Strongly Agree
2. Encourage them to continue their studies.	3.33	0.55	Strongly Agree	3.28	0.53	Strongly Agree
3. Check if there are problems.	3.25	0.57	Agree	3.15	0.61	Agree
4. Support is given to lessen anxieties.	3.33	0.55	Strongly Agree	3.20	0.59	Agree
5. Give assistance when there is a need.	3.22	0.58	Agree	3.15	0.60	Agree
6. Offer emotional support for the performance, ability, and efforts in the studies.	3.25	0.57	Agree	3.15	0.61	Agree
7. Balance the time spent on studies, friends, and other activities.	3.23	0.57	Agree	3.12	0.60	Agree
8. Express concern and interest, when necessary, to make good choices, and to learn from experience.	3.26	0.54	Strongly Agree	3.18	0.56	Agree
9. Remind in dealing with the time of studies.	3.27	0.55	Strongly Agree	3.22	0.57	Agree
10. Discuss the ideal conditions in using internet that respects each member of the family.	3.15	0.59	Agree	3.13	0.58	Agree
Composite Mean	3.25	0.02	Agree	3.19	0.03	Agree

Legend: 3.26-4.00 (Always), 2.51-3.25 (Sometimes), 1.76-2.50 (Rarely), 1.00-1.75 (Not at All)

The qualitative data revealed the following themes: educational materials and support for tertiary level from the local government during the pandemic, expectations of educational financial assistance from the city government during the pandemic, expectations of educational materials support from the city government during the pandemic and expectations of parents on educational support of their children from city government. the themes yielded data pertaining to educational materials such as tablets which are most needed by students at the tertiary level in view of the online learning platform. However, there was no explicit support in terms of cash assistance from the city government of Makati which was an expressed expectation from the parents in terms of pandemic support. Though there was no shortage of supplies like flash drives, and printed modules to augment online classes as well as internet load. In addition, there was also the pronouncement of the CHED Chairman that students should be given the utmost consideration in terms of the new normal set up of learning especially looking after the mental well-being of the students though there was expressed support both from the

Local government unit there were also apprehensions as to the delivery or grant of assistance.

Table 6

Expectations from the City Government of Makati in Terms of Assistance During the Pandemic.

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Educational Materials Support from Local Government during Pandemic for tertiary level	Gadgets such as tablets were distributed to college level Learning materials such as books, papers, and pencils had been received by Elementary students Did not receive any educational materials from City Government
Expectations on Educational Financial Assistance from City Government During Pandemic	Did not receive any educational financial support from City Government Token fee exemption is a way of financial support from the City Government
Expectations on Educational Materials Support from City Government during Pandemic	The City Government promises to give educational Material support to tertiary level Did not expect any educational support from City Government Gadget Internet Connection Financial Assistance
Expectations of parents on Educational Support of their children from City Government	School Materials Safe Implementation of Face-to-Face Classes Learning Platform Technical Supplies

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was conducted to investigate the experiences encountered by the students in the new normal while enrolled or taking up the course of tertiary mathematics education. Their parents were likewise included in the study to find out their coping mechanisms while locked at home with their children. The pandemic disrupted the normal course of life. The findings revealed there is a significant number of parents became unemployed during the pandemic. Added to that are the demands and difficulties of studying online. The complexities brought by the new normal call for strategies to cope with the new normal thus, the study conducted findings revealed that the parents and students are aware that provisions for the needs for the physical or learning environment in tertiary mathematics education especially in the new normal are important. This supports the study of Polish students wherein the most often used coping strategies are acceptance and planning (Babicka-Wirkus et al, 2021). Results also showed that the parents and students are aware of the need to be psychologically prepared to deal with the challenges afforded by the disruption of normal activities like attending classes in person or working outside the home thus the need to seek emotional support, another coping strategy used by the participants in Babicka-Wirkus et al (2021) study. Data collected show that they are cognizant of facing head-on the tasks in the course they are taking which is tertiary mathematics education. This finding supports the study of Plotner, et al (2020) wherein university students when faced with stressful situations, chose planful problem-solving as their first-choice coping strategy. In addition, the results indicate that the physical and moral coping strategies used by parents and students are closely similar. This was also

reinforced in the same study wherein problem-focused strategy is the main coping mechanism to stressful situations. Furthermore, the Polish study revealed that factors such as age and place of residence influenced the choice of specific strategies for coping with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic which is nearly related to how the parents and students in this particular study resolved issues brought by novel learning set-up and technological challenges. Thus, based on the current results, a support program for students is proposed which would involve psychological, organizational, and instrumental support. It is also recommended that a future investigation of how students cope with stress, especially during the pandemic, may result in long-term consequences for their psychophysiological health and academic achievements.

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