

Coping Mechanisms Among Working Students in Calabanga Community College

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the challenges faced by working students at Calabanga Community College during the Academic Year 2022–2023 and to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the severity of the problems they encounter and the effectiveness of their coping strategies. The study answers the following questions: 1. What is the extent of the problems encountered by the working students in Calabanga Community College along with financial resources, time resources, social resources, personal resources; 2. What is the level of coping strategies of working students in Calabanga Community College along problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, meaning-focused coping, and avoidance-focused coping; and 3. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of problems encountered and the level of coping strategies among working students at Calabanga Community College? This

study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was employed to collect information about the levels of coping strategies employed by the students, focusing on problem-focused, emotion-focused, meaning-focused, and avoidance-focused mechanisms. The correlational component of the design was used to examine whether significant relationships exist between the level of problems encountered and the level of coping strategies and demographic data. The study used census sampling to gather 297 working students studying in Calabanga Community College through structured survey questionnaire and analyzed through Pearson-r correlation test. The findings provide recommendations to students, instructors, Calabanga Community College Community, Local Government Unit of Calabanga, and future researchers for further study.

Keywords: *Coping Mechanisms, Problem-Focused Coping, Emotion-Focused Coping, Meaning-Focused Coping, Avoidance-Focused Coping*

INTRODUCTION

Students view employment as a means of personal growth and career preparation. Students develop skills in prioritizing, organizing, and taking responsibility. They build confidence, improve communication, and enhance problem-solving abilities. (Cui et al., 2017) which help them achieved satisfactory academic performance (Labador et al., 2023). It also provides them with valuable experience, financial savings, and support for their educational expenses to help them complete their degrees. (Gaytos et al., 2020, Tumin, 2020) Students draw strength from their families and faith. (Frigilliano et al., 2015).

However, they experience conflicts among their academic responsibilities, job demands, and social life. (Grozev and Easterbrook, 2022). Academic stress such as intense competition and overwhelming workloads contributes to anxiety and exhaustion (Wang & Fan, 2023, Chantrea et al., 2017). They are more prone to burnouts, poor health, weak coping mechanisms, high stress levels, and low motivation. (Maskova, 2023, Wan). Students also experienced challenges such as the parent's occupation, participation in cash assistance programs, and family size, being the eldest child, or female encountered more educational difficulties. (Perez et al., 2021)

In addition, time scarcity as a critical stressor for individuals juggling multiple roles (Bangquiao et al., 2023; Pedrosa et al., 2023). The depletion of time resources limits students' capacity to fully engage in academic tasks, leading to heightened stress and potential burnout (Grogan and Lilly, 2023, Tumin et al., 2020; Aguilera et al., 2024) and it can adversely impact students' psychological resilience and coping mechanisms (Dimala and Saraswati, 2023; Freire and Matias, 2017). Students with a higher use of coping strategies tend to experience less psychological distress. (Rahiman et al., 2023 and Rathakrishnan et al. 2022).

Coping involves intentional actions to manage stress (Saxena, 2023; Moonjari, 2021). Working students commonly use various coping mechanisms to handle academic and life stressors. Personal resources like coping skills contribute significantly to psychological well-being and life satisfaction in university populations. (Moreno-Montero et al., 2024) . Problem-focused strategies play a critical role in minimizing students' vulnerability to stress (Davaranya et al., 2019). Meaning-making is an emotion-focused strategy that involves reinterpreting stressors to derive purpose or positive significance. It often requires high levels of emotional intelligence, psychological resilience, and introspection, resources that not all students possess or can readily access under stress (Chowdhury. 2019),

Moreover, students with a well-developed psychological immune system are better equipped to cope with difficulties, as they are more likely to reinterpret challenges positively and find meaning in their experiences (Takács et al., 2021). Multitasking has been found to help working students manage their responsibilities more effectively and reduce the risk of burnout (Grogan and Lilly, 2023). Students also employ a combination of internal strategies, such as planning, minimizing distractions, and practicing self-discipline, along with external methods like arranging flexible work schedules and delegating tasks to manage their time effectively. (Pedroso, 2023, Aguilera et al., 2024). Other effective strategies identified include self-instruction, peer tutoring, and goal setting. (Jadia et. al., 2023) Engaging in leisure activities has also been shown to reduce both workaholism and stress. (Aziz et al., 2023). Effective budgeting and saving money were key strategies they used to cope with students. They avoided spending it on unnecessary or harmful items. (Polinar, 2022).

Research Questions

This study seeks to examine the challenges faced by working students at Calabanga Community College during the Academic Year 2022–2023 and to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the severity of the problems they encounter and the effectiveness of their coping strategies.

It specifically aims to respond to the following inquiries.

1. What is the extent of the problems encountered by the working students in Calabanga Community College along the following areas?

- 1.1 Financial Resources
- 1.2 Time Resources
- 1.3 Social Resources
- 1.4 Personal Resources
2. What is the level of coping strategies of working students in Calabanga Community College along the following areas?
 - 2.1 Problem-Focused Coping
 - 2.2 Emotion-Focused Coping
 - 2.3 Meaning-Focused Coping
 - 2.4 Avoidance-Focused Coping
3. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of problems encountered and the level of coping strategies among working students at Calabanga Community College?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was employed to collect information about the levels of coping strategies employed by the students, focusing on problem-focused, emotion-focused, meaning-focused, and avoidance-focused mechanisms. The correlational aspect of the design was used to examine whether significant relationships exist between the level of problems encountered and demographic data, as well as between the level of coping strategies and demographic data.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Calabanga Community College (CCC). At Calabanga, Camarines Sur. CCC offers BS Entrepreneurship, Bachelor of Secondary Education majors in Social Studies, English, Mathematics, and English, Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, and Bachelor of Physical Education.

Population

The population of this study included 297 working students enrolled at Calabanga Community College (CCC) during the school year 2022-2023. These students manage both their schoolwork and part-time or full-time jobs, making them ideal for studying stress, resource use, and coping strategies.

Sampling Procedure

Census sampling was chosen to gather complete and accurate information by including everyone who met the criteria in the study. The main tool for collecting data in this study was a structured survey questionnaire created by the researcher. The questionnaire had two parts. The first part measured the problems students face in four areas: financial, time, social, and personal resources, using a four-point scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The second part focused on coping strategies, divided

into problem-focused, emotion-focused, meaning-focused, and avoidance-focused, rated on a five-point scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection followed careful and ethical steps to ensure the study was trustworthy and informed consent received. A pilot test was done with a small group of working students who were not part of the main study to help find and fix unclear or weak questions in the questionnaire. After finalizing the survey, the questionnaires were given to working students at Calabanga Community College for the school year 2022–2023, using census sampling to select participants. Respondents were provided with the questionnaires and were given two weeks to complete it. After completing the surveys, the researchers encoded the data and prepared it for analysis.

Data analysis

The results showed how many problems the students had as well as how often they used different coping strategies. The study used Pearson-r correlation test.

RESULTS

Table 1. Challenges Faced by Working Students at Calabanga Community College

Parameters	Mean Score	Interpretation
Time Resources	2.82	HIGH
Personal Resources	2.82	HIGH
Financial Resources	2.77	HIGH
Social Resources	2.71	HIGH
Mean	2.78	HIGH

Legend: 1-1.75 VERY LOW 1.76-2.25 LOW 2.26-3.25 HIGH 3.26-4.0 VERY HIGH

Table 1 illustrates the challenges faced by working students at Calabanga Community College. The findings reveal that the most significant challenges pertain to time resources and personal resources, both with a mean score of 2.82, indicating a high level of difficulty experienced by the students.

Time resources emerged as a primary challenge, pointing the strain working students endure in managing their academic responsibilities alongside employment. This finding is consistent with existing literature that identifies time scarcity as a critical stressor for individuals juggling multiple roles (Bangquiao et al., 2023; Pedrosa et al., 2023). It limits students' capacity to fully engage in academic tasks, leading to heightened stress and potential burnout (Grogan and Lilly, 2023).

Similarly, personal resources were reported to be significantly challenged. The drain on personal resources reflects the cumulative stress effects on students' well-being, affirming the COR Theory's

proposition that resource loss intensifies stress experiences (Moreno-Montero et al., 2024; Ingusci et al., 2023). It can adversely impact students' psychological resilience and coping mechanisms (Dimala and Saraswati, 2023; Freire and Matias, 2017).

The high challenge ratings in these areas suggest the need for institutional support systems that can help students conserve and replenish their critical resources. In contrast, other resource domains such as social support and financial resources showed lower mean scores, suggesting that while important, they may not be perceived as immediate or primary stressors relative to time and personal resources in this context. Educational institutions should consider targeted interventions to support time management skills and personal well-being, fostering a more sustainable balance between work and academic demands.

In addition, the results revealed that the overall average coping strategy utilization score among students was **3.16**, which falls within the **High** utilization range. This indicates that most students employ at least one—and often multiple—coping strategies to manage their stress.

The finding in Table 1 indicates that students are actively engaging in various coping behaviors to handle academic and personal stressors. This aligns with existing literature and studies stressing the importance of adaptive coping strategies in promoting student well-being and academic success.

Table 2. Coping Strategies of Working Students at Calabanga Community College

Parameters	Mean Score	Interpretation
Problem-Focused Coping	3.19	HIGH
Support-Seeking Coping	3.16	HIGH
Emotion-Focused Coping	3.14	HIGH
Meaning-Making Coping	3.13	HIGH
Mean	3.16	HIGH

Legend: 1-1.75 VERY LOW 1.76-2.25 LOW 2.26-3.25 HIGH 3.26-4.0 VERY HIGH

Table 2 presents the coping strategies employed by working students at Calabanga Community College. The results reveal that problem-focused coping is the most frequently utilized strategy, with a mean score of 3.19, interpreted as High. This finding suggests that students predominantly manage stress by actively addressing and resolving the issues they encounter.

This finding is supported by the study of Sari (2023), which concluded that working students tend to adopt problem-focused coping mechanisms to balance academic workload and job commitments. Davarniya et al. (2019) added that problem-focused coping mechanisms minimizes students' vulnerability to stress. Aguila et al. (2024) revealed that working students practice problem-focused coping strategies, such as self-regulated learning, employing structured routines, task prioritization, and goal setting. In the same vein, Albandida et al. (2024) found that students rely on problem solving to maintain psychological well-being. The consistency of these findings across existing literature underscores the adaptive value of problem-focused coping. It enables students to take control over stress-inducing situations, allowing them to better integrate their academic and work responsibilities. This strategic response not only reduces emotional distress but also promotes academic perseverance and overall well-being.

In contrast, meaning-making coping received a slightly lower, yet still high, mean score of 3.13 (High), indicating it was the least favored strategy among those surveyed. While students recognize its importance, not all are able to consistently engage in meaning-making—an approach involving finding purpose and positive significance in stressful experiences. Meaning-making, as defined by Chowdhury (2019), is an emotion-focused strategy that involves reinterpreting stressors to derive purpose or positive significance. It often requires high levels of emotional intelligence, psychological resilience, and introspection, resources that not all students possess or can readily access under stress. Moreno-Montero et al. (2024) found that meaning-making coping is more likely among students with strong psychological capital, including hope, resilience, and optimism. Moreover, Konaszewski et al. (2023) emphasized that meaning-making coping is often underutilized by students lacking sufficient self-efficacy and emotional regulation skills. Akbar and Aisyawati (2021) argued that high psychological distress limits the capacity of students to engage in emotionally demanding strategies like meaning making.

The findings revealed while meaning-making coping is widely acknowledged as beneficial, it is often the least preferred or practiced due to its emotional demands, the lack of internal resources, and the urgent nature of academic stressors that drive students toward more actionable coping methods.

In addition, the results revealed that the average mean for coping strategy was 3.16, which falls within the "High" category based on the interpretation scale. This suggests that most students employed at least one—and often multiple—coping strategies to manage their academic, work-related, and personal stressors. Davarniya et al. (2019) observed that resilient students often utilize a combination of coping strategies to handle pressure. Rahiman et al. (2023) found that students with a higher use of coping strategies tend to experience less psychological distress. Aina and Wijayati (2019) added that students commonly engage in a range of coping techniques—including problem-solving, emotional regulation, and avoidance—as adaptive responses to academic stress. Albandia et al. (2024) added that college students in Metro Manila resorted to multiple coping methods, such as seeking social support, religious practices, and time management, to maintain their psychological well-being.

The diversity and frequency of coping strategy use among the participants of this study highlight the importance of providing institutional support and training that enhances students' access to effective stress management resources. This includes workshops on emotional regulation, time management, and mental health services, particularly for working students who may face dual burdens of academic and work responsibilities.

The findings in Table 2 reflect a proactive and multifaceted stress management approach among working students.

Table 3. Correlation Between Problems and Coping Strategies

Challenges	Coping Strategies	Pearson Correlation	Sig	Stat Sig
Financial Resources	Problem Focused	-0.86	.139	NS
	Emotion-Focused	.019	.747	NS
	Support-Seeking	.055	.341	NS
	Meaning-Making	-.110	.059	NS
Time Resources	Problem Focused	-0.45	.439	NS
	Emotion-Focused	.034	.560	NS

	Support-Seeking	.074	.202	NS
	Meaning-Making	.038	.515	NS
Social Resources	Problem Focused	.120	.039	S
	Emotion-Focused	.005	.927	NS
	Support-Seeking	.040	.491	NS
	Meaning-Making	-.003	.55	NS
Personal Resources	Problem Focused	.050	.389	NS
	Emotion-Focused	-.064	.273	NS
	Support-Seeking	.068	.245	NS
	Meaning-Making	-.092	.112	NS
Challenges	Coping Strategies	.016	.779	NS

Legend: Sig. = >0.05 – Not Significant (NS); Sig. = <0.05 – Significant (S)

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between the challenges faced and the coping strategies employed by working students at Calabanga Community College. The overall correlation between total challenges and coping strategies was found to be not statistically significant, suggesting that the difficulties encountered by working students do not consistently predict the coping strategies they use. This finding aligns with the existing literature (Freire et al., 2020, Maskova, 2023) that coping behaviors among students are highly individualized and not always aligned with the nature of the stress encountered. Moreno-Montero et al. (2024) and Davarniya et al. (2019) highlighted self-efficacy such as resilience as key predictors of stress management.

However, an exception emerged in the relationship between social resource challenges and problem-focused coping strategies, which yielded a very weak but statistically significant positive correlation ($r=297$) = .120, $p = .039$. This suggests that students who report deficits in social resources—such as interpersonal conflicts, isolation, or limited support—may be slightly more inclined to use problem-solving approaches to manage these difficulties. This finding supports the existing literature (Rathakrishnan et al., 2022, Akbar and Aisyawati, 2021) that lack of social support often prompts students to seek problem-focused strategies or actively manage their circumstances to regain social stability. Aina and Wijayati (2019) also observed the perceived social context can influence students to employ varied coping methods.

Despite this isolated correlation, these findings suggest that coping strategies among working students are influenced by a complex interplay of personal, psychological, and contextual factors. Dimala and Saraswati (2023) found that motivation and self-regulation significantly mediate the dynamics between stress and coping mechanisms.

The findings in Table 13 show that while social resources may have some predictive value for specific coping mechanisms, the general absence of strong correlations indicates that students' coping behavior is likely shaped by individual-level differences.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 reveals that working students face significant challenges, particularly in time resources and personal resources. Despite these challenges, students are generally proactive in employing a variety of adaptive coping strategies to navigate their dual responsibilities. However, the effectiveness of these

strategies varies depending on individual circumstances. Table 2 reveals that working students actively engage in problem-focused coping, allowing them to manage their dual responsibilities effectively by addressing stressors directly. However, meaning-making coping is less commonly practiced due to its emotional demands and the urgent, task-oriented nature of the students' stressors. Table 3 reveals that specific difficulties, such as time, personal, or financial challenges do not reliably predict the types of coping strategies students choose to use. However, students who experience social difficulties may be slightly more inclined to adopt active, solution-based approaches to manage these stressors.

The findings recommend students to attend workshops or training on time management, emotional regulation, and stress management to strengthen proactive coping skills, and seek support from peers, mentors, or counselors when experiencing emotional distress or social isolation. Instructors should be more empathetic and flexible with deadlines for students known to be working part-time or full-time and integrate stress-management into classroom practices. Calabanga Community College should establish a Student Support Center or strengthen existing services focused on counseling, peer mentorship, academic advising, and mental health, and offer flexible academic arrangements for working students, partner with the Public Employment Source Office to provide livelihood programs, or provide part-time job matching for students, that do not compromise academic performance. Researchers should disseminate the study to raise awareness of the unique challenges of working students. The Local Government Unit of Calabanga should promote community engagement programs where students can receive social support, mentorship, and emotional reinforcement. Future researchers should investigate the effectiveness of institutional support systems in helping working students balance their dual roles and study the coping mechanisms of other working students such as older adults or single parents to compare with younger working students.

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