

## Article

## Coping Mechanism Employed by Special Education Teachers in Teaching Special Needs Learners

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**Abstract:** This study examines the coping mechanisms employed by teachers in Sagbayan and Talibon when faced with the unique challenges of teaching learners with special educational needs (LSENs). The survey results reveal that while certain profile characteristics, such as age, marital status, and years of teaching experience, were notable, they did not significantly impact the coping strategies of the respondents. Instead, the teachers demonstrated a high level of coping mechanisms across various dimensions, including adaptive mechanisms, cooperation, emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping, and the development of individual educational plans (IEPs). Collaboration among teachers emerged as a key coping strategy, underscoring its importance in promoting resilience and effective teaching. Despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, these teachers exhibited unwavering dedication to their profession and a commitment to providing high-quality education to LSENs. These findings emphasize the need for ongoing support and resources to sustain the well-being of special education teachers and to ensure the success of inclusive education initiatives for all students.

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**Keywords:** Coping Mechanisms, special education, LSEN's, adaptive mechanisms

### Introduction

In the realm of Special Education (SPED), educators, including both Special Education teachers and general classroom teachers, face a myriad of complex responsibilities when working with learners with special educational needs (LSENs) (Higgins, 2023). LSENs encompass a broad range of challenges, including developmental and physical growth issues, learning disabilities, communication difficulties, and emotional and behavioral concerns. These students encounter persistent obstacles that hinder their full participation in and benefit



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from education due to enduring learning, mental health, sensory, or physical disabilities, which make their learning experiences distinct from those of their typically developing peers (Sakiz, 2022).

Over time, the definition of special education has evolved, increasingly focusing on learners falling behind in their education due to medical or intellectual reasons compared to their peers (Francisco et al., 2020). However, the presence of Special Education teachers in regular classrooms can sometimes create challenges in delineating responsibilities for these special students (Kauffman et al., 2022). Thus, there is an imperative to enhance collaboration between Special Education and mainstream teachers (Soini et al., 2019). The effectiveness of teachers in imparting knowledge and skills to their students is greatly influenced by the learning environment, assigned tasks, and financial security, which, in turn, influence their levels of professional performance (Alison, 2019; Hendrawijaya et al., 2020).

It is worth noting that teachers' exposure to unnecessary stress can hamper their everyday abilities, diminish job satisfaction, and reduce productivity, ultimately leading to feelings of exhaustion and strain (Zheng et al., 2022). High levels of teacher stress have been associated with students' poor social adjustment and academic performance, manifesting as absenteeism, misbehavior, and dissatisfaction (Rosas et al., 2020). Given that students with special learning needs demand additional attention, time, and resources, Special Education teachers often experience elevated levels of stress (Nusser, 2021).

To effectively address the unique challenges posed by LSENs, teachers must possess a profound understanding of special education needs. Learners with special educational needs often struggle to learn in the absence of appropriate support, prompting educators to develop coping mechanisms to overcome the difficulties and stress inherent in educating these students. It is crucial for school administrators to identify effective coping strategies that enable teachers to reduce their stress levels and cultivate a more relaxed work environment (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2020; Boon, 2020). Highly skilled teachers possess the ability to implement strategies that are conducive to providing support and assistance to LSENs without making erroneous judgments about their intelligence levels. Educators who are well-versed in the specific needs of learners with special educational needs become more adept at helping them navigate their academic journey successfully.

In the provinces of Bohol and Ormoc City, Special Education teachers have encountered a spectrum of challenges that may have led to stress. However, with appropriate training and support, they have developed coping mechanisms that have allowed them to effectively address these challenges. As members of the general education system, we, the researchers, are driven by a desire to uncover insights into how teachers develop coping mechanisms that contribute to the provision

of support for learners with special educational needs in primary public schools in the provinces of Bohol and Ormoc.

Through an examination of the coping mechanisms adopted by both Special Education and regular teachers when educating learners with special educational needs, it is expected that they can better align their goals with the educational needs of LSENs. However, it is noteworthy that no study has been conducted to assess the coping mechanisms of Special Education teachers handling LSENs, particularly during the challenging period of the pandemic. Hence, this study seeks to fill this research gap and shed light on the coping strategies employed by SpEd teachers during these unprecedented times.

## Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive correlational research design. A correlational study examines the extent to which variations in one characteristic or variable are associated with variations in one or more other characteristics or variables (Leedey & Ormrod, 2010). This study aimed to investigate whether certain components of occupational research that special education teachers may have faced are related to the coping mechanisms they used. This suggests that the pressures experienced by special education instructors influence the coping techniques they employ. The study was conducted at Jagna Central Elementary School- SpEd Center, Sagbayan Central Elementary School, Talibon SpEd Center, and Ormoc Central Integrated School. Researchers observed that special education teachers are currently experiencing significant stress due to various factors. The participants of this study consisted of the special education instructors at Jagna Central Elementary School-SpEd Center, Sagbayan Central Elementary School, and Talibon SpEd Center. Data was collected from a total of 8 instructors from Jagna Central Elementary School-SpEd Center, 6 teachers from Sagbayan Central Elementary School, 6 teachers from Talibon SpEd Center, and 10 teachers from Ormoc Central Integrated School. The number of participants amounted to 30 in total. This study utilized standardized questionnaires sourced from various origins and was separated into three distinct sections. The initial section focuses on the demographic characteristics of the teacher-respondents, encompassing five distinct elements. The second part of the study focused on the coping mechanisms employed by special education teachers when dealing with special education students. This section consisted of six subsections, namely adaptive mechanisms, collaboration mechanisms, emotional-focused mechanisms, support or cooperation, problem-focused coping mechanisms, and the individual educational plan. These categories were derived from the works of Cancio et al. (2018) and de Silva and Marin (2019). The third section of the study examined the challenges faced by SpEd instructors in managing LSENs (learners with special educational needs) during the

COVID-19 pandemic. This section utilized a set of five indicators, derived from the work of Macmbinji and Pwani (2018). In order to prevent copying, the copyright of the surveys was respected, as they were obtained from several established sources.

## Results and Discussion

**Respondents Profile.** The survey results reveal interesting correlations regarding the level of coping mechanisms among the teacher-respondents. Firstly, the majority of the respondents were females, primarily from the 41 years and above age bracket, indicating that they may have encountered various life challenges, including those related to their teaching profession, and may have developed coping mechanisms over time. Additionally, all respondents were married, suggesting that they likely have diverse life experiences that contribute to their coping abilities. Notably, 50% of the teachers held a master's degree, while the other 50% had a bachelor's degree, implying that educational qualifications did not significantly affect their coping capabilities when teaching learners with special educational needs (LSENs). Finally, the majority of respondents had been teaching LSENs for 6-10 years, followed by those with over 20 years of experience and a smaller group with 11-15 years of experience, suggesting that more seasoned teachers might be better equipped to handle the challenges associated with teaching LSENs. Overall, the data suggests that various factors, including age, marital status, and years of teaching experience, may influence the coping mechanisms of teachers when dealing with LSENs.

Table 1. Level of Coping Mechanisms in Handling LSENs in terms of Adaptive Mechanism

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Teachers change sources of stress and themselves and are engaged in leisurely activities such as social emotional support through friends, family, peers, dancing, etc.	3.25	Very High
2	Potential stressors are viewed by teachers as challenges not as threats, showing preference for active coping and not avoiding coping.	3.00	High
3	Teachers' access social-emotional support solve problems, and gain mastery in teaching students with special educational needs.	3.25	Very High
4	Teachers find ways to anticipate a problem and make preparations to enable them to cope with the coming challenge.	3.08	High
5	Teachers invest time and effort in the teaching task and attempt to learn from the stressful experience.	3.00	High
<b>Aggregate Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.12</b>	<b>High</b>

In Table 1, as illustrated for Sagbayan and Talibon teacher-respondents' level of coping mechanism in terms of adaptive mechanism, it registered *High* or 3.12 overall aggregated weighted mean. With the highest rank of 3.08 weighted mean, that corresponds to most teachers find ways to anticipate a problem and make preparations to enable them to cope with the coming challenge. An article titled "From coping to improving and accelerating: Supporting teachers in the pandemic and beyond" published by Education for Global Development (2020) revealed that the adaptive mechanism for teachers to use remote learning tools requires much more preparation, materials, and thought than education systems can prepare in a few days or weeks. Given these constraints, it's critical to go beyond how to support teachers and examine how the crisis might be used to improve teachers' abilities before they return to the classroom. Therefore, data demonstrated that teachers specifically belonged to special education who anticipated the problem beforehand experienced less stress since they were prepared to find a rapid solution or react to any circumstance that may arise.

Table 2 shows that the teacher-respondents' degree of mechanism in terms of cooperation mechanism is *High*, with an overall aggregated weighted mean of 3.22. The greatest proportion of teachers who teach students with special educational needs (LSENs) "use co-teaching techniques, collaborative planning and decision-making with teachers in the same school, and provide experiential knowledge and support to each other," with a weighted mean of 3.67, or *Very High*.

Table 2. Level of Coping Mechanisms in Handling LSENs in terms of collaborative Mechanism

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Utilizes co-teaching techniques, collaborative planning and decision making with teachers in the same school, and provide each other with experiential knowledge and support.	3.67	Very High
2	Adopts the use of support network of teachers through mentoring providing a mechanism to teachers to productively cope with stress.	3.17	High
3	Utilizes sharing of vital teaching tips and advice for behavioral management from experienced special education teachers.	3.17	High
4	Provision of behavior management and effective training in professional organizations.	2.83	High
5	Collaborates with community and professional organizations to learn new teaching techniques contributing to teacher resilience and retention.	3.25	Very High
<b>Aggregate Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.22</b>	<b>High</b>

A study like this finding was from Voogt et al. (2016). It revealed that the effects of curriculum design demonstrating collaboration with



teachers in terms of learning outcomes in areas such as (pedagogical) content knowledge and design knowledge and skills became manifest in the outcomes of the curriculum design process, as well as in stakeholders' appreciation. The authors concluded that focused and curriculum-linked professional development delivered in teams improves teachers' knowledge and practice and impacts curricular change implementation. As a result, it simply demonstrates that instructors who collaborate with other teachers have a greater degree of coping mechanism than those who prefer to work alone.

Table 3. Level of Coping Mechanisms in Handling LSENs in terms of Emotion-Focused Mechanism

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Utilizes reduction of unwanted emotions by dealing with emotions themselves or sharing with other teachers.	2.67	High
2	Coping mechanism involves the conduct of regular training and spiritual consultations with special education experts to cope with stressful situations.	3.08	High
3	Periodic and regular self-evaluation are conducted to reduce feelings of rage and negative emotions.	3.00	High
4	Psycho-social program is implemented to provide recognitions and incentives to special education and regular teachers.	2.83	High
5	Teachers develop mastery of experiences in special education through commitment and perseverance in changing situations.	3.58	Very High
<b>Aggregate Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.03</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 3 reveals that the degree of coping mechanism utilized by instructors when educating students with special educational needs (LSENs) is *High*, with an average aggregated weighted mean of 3.03. The majority of "Teachers build mastery of experiences in special education via dedication and tenacity in changing settings." has a coping mechanism of 3.58 or a degree of *Very High*. This implies that teachers have already stable dedication to their work, hence exhibited very high emotion-focused coping mechanism. On the other hand, teachers who "use undesirable emotion reduction by dealing with feelings themselves or sharing them with other teachers" received the lowest level, with a degree of 2.67, or *High*. The finding implies that teachers need to share to others their emotional feelings rather than keeping it with themselves. As Matthew Lynch (2020) in his article "Common Co-Teaching Challenges" explained co-teaching can be a life saver and can be incredibly helpful in many ways in a classroom with a wide range of abilities that can be surely enlightening when teachers are facing issues regarding teaching specifically children with special needs. However, Matthew also further explained that sharing issues regarding teaching with other teachers may not solve their problems sometimes as their co-teachers also have the same predicament and there are some

potential challenges may arise when they are sharing same classroom with the same issues.

Table 4. Level of Coping Mechanisms in Handling LSENs in terms of support cooperation

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Formation of cooperation among regular and special education teachers to adopt healthy ways of dealing and responding to work related stress and avoid emotional exhaustion.	3.17	High
2	Special education teachers are provided with support from colleagues and school administrators, contributing to the elimination of teachers' feeling of isolation.	3.17	High
3	Teachers obtain membership in professional organizations that provide assistance for educational resources, camaraderie, and staff development, thus, reducing stressful situations in the workplace.	3.08	High
4	Regular and special education teachers cooperate to use differentiated instructional strategies to teach students with disabilities in the same classroom, increasing curriculum accessibility content for all learners.	3.67	Very High
5	Formation of a team is used, composed of teachers, school principal, inclusion specialist, parents, and health therapist, to solve problems for the students' development and provide support to the classroom teacher.	3.42	Very High
<b>Aggregate Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.30</b>	<b>Very High</b>

Table 4 demonstrates that educators dealing with learners with special educational needs (LSENs) in Sagbayan and Talibon exhibit a high degree of coping methods, particularly in terms of assistance and cooperation. The overall weighted mean for this dimension is 3.30, indicating a "Very High" level of coping. Statement number three, emphasizing the collaboration between regular and special education teachers in using differentiated instructional strategies to teach students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, received the highest rating of 3.67, signifying a "Very High" level of agreement. This highlights the importance of teamwork and diversified teaching approaches, echoing the findings of Randall Peterson's work on the significance of teacher teamwork for effective education. However, statement numbers one and two received slightly lower scores, both at 3.17, still reflecting a "High" degree of agreement. Statement number three received the lowest score at 3.08, remaining within the "High" range. These results suggest that school administrations should provide substantial support to teachers to prevent feelings of isolation when dealing with LSENs, as indicated by the study conducted by Cipriano and Brackett (2020). Administrators with advanced emotional abilities can contribute to teachers experiencing fewer negative emotions, more positive emotions, and high-quality interactions with students, ultimately reducing stress and promoting well-being in the school environment.

Table 5. Level of Coping Mechanisms in Handling LSENs in terms of Problem-Focused Coping Mechanism

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Teachers use behaviors that directly reduce stress or deal directly with the problem.	3.08	High
2	Teachers use behavioral and cognitive actions to reduce the problem and work stress.	3.17	High
3	Teachers change teaching and learning situations to eliminate sources of stress.	3.75	Very High
4	Teachers use behavior change to reduce and overcome stressful situations in the teaching workplace, and in the management of students' learning needs.	3.25	Very High
5	Teachers use professional development and advanced trainings to provide continuous high quality educational services to special education students.	3.25	Very High
<b>Aggregate Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.30</b>	<b>Very High</b>

Table 5 displays the level of coping mechanisms of the teacher-respondents in handling LSENs in terms of problem-focused coping mechanism is "Very High" with 3.30 aggregate weighted mean. Statement no. 5 where "Teachers use professional development and advanced trainings to provide continuous high quality educational services to special education students" got 3.25 or *Very High*. This surmise those teachers who participate more in training and other activities that contribute in the development of teaching abilities are believed to have a stronger coping mechanism because they already have the capacity to grasp it more quickly and find a constructive approach to cope with it also as a result of their skills developed via training and strategies acquired. This can be detected to the study of Kebbi, Marwa (2018) about "Stress and Coping Strategies used by Special Education and General Classroom Teachers". It revealed that the only coping strategy that was directly related to the school was "Taking courses and workshops to improve skills", since it was the school administration that sent the teachers to attend workshops and courses to update their knowledge and improve their skills thus this means it helps to lower the level of stress because teachers can easily focused to the problems they are facing at that moment and can find easy solution to resolve the issues that contributed to the skills gained from the training they acquired.

According to Table 6, the respondents' degree of coping strategies in dealing with learners with special educational needs (LSENs) in terms of personalized educational plans is *Very High*, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.27. Statement # 1 revealed the highest rank degree of 3.58, indicating that Sagbayan and Talibon respondents'



coping mechanism is "development and pedagogical planning is used in order to enable the student with special learning needs to adapt to the curriculum in conformity with their needs and learning abilities," while statements # 3 and 5 have the same ranking, which is 3.25 or "Very High," and statement # 4 has the lowest degree of ranking, which is 3.25 or "Very Low."

Table 6. Level of Coping Mechanisms in Handling LSENs in terms of Individual Education Plan

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Development and pedagogical plan is used in order to enable the student with special learning needs to adapt to the curriculum in conformity with the students' needs and learning abilities.	3.58	Very High
2	Based on the students' performance, the teacher develops new learning objectives for the special student.	3.33	Very High
3	Development of objectives do not discourage the learner but challenge the student to learn new skills, resulting in teacher's better quality of work.	3.25	Very High
4	The plan allows the teacher to easily follow the learners' academic progress and is drawn up in cooperation with other teachers and team members for the inclusion of the student.	2.92	High
5	The plan is used as a coping mechanism allowing the teacher to use all available information that support students' development needs.	3.25	Very High
<b>Aggregate Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.27</b>	<b>Very High</b>

The findings show that teachers teaching learners with special educational needs (LSENs) have a greater degree of coping mechanism because most teachers utilize a pedagogical plan, which allows learners to adjust to the curriculum based on their requirements and learning skills. This suggests that teachers who develop IEPs in advance make it simpler for them to cope with stress and their coping mechanisms are at a high level since they are prepared for the shortfalls that must be supplied to the learners to avoid stress. This underlines the study of Cancio et al. (2018) "Special Education Teacher Stress: Coping Strategies" showing that teachers who regularly plan their IEP and make an advance plotting of the necessary skills to target furthermore, it becomes simpler for them to educate children with special needs because they are more prepared and equipped to acquire the necessary skills since they witness successful tactics in action with learners.

Table 7 summarizes the challenges encountered by Special Education (Sped) teachers while teaching learners with special educational needs (LSENs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall weighted mean of 2.50 indicates a general agreement among Sped teachers regarding these challenges. Notably, Sped teachers disagreed with the notion that they lacked essential skills and training to address diverse special needs, suggesting a sense of readiness.

However, they acknowledged the presence of behavioral challenges, such as temper tantrums and hyperactivity among LSENs, which added complexity to their teaching roles.

Table 7. Problems Encountered by the Sped teachers in teaching LSENs during the COVID 19 pandemic

S/ N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Lack of essential skills, knowledge, experience, and training with diverse special needs.	1.75	Disagree
2	Experience of forms of temper tantrums and hyperactivity in the management of learners.	2.83	Agree
3	Lack of support from school administrators.	2.17	Agree
4	Students with disabilities require constant monitoring creating difficulties and stress in meeting their needs.	3.50	Strongly Agree
5	Inadequacy of resources and incompetence of teachers relative to curriculum implementation of special needs education.	2.25	Agree
Aggregate Weighted Mean		2.50	Agree

They also expressed a need for more support from school administrators and cited the high demand for constant monitoring of students with disabilities, which induced stress. Additionally, Sped teachers highlighted resource inadequacies and perceived teacher incompetence in implementing special needs education curriculum, emphasizing the necessity for more resources and professional development. Despite these obstacles, their commitment to inclusive education remained unwavering during the pandemic.

Table 8. test of relationship between profile and the Coping Mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSENs in terms of Adaptive Mechanisms

Adaptive Mechanism VS.	p - value	Decision	Result
Age	0.576	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	0.727	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Number of years in teaching LSENs	0.406	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$  (one-tailed)

As depicted in Table 8, in terms of adaptive mechanism, using Fisher's Exact test, the computed p-values such as age ( $p=0.576$ ), highest

educational attainment ( $p=0.727$ ), and number of years in teaching LSENs ( $p=0.406$ ) revealed that all  $p$ -values are greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results indicate that there is no significant relationship between the identified profile and the coping mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSENs in terms of adaptive mechanism. This implies that Sagbayan and Talibon teacher respondents generally involved in adaptive mechanism in coping up with stress especially in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs) regardless of their age, how long they serve the school and what is their educational attainment. Teachers are being mindful to adjust to stressful situations by confronting the issues directly so that they are not caught in unhealthy situations that will result in even more stressful situations. According to Skinner and Beers (2016), teachers discovered coping strategies such as mindfulness as one of the adaptive mechanisms to reduce stress, physical and mental health problems, and even burnout, which may help them avoid engaging in maladaptive coping strategies.

Table 9. test of relationship between profile and the Coping Mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSENs in terms of Collaboration Mechanisms

Collaboration Mechanism VS.	p - value	Decision	Result
Age	0.500	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	0.284	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Number of years in teaching LSENs	0.273	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*Significant at  $p<0.05$  (one-tailed)

The results of Fisher's Exact test, as shown in Table 9, indicate that there is no significant relationship between the identified profile factors (age, highest educational attainment, and number of years in teaching LSENs) and the coping mechanisms of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs) in terms of collaboration. All computed  $p$ -values were found to be greater than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This suggests that the profile characteristics of the teachers did not significantly influence their coping mechanisms, particularly in the context of collaboration. The findings imply that teachers from Sagbayan and Talibon SpEd Centers highly valued collaboration as a coping mechanism, which may help alleviate stress and reduce burnout. Collaborative efforts among teachers were seen as an effective way to acquire knowledge about LSENs and enhance teaching skills. These results align with prior research by Jung et al. (2019), emphasizing the importance of the school setting in shaping

collaborative activities among educators and how collaboration can serve as a tool for professional development and problem-solving within educational institutions. However, it's noted that in certain situations, teacher collaboration may also reinforce traditional teaching practices and beliefs.

Table 10. test of relationship between profile and the Coping Mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSENs in terms of Emotion-Focused Mechanisms

Emotion-Focused Mechanism VS.	p - value	Decision	Result
Age	0.424	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	0.273	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Number of years in teaching LSENs	0.406	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$  (one-tailed)

Table 10 shows that in terms of emotion-focused mechanism, using Fisher's Exact test, the computed p-values such as age ( $p=0.424$ ), highest educational attainment ( $p=0.273$ ), and number of years in teaching LSENs ( $p=0.406$ ) revealed that all p-values are greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results indicate that there is no significant relationship between the identified profile and the coping mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSENs in terms of emotion –focused mechanism. This might suggest that teachers, regardless of their profile, take a more positive, emotional approach. They may readily focus on moderating negative emotional reactions to stress, such as worry, fear, grief, and rage, especially when working with learners with special educational needs (LSENs). This method of coping by teachers in such special education facilities might be beneficial when the stressor is unchangeable. Emotion-focused coping methods help teacher-respondents in Sagbayan and Talibon become less emotionally reactive to pressures. This may alter the way teacher experience to these situations so they impact differently (Amnie, AG, 2018). Teacher coping is an important issue to tackle, as stress and burnout have a negative association with teachers' devotion to their profession (Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016). Prior research on teachers' coping profiles by Aulén et al. (2021) discovered that stressed teachers mostly utilized emotion-focused coping techniques. Pogere et al. (2019) discovered that emotion-focused coping is positively connected with emotional tiredness in their study. Thus, teachers' capacity to control their emotions, particularly during teaching, is an important component in minimizing the degree of stress they experience.

As shown in Table 11, in terms of support or cooperation using Fisher's Exact test, the computed p-values such as age ( $p=0.318$ ), highest educational attainment ( $p=0.773$ ), and number of years in teaching

LSEnS ( $p=0.091$ ) revealed that all  $p$ -values are greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results indicate that there is no significant relationship between the identified profile and the coping mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSEnS in terms of support or cooperation.

Table 11. test of relationship between profile and the Coping Mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSEnS in terms of Support or Cooperation.

Support or Cooperation VS.	p - value	Decision	Result
Age	0.318	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	0.773	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Number of years in teaching LSEnS	0.091	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*significant at  $p<0.05$  (one-tailed)

This may infer that respondent from Sagbayan and Talibon SpEd centers that their coping mechanism in terms of support or cooperation regarded as a high factor in decreasing their stress. It is more beneficial to reduce the degree of stress they experience when teaching, particularly with learners with special educational needs (LSEnS). It can't be argued that support may be both teachers and family members, regardless of age, gender, or time of teaching service, which is a key element in making it simpler to discover answers to the issues that arise with teaching. There is no doubt that having a teacher at your side is really beneficial. Teachers frequently seek help, particularly in their teaching while dealing with challenges produced by handling learners with special needs. Aside from that, the support of other teachers in the task necessary to make them simpler to carry out is also a big aid already to them to lessen the stress brought about teaching. This is the study by Hidalgo et al. (2021) about "Teachers' Mental Health and Self-Reported Coping Strategies during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ecuador". The results of their research showed that social support was the most frequently used among the participants. The activities within this category included seeking and providing support by sharing with family and friends to maintain active and on-going contact with them.

Table 12. test of relationship between profile and the Coping Mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSEnS in terms of Problem-Focused Coping Mechanism

Problem-Focused Coping Mechanism VS.	p - value	Decision	Result
Age	0.318	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	0.773	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Number of years in teaching LSEnS	0.091	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*Significant at  $p<0.05$  (one-tailed)



As presented in Table 12, the data show that in terms of problem-focused coping mechanism, using Fisher's Exact test, the computed p-values such as age ( $p=0.318$ ), highest educational attainment ( $p=0.773$ ), and number of years in teaching LSENs ( $p=0.091$ ) revealed that all p-values are greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results indicate that there is no significant relationship between the identified profile and the coping mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSENs in terms of problem-focused mechanism. This finding might suggest that teacher-respondents from Sagbayan and Talibon employed the problem-focused mechanism in a variety of practical ways to target or reduce the sources of stress. Some frequent problem-focused strategies are how teachers manage time in IEP planning to target the specific needs of LSEN, requesting help from colleagues to the task that they need to be enlightened to avoid more challenges, and how they generally recognize the problem at hand to seek a solution right immediately, so it will minimize stress and burn-out. Coping is further understood as cognitive and behavioral responses to dealing with stressful situations. Coping with stress alludes to the internal mental and/or behavioral responses to external loads, threats, losses and challenges (Bru, 2019). Early research suggested that problem-focused was preferable to emotion-focused coping for long-term, healthier psychological functioning, though it is now recognized that most stressors elicit both types of coping (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019).

Table 13. test of relationship between profile and the Coping Mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSENs in terms of Individual Education Plan

Individual Educational Plan VS.	p - value	Decision	Result
Age	0.500	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	0.716	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Number of years in teaching LSENs	0.273	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$  (one-tailed)

Table 13 shows that in terms individual educational plan using Fisher's Exact test and with the computed p-values such as age ( $p=0.500$ ), highest educational attainment ( $p=0.716$ ), and number of years in teaching LSENs ( $p=0.273$ ) revealed that all p-values are greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results indicate that there is no significant relationship between the identified profile and the coping mechanisms of the respondents in handling LSENs in terms of individual educational plan (IEP). This could indicate teachers who plan ahead the individual educational plan (IEP) have a high level of coping mechanism. The IEP is a vital document for learners with special educational needs (LSENs) and others engaged in their education. If implemented properly by teachers,

the IEP should enhance teaching, learning, and results. The IEP for each learner specifies, among other things, the educational program that has been developed to fit that child's specific needs. As a result of early preparation to reduce stress and burnout, instructors find it simpler to teach. According to Waltz (2016), stresses cannot be eliminated from the classroom, thus teachers must develop ways and techniques to handle them. Maintain teaching and personal effectiveness like planning ahead the IEP this refutes the study of Kebbi, M. (2018) the data demonstrated that the Individual Educational Plan was unknown to the majority of ordinary classroom teachers (IEP). As a result, it is advised that special education be provided. Experts take a more active role in establishing the IEP and enlisting ordinary classroom teachers, counselors, and administrators in its implementation. Teachers would benefit from the IEP in terms of stress reduction since they would understand more about each situation, they could meet among special needs learners. The special educator's aims and learning objectives should be communicated to the entire team working with the learner working on throughout the school year.

## Conclusion

The results have provided valuable insights into the coping mechanisms of teachers when dealing with learners with special educational needs (LSENs) in the context of Sagbayan and Talibon. While various factors such as age, marital status, and years of teaching experience were found to be important profile characteristics, they did not significantly influence the coping mechanisms of the respondents. Overall, the teachers exhibited high levels of coping mechanisms, with a strong emphasis on adaptive mechanisms, cooperation, emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping, and the development of individual educational plans (IEPs). Collaboration among teachers emerged as a particularly crucial coping strategy, emphasizing the importance of teamwork and diversified teaching approaches. It is evident that these teachers are dedicated to their work, prepared to face challenges, and committed to providing high-quality education to LSENs, even during the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings underscore the resilience and adaptability of special education teachers in Sagbayan and Talibon, highlighting the need for continued support and resources to ensure their well-being and the success of inclusive education for all learners.

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