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PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT AND COPING MECHANISMS OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN MARILOG SOUTH DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is considered one of the most demanding professions because teachers are expected to fulfill multiple responsibilities related to instruction, learner development, classroom management, administrative work, and community involvement. These professional demands become more challenging in geographically isolated and resource-constrained areas where teachers experience inadequate resources, difficult transportation access, and increasing community expectations. In such situations, teachers' professional commitment and coping mechanisms become essential in sustaining emotional well-being, resilience, and professional effectiveness. This study examined the relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms among elementary teachers in Marilog South District, Division of Davao City. Specifically, the study determined the extent of teachers' professional commitment in terms of commitment toward profession, students, and community, as well as the extent of coping mechanisms in terms of appraisal-focused coping, problem-focused coping, and emotion-focused coping. The study further investigated whether professional commitment significantly predicts coping mechanisms among teachers.

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. A total of 153 elementary teachers from medium-sized public elementary schools in Marilog South District participated in the study through simple random sampling from a total population of 248 teachers. Data were collected using adapted survey questionnaires from Hussen et al. (2021) for professional commitment and Cayao and Arenga (2021) for coping mechanisms. Statistical tools utilized included weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated an extensive level of professional commitment, with commitment toward community obtaining the highest mean, followed by commitment toward students and commitment toward profession. Likewise, teachers demonstrated an extensive level of coping mechanisms, with emotion-focused coping obtaining the highest mean. Results further revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms. Regression analysis indicated that professional commitment significantly predicts coping mechanisms, with commitment toward students emerging as the strongest predictor.

The findings imply that teachers who possess stronger professional commitment are more capable of utilizing adaptive coping strategies in managing occupational stress and workplace demands. The study highlights the importance of strengthening institutional support systems, wellness programs, resilience-building initiatives, and professional development opportunities that enhance teacher commitment and emotional well-being. The study also emphasizes the significance of maintaining supportive school environments that promote teacher resilience, effectiveness, and educational quality, particularly in geographically challenged educational settings.

KEYWORDS: *Professional Commitment, Coping Mechanisms, Occupational Stress, Teacher Resilience, Elementary Teachers, Marilog South District*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is widely recognized as one of the most important professions because teachers play a significant role in shaping learners' intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development. Teachers are considered nation-builders because they contribute greatly to the formation of productive, responsible, and competent citizens. However, despite the noble nature of the teaching profession, teachers continue to experience numerous professional demands and workplace challenges that affect their emotional well-being, motivation, and professional performance.

Modern educational systems require teachers to perform various responsibilities beyond classroom instruction. Teachers are expected to prepare lesson plans, implement diverse teaching strategies, assess learner performance, complete administrative reports, attend seminars and trainings, participate in school activities, and establish strong

relationships with parents and stakeholders. These multiple responsibilities expose teachers to occupational stress that may negatively affect their professional effectiveness and emotional health.

Teacher stress has become a growing concern worldwide because prolonged exposure to occupational demands may lead to burnout, emotional exhaustion, low job satisfaction, and declining work performance. Teachers who experience excessive stress may encounter difficulties in maintaining positive classroom environments, sustaining learner engagement, and balancing professional and personal responsibilities. In some cases, occupational stress may even result in absenteeism, low morale, and early resignation from the profession.

The challenges become even more difficult in geographically isolated and resource-constrained areas such as Marilog South District in Davao City. Teachers assigned in these areas often experience inadequate instructional materials, insufficient facilities, unstable internet connectivity, difficult transportation access, and limited professional resources. Some teachers travel long distances through mountainous roads and remote communities just to reach their assigned schools. They also encounter additional responsibilities related to community engagement, school programs, and stakeholder participation.

Despite these challenges, many teachers continue to demonstrate dedication and perseverance in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Such dedication is reflected in teachers' professional commitment. Professional commitment refers to teachers' sense of loyalty, responsibility, and attachment toward their profession, students, and community. Teachers who possess strong professional commitment remain motivated and engaged despite difficult working conditions and occupational stress.

Professional commitment consists of several dimensions. Commitment toward profession refers to teachers' adherence to ethical standards, professional values, and continuous professional growth. Teachers who are committed to their profession strive to improve their competence and maintain high standards of teaching performance. Commitment toward students involves teachers' dedication to learner welfare, academic achievement, and holistic development. Teachers who are committed to students provide guidance, emotional support, and meaningful learning experiences that help learners succeed academically and personally. Commitment toward community reflects teachers' active participation in community activities and collaboration with parents, local stakeholders, and institutions to support educational goals.

Along with professional commitment, coping mechanisms are also important factors that help teachers manage occupational stress and workplace challenges. Coping mechanisms refer to cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies utilized by individuals to manage stressful situations and maintain emotional balance. Teachers who employ effective coping strategies are more capable of adapting to workplace demands and maintaining professional effectiveness.

Coping mechanisms are commonly categorized into appraisal-focused coping, problem-focused coping, and emotion-focused coping. Appraisal-focused coping involves reframing stressful situations positively and maintaining optimistic perspectives despite challenges. Problem-focused coping refers to strategies that involve taking direct action to address problems and reduce stressors. Emotion-focused coping includes emotional regulation strategies such as self-reflection, prayer, social support, relaxation, and positive thinking.

The relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms has gained increasing attention in educational research because both variables significantly influence teacher well-being and educational effectiveness. Teachers who demonstrate stronger professional commitment are more likely to develop adaptive coping strategies that enable them to manage stress effectively. Likewise, teachers who possess healthy coping mechanisms are more capable of sustaining professional engagement, resilience, and emotional stability.

This study was anchored on the Conservation of Resources Theory proposed by Hobfoll (1989), which explains that individuals strive to acquire, protect, and maintain valuable personal resources such as motivation, emotional stability, confidence, and resilience. According to the theory, individuals who possess stronger resources are more capable of coping with stressful situations and preventing emotional exhaustion.

The study was also supported by the Job Demands-Resources Theory, which emphasizes the importance of balancing workplace demands with personal and organizational resources. Teachers who possess adequate personal resources and institutional support systems are more capable of coping with professional demands and maintaining workplace engagement. In addition, Psychological Capital Theory highlights the significance of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy in promoting employee well-being and performance.

Several studies have explored teacher stress, professional commitment, and coping strategies in various educational settings. Previous research revealed that teachers with higher professional commitment demonstrate stronger resilience, better classroom management, and improved emotional well-being. Similarly, teachers who utilize adaptive coping mechanisms are more capable of maintaining positive attitudes and professional effectiveness despite stressful situations.

However, there remains limited localized research examining the relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms among elementary teachers in Marilog South District. Considering the unique geographical and educational conditions of the district, it is important to examine how teachers maintain commitment and cope with workplace challenges. Understanding this relationship may help educational leaders and policymakers develop programs and interventions that promote teacher well-being, resilience, and professional growth.

This study therefore aimed to determine the relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms among elementary teachers in Marilog South District. The findings of the study may contribute to the improvement of teacher wellness programs, institutional support systems, professional development initiatives, and educational policies that strengthen teacher resilience and educational effectiveness.

2. OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to determine the relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms among elementary teachers in Marilog South District.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent of professional commitment of teachers in terms of:
    - commitment toward profession;
    - commitment toward students; and
    - commitment toward community.
2. Determine the extent of coping mechanisms of teachers in terms of:
    - appraisal-focused coping;
    - problem-focused coping; and
    - emotion-focused coping.
3. Determine whether there is a significant relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms.
4. Identify which domains of professional commitment significantly predict coping mechanisms.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Quantitative research enabled the collection and analysis of numerical data to objectively examine the relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms among teachers. The descriptive component of the study described the existing levels of teachers' professional commitment and coping strategies, while the correlational component examined the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables.

The descriptive-correlational design was appropriate because the study aimed to determine the association between professional commitment and coping mechanisms without manipulating the variables. The design also allowed the researcher to identify whether professional commitment significantly predicts coping mechanisms among teachers.

The study was conducted among elementary teachers in Marilog South District, Division of Davao City. Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research, and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect respondents' identities and responses. Teachers were also assured that the gathered information would be used solely for academic and research purposes.

Data were collected through structured survey questionnaires adapted from validated instruments. The professional commitment questionnaire was adapted from Hussen et al. (2021), while the coping mechanisms questionnaire was adapted from Cayao and Arenga (2021). The instruments underwent validation and reliability testing to ensure consistency and accuracy of responses.

The professional commitment questionnaire measured commitment toward profession, commitment toward students, and commitment toward community. Meanwhile, the coping mechanisms questionnaire measured appraisal-focused coping, problem-focused coping, and emotion-focused coping strategies.

The professional commitment instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.97, indicating excellent reliability. The coping mechanisms questionnaire obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.80, indicating good internal consistency and reliability. These reliability coefficients indicate that the instruments were appropriate for data collection and analysis.

4. SAMPLING DESIGN

The study employed simple random sampling to ensure that all teachers had equal opportunities to participate in the study. The total population consisted of 248 elementary teachers from medium-sized public elementary schools in Marilog South District.

Using Slovin's Formula with a margin of error of 0.05, the researcher obtained a sample size of 153 respondents. Respondents were selected through a randomization process using an official list of teachers provided by the district office.

The inclusion criteria required respondents to:

- be currently teaching Grades 1 to 6;
- have at least three years of teaching experience;
- be actively teaching during the data collection period; and
- voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Teachers assigned to non-teaching positions, teachers on extended leave, and teachers who did not meet the required teaching experience were excluded from the study.

The use of simple random sampling minimized sampling bias and enhanced the representativeness of the respondents. This method also increased the reliability and validity of the study findings.

5. STATISTICAL DESIGN

The following statistical tools were utilized in analyzing the gathered data:

1. **Weighted Mean** – used to determine the extent of professional commitment and coping mechanisms of teachers.
2. **Standard Deviation** – used to determine the consistency and variability of respondents' answers.
3. **Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Pearson r)** – used to determine the significance and strength of the relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms.
4. **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis** – used to identify which domains of professional commitment significantly predict coping mechanisms.

The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Statistical analysis enabled the researcher to objectively interpret the relationship and predictive influence between the variables.

6. GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The study was conducted in Marilog South District, Division of Davao City, Philippines. The district consists of medium-sized public elementary schools located in geographically isolated and resource-constrained communities.

Many schools in the district experience limited instructional materials, insufficient facilities, transportation difficulties, and limited access to technological resources. Teachers assigned in these areas often travel long distances through mountainous roads and remote communities to reach their schools.

The district was considered an appropriate setting for the study because teachers in geographically challenged areas experience unique occupational stressors that may influence their professional commitment and coping mechanisms. The educational conditions in Marilog South District provide a relevant context for examining how teachers sustain resilience, emotional stability, and professional engagement despite difficult circumstances.

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7. RESULTS

Professional Commitment of Teachers

The findings revealed that teachers demonstrated an extensive level of professional commitment, with an overall mean of 3.99. Among the three domains, commitment toward community obtained the highest mean of 4.01, followed by commitment toward students with 3.99, and commitment toward profession with 3.96.

The results indicate that teachers consistently demonstrate dedication not only to their profession but also to student welfare and community involvement. Teachers exhibited strong commitment in maintaining positive classroom environments, respecting learners, communicating effectively with parents, and participating actively in community-related activities.

The high level of commitment toward community may be attributed to the collaborative culture observed in rural educational settings where teachers frequently coordinate with parents, local leaders, and stakeholders in implementing school programs and educational activities. Teachers recognize the importance of community support in achieving educational goals and promoting learner development.

Similarly, teachers' commitment toward students reflects their dedication to supporting learners academically, emotionally, and socially. Teachers continue to provide guidance, encouragement, and assistance to learners despite workplace challenges and occupational stress.

The findings further suggest that teachers in Marilog South District maintain balanced professional values and strong dedication despite teaching in geographically isolated and resource-limited areas.

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

Results showed that teachers also demonstrated an extensive level of coping mechanisms, with an overall mean of 4.01.

Among the coping dimensions, emotion-focused coping obtained the highest mean of 4.02, followed by appraisal-focused coping with 4.01 and problem-focused coping with 3.99.

The findings indicate that teachers actively utilize emotional regulation, positive thinking, self-reflection, and social support strategies in managing workplace stress. Teachers commonly relied on prayer, positive self-talk, family support, peer support, and reflective thinking to maintain emotional stability and professional functioning.

The strong use of emotion-focused coping strategies may reflect the cultural and spiritual orientation of Filipino teachers, who often rely on faith, family relationships, and emotional support during stressful situations. Teachers also demonstrated appraisal-focused coping strategies by maintaining optimism and viewing challenges as opportunities for growth and learning.

Problem-focused coping strategies were likewise utilized through planning, time management, and practical problem-solving approaches that help teachers address occupational demands effectively.

The close mean scores among the coping dimensions suggest that teachers use a balanced combination of coping strategies in managing professional responsibilities and workplace stress.

Relationship Between Professional Commitment and Coping Mechanisms

The study found a strong and significant positive relationship between professional commitment and coping mechanisms.

Overall professional commitment demonstrated a very strong correlation with:

- appraisal-focused coping ($r = 0.826$, $p = 0.001$);
- problem-focused coping ($r = 0.835$, $p = 0.001$);
- emotion-focused coping ($r = 0.722$, $p = 0.001$); and
- overall coping mechanisms ($r = 0.878$, $p = 0.001$).

The findings indicate that teachers who demonstrate higher professional commitment are more capable of managing stress through adaptive coping strategies.

Among the domains of professional commitment, commitment toward students demonstrated the strongest relationship with coping mechanisms. This finding suggests that teachers who are highly dedicated to learner welfare and academic achievement are more resilient and emotionally stable despite professional challenges.

The findings support the Conservation of Resources Theory, which explains that individuals who possess stronger personal and professional resources are more capable of coping with stress and maintaining professional effectiveness.

Regression Analysis on the Influence of Professional Commitment on Coping Mechanisms

Regression analysis revealed that professional commitment significantly predicts coping mechanisms.

The regression model produced the following results:

- $R = 0.877$
- $R^2 = 0.769$
- $F = 165.623$
- $p < 0.001$

The coefficient of determination indicates that 76.9% of the variance in coping mechanisms is explained by professional commitment.

Among the predictors:

- commitment toward students had the strongest influence ($\beta = 0.398$);
- commitment toward profession followed ($\beta = 0.298$); and
- commitment toward community had the least but still significant influence ($\beta = 0.198$).

These findings imply that teachers who are strongly committed to students are more capable of coping effectively with workplace stress and professional demands.

The findings also highlight the importance of strengthening teacher-student relationships, professional engagement, and institutional support systems in promoting teacher resilience and emotional well-being.

8. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are offered:

1. The Department of Education may strengthen teacher wellness programs through stress management seminars, resilience training, counseling services, and mental health interventions.
2. School administrators may establish stronger professional support systems such as peer mentoring, collaborative learning communities, and wellness activities to improve teacher well-being.
3. Schools may strengthen home-school-community partnerships to improve teacher engagement and institutional support.
4. Teachers may continue participating in professional development activities and adopt healthy coping practices such as positive thinking, self-reflection, work-life balance, and time management.
5. Institutional support should be increased, especially in geographically challenged areas, to reduce occupational stress and improve access to professional resources and instructional materials.
6. Educational leaders may implement teacher recognition programs that strengthen professional motivation, morale, and commitment.

9. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that elementary teachers in Marilog South District demonstrate extensive professional commitment and extensive coping mechanisms despite workplace challenges and difficult teaching conditions.

Teachers consistently exhibit dedication toward their profession, students, and community while utilizing appraisal-focused, problem-focused, and emotion-focused coping strategies in managing occupational stress.

The findings further establish that professional commitment has a strong and significant relationship with coping mechanisms. Teachers who possess stronger professional commitment are more likely to utilize adaptive coping strategies that help maintain emotional stability, resilience, and professional effectiveness.

Regression analysis confirms that professional commitment significantly predicts coping mechanisms, with commitment toward students emerging as the strongest predictor.

The study therefore emphasizes that strengthening teachers' professional commitment contributes significantly to improved coping capacity, emotional well-being, resilience, and educational effectiveness.

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10. AREA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future researchers may:

1. Include teachers from other districts or regions to compare findings across educational settings.
2. Utilize qualitative or mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into teachers' lived experiences.
3. Investigate other variables related to coping mechanisms such as organizational support, workload, leadership practices, and resilience.
4. Conduct longitudinal studies to examine changes in professional commitment and coping mechanisms over time.
5. Explore the effectiveness of teacher wellness programs and mental health interventions in improving coping capacity and professional engagement.

11. FIGURES, TABLES, AND REFERENCES

Table 1. Summary of Professional Commitment of Teachers

Domain	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Towards Profession	3.96	0.940	Extensive
Towards Students	3.99	0.941	Extensive
Towards Community	4.01	0.960	Extensive
Overall	3.99	0.947	Extensive

Table 2. Summary of Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

Domain	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Appraisal-Focused	4.01	0.880	Extensive
Problem-Focused	3.99	0.893	Extensive
Emotion-Focused	4.02	0.876	Extensive
Overall	4.01	0.883	Extensive

Table 3. Relationship Between Professional Commitment and Coping Mechanisms

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Professional Commitment and Coping Mechanisms	0.878	0.001	Significant

Table 4. Regression Analysis on the Influence of Professional Commitment on Coping Mechanisms

Predictor	Beta	t-value	p-value
Towards Profession	0.298	2.033	0.000
Towards Students	0.398	2.408	0.000
Towards Community	0.198	1.819	0.001

R = 0.877
R^2 = 0.769
F = 165.623
p < 0.001

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