

CHALLENGES AND COPING MECHANISMS OF KINDERGARTEN PARENTS IN MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords— Modular Distance Learning, Kindergarten, Parental Involvement, Coping Mechanisms, Quantitative Research, Chi-square Test, Spearman's Rho, Tagbilaran City, Philippines.

This study investigates the challenges and coping mechanisms encountered by kindergarten parents during the transition to modular distance learning in public schools amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 264 parents who facilitated their children's distance learning. A researcher-made questionnaire, validated by experts and demonstrating high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.959 for challenges,

0.952 for coping mechanisms), was employed to collect data. The statistical analyses included descriptive statistics to summarize the data and inferential statistics such as the Mann-Whitney U Test, Chi-Square Test, and Spearman's Rho to explore relationships between variables. Findings revealed significant challenges related to balancing responsibilities, learner motivation, and accessibility. Furthermore, male parents encountered more challenges than female parents. On the other hand, single parents reported more effective coping strategies compared to their partnered counterparts. Despite facing



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substantial challenges, parents demonstrated resilience through varied coping mechanisms. The study highlights the essential role of parental involvement in their children's education and suggests recommendations for support interventions from educational authorities.

INTRODUCTION

It has been two years since the Covid-19 pandemic struck the Philippines. The World Health Organization (WHO) noted that anyone could get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die. By this condition, the Philippine government, in collaboration with the Department of Education (DepEd), declared schools to be closed. Formal education of the students has now shifted from traditional face-to-face to modular distance learning, which involves individualized instruction that allows students to utilize self-learning modules (SLMs) in print or digital format/electronic copy, depending on the learner's needs, as well as other learning resources like learner's materials, textbooks, according to Alvarez (2021).

Since pupils are not allowed to go to school, the teacher prepares the modules, and parents/guardians collect them and deliver them back to school. Moreover, since formal schooling is now done at home, parents become the primary facilitators of their child's learning. Thus, this becomes an additional workload for them.

Parents are inevitably overwhelmed with the sudden shift of the responsibility to educate their pupils. It causes them stress and burnout because they have to divide their time between facilitating their child and their other responsibilities. According to the study of Kintanar et al. (2021), even before the pandemic, parents struggled to teach their children because some were uneducated and could not understand even simple instructions. It would be more difficult for parents with kindergarten learners at home since they need more time and attention to educate than children at a higher level. Additionally, some parents need help understanding the lessons and strategizing on how to facilitate since they are not used to being the primary facilitators because it used to be the teachers at school who did the work.

Nevertheless, parents have no choice but to take responsibility for the sake of the education of their children. They should do their best to provide time for their child amidst their busy schedules and assist them in schooling. Sadjail-Salapuddin (2021) suggested that school authorities, teachers, and other school stakeholders should devise effective programs to engage parents and the community in the development of learning techniques through module orientation and other learning modalities to help the parents. Thus, the objective of this study is to help kindergarten parents embrace their responsibility as the foremost teachers of their children during modular distance learning. This circumstance equips them with better strategies for motivating their children to learn.

Literature Review. Challenges are inevitable, not just in education but also in our everyday lives. What is important to learn is how we see the challenges we have experienced.

First, Stoltz's Adversity Quotient (1997) noted that we must see hardship as a challenge, a challenge as an opportunity, and an opportunity should be embraced. Adversity does not create insurmountable barriers for anyone. According to him, research showed that the more he consciously repeats a constructive thought or action, the deeper, faster, and more automatic it becomes.

On the other hand, the Stress and Coping Theory of Folkman and Lazarus (1986) believed that the coping appraisal is a method of determining whether or if a given contact with the environment is relevant to one's well-being

and, if so, in what ways? Then, the person considers what, if anything, can be done to mitigate or prevent harm or raise the likelihood of benefit. Coping is described as a person's ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal demands deemed too hard for them to handle.

Moreover, Systemic Stress: Selye's Theory developed by Selye (1950) stated that aside from the numerous specific defense reactions (e.g., formation of specific antibodies, adaptation to cold, habituation to morphine, hypertrophy of frequently used muscle groups), there is an integrated syndrome of closely interrelated adaptive responses to non-specific stress itself; this has been described.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) framed the Ecological Systems Theory, which stated layers of ecological systems, namely mesosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem. Mesosystem models explain that happenings at home can influence a child's academic achievement and vice versa. In Exosystem models, children's psychological development is influenced not just by what happens in the other contexts in which they spend their time but also by what happens in the other settings in which their parents conduct their lives, particularly in a place where children rarely visit—their parents' workplace. "Exosystems" are "external" environments to the developing human. Lastly, chronosystem models mean that the passage of time has traditionally been considered synonymous with chronological age in developmental research, that is, as a frame of reference for investigating individuals' psychological changes as they age.

In addition, the Social Systems Theory of Getzels (1978) also emphasized the importance of parents and other older people to learn the child. It is argued that the teacher and the parent should meet as adults to discuss the child's common interests, bringing their life experiences and all the influences that affect them to a social structure.

Finally, the Person-Environment (P-E) Theory of stress formally recognizes the roles of the individual and the environment in stress. It states that the individual or the environment does not cause stress on its own but rather by how well they fit or are congruent.

The educational system has now shifted from physical face-to-face to homeschooling. Parents' educational roles for their children have become even more critical in the home. Only their parents are around when children need help with homework, and they foster good development and new learning experiences for toddlers and pre-schoolers (Wang et al., 2020). Parents have had to learn how to become educators while their children learn at home (Bozkurt et al., 2020). To ensure continuity of education, they are forced to take on the task of homeschooling (Cruz, RVT). However, even before the pandemic, parents struggled to teach their children because some were uneducated and could not understand even simple instructions, Kintanar et al. (2021). Since the current situation, it has been a more challenging journey for everyone, as De Leon (2021) underscored. According to Lee et al. (2021), half of the American parents in their study felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities to educate their child at home during the COVID-19 crisis, resulting in significant distress and moderate to severe anxiety. It is also reported by Patrick et al. (2020) that the worsening of parental mental health and children's behavioral health due to COVID-19 is evident.

Encountering challenges in modular distance learning can be stressful for parents. Some researchers defined stress in different ways. According to Achterberg et al. (2021), the recent COVID-19 outbreak has added to the stress in many households, as parents must choose between homeschooling their children, working remotely, or not working at all while worrying about the virus. When faced with external stressors, parents frequently exhibit an increase in parental negative emotions, such as depression, anxiety, hostility, and interpersonal sensitivity, which are more prevalent.

The study by Bayucca (2021) revealed that the top problems of parents in modular distance learning are difficulty in independent learning, difficulty concentrating on studies, and parents' inadequate knowledge of the contents of their children's lessons. Learner-respondents, on the other hand, are unanimous in declaring that distance learning is difficult due to a variety of contributing factors such as difficulty learning on their own, a lack of reference materials for more examples, limited guidance from parents and teachers, research load challenges, and some difficulty understanding English.

Meanwhile, the study by Trovela (2021) stated that parent participants expressed that they experienced challenges in terms of internet access; not all of the answers are written in the answer key of modules, and their lessons are different from those previously taught.

Additionally, the study of Agaton & Cueto (2021) discovered that parents had encountered many challenges from distance learning, including the virtual setting, delivery of instruction, and unsatisfactory learning outcomes; struggles with the use and availability of technology; personal issues with their child's health, stress, and learning style; and financial difficulties while working for the family during the lockdown.

Moreover, the study by Budhrani et al. (2021) revealed that parents had to

motivate their children by assisting them with the shift, helping them control distractions, finding the ideal balance of screen time for pleasure and study, and accelerating learning online. Children found it challenging to concentrate on online schoolwork since they knew their toys and gadgets were nearby.

Regarding instruction, availability, communication, and providing feedback, parents complain about a lack of teacher assistance. They gripe that the teacher needs to explain the material better, which reduces learning for the kids working out problems. They need help understanding on their own without getting any feedback. When learning remotely vs. in person, parents observe that their children need longer time to complete assignments, according to Drvodelić and Domović (2022).

On the other hand, having a coping mechanism for challenges is essential in life. Olivo (2021) stressed that teachers' attitudes and family resources are two significant barriers limiting parents' ability to participate actively in their children's education. Schools and teacher training, on the other hand, can overcome these difficulties. Cluver and colleagues (2020) pointed out that while it is a problem for parents with more responsibilities, it is also an opportunity and a requirement for strengthening social bonds and supporting families through difficult times.

According to Henter and Nastasa (2021), parents who are capable of understanding emotional information and its sources, accessing and generating emotions to facilitate thinking, and managing their own emotions have a better chance of preventing the development of emotional exhaustion. According to Pajariato (2020), the academic stress induced by studying from Home can be alleviated by enhancing student religiosity, teacher support, and parent support at home. On the other hand, Yahya et al. (2021) suggest that using Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA-MA) is helpful and advantageous, especially during the Covid-19 outbreak. PTA-MA application will improve communication among PTA members. Sadjail-Salapuddin (2021) stated that school authorities, teachers, and other school stakeholders should devise effective programs to engage parents and the community in the development of learning techniques through module orientation and other learning modalities. Uneducated parents should be given top priority in assisting their children in obtaining a good education by sending volunteer teachers to conduct collaborative tutorial learning strategies in a small group of parents and students while adhering to the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) health prevention protocols. In the absence of face-to-face learning in the classroom, home modular learning, along with other learning modalities, maintains educational excellence.

According to Bayucca (2021), providing additional reference materials such as books, self-learning kits, booklets, and video courses will substantially help alleviate the difficulties encountered with modular distance learning. Since modular distance learning has been implemented for two years, parents may overcome the challenges they have encountered or, worse, take

their children's education for granted. With that, the researcher wanted to determine if the kindergarten parents among the public elementary schools in the Tagbilaran City Division for the School Year 2021-2022 had encountered some challenges and, if there were any, whether they would be able to cope with the problems or not. The researcher believed that the parents and the family are considered the educational partners in their child's education. It is important to tackle their challenges in modular distance learning because, without proper action on their problems, it will significantly affect the performance and motivation of the students. The present study would also like to test whether the coping mechanisms of the respondents were influenced by the challenges they encountered. Hence, this study sheds light on the present status of parents during modular distance learning. Furthermore, the findings of the study will be the basis of the researcher for the proposed intervention program to address the issue.

METHODOLOGY

Design. This study adopted a **quantitative descriptive-correlational research design** to explore the challenges encountered by kindergarten parents during modular distance learning and their coping mechanisms amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The study involved 264 parents of kindergarten students enrolled in public schools within Tagbilaran City, Bohol. The sample size was determined using an online sample size calculator, employing a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. A **random sampling technique** was applied to select participants. Eligibility criteria required that the parent facilitated the child's modular distance learning throughout the school year and that the child was not a transferee.

Research Instrument. The primary data collection tool was a **researcher-made questionnaire** derived from and modified based on the studies of Bayucca (2021), Kintanar et al. (2021), Garbe et al. (2020), Gumapac et al. (2021), Pascual (2020), and other published research. To ensure methodological rigor, the instrument underwent **face and content validation** by experts in the field, followed by reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability scores demonstrated high internal consistency, with the **challenges questionnaire** yielding a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.959 and the **coping mechanisms questionnaire** scoring 0.952.

The questionnaire comprised three main sections: the **Profile of Respondents** that Collected demographic and contextual information; **Challenges Encountered** that Items were rated on a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Disagree (1), with interpretations spanning "**very high extent of challenges**" to "**very low extent of challenges.**" **Coping Mechanisms** – Items were rated on a frequency scale from Always (4) to Never (1), with interpretations from "**very good coping mechanisms**" to "**poor coping mechanisms.**"

Sample statements in the **challenges section** included “I have difficulty balancing my responsibility in facilitating my child due to household chores,” “I am worried because my child is distracted by online games or social media,” “We lack stable internet access to support my child’s learning;” “I sometimes lose patience when my child does not listen to me.”

For the **coping mechanisms section**, sample items included, “I wake up early to complete household chores to make time for facilitating my child’s studies;” “I reward my child for completing learning tasks effectively.”

Data Collection Procedure. Prior to data collection, the researcher secured necessary permissions from the participating schools and obtained informed consent from parents through signed consent forms. The questionnaires were distributed during the regular module distribution schedules, ensuring compliance with **COVID-19 safety protocols**, such as wearing face masks, practicing physical distancing, and using hand sanitizers. Follow-ups were conducted a week later to retrieve completed questionnaires.

Data Analysis. The collected data were meticulously organized, tabulated, and analyzed. A **normality test** was performed to determine the appropriate statistical tools for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as **Frequency, Composite Mean, and Weighted Mean** were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics employed included **the Chi-Square Test** to assess associations between categorical variables; **Spearman’s Rho Test** to evaluate correlations between challenges and coping mechanisms; **Mann-Whitney U Test** to compare differences between two independent groups; and **Kruskal-Wallis Test** to compare differences across more than two independent groups. This structured and systematic approach ensured the reliability and validity of findings, facilitating meaningful interpretations of the challenges and coping strategies employed by kindergarten parents during modular distance learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study delved into the challenges and coping mechanisms of kindergarten parents in facilitating modular distance learning during the pandemic. The main findings, detailed below, are discussed in the context of relevant literature.

Balancing Responsibilities. Despite these challenges, parents demonstrated remarkable resilience, finding ways to manage their responsibilities and support their children’s learning. Parent respondents expressed difficulties juggling responsibilities, notably with domestic chores (3.13) and job obligations (2.81). These difficulties transpired from the dual weight of family chores and employment, which prevented parents from fully supporting their children’s modular learning.

This finding aligns with Dargo and Dimas (2021), who noted that working parents, particularly during the pandemic, struggled to manage routines while supervising their children’s education. Many parents needed more time due to

the competing demands of work and home life.

Non-Positive Learner Motivation. A high level of difficulty was noted in motivating learners (2.75), with parents observing that children were easily distracted by online games and social media, often perceiving modular distance learning as a vacation from school. This result supports the findings of Morse et al. (2022), who found that parents faced challenges in maintaining children's focus and motivation, often due to distractions such as gaming and social media, which competed for their attention.

Accessibility. In terms of accessibility, challenges were relatively low (2.39), though concerns about unstable internet connectivity (2.62) were prominent. Parents also reported needing more teaching materials to supplement modular lessons. This result mirrors the findings of Panganiban and Madrigal (2021), which revealed that internet accessibility remains a significant barrier, especially in rural areas where connectivity is limited.

Socio-Emotional Development. Socio-emotional challenges were rated high (2.70), with parents expressing frustration, worry, and impatience when children were uncooperative (3.00). These findings are consistent with Biffi et al. (2021), who reported that children's disobedience and lack of cooperation often led to stress among parents managing home-based learning environments.

Curriculum Concerns. Parents encountered low to moderate challenges with the curriculum (2.43), particularly with complicated topics (2.67) and inadequate module content (2.61). Parents with lower educational backgrounds found it difficult to understand vague module instructions. Susilowati and Azzasyofia (2020) corroborated this, noting that parents needed help with complex school activities and insufficient module guidance, especially for younger learners.

Balancing Responsibilities. Parents demonstrated effective coping mechanisms (3.12) by adopting strategies such as waking early to manage their time and tackling one subject daily to avoid cramming. This finding not only aligns with Birimoglu and Begen (2022), but also reassures us that parents are finding effective ways to balance work and education-related tasks.

Non-Positive Learner Motivation. Parents excelled at motivating their children (3.35), identifying and applauding their achievements (3.64), and providing a good coping mechanism. Budao (2021) underlines the need for encouragement and positive reinforcement in retaining children's motivation to learn.

Accessibility. Parents coped with accessibility challenges by improvising instructional materials using recycled household items (3.12). This finding corresponds with Dewantari (2021), who noted that creatively utilizing available resources enhanced learning and reduced reliance on external teaching aids.

Socio-Emotional Development. Coping mechanisms for socio-emotional challenges were rated as good (3.05). Parents managed stress by

lowering expectations, focusing on the positives of modular learning, and adopting a more understanding approach to their children's behavior (3.53). These strategies align with Cahapay (2021), who found that parents adjusted their expectations and perceived the situation as an opportunity to strengthen family bonds.

Curriculum Concerns. Parents effectively addressed curriculum challenges (3.14) by simplifying complex topics and explaining them at their children's level of understanding. Brom et al. (2020) similarly reported that parents played an active role in simplifying instructions and reviewing schoolwork to enhance comprehension.

Correlation Between Variables. A significant relationship was found between sex and challenges, with male respondents reporting more challenges than females ($p = 0.043$). This finding contradicts common assumptions but is supported by Susilowati and Azzasyofia (2020), who noted that while mothers often took on more childcare responsibilities, fathers found modular learning particularly challenging due to unfamiliarity with teaching tasks.

The number of learners at home was significantly related to coping mechanisms ($p = 0.0197$), with parents of multiple children reporting greater difficulty managing time and attention. Bokayev et al. (2021) also observed that increasing household responsibilities negatively affected parental satisfaction with schooling.

Finally, a significant correlation between challenges encountered and coping mechanisms ($p = 0.049$) was observed; such findings indicated that parents faced substantial challenges. The effectiveness of their strategies strongly influenced their ability to cope. This finding not only supports Bayod et al. (2021) but also enlightens us about the complex relationship between challenges and coping mechanisms in the context of modular learning.

Table 1. *Difference between the Coping Mechanisms according to the Parenting Status of the Respondents*

Variables	Computed Mann-Whitney U	P-Value @ 18 df (0.05) = 0.009 (P<0.05)	Decision
Coping Mechanisms and Parenting Status	0.034	Significant	Reject Ho

Conversely, it reveals that the effectiveness of the coping mechanisms used by parents in modular distance learning differs if the household has a single-parent or two-parent. The result showed that the single parent's mean rank was higher than two-parent. Thus, this means that the single parent can cope easily with the challenges of modular distance learning compared to those with two parents. With this, the coping mechanisms according to parenting status do not coincide with the findings of Damen et al. (2020), who stated that when a family has additional resources, such as a partner with whom

one can share parenting responsibilities and time, with whom one can discuss challenging parenting situations, and from whom one can receive personal support, these efforts become simpler.

Furthermore, the results of the test displayed a p-value of .000 which is lesser than 0.05, the set level of significance when measuring the variance in the different dimensions of the challenges encountered by parents. This means that there is a significant degree of variance among the different dimensions of challenges encountered by parents. It implies that the different dimensions, namely balancing responsibilities, non-positive learner motivation, accessibility, socio-emotional developmental concern, and curriculum concerns of parents, vary significantly and that they were having difficulty in modular distance learning in all dimensions. This corresponds to the study of Garbe et al. (2020) that parents reported having problems balancing responsibilities, learner motivation, accessibility, and learning outcomes.

Lastly, data showed that the dimensions of coping mechanisms have a significant variance because the P-value of 0.000 was lower than the significance level of .05. Thus, rejecting the null hypothesis. There is a difference in the mean ranks among the five dimensions. This means that parents cope variedly with the challenges they have encountered in modular distance learning in all dimensions, such as balancing responsibilities, non-positive learner motivation, accessibility, socio-emotional development concerns, and curriculum concerns of parents. This supports the findings of Aznar et al. (2021) that resourceful parents who had efficient coping mechanisms and thought of their living space as appropriate were better able to handle the stress brought on by the demands of homeschooling.

Among all, the study implied that there was a correlation between the challenges encountered and coping mechanisms of kindergarten parents in modular distance learning. It showed that the kindergarten parents were experiencing challenges, yet they were able to cope with them for the sake of their children's education. As the challenges arose, the more coping mechanisms they tried to combat the new challenges they faced due to the sudden transition to the educational setting. The positive mindset that being a primary teacher is an opportunity to have more time with their children and not an additional burden helps a lot during modular distance learning. This statement agreed with the study of Jans-Beken (2021) entitled "A Perspective on Mature Gratitude as a Way of Coping with COVID-19". He found out that confronting his existential fragility during a pandemic is not only a catastrophe but also an opportunity to reconsider our existence. Mature thankfulness, as presented in this perspective, might assist him in coping with the risks and limitations that the COVID-19 epidemic has imposed on his life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study revealed a significant correlation between challenges encountered and the coping mechanisms of parents of kindergarten

learners. It can be concluded that parents had encountered challenges in modular distance learning, yet they were able to cope with the challenges effectively through the coping mechanisms they used. They can adapt to the situation and take responsibility for the sake of their children's education.

The result continuously revealed that male respondents were more challenged than female respondents. This means that fathers felt more challenged in modular distance learning than mothers. It can also be stated that even if they had two learners at home, they could still cope with the challenges they encountered.

On the other hand, it was shown that single parents could easily cope with the challenges they have encountered in modular distance learning compared to two-parent families. It can be drawn that single parents are used to challenges in their lives because the fact that they solely raise their children speaks volumes about how they endured trials in life.

Conversely, the challenges encountered and coping mechanisms used vary among the five dimensions: balancing responsibilities, non-positive learner motivation, accessibility, socio-emotional development concerns, and parents' curriculum concerns.

Generally, this study concluded that parents of kindergarten learners encountered challenges in modular distance learning yet they were able to cope because the coping mechanisms they used were effective. It has been determined that as the intensity of the challenges they have encountered increases, the coping mechanisms they have used also increase to counteract the negative effect of modular distance learning on their child's learning. Meanwhile, the result of this study is essential because even if the school setting has now gradually gone back to face-to-face, the involvement of the parents in their child's learning, especially for kindergarten learners, is still needed. Parents still facilitate their children at home after school and assist them in their studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided herein based on the findings and conclusions.

1. The school would conduct a seminar to enhance parent's strategy in managing their children at home. That they would separate their responsibility as a mother as to being a teacher at the same time.
2. Parents should be guided that even if they have encountered problems, they should prioritize their children's education.
3. The school admin should create a program that could help the parents with techniques and strategies to get their children's attention.
4. DepEd should improvise the modules in an easy to comprehend, give ample information/examples and lessen the activities per subject.

5. The school division should give other teaching materials to help parents facilitate the lesson for their children.
6. Teachers should check the parents' status in facilitating their children so that they can advise on what to do if they encounter problems.
7. Parents should collaborate with co-parents to ease their problems in modular distance learning.
8. DepEd should administer a program that could help the parents in their emotional aspects. They could do some stress management webinars or other activities to lessen the parents' stress.

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