

Stressors and Coping Strategies of Teacher Education Students on Online Learning: A Quantitative Study

**Karylle B. Tolentino, Ma. Razll V. Abella, Juspher G. Handang,
Alprince King Biri, Lyka C. Saldariega, Irish Faye R. Bengil**

College of Teacher Education, Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City,
Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies the stressors and coping strategies employed by education students at the College of Teacher Education at Western Mindanao State University during their online learning. The respondents of this study were 80 first- to fourth-year education students. The descriptive correlational and quantitative research approaches were used in this study since they will determine the significant difference between stressors when grouped according to gender and coping strategies when grouped according to gender. To conduct this study, a five-point Likert scale survey questionnaire was employed to collect the data. The result shows that there was no significant difference observed in the type of stress that teacher education students experience when data is grouped according to gender. The result also shows that there was no significant difference in the coping strategies that the teacher education students employ when data is grouped according to gender.

I. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak reportedly started in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Almost every country has implemented public health measures to combat the disease's spread. This pandemic has pushed the physical closure of businesses, sports, and schools around the world (Secretary-General's Policy Brief on Education During COVID-19 and Beyond | United Nations in the Philippines, 2020).

According to Finkelstein (2006), asynchronous and synchronous learning are two types of online learning. Synchronous technologies like audioconferencing, videoconferencing, web chats, etc. allow for "real-time" contact between the instructor and the learners, while asynchronous technologies, such as email, short videos, discussion forums, etc., require long delays between instructions and responses. According to Handang (2022), Filipino students are prepared and ready for asynchronous and synchronous learning but they are not prepared for other factors involved in it such as stress. Saldariega et al. (2022) have mentioned that there is no interaction between the students and the teacher in asynchronous classes which makes it harder for the students to learn. The sudden transition to online learning in schools and universities has made students experience quick changes in their day-to-day and school lives, and these changes have caused and increased student stress. Students find online learning to be stressful and difficult.

Stress can be linked to or made worse by a variety of common mental and physical problems that college students experience, including headaches, fatigue, depression, anxiety, and difficulty coping. (The Effects of Stress on College Students and Ways to Overcome It, 2021) Some of the

common stressors reported in an academic setting include excessive assignments, poor time management, social skills, peer competition, etc. When students are stressed, they tend to cope with it to lessen or remove stress (Reddy et al., 2018). However, coping is a way of dealing with stressful situations, which are often brought on by changes, in order to maintain one's personal mental and emotional well-being. Coping strategies are the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions that you use to cope with life's challenges (How Do You Cope, n.d.). Coping is a skill that teaches us how to deal with pressure and makes us more adaptable (posts by KY COUNSELLING CENTRE, 2021). Coping strategies have their pros and cons. According to Smith et al. (2016), certain coping mechanisms reduce stress, some increase stress and have negative psychological effects, and others have positive psychological effects. Personal resiliency, however, may have an impact on the efficacy of any coping strategy.

One of the factors in this study of online learning is stressors and how to cope with them. This study is significant because it will assist you in breaking free from the pressure of stress in your life, allowing you to be happier, healthier, and more productive (Stress Management, HelpGuide.Org, 2021). The students have used coping strategies to reduce stress and feel secure about all of the difficulties they faced while engaging in online learning (Daraman & Decano, 2021). According to Freire et al. (2001), considering coping flexibility, the study's key contribution is an examination of the relationship between coping methods and overall self-efficacy in university students. The importance of coping strategies in minimizing negative effects has been emphasized in academic stress research.

Previous studies were conducted among graduate students (Ramos & Borte, 2022; Ickes et al., 2015); nursing students and medical students (Majrashi et al., 2021; Bamuhair et al., 2015); accountancy students (Balucan et al., 2021); senior high school students (Kho, 2021); university students and college students (Reddy et al., 2018; Freire et al., 2001; Logel et al., 2021; Lopes & Nihei, 2021).

Although previous studies have been conducted, most of them were conducted by institutions, and some were not in the context of the Philippines. The study of stressors and coping strategies among teacher education students is not widely known, and conducting this study will contribute to and broaden the context of this study.

This study will figure out the stress and coping strategies among teacher education students at Western Mindanao State University during online learning. The findings of this study may be useful for teaching and counseling services, as well as for other purposes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of the study is to identify stressors and coping strategies among Education students at Western Mindanao State University.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What types of stressors do teacher education students experience during their online learning?
2. What are the coping strategies teacher education students employed?
3. Is there a significant difference in the type of stressors that teacher education students experience during their online learning across gender?
4. Is there a significant difference in the coping strategies teacher education students employ when data are grouped according to gender?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Online Learning

Since COVID-19 struck, it has transformed everyone's lives in multiple ways, especially from the perspective of education. As a result, instead of face-to-face classes, online learning is now being used at all levels of school.

Online learning is described as "learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous situations using various devices with an internet connection (e.g., smartphones, laptops, etc.)." (Dhawan, 2020). Online learning classes are conducted entirely online, allowing students to have flexible time. This allowed them to choose where, when, and how they would learn. Study materials are widely accessible online, and students can enroll in just about any course of their choice. They offer everything, such as lectures, additional activities, question and answer sessions, topic discussions, and so on. It also saved students' travel expenses. Access to a computer, the internet, and the determination to achieve in a non-traditional classroom are the only requirements for students to engage in an online class. Although more studies show that online learning is effective, some studies show the ineffectiveness of online learning (Stern, n.d.). According to Basar et al., (2021), only a minor percentage of respondents believed they benefited from online learning, and almost all agreed that it did not drive them to appreciate studying. Another study showed that students in rural places believe online learning to be less successful since communications systems and infrastructure do not effectively help them in following online learning (Harefa & Sihombing, 2022). Also, according to Gilbert (2015), a study indicates that students avoid interacting with their instructors and classmates, particularly during discussion and recitation time, making learning ineffective. And with this, online learning has its pros and cons. Just as was stated before, students are required to have high-speed internet access that will enable them to be part of their online classes. Failure to have these will result in poor performance and can lead to many difficulties. Online learning can also lead to poor communication skills and the students may feel isolated, unlike in traditional classrooms (Michelle, 2021). On the other hand, online learning provides students flexibility, and students can set their own pace of learning. They can manage their own time. Online learning also ensures all students are fully engaged since learning occurs in combination with texts, videos, and other media, sounds, interactive communication, and engaging visuals are all available (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021). With online learning, students can time and be at their convenience. When they have free time they got a hold of their time, and this will also make them responsible individuals.

Stressors

A stressor is a stressful occurrence or experience or simply something that causes stress to a person (Stressor, 2022). Stressors significantly impact our mood, sense of well-being, behavior, and health (Schneiderman et al., 2008). Any occurrence, force, or circumstance that causes physical or emotional stress is referred to as a stressor. In the short term, stressors are what cause us to be stressed, and these can be caused by many things, such as the physical environment, such as noise, lights, and heat, financial expenses such as payment of bills, life events such as the death of loved ones, marriage, and illness, and lifestyle choices such as lack of sleep and poor diet. Stressors can also be caused by major events such as calamities and the spread of disease, just like the COVID-19 Pandemic. The sudden shift to online learning has a huge toll on the academic performance of students, specifically on their mental health as surveyed by Brillantes (2021) among Filipino learners. This supports the contention of Lao et al. (2021) wherein based on their findings, they implied that the new modality for learning is flawed to a certain extent as students have been dissatisfied with their performance in school and the challenges posed by the online learning environment is out of the student's control and that this compromised the quality of the student's learning.

When exposed to stress, the body's stress response is activated, and a series of physiological

changes occur to allow the individual to fight or escape. If this seems like stress, it's because when people talk about stress in their lives, they are talking about stressors. Stressors are the source of stress. Stress can be anxiety, depression, and a hard time coping with things in life.

Academic Stress

Stress has now become a part of students' academic lives as a result of the different internal and external pressure placed on them. Young people are especially prone to issues connected with academic stress since they are going through personal and social transformations (Reddy et al., 2018). Moreover, Somoso (2022) found the top 3 stressors among the students such as academic demands, time pressure to accomplish the work, and workloads. This suggests that students experienced academic stress regardless of the academic endeavor they partake in. It could be deduced that when students are stressed affects their motivation to learn. Extreme stress can affect work effectiveness and result in poor academic performance and reduced productivity. College students who had stressful life experiences reported having lower motivation, decrease academic performance, and increased college drop-out rates (Pascoe et al., 2020). According to Keinan and Perlberg (1986), the feeling of high levels of stress can result in feelings of irritation, anxiety, and depression. Also, according to Campbell and Svenson (1992), regardless of the year university students endure a lot of strain due to financial issues, excessive class workloads such as assignments or tasks, additional roles, changes in all kinds of behaviors, time management, and finding a suitable life partner, regardless of school or gender. Academic stress is characterized as mental suffering associated with impending academic problems or failure, as well as the fear of academic failure. Academic pressures may be encountered in a student's life in a variety of situations, including school, family, and socialization (Kho, 2021). Especially during this pandemic, students experience all kinds of stress, but most especially in the academic field. Most high school students top academic stresses include exams, grades, homework, academic and success expectations, and family pressure. This supports the descriptive qualitative design conducted by Francisco, et.al. (2022), among preservice teachers wherein the major factor contributing to the academic stress of the students is the heavy academic workload given to them with limited time to prepare and accomplish these tasks. With this stress that students experience, the number of suicides has risen, and students' mental health, particularly academic stress, and its effect have brought a significant concern for schools and the government.

Due to the unexpected spread of the Covid-19 virus, students were forced to take their classes online. With the sudden change in the mode of learning, students struggle to cope with the situation. According to Goswami and Nayak (2019), the online learning environment caused stress among students. This supports the study conducted by Aranas (2021), wherein she stressed that although online learning is beneficial in terms of academic opportunities for the students, it is undeniable that learners found difficulty, challenges, stress, and exhaustion when learning in an online class. Furthermore, Gonzales (2021) highlighted that there are limitations when learning in a virtual set-up, and this causes the students to be demotivated to do well in their academics. Hence, given the circumstance, we can infer that students are suffering from academic stress.

In addition, other reasons contribute to students' dissatisfaction with the current system. Students' stresses during online learning include the following: poor internet connectivity, online material delivery, and lecture time (Goswami and Nayak, 2019). Their stress grows when the demand for online learning exceeds that of traditional learning methods. The impact of online learning on students is what has brought them stress.

Coping Strategies and Stress

Students would not be considered students if they did not face any school-related stressors. That is why they have coping strategies in place to deal with it. The study by De Villa and Manalo (2020) identified some of the effective coping methods that individuals use to release stress

during online learning. Positive well-being, time management, openness to change, peer mentorship, and, finally, cooperation or being sociable are some of these strategies. A study conducted among prospective English Language Teachers was concluded by Biri (2022) he posited that when students do not suffer from anxiety and distress, students tend to do well in their academic performance. According to Knowles and Kerkman (2007), a student has two kinds of motivation: external motivation and internal motivation, which helps them cope with their stress. External motivation is a manner of coping that is outside of the student's control, while internal motivation is the students' thinking to lessen stress. The majority of learners deal with stress internally. Students would find ways to cope with stress to avoid breakdowns.

III. METHODOLOGY Research Design

The descriptive correlational and quantitative research approaches were used by the researcher to conduct this study. A survey questionnaire was used as the instrument in collecting data to determine the stressors and coping strategies of the teacher education students of Western Mindanao State University.

Moreover, this study is cross-sectional due to the time allocated for data gathering as data collection was done within a relatively short period of time (Buslon & Alieto, 2019). Finally, there was no manipulation of any variables in the research study and there was no experimental group which denotes that the study is non-experimental (Torres, & Alieto, 2019a; Torres, & Alieto, 2019b).

Research Respondents

The respondents of the study are first-year to fourth-year teacher education students of Western Mindanao State University. This study utilized a survey questionnaire. The first part is the demographic profile, where the name and gender will be asked. The second and last part of the questionnaire will be adopted from the study by Sanny M. Daraman and Dr. Ronald S. Decano entitled Stressors and Coping Strategies on Distance Learning Among Education Students.

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire in the form of a five-point Likert scale, with corresponding descriptions, was used to determine the stressors and coping strategies that the teacher education students experienced and employed during their online learning and was distributed using Google Forms. The five-point Likert scale consists of 27 items in total and was divided into two categories. The research instrument was pilot tested to ensure reliability before it will be used for final data gathering, pilot testing is essential in order to have a reliable instrument (Alieto, 2019).

Data Analysis

The questionnaire has been distributed using Google Forms. The researcher decided to use a digitalized method to follow the safety protocol caused by the pandemic. A coding procedure was used for the analysis of the data. Gender (1 male and 2 female) and age were written in the figure as demographic characteristics. In response to the statements made in the questionnaire, 1 for never, 2 for seldom, 3 for sometimes, 4 for often, and 5 for always. To facilitate the analysis of data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. The use of SPSS is being utilized by researchers around the world in the treatment of the data being collected from Survey Questionnaires (Joe et al., 2022).

Descriptive analysis was used in determining the data set for the type of stressors teacher education experienced and the coping strategies teacher education students employed during online learning. Finally, when data are grouped according to gender, a t-test for an independent sample was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the types of stressors experienced by teacher education students during online learning and the coping strategies used by teacher education students.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Teacher Education Students Level of Stress: Academic Related Stressors

To determine the level of stress of the respondents according to academic-related stressors, the 5 – point Likert scale was employed.

(1) Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Often	(5) Always
1. High academic workload				
1.3	11.3	28.8	26.3	32.5
2. Dissatisfaction with lectures				
1.3	16.3	47.5	26.3	8.8
3. High frequency of examinations				
2.5	18.8	33.8	22.5	22.5
4. Poor performance in examinations				
5.0	12.5	48.8	18.8	15.0
5. Lack of learning materials				
6.3	17.5	43.8	16.3	16.3
6. Difficulty reading and understanding modules				
17.5	36.3	26.3	11.3	8.8

Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of the data set using SPSS. The table above shows the level of stress of teacher education students at Western Mindanao State University. The analysis revealed that the stressors in terms of “*Academic Related Stressors*” showed that Item number 1, which is “*High academic workload*”, resulted in ‘*always*’ as the highest, with a percentage of 32.4. Item number 2 “*Dissatisfaction with lectures*”, item number 3 “*High frequency of examinations*”, item number 4 “*Poor performance in examinations*” and item number 5 “*Lack of learning materials*” showed ‘*sometimes*’ as the highest, with the percentage of 47.5, 33.8, 48.8 and 43.8 respectively. Item number 6, which is “*Difficulty reading and understanding modules*” showed ‘*seldom*’ as the highest with 36.3 percent.

This study shows that in terms of “*Academic Related Stress*”, “*Poor performance in examination*” has the highest percentage of 48.8 among six items. This means that students experience the most stress when they have poor performance in exams, which is the opposite of the results of the study conducted by Daraman S. and Dr. Decano R., titled “*Stressors and Coping Strategies on Distance Learning Among Education Students*” (Daraman & Decano, 2021), which stated that in terms of “*Academic Related Stress*,” “*High academic workload*” is the highest. This study's findings might be caused by students' limited study time.

Table 1.1: Teacher Education Students Level of Stress: Psychosocial Related Stressors

To determine the level of stress of the respondents according to psychological related stressors, the 5 – point Likert scale was employed.

(1) Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Often	(5) Always
1. Inability to manage time				
3.8	21.3	35.0	23.8	16.3
2. Inability to concentrate during lectures				
3.8	15.0	45.0	18.8	17.5
3. Anxiety about my performance in exams				
5.0	15.0	31.3	23.8	25.0
4. High parental expectations				

20.0	20.0	26.3	15.0	18.8
5. Worries about future				
5.0	6.3	23.8	21.3	43.8
6. Loneliness				
15.0	18.8	28.8	18.8	18.8
7. Financial problems				
10.0	21.3	30.0	17.5	21.3
8. Family/Marriage problems				
32.5	18.8	23.8	12.5	12.5

Table 1.1 presents the descriptive analysis of data on the level of stress of teacher education students at Western Mindanao State University in terms of “Psychosocial Related Stress.” Item number 1 “Inability to manage time”, item number 2 “Inability to concentrate during lectures”, item number 3 “Anxiety about my performance in exams”, item number 4 “High parental expectations”, item number 6 “Loneliness”, and item number 7 “Financial problems” resulted in ‘sometimes’ as the highest percentage of 35.0, 45.0, 31.3, 26.3, 28.8 and 30.0 respectively. Item number 5 “Worries about future”, resulted in ‘always’ with a percentage of 43.8, and item number 8 “Family/Marriage problems”, with a result of ‘never’ with a percentage of 32.5 as the highest.

This study shows that in terms of “Psychosocial Related Stress”, “Inability to concentrate during lectures” has the highest percentage of 45.0 among eight items. This suggests that when students are unable to focus during lectures, they feel stressed, which is the exact opposite of the result made by Kwaah C. and Essilfie G., titled “Stress and Coping Strategies among Distance Education Students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana” (Kwaah & Essilfie, 2017), which stated that in terms of “Psychosocial Related Stress”, “Financial problems” is the highest that caused stress to the students. The result of this study may be caused by environmental distractions such as noise, uncomfortable space, and mind wandering.

Table 1.2: Teacher Education Students Level of Stress: Health-Related Stressors

To determine the level of stress of the respondents according to health-related stressors, the 5 – point Likert scale was employed.

(1) Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Often	(5) Always
1. Lack of healthy diet/irregular eating habits				
16.3	16.3	31.3	22.5	13.8
2. Sleep problems				
3.8	13.8	25.0	22.5	35.0
3. Illness/Health problems				
31.3	23.8	20.0	17.5	7.5

Table 1.2 present the descriptive analysis of data on the level of stress of teacher education students of Western Mindanao State University in terms of “Health-Related Stressors”. Item number 1 “Lack of healthy diet/irregular eating habit”, resulted in ‘sometimes’ with a percentage of 31.3. Item number 2 is “Sleep problems”, with a result of ‘always’ with a percentage of 35.0, and item number 3 is “Illness/Health problems”, with the highest percentage of ‘never’ which is 31.3.

This study shows that in terms of “Health-Related Stressors”, “Sleep problems” has the highest percentage of 35.0 among the three items. This means that students experience stress when they lack or have sleeping problems. Similar to the study conducted by Alotaibi et al., titled, “The Relationship between sleep quality, stress, and academic performance among medical students” (Alotaibi et al., 2020), which stated that students with poor sleeping habits caused distress. The findings of this study might have been impacted by students' efforts to finish the activities assigned

to them by their professors on time.

Table 2: Teacher Education Students Coping Strategies

To determine the coping strategies of the respondents, the 5 – point Likert scale was employed.

(1) Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Often	(5) Always
1. Active coping: Doing something about the situation, taking action to negate stressors				
2.5	10.0	32.5	35.0	20.0
2. Positive reframing: Seeing something good in what is happening, learning from experience				
00.0	8.8	30.0	27.5	33.8
3. Alcohol/tobacco/substance abuse: Using tobacco/alcohol/drugs to feel better				
68.8	7.5	8.8	11.3	3.8
4. Humor: Making fun of the situation				
7.5	13.8	38.8	16.3	23.8
5. Given up coping: Giving up the attempt to do anything about the situation				
23.8	31.3	31.3	8.8	5.0
6. Emotional support: Getting emotional support/advice from friends and family				
10.0	10.0	30.0	36.3	13.8
7. Instrumental support: Getting help and advice from lecturers or tutors				
27.5	26.3	32.5	7.5	6.3
8. Self-distraction: Doing something to take my mind off the situation such as watching TV, movies, shopping, listening to music				
1.3	11.3	17.5	16.3	53.8
9. Religion: Praying/meditating				
8.8	18.8	21.3	20.0	31.3
10. Venting Expressing negative feelings: showing anger at things/people				
30.0	26.3	25.0	7.5	11.3

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of the data set using SPSS. The table above shows the coping strategies of teacher education students at Western Mindanao State University. The analysis revealed the coping strategies of teacher education students in item number 1 “Active coping: Doing something about the situation, taking action to negate stressor” and item number 6 “Emotional support: Getting emotional support/advice from friends and family”, which resulted in ‘often’ with a percentage of 35.0 and 36.3. Item numbers 2 “Positive reframing: Seeing something good in what is happening, learning from experience”, 4 “Humor: Making fun of the situation” and 7 “Instrumental support: Getting help and advice from lecturers or tutors”, revealed a result of ‘sometimes’ with a percentage of 30.0, 38.8 and 32.5 respectively. Item numbers 3 “Alcohol/tobacco/substance abuse: Using tobacco/alcohol/drug to feel better” and 10 “Venting Expressing negative feelings: showing anger at things/people”, revealed a result of ‘never’ with a percentage of 68.8 and 30.0. Item number 8 “Self-distraction: Doing something to take my mind off the situation such as watching TV, movies, shopping, listening to music” and 9 “Religion: Praying/meditating”, resulted in ‘always’ with a percentage of 53.8 and 31.3. Item number 5 “Given up coping: Giving up the attempt to do anything about the situation”, resulted in two the same highest percentage of 31.3 on ‘seldom’ and ‘sometimes’.

This study shows that the coping strategy “Self-distraction: Doing something to take my mind off the situation such as watching TV, movies, shopping, listening to music”, with a percentage of 53.8, is being utilized by students when dealing with stress. The study conducted by Seridis (2008) supports the study conducted which revealed that self-distraction is commonly used as a coping strategy by students. In contrast, this study also showed that most students ‘never’ used the coping strategy, “Alcohol/tobacco/substance abuse: Using tobacco/alcohol/drug to feel better”, with 68.8

percent to destress themselves. This study found that the majority of student does not use alcohol/tobacco/substances to destress themselves. The majority of the student use positive coping strategies. The researcher believes that this result is due to the convenience with which students may access and use these gadgets.

Table 3: The Significant Differences in the Type of Stressors that Teacher Education Students Experience during their Online Learning across Gender

The data below will be used to determine whether there is a significant difference in the types of stressors experienced by teacher education students during their online learning across genders. An Independent T-test is done to determine the significant difference.

Variables		Categories	M	SD	Description	Sig. (two-tailed)
Dependent	Independent					
Stressors	Gender	Male	3.2687	.72583	Sometimes	.456
		Female	3.1409	.78911	Sometimes	

The table presents the significant differences in the perception of the respondents on the types of stress among teacher education students as to gender. Stressors were compared between male and female students to examine how this category of students perceive the type of stress. The table shows that the significant difference of .456 shows that there is no significant difference observed in the type of stress of teacher education students in Western Mindanao State University in terms of gender. This means that they all have the same type of stress that they have experienced during online learning, regardless of gender.

Table 4 The Significant Differences in the Coping Strategies Teacher Education Students Employ when Data are Group According to Gender

The data below will be used to determine whether there is a significant difference in the coping strategies teacher education students employ when data are grouped according to gender. An Independent T-test is done to determine the significant difference.

Variables		Categories	M	SD	Description	Sig. (two-tailed)
Dependent	Independent					
Coping Strategies	Gender	Male	3.1000	.61734	Sometimes	.680
		Female	3.0395	.68003	Sometimes	

The table presents the significant differences in the perception of the respondents regarding the coping strategies among teacher education students as to gender. The table shows that the significant difference of .680 shows that there is no significant difference present in the coping strategies of teacher education students in Western Mindanao State University when data are grouped according to gender. This means that regardless of their gender they all have the same coping strategies used when dealing with stress during online learning.

V. CONCLUSION

The demographic profile of the respondents showed that, in terms of gender, 53.8% were female and 46.3% were male, and most of them were students at the age of 21 years old, with a percentage of 56.3%. Therefore, most of the respondents were female and students around 21 years old. The study revealed that poor performance in examinations, inability to concentrate during lectures, and sleep problems are the major causes of stress among teacher education students at Western Mindanao State University. One of the most effective coping strategies used by teacher education students is self-distraction. The students used this strategy to cope with and relieve the stress they experienced during online learning. The study revealed that there is no significant difference observed in the type of stress that teacher education students experience when data is grouped according to gender. The study also revealed that there is no significant

difference in the coping strategies that the teacher education students employ when data is grouped according to gender.

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