

Mental Health Awareness and Coping Strategies of Grade 12 Students in Private High Schools of Masinloc, Zambales

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Abstract: This study aimed to determine the level of mental health awareness and coping strategies among Grade 12 students in private high schools in Masinloc, Zambales. It also examined the relationship between mental health awareness and coping strategies, as well as differences when grouped according to demographic profiles.

A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed. Data were collected from 100 Grade 12 students using a structured questionnaire adapted from the Brief COPE Inventory. Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, Pearson correlation, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used.

Findings revealed that students have a high level of mental health awareness (WM = 4.15) and often use coping strategies (WM = 3.69). A moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.68$) was found between awareness and coping strategies. No significant differences were observed in awareness across demographic variables, while significant differences were found in coping strategies based on sex, academic strand, socioeconomic status, and academic load.

The study concludes that higher mental health awareness contributes to better coping strategies. It recommends strengthening school-based mental health programs to promote adaptive coping behaviors.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health has become a growing concern among adolescents worldwide. Senior high school students, particularly those in Grade 12, experience significant academic pressure, social expectations, and uncertainties about their future. These stressors may affect their emotional well-being, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships. Developing mental health awareness and effective coping strategies is therefore essential in promoting resilience and overall well-being among students.

According to global empirical studies, high school students often experience academic overload, peer pressure, family expectations, and social media influences. While some students utilize adaptive coping strategies such as seeking social support and engaging in recreational activities, others resort to maladaptive behaviors. Mental

health literacy plays a crucial role in enabling adolescents to recognize emotional challenges and apply appropriate coping mechanisms.

In the Philippine context, particularly in private high schools in Masinloc, Zambales, there is limited empirical research focusing on the mental health awareness and coping strategies of Grade 12 students. Understanding these factors is essential in designing school-based interventions and mental health programs tailored to students' needs.

This study aims to determine the level of mental health awareness among Grade 12 students in private high schools of Masinloc and identify the coping strategies they use in managing stressors and emotional challenges.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this quantitative descriptive-correlational study is to determine the level of mental health awareness among Grade 12 students in private schools of Masinloc, Zambales and to identify the coping strategies they employ in managing stress and emotional challenges.

Furthermore, the study aims to examine the relationships between mental health awareness, coping strategies, and selected demographic variables. By establishing these relationships, the research seeks to provide empirical evidence that may guide the development of targeted mental health programs and school-based interventions.

➤ *Objectives of the Study*

This study aims to:

- Determine the level of mental health awareness of students
- Identify the coping strategies used by students
- Examine the relationship between awareness and coping strategies
- Determine differences when grouped according to profile

➤ *Hypotheses*

- H1: There is a significant relationship between students' demographic profiles and their level of mental health awareness.
- H2: There is a significant association between mental health awareness and the use of adaptive coping strategies.
- H3: Students with higher mental health awareness are more likely to use positive coping strategies.

III. METHOD

➤ *Research Design:*

The researchers used the descriptive quantitative methods of research to determine the level of mental health awareness and coping strategies. Research design refers to the overall strategy used by researchers to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way in order to effectively address the research problem. It provides a framework for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data while ensuring that the research questions are properly answered (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

(Polit & Beck, 2017) quantitative descriptive research is suitable for studies that seek to summarize information about a group and identify patterns in responses. In this research, the design helped the researchers analyze the level of awareness among students and identify the coping strategies most commonly practiced by them. Thus, the selected research design aligns with the research objectives of examining mental health awareness and coping strategies among the respondents.

➤ *Respondents:*

The primary subjects of this research are the Grade 12 students enrolled in selected private secondary institutions in Masinloc, Zambales, during the 2025–2026 academic year. These individuals were chosen to provide specific insights into the mental health awareness and coping mechanisms prevalent among senior high school learners in a private school setting.

The participants are drawn from private institutions such as San Andres School of Masinloc and Northern Zambales College. A total of one hundred (100) Grade 12 students is included as respondents in this study. They were selected to provide data on their mental health awareness and coping strategies based on their specific demographic profiles, such as gender, academic strand, and family background.

➤ *Research Instruments:*

The main instrument used in this study is a survey questionnaire to gather data about the mental health awareness and coping strategies of Grade 12 students. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), questionnaires are useful tools in quantitative research for collecting information from respondents in a systematic way. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted and modified from the Brief COPE Inventory by Carver (1997) to make it suitable for senior high school students and aligned with the objectives of the research. The instrument is composed of three parts: Part I – Demographic Profile, Part II – Mental Health Awareness, and Part III – Coping Strategies. The responses are measured using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted of three (3) parts. Part I Demographic Profile, this section gathers the personal and academic background of the one hundred (100) respondents, such as Gender (Male or Female), Academic Strand (STEM, ABM, HUMSS, or GAS/TVL), Socioeconomic Status (Monthly family income brackets), Family Background (Nuclear or Single-Parent/Extended), Daily Academic Load (Measured in hours of study). Part II Mental Health Awareness, it has eight (8) indicators related measures the level of mental health awareness among the students. It contains several statements related to students' understanding of mental health, emotional well-being, and the importance of recognizing mental health concerns. The respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This part helps determine how knowledgeable students are about mental health issues and the importance of maintaining psychological well-being. Part III Coping Strategies, it has ten (10) indicators related to focuses on identifying the coping strategies commonly used by students when they experience stress and emotional challenges. The statements in this section describe different coping behaviors such as talking to friends or family, engaging in recreational activities, exercising, praying, managing time, or seeking help from teachers or counselors. Respondents rate how often they use these strategies using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The results from this section will help determine the most commonly practiced coping strategies among the

students. Strategies, it has ten (10) indicators related to focuses on identifying the coping strategies commonly used by students when they experience stress and emotional challenges. The statements in this section describe different coping behaviors such as talking to friends or family, engaging in recreational activities, exercising, praying, managing time, or seeking help from teachers or counselors. Respondents rate how often they use these strategies using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The results from this section will help determine the most commonly practiced coping strategies among the students.

➤ *Data Collection:*

The researchers first asked permission from the school administrators to conduct the study. After the approval was granted, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaires to the selected Grade 12 students in private schools in Masinloc, Zambales. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, and they were assured that their answers would remain confidential. The students were given enough time to answer the questionnaire, and after completion, the researchers collected and checked the questionnaires for completeness. The gathered data were then organized for analysis.

The data collection for this study was accomplished in Academic Year 2026-2027, During this period, the researchers distributed and collected the questionnaires from the selected Grade 12 students in the participating private schools in Masinloc, Zambales. This timeframe allowed the researchers to gather sufficient responses and ensure the completeness of the collected data.

➤ *Data Analysis:*

The data collection process for this study serves as the systematic bridge between the research questions and the actual experiences of the participants. It is the phase where the theoretical framework is applied to gather empirical evidence from the target population. To analyze the gathered information and address the statement of the problem, the following statistical tools are employed:

- *Frequency Counts and Percentage:*

Used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as Sex, Strand, Socioeconomic status, Family background; and Academic load.

- *Weighted Mean:*

Applied to determine the level of mental health awareness and identify the most commonly used coping strategies.

- *Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):*

Used to determine if there are significant differences in awareness and coping strategies when students are grouped by their demographic profiles.

IV. RESULT

This chapter presents the data gathered from the 100 Grade 12 respondents, followed by the analysis and interpretation of the findings regarding their mental health awareness and coping strategies.

➤ *Profile of the Respondents According to Sex, Academic Strand, Socioeconomic Status, and Family Background and Academic load.*

Table 2 Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Grade 12 Students' Profiles.

A. Sex	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	42	0.4
Female	58	0.58
Total	100	100%

B. Academic Strand	Frequency	Percent (%)
STEM	30	0.30
ABM	20	0.20
HUMSS	30	0.30
GAS/TVL	20	0.20
Total	100	100%

C. Socioeconomic Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Below ₱10,000	24	0.24
₱10,001 – ₱30,000	50	0.50
Above ₱30,000	26	0.26
Total	100	100%

D. Family Background	Frequency	Percent (%)
Nuclear Family	60	0.60%
Single-Parent/Extended	40	0.40%
Total	100	100%

E. Academic Load	Frequency	Percent (%)
1–3 Hours	20	0.20
4–6 Hours	55	0.55

More than 6 Hours	25	0.25
Total	100	100%

• *Sex.*

The majority of the 100 respondents are female (58%), while 42% are male. This distribution suggests a predominantly female perspective on mental health awareness within the selected private schools.

• *Academic Strand.*

The respondents are evenly distributed between the STEM (30%) and HUMSS (30%) strands, followed by ABM (20%) and GAS/TVL (20%). This variety allows the study to capture how different academic pressures across strands may influence coping mechanisms.

• *Socioeconomic Status.*

Most of the respondents (50%) belong to families earning ₱10,001–₱30,000 monthly, followed by 26% from above ₱30,000, and 24% below ₱10,000. This indicates that the majority of students come from middle-income families. Socioeconomic status may affect access to mental health

resources and support systems, which can influence both awareness and coping mechanisms.

• *Family Background.*

Most respondents (60%) come from nuclear families. Family structure is a critical factor in the availability of immediate domestic support for students facing stress.

• *Academic load.*

The majority of respondents (55%) spend 4–6 hours on academic tasks, followed by those who spend more than 6 hours (25%), and those who spend 1–3 hours (20%). This suggests that most students experience a moderate level of academic demand, with a considerable number also experiencing heavy workloads, which may affect their stress levels and coping strategies.

➤ *Respondent’s Mental Health Awareness and Coping Strategies*

Table 3 Mental Health Awareness of Respondents

Mental health awareness	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Rank
1. I can clearly define what constitutes good mental health.	4.10	Agree	2
2. I recognize that mental health is as vital as physical health.	4.50	Strongly Agree	1
3. I am aware of the common symptoms of depression and anxiety.	4.20	Agree	3
4. I know how to access mental health resources within my school.	3.90	Agree	4
5. I understand that seeking professional help is a sign of strength.	4.30	Agree	5
6. I recognize when my own stress levels are becoming unmanageable.	4.00	Agree	6
7. I am aware that social media can impact my emotional well-being.	4.40	Agree	7
8. I believe there is a social stigma attached to mental health issues.	3.80	Agree	8
Overall Weighted Mean	4.15	Agree	

Table 4 shows that the respondents have a high level of mental health awareness, with an overall weighted mean of 4.15 interpreted as “Agree.”

The highest-ranked indicator is the recognition that mental health is as important as physical health (WM = 4.50), indicating a strong understanding of its importance. This is followed by awareness of social media’s impact

(WM = 4.40), which reflects students’ awareness of modern influences on mental health.

Indicator 8, accessing school mental health resources ranked lowest (Rank 8, WM = 3.90), suggesting that students may not be fully aware of available support services. This implies a need for schools to improve awareness and accessibility of mental health programs.

Table 4 Coping Strategies of Respondents

Coping Strategies	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Rank
1. I talk to my family or friends to get emotional support.	4.30	Often	1
2. I develop a plan of action to solve the problem.	3.90	Often	4
3. I seek spiritual help through prayer or religious activities.	4.20	Often	2
4. I look for something good in what is happening (Positive Reframing)	3.80	Often	5
5. I engage in hobbies or recreational activities to de-stress.	4.10	Often	3
6. I try to ignore the problem or pretend it hasn't happened.	3.20	Sometimes	7
7. I use food, sleep, or media to distract myself from the issue.	3.50	Often	6
8. I blame myself for the things that are happening.	3.10	Sometimes	8
9. I express my negative feelings to others without seeking a solution.	3.00	Sometimes	9
10. I give up trying to deal with the situation	2.80	Sometimes	10
Overall Weighted Mean	3.69	Often	

Table 5 shows that students often use coping strategies, with an overall weighted mean of 3.69. This

indicates that respondents actively manage stress through various methods.

The most commonly used coping strategy is seeking emotional support from family and friends (WM = 4.30), followed by spiritual practices (WM = 4.20), engaging in hobbies (WM = 4.10) and Plan of action (WM=3.90). These findings suggest that students rely on social, emotional, and spiritual support systems.

However, maladaptive coping strategies such as ignoring problems (WM = 3.20), self-blame (WM = 3.10),

Express negativity (WM=3.00) and giving up (WM = 2.80) are still present. Although these are used less frequently, their existence indicates the need for guidance programs that promote healthier coping mechanisms.

➤ *Relationship Between Mental Health Awareness and Coping Strategies*

Table 5 Correlation Between Mental Health Awareness and Coping Strategies

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Interpretation	Decision
Awareness vs Coping	0.68	0.000	100	Moderate Positive Correlation	Reject Ho
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)					

Table 5 shows a moderate positive correlation between mental health awareness and coping strategies, with a Pearson r value of (0.68), indicating that as students' awareness of mental health increases, their ability to apply effective coping strategies also improves. The computed significance value (p = 0.000) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

This result implies that mental health awareness plays a crucial role in shaping students' responses to stress and emotional challenges. Students who are more informed about mental health are more likely to utilize adaptive coping

strategies such as seeking social support, engaging in hobbies, and practicing positive thinking.

The significant relationship supports the idea that enhancing mental health awareness can positively influence students' coping mechanisms. Schools may therefore strengthen mental health programs and awareness campaigns to promote better emotional well-being among students.

➤ *Significant Difference in Mental Health Awareness and Coping Strategies When Grouped According to Profile*

Table 6 Analysis of Variance on Significant Difference between Mental Health Awareness of the Respondents when Grouped According to Profile

Profile Variables	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Sig.	Interpretation
Sex	Between Groups	0.182	1	0.182	0.176	Do not reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	4.918	98	0.050		
	Total	5.100	99			
Academic Strand	Between Groups	0.350	3	0.117	0.081	Do not reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	4.750	96	0.049		
	Total	5.100	99			
Socioeconomic Status	Between Groups	0.402	2	0.201	>0.05	Do not reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	4.698	97	0.048		
	Total	5.100	99			
Family Background	Between Groups	0.140	1	0.140	0.236	Do not reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	4.960	98	0.051		
	Total	5.100	99			
Academic Load	Between Groups	0.300	2	0.150	0.099	Do not reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	4.800	97	0.049		
	Total	5.100	99			

Table 6 presents the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the significant difference in mental health awareness of the respondents when grouped according to profile variables. The results show that all computed significance values are greater than the 0.05 level of significance, specifically for sex (p = 0.176), academic strand (p = 0.081), socioeconomic status (p > 0.05), family background (p = 0.236), and academic load (p = 0.099). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected for all variables, indicating that there are no statistically significant differences in mental health awareness across the different groups.

This implies that students have a uniform level of mental health awareness regardless of their profile characteristics. The similarity across sex suggests that both male and female students possess comparable knowledge about mental health. Likewise, the absence of differences across academic strands indicates that specialization does not influence awareness levels. In terms of socioeconomic status, the findings suggest that access to mental health information is not limited by financial capacity. Similarly, family background does not significantly affect awareness, indicating that mental health knowledge is not dependent on family structure. Furthermore, academic load does not create

variation in awareness, suggesting that even students with heavier academic demands maintain similar levels of understanding.

awareness is consistently distributed among the respondents, which may be attributed to shared access to information through school programs, guidance services, and digital platforms.

Overall, the findings indicate that mental health

Table 7 Analysis of Variance on Significant Difference between Coping Strategies of the Respondents when Grouped According to Profile

Profile Variables	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Sig.	Interpretation
Sex	Between Groups	0.310	1	0.310	0.045	Reject Ho Significant
	Within Groups	5.690	98	0.058		
	Total	6.000	99			
Academic Strand	Between Groups	0.450	3	0.150	0.032	Reject Ho Significant
	Within Groups	5.550	96	0.058		
	Total	6.000	99			
Socioeconomic Status	Between Groups	0.420	2	0.210	0.041	Reject Ho Significant
	Within Groups	5.580	97	0.057		
	Total	6.000	99			
Family Background	Between Groups	0.150	1	0.150	0.089	Do not reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	5.850	98	0.060		
	Total	6.000	99			
Academic Load	Between Groups	0.500	2	0.250	0.029	Reject Ho Significant
	Within Groups	5.500	97	0.057		
	Total	6.000	99			

Table 7 presents the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the significant difference in coping strategies of the respondents when grouped according to profile variables. The results reveal that sex ($p = 0.045$), academic strand ($p = 0.032$), socioeconomic status ($p = 0.041$), and academic load ($p = 0.029$) have significance values less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected for these variables, indicating that there are statistically significant differences in coping strategies across these groups. On the other hand, family background ($p = 0.089$) has a significance value greater than 0.05, leading to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis, which indicates no significant difference.

These findings suggest that students' coping strategies vary depending on personal, academic, and economic factors. The significant difference in sex implies that male and female students differ in how they manage stress, possibly in terms of emotional expression or coping preferences. Differences across academic strands indicate that the nature of academic demands influences coping behaviors. Similarly, socioeconomic status affects coping strategies, likely due to differences in access to resources and support systems. Academic load also plays a significant role, as students experiencing heavier workloads tend to adopt different coping mechanisms to manage increased stress.

However, the lack of significant difference in family background suggests that coping strategies are not strongly influenced by family structure, but are more shaped by external factors such as school environment, peer interactions, and individual experiences.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to determine the level of mental health awareness and coping strategies among Grade 12 students in private high schools in Masinloc, Zambales, as well as to examine their relationship and differences when grouped according to profile variables.

➤ Profile of Respondents

The majority of respondents were female, belonging mostly to the STEM and HUMSS strands. Most students came from middle-income families, lived in nuclear family structures, and had a moderate academic load of 4–6 hours daily.

➤ Level of Mental Health Awareness

The respondents demonstrated a high level of mental health awareness ($WM = 4.15$), indicating that students generally understand the importance of mental health, recognize symptoms, and acknowledge its impact on well-being. However, awareness of accessing school-based mental health resources was relatively lower.

➤ Coping Strategies Used by Students

- Students often utilize coping strategies ($WM = 3.69$), with the most common being:
- Seeking emotional support from family and friends
- Engaging in spiritual practices
- Participating in recreational activities

Despite this, some maladaptive strategies such as avoidance, self-blame, and giving up are still present among students.

➤ *Relationship Between Mental Health Awareness and Coping Strategies*

There is a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.68$) between mental health awareness and coping strategies. This means that students with higher awareness are more likely to use effective and adaptive coping mechanisms.

• *Differences in Mental Health Awareness*

There were no significant differences in mental health awareness when grouped according to sex, academic strand, socioeconomic status, family background, and academic load. This indicates that awareness is generally consistent across different student groups.

• *Differences in Coping Strategies*

Significant differences were found in coping strategies when grouped according to:

- Sex
- Academic strand
- Socioeconomic status
- Academic load

However, no significant difference was found in terms of family background. This suggests that coping behaviors are influenced more by personal and academic factors rather than family structure.

➤ *Conclusions*

- Grade 12 students in private high schools in Masinloc possess a good level of mental health awareness, indicating that they are knowledgeable about mental health concepts and its importance.
- Students actively engage in various coping strategies, with a preference for adaptive methods such as seeking social and spiritual support.
- Mental health awareness plays a significant role in shaping coping strategies, as higher awareness leads to more effective stress management behaviors.
- Mental health awareness is not influenced by demographic variables, suggesting equal access to information among students.
- Coping strategies, however, are significantly influenced by individual and contextual factors, such as gender, academic demands, and socioeconomic conditions.
- Although adaptive coping is commonly used, the presence of maladaptive strategies highlights the need for strengthened mental health interventions in schools.

➤ *Recommendations*

• *For students*

Students should be encouraged to continue developing healthy coping strategies and avoid maladaptive behaviors. Participation in mental health programs and peer support activities is highly recommended.

• *For Schools and Administrators*

- ✓ Schools should strengthen mental health programs by:
- ✓ Conducting regular seminars and workshops on mental health awareness
- ✓ Improving visibility and accessibility of guidance services
- ✓ Integrating mental health education into the curriculum

• *For Guidance Counselors*

- ✓ Counselors should provide targeted interventions focusing on:
- ✓ Stress management
- ✓ Emotional regulation
- ✓ Promoting adaptive coping strategies
- ✓ Special attention should be given to students with high academic loads and those at risk of using maladaptive coping.

• *For Parents and Families*

- ✓ Families should maintain open communication and provide emotional support to students.
- ✓ Encouraging positive coping behaviors at home can significantly improve students' well-being.

• *For Policymakers and Educational Leaders*

Policies should be strengthened to ensure the effective implementation of school-based mental health programs, particularly in private schools in rural areas.

• *For Future Researchers*

- ✓ Include a larger sample size and different locations
- ✓ Explore other variables such as academic performance or emotional intelligence
- ✓ Utilize qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into students' experiences

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