Research Article

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES: CHALLENGES, COPING STRATEGIES, AND ONLINE TEACHING PREPAREDNESS OF COLLEGE ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS

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ABSTRACT

Effective English instruction plays a pivotal role in higher education as it not only serves as a fundamental communication tool but also as a key to accessing various academic and career opportunities. Hence, this descriptive-correlational study examined the problems met, coping mechanism employed, and effects of online class to English Teachers in certain Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region 10 during the school year 2022-2023, post-pandemic. A training module was designed anchored on the findings of the study. The module is designed to address the challenges identified in the research providing targeted support and resources to enhance teachers' effectiveness in navigating online instruction. The study indicates that English teachers face a plethora of challenges in their online instructions, especially when it comes to student engagement and interaction, managing students' behavior, fostering student motivation, and providing necessary support. The study reveals that the teachers employ the use both active and coping mechanisms. Moreover, the research findings suggest a correlation between the challenges experienced by students and the use of active coping mechanisms by teachers.

Keywords: Challenges, Coping Strategies, Online Teaching Preparedness, Post-Pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

The development of communication skills, specifically in English, is considered a necessity for students to succeed in their chosen fields (Shamim and Akhtar, 2018). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a significant shift towards online learning, posing challenges for college English instructors to adapt to the new mode of teaching.

The pandemic has forced educational institutions to adopt online learning as a means of delivering quality education while ensuring the safety of students and faculty (UNESCO, 2020). The abrupt shift towards online learning has resulted in numerous challenges for educators, including adapting to new teaching platforms, managing online class dynamics, and finding ways to engage students effectively (Alamri *et al.,* 2021).

Instructors must develop coping mechanisms and prepare for online teaching to ensure quality education delivery. They must acquire new skills and knowledge on online teaching methods and platforms, adapt to changes in instructional strategies, and find ways to engage students actively in the online learning process (Kaur and Kumar, 2021). Instructors must also prepare for potential technical difficulties and find alternative means of delivering course content to ensure minimal disruption in learning (Alamri *et al.,* 2021).

This study aims to bridge this gap in the literature by exploring the specific challenges and coping mechanisms employed by college English instructors in Region 10 amid the post-pandemic. The study aims to provide practical recommendations for educators and policymakers on how to develop effective online teaching modules that cater to the needs of students and instructors.

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METHOD

This study utilized a mixed-method design to examine the challenges experienced, coping mechanisms, and their effects on the online teaching preparedness of English teachers amid post-pandemic in selected private schools in Region 10 for the school year 2022-2023. Creswell (2008) explained that mixed-method research is a research methodology that incorporates the philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry from both quantitative and qualitative research.

The research locale of this study centered on the English teachers situated within HEIs in Region 10. The participants were 39 English teachers who were affiliated in Higher Education Institutions in Region 10. They were selected through convenience non-probability sampling using the snowball technique. The sample consisted of English teachers who were teaching either synchronously or asynchronously. According to Creswell (2014), convenience sampling is used to select participants who are easily accessible and available for the study. Furthermore, the interview process was conducted to supplement the quantitative data and provide a more in-depth understanding of the teachers' experiences with online teaching.

The challenges encountered inventory utilized a standardized questionnaire developed by Siddiquei and Kathpal (2021). The questionnaire demonstrated good reliability with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.886 to 0.936, indicating good reliability of the data. The modified Filipino coping strategies scale was utilized, which was based on the credible theoretical framework proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The readiness inventory for online teaching was adopted from a reliable source that was previously tested and validated.

The researcher employed a quantitative method of treating the data for analyses suited according to the research problem mentioned in Chapter 1. These were the basic and inferential statistical tools appropriate to the nature of the data sets gathered. These are the following:

Mean and Standard Deviation. These basic descriptive statistical tools were used to analyze the challenges faced by English teachers, teachers' self-report assessments, respondents' coping strategies, teachers' preparedness for online teaching in online classes amid the post-pandemic period. These descriptive statistics were appropriate to answer and analyze the research problems stated in number one (1), number three (3), and number six (6) since these variables are measurable quantitatively through a Likert scaled instrument with an appropriate scoring system.

Kruskal-Wallis H Test. This non-parametric statistical tool was utilized to answer and analyze research problems stated in number two (2) and number four (4). This method was deemed more appropriate to test the significant differences in the mean rating scores of the respondents.

Dunn-Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test. The Dunn-Bonferroni method is more suitable for this posteriori analysis. It helps identify which specific groups have significant differences. When performing multiple comparisons, the risk of Type I error (false positives) increases. The Dunn-Bonferroni approach is used to correct this; it adjusts the significance level (α) to account for multiple comparisons, thereby controlling the family wise error rate.

Spearman (rho) Rank Correlation. To solve and analyze research problem number five (5) and number seven (7), this non-parametric statistical treatment for bivariate relationship was used. This tool is more suited because it does not require the distribution of data sets with few tied ranks to be normal. This is due to the non-normal distributional shape of the data sets presented in Table E. Hence, Spearman rank correlation was utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data obtained, the following results are presented:

Problem 1: What is the extent of the challenges experienced by English teachers in their online classes amid post pandemic in terms of students, institutional support, instructors, content, motivational support, and technological factors?

Table 1.7 Extent of the Challenges Experienced By English Teachers in Online Classes Amid Post Pandemic

Factors	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
Students	1.80	4.80	3.49	.663	Slight Challenge
Institution Support	1.00	5.00	3.53	.958	Slight Challenge
Instructors	1.40	5.00	3.72	.836	Slight Challenge
Content	2.80	5.00	4.19	.560	Slight Challenge
Motivational Support	1.40	5.00	3.64	.786	Slight Challenge
Technological Factors	2.40	5.00	3.98	.655	Slight Challenge

Table 1.7 presents that among the factors, the lowest mean rating score is attributed to *students*. The factor with the highest mean rating score is *content*.

Based on the interview responses, several themes emerged regarding the frequent challenges faced during online teaching.

Internet Connection - "One of the challenges I face during online teaching is the stability of internet connection." The most frequently reported challenge by respondents is an issue with internet connectivity.

Student Participation and Engagement - "Students are shy to engage with the instructor." During virtual sessions, some students are apprehensive to connect with the instructor or their peers.

Technical and Digital Literacy Issues - "Some students are having a hard time coping with digital literacy." Technical difficulties and students' inadequate digital competence are barriers to successful online instruction. These findings are consistent with the study of Coffey and Katsanis (2022) who explored the challenges in online student engagement.

Problem 2: How do the challenges experienced by English teachers during online classes in the post-pandemic differ in terms of students, institutional support, instructions, content, motivational support, and technological factors?

Table 2 Comparison of Challenges Experienced by English Teachers in Online Classes Amid Post-Pandemic

Challenges (*Factors*)	Mean	QI	Kruskal-Wallis H-value	p-value
Students	3.49[a]	SC	31.296	<.001[**]
Institution Support	3.53[a]	SC		
Instructions	3.72[a,b]	SC		
Content	4.19[b]	SC		
Motivational Support	3.64[a]	SC		
Technological Factors	3.98[b]	SC		

Note: Significant at 0.01 level QI – Qualitative Interpretation: SC – Slight Challenge Different letters in the mean score denote significance at adjusted p-value using the Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc test

Table 2 presents the Kruskal-Wallis test results indicate a significant difference in the challenges experienced by English teachers during online classes in the post-pandemic period at a 0.01 level of significance.

The analysis uncovers significant differences in challenges pertaining to 'students.' 'institutional support,' and 'motivational support' when compared to challenges related to 'content' and 'technological factors.' English teachers perceive that challenges tied to 'students ' 'institutional support ' and 'motivational support' are more prominent compared to those associated with 'content' and 'technological factors.'

When it comes to dealing with 'students' teachers encounter difficulties in engaging them online due to various factors, such as internet connectivity problems, managing their behavior remotely and monitoring their understanding and progress.

In terms of 'institutional support,' the difficulties originate from a lack of proper institutional assistance. In terms of 'motivational assistance,' teachers confront difficulties that inspires students and provides an interesting online learning environment.

English teachers, on the other hand, believe that issues relating to 'content' and 'technology elements' are less significant. The higher mean rating ratings indicate that teachers are more at ease modifying instructional materials for online learning and employing a variety of online resources. Ktoridou *et al.,* (2020) conducted research on the problems and techniques of online student engagement, emphasizing the significance of addressing student engagement in the virtual classroom.

Problem 3: What coping strategies are employed by the teachers in their online classes in terms of active, passive, and avoidant strategies?

Table 3.4 Respondents' Coping Strategies Employed in Online Classes

Coping Strategies	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
Active	2.67	5.00	4.04	.626	Often Used
Passive	2.80	5.00	3.99	.556	Often Used
Avoidant	1.60	4.90	2.57	.614	Rarely Used

Table 3.4 presents that according to the mean ratings and qualitative interpretation, teachers typically use active and passive coping techniques, while avoidant coping strategies are used less frequently. For active coping methods, the mean rating of 4.04 and the qualitative interpretation of "Often Used" indicate that teachers use active coping methods frequently in their online classes.

Teachers frequently use passive coping methods, according to the mean rating of 3.99 and the qualitative interpretation of "Often Used" for Passive Coping methods. The mean rating of 2.57 and the qualitative interpretation of "Rarely Used" for avoidant coping methods indicate that teachers use avoidant coping methods less frequently. According to the data, teachers in online classes typically use active and passive coping mechanisms to deal with the obstacles they experience. Based on the interview responses, several themes emerged regarding the various measures employed by educators to handle the difficulties encountered while teaching online.

Communication and Interaction - "I always ask my learners before, during, and after class discussions if they can hear and understand me." Effective communication and contact with students are critical in dealing with challenges during online teaching.

Asynchronous Learning - "I post lecture videos so they could review the lectures anytime." To alleviate connectivity concerns and suit varied student schedules, asynchronous learning methodologies are often used.

Preparation and Innovation - "I am for inclusivity. Since many of my students are having difficulties in their internet connectivity, I always make sure to announce the schedule of the conduct of online class for them to prepare the necessities - find a location for stable internet connection, etc." Educators must be prepared and innovative in order to handle the problems of online teaching.

Technical Proficiency - "Being proactive in learning new skills/ knowledge." Educators gain the essential skills and information by watching tutorial videos and being proactive in their learning about new technology.

Fiorilli *et al.,* (2020), for example, investigated the association between coping strategies and teacher stress, revealing the favorable influence of active coping strategies on teacher well-being. Furthermore, Johnson *et al.,* (2022) explored the function of passive

coping strategies in teacher resilience and adaptation to online teaching, emphasizing its value in stress management and enhancing teacher effectiveness.

Problem 4: How do coping strategies employed by English teachers during online classes amid post-pandemic differ significantly?

Table 4 Comparison of the Coping Strategies Employed by English Teachers in Online Classes Amid Post-Pandemic

Coping Strategies	Mean	QI	Kruskal-Wallis H-value	p-value
Active	4.04[b]	OU	63.841	<.001**
Passive	3.99[b]	OU		
Avoidant	2.57[a]	RU		

Note: **Significant at 0.01 level QI – Qualitative Interpretation: OU – Often Used; RU – Rarely Used Different letters in the mean score denote significance at adjusted p-value using the Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc test

Table 4 presents that at a 0.01 level of significance, the Kruskal-Wallis test results demonstrate a significant difference in the coping mechanisms used by English teachers in online classes during the post-pandemic period.

The high mean rating and qualitative interpretations of "Often Used" for active and passive coping techniques imply that English teachers commonly use these methods in online classes. Avoidant coping methods, which were used less frequently, may be viewed as less helpful to carrying out their responsibilities and facilitating student development. Mercer and Gregersen (2020), for example, investigated the association between coping strategies and teacher resilience in online teaching, revealing the positive influence of active coping methods. Furthermore, Dollard *et al.,* (2023) explored the function of passive coping techniques in teacher well-being and job satisfaction, emphasizing its importance in stress reduction.

Problem 5: How do challenges experienced by English teachers during online classes amid post-pandemic and coping strategies employed correlate to each other?

Table 5 Relationship Between the Challenges Experienced by English Teachers During Online Classes Amid Post-Pandemic and Coping Strategies Employed

Challenges Experienced	Coping Strategies	Correlation Coefficient (*rho*)	p-value
Students	Active	.449**	.004
	Passive	.478**	.002
	Avoidant	-.288	.076
Institution Support	Active	.320*	.047
	Passive	.181	.270
	Avoidant	-.073	.660
Instructions	Active	.665**	<.001
	Passive	.554**	<.001
	Avoidant	-.204	.213
Content	Active	.631**	<.001
	Passive	.529**	.001
	Avoidant	-.087	.597
Motivational Support	Active	.353*	.028
	Passive	.308	.056
	Avoidant	-.272	.094

Technological Factors	Active	.635**	<.001
	Passive	.669**	<.001
	Avoidant	-.265	.103

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 5 presents the correlation coefficients (rho) and p-values for the relationship between each dimension of challenges and the coping strategies employed by English teachers. The significance levels indicate whether the correlations are statistically significant at 0.01 or 0.05 level.

The findings show that there are significant correlations between key aspects of challenges and the coping strategies used by English teachers. There is a significant positive correlation between the difficulties encountered by students and the use of active coping mechanisms. There is a significant positive correlation between the difficulties encountered with institutional support and the use of active coping mechanisms. There is a strong positive correlation between difficulties with instructions and the use of active coping methods. There is a considerable positive correlation between content problems and the use of active coping techniques. There is a moderately positive correlation between the problems encountered and the use of active coping mechanisms. There is a strong positive correlation between technological factor problems and the use of active coping mechanisms.

Teachers' coping abilities and overall well-being can be improved by providing focused assistance in areas such as student engagement, institutional support, teaching tactics, subject development, and technological competency.

May *et al.,* (2023), for example, conducted research on the relationship between teacher challenges and coping strategies in online teaching, highlighting the relevance of active coping strategies in overcoming instructional challenges. Furthermore, Beausaert and Kyndt (2023) investigated the importance of institutional support in teacher coping techniques and found that supportive resources improved teachers' ability to manage problems effectively.

Problem 6: How do teachers assess their online teaching preparedness in terms of technical competence, experience with online teaching and learning, attitudes towards online learning, and time management and commitment?

Table 6.5 Online Teaching Preparedness of the Respondents

Factors (Subscale)	Minimum	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
Technical Competence	3.08	4.34	.490	Fully Prepared
Experience with Teaching and Learning	Online3.14	4.22	.550	Fully Prepared
Attitudes towards Learning	Online3.33	4.41	.530	Fully Prepared
Time Management and	2.80	4.21	.590	Fully Prepared

Table 6.5 presents the findings indicate that teachers assess themselves as fully prepared in all subscales of online teaching preparedness. The mean scores for all factors are above the midpoint, reflecting high levels of preparedness in technical competence, experience with online teaching and learning, attitudes towards online learning, and time management and commitment. Based on the interview responses, several themes emerged

regarding the participants' self-assessment of their technology proficiency into the following themes:

Confident and Well-Equipped - "Yes, I am a tech-savvy teacher who embraces new modes of learning, employing technological advancements in conducting my classes." Participants demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm in their technological abilities, demonstrating a positive attitude toward adopting technology for efficient online teaching.

"On the average or something in between." Participants rate their technological competency as "average" or "something in between," implying neither a high level of nor a total absence of technological skills.

Unsure or Not Very Tech-Savvy - "I would say no. I am not a techy person, but at least I know basic technicalities when it comes to those essential parts and ways when using technology." Participants express doubt or lack of confidence in their technological abilities.

Friberg and McKinney (2019) investigated the connection between teacher preparation and student success in online courses.

Problem 7: Is there a significant relationship between teachers' online teaching preparedness and challenges experienced in online class and their employed coping strategies?

Table 7.1 Relationship Between the Teachers' Online Teaching Preparedness and Challenges Experienced in Online Class

Online Teaching Preparedness	Challenges Experienced	Correlation Coefficient (rho)	p-value
Technical Competence	Students	.394*	.013
	Institution Support	.018	.913
	Instructions	.441**	.005
	Content	.470**	.003
	Motivational Support	.052	.751
	Technological Factors	.535**	<.001
Experience with Teaching and Learning	Online Students	.371*	.020
	Institution Support	.107	.518
	Instructions	.396*	.012
	Content	.313	.052
	Motivational Support	.020	.906
	Technological Factors	.497**	.001
Attitudes towards Learning	Online Students	.137	.405
	Institution Support	.145	.380
	Instructions	.502**	.001
	Content	.404*	.011
	Motivational Support	.127	.442
	Technological Factors	.473**	.002
Time Management And Commitment	And Students	.359*	.025
	Institution Support	-.012	.944
	Instructions	.467**	.003
	Content	.501**	.001
	Motivational Support	-.042	.801
	Technological Factors	.548**	<.001

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 7.1 presents that there is a significant relationship between teachers' online teaching readiness and the difficulties they face in online classrooms. The correlation coefficients and p-values show that there are strong relationships between particular characteristics of online teaching readiness and specific problems.

Technical Competence - Teachers' technical proficiency is positively correlated to student, teaching, topic, and technological problems.

Attitudes towards Online Learning - Teachers' positive attitudes regarding online learning have significant correlations with instructional, content, and technological challenges.

Time Management and Commitment - Teachers' time management and commitment to online teaching have significant correlations with student, instruction, topic, and technological obstacles.

Overall, these findings indicate that teachers with higher levels of technical competence, experience in online teaching and learning, positive attitudes toward online learning, and good time management and commitment to online teaching are better prepared to face the challenges of online classes.

Table 7.2 Relationship Between the Teachers' Online Teaching Preparedness and Coping Strategies Employed

Online Teaching Preparedness	Coping Strategies	Correlation Coefficient (rho)	p-value
Technical Competence	Active	.505**	.001
	Passive	682**	<.001
	Avoidant	-.103	.532
Experience with Online Teaching and Learning	Active	.369*	.021
	Passive	.495**	.001
	Avoidant	-.245	.133
Attitudes towards Online Teaching	Active	.452*	.004
	Passive	.534**	<.001
	Avoidant	-.281	.083
Time Management and Commitment	Active	.537*	<.001
	Passive	.458**	.003
	Avoidant	-.017	.917

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 7.2 presents that there is a significant relationship between instructors' online teaching readiness and the coping methods they use in the face of problems. The correlation coefficients and p-values show that there are significant correlations between key characteristics of online teaching preparedness and active and passive coping methods.

Technical Competence - Teachers' technical skill correlates significantly with both active and passive coping techniques.

Experience with Online Teaching and Learning - Teachers' online teaching and learning experiences show a significant positive correlations with passive coping techniques.

Attitudes towards Online Learning - Favorable attitudes of teachers toward online learning have significant positive correlations with both active and passive coping methods.

Time Management and Commitment - Teachers' time management and dedication to online education show significant positive correlations with both active and passive coping techniques.

Overall, these findings suggest that teachers with technical competence, experience in online teaching and learning, positive attitudes toward online learning, good time management, and commitment to online teaching are more likely to use both active and passive coping strategies in response to challenges. The substantial correlations between online teaching readiness and coping methods among teachers underline the necessity of comprehensive support and professional development programs for teachers.

Problem 8: What module can be designed to enhance teachers' ability to deliver engaging online classes and boost students' participation?

TRAINING MODULE FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study indicates that English teachers face a plethora of challenges and obstacles in their online instructions, especially when it comes to student engagement and interaction, managing students' behavior, fostering student motivation, and providing necessary support. This implies that there is a need for continuous support and professional development.

The study reveals that teachers use both active and coping mechanisms. The use of active coping mechanism demonstrates their ability to proactively seek solutions and adapt their teaching strategies. Moreover, the use of passive coping mechanism, such as the ability to accept the limitations of the online modality, practicing self-care, and seeking emotional support, indicate that teachers recognize their limitations and their need for self-care. The online modality is much more challenging than face-to-face teaching due to its unique sets of difficulties – all the more reasons for teachers to practice self-care and meet their emotional needs.

Moreover, the research findings suggest a correlation between the challenges experienced by students and the use of active coping

mechanisms by teachers. Teachers tend to employ active coping strategies to adeptly address and overcome these difficulties. Furthermore, it shows the teachers willingness to explore innovative approaches and implement effective problem-solving strategies. This underscores the crucial role of educators in fostering a supportive and conducive virtual learning environment. This also signify that human element is an indispensable and never be replaced by any technology-driven method.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are suggested for the different stakeholders involved in online education:

1. *Educational instructions* may consider enhancing their support systems to assist teachers in effectively addressing the challenges faced in online classes.
2. *Teachers* may be given additional training and support in online pedagogy and student engagement initiatives.
3. *Teacher educators* may incorporate online teaching and learning components into both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs.
4. *Policymakers* may consider establishing standards and policies that promote comprehensive preparedness for online teaching.
5. *Students* may benefit from orientation programs and tools designed to assist them in adjusting to online learning development.
6. *Future researchers* may conduct studies to explore the students' perspective on how they cope with and adapt the post-pandemic educational landscape.

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