

Gender Differences on Stress and Coping Strategies Among Faculty of a University

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Anxiety, Coping Strategies, Depression, Gender Difference, Stress,

Received : 18, April

Revised : 20, May

Accepted: 22, June

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ABSTRACT

The results indicate that there is no notable variance in the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among faculty members when categorized by age, gender, and marital status. Additionally, the study reveals a positive correlation between depression, anxiety, and stress with emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping strategies. In other words, as the severity of depression, anxiety, and stress increases among teachers, so does their reliance on emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping mechanisms. However, the study found that the distinction between genders in this regard was not significant.. The research suggests, among other things, that faculty members should undergo retesting to assess the reliability of the results. Despite the minimal gender differences, some individuals are still facing significant levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. This reaffirmation of the initial findings should be submitted to the Human Resource Management Office to support the development of a wellness program.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has resulted in a multitude of stressors, causing a surge in psychological stress levels. Teachers, students, and parents across the globe are forced to navigate through the extraordinary events triggered by Covid-19, including school closures and the enforcement of different levels of shelter-in-place directives, from social distancing to stringent quarantines, to address the challenges posed by the global health crisis.. Numerous educators have had to transition to teaching in unfamiliar and challenging situations with minimal notice and inadequate training. Despite this, there is an assumption that teachers will persevere and strive to adjust, adapt, and maintain effective teaching and learning through various online tools. The feasibility of educators meeting these demands has not been a primary consideration in the majority of policy decisions, and the resulting stress is often an afterthought, if acknowledged at all. Alongside a lengthy list of practical pedagogical stressors, educators are also dealing with the pressures of the pandemic itself, including health worries for themselves and others, changes due to remote work, uncertainties about current and future employment, new family and household duties, and the isolation of being stuck at home.

Stress can manifest as either a beneficial or detrimental state of mental and physical arousal that individuals may face in situations they perceive as threatening or overwhelming to their psychological and social well-being. Stress affects people from all walks of life, irrespective of their age, educational background, geographical location, or social status, making it a universal phenomenon. University students, in particular, grapple with stress as they strive to manage their academic, social, and personal experiences (Amponsah & Owolabi, 2011). Central Philippines State University as a higher education institution continues with its mandate to provide quality education to students despite difficult situations such as pandemic. Faculty personnel are facing many stressors along the way to keep with this mandate. Many are complaining in silence the stress they are experiencing and silently coping with it in their own ways. The researchers are interested in investigating the gender disparities in perceived depression, anxiety, and stress levels among personnel, as well as their coping mechanisms during challenging periods. Findings from this study can help provide appropriate psychological supports from the university towards its male and female faculty personnel and will become basis in the creation of appropriate wellness program.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The interconnection between health and development highlights the importance of addressing deficiencies in both areas to prevent further complications. Agenda 21 (2002) stresses the urgency of implementing immediate actions to meet the basic health requirements of the population, as they play a crucial role in advancing sustainable development and primary healthcare goals. Anchored on the cognitive appraisal or psychological evaluation (referred to as 'appraisal'), individuals interpret events that trigger a particular response in their environment. Lazarus' transactional model of stress employs psychological evaluation to reveal responses to challenging situations

(Lazarus, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In this framework, a psychological assessment is defined as how an individual responds to and interprets the sources of stress in daily life. Various psychological disorders have been identified as having abnormal patterns of psychological assessment in those affected by the condition. The theory explores two distinct forms of psychological evaluation referred to as "primary appraisal" and "secondary appraisal" that are essential for an individual to feel stressed in response to an event (Lazarus, 1984). In primary appraisal, a situation is interpreted as posing a threat to the individual or as being detrimental to their goals. Throughout the secondary appraisal phase, individuals may come to the conclusion that they do not possess a suitable strategy to address a difficult situation. This realization can result in stress when the difficult situation arises (Lazarus, 1984).

The theoretical frameworks discussed thus far are reinforced by cognitive appraisal which is the emotional elucidation made by a person to an event that evokes a specific functional reaction in the surrounding. Consequently, the stress experienced by the faculty of Central Philippines State University and the coping strategies they adopt to offset the stress are underpinned by cognitive appraisal which in this case is the stressful situation encountered by faculty, and emotional elucidation as the coping strategies they have adopted to manage stress

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the gender differences on stress and coping strategies among faculty of Central Philippines State University. The main objective of this research is to identify the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of age, gender, and marital status, assess the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress experienced by the faculty members and categorize them based on their profiles, and analyze the coping mechanisms employed by the faculty to manage the aforementioned stressors.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, the respondents of study, sampling techniques, data collection instruments and procedure and data analysis.

Research Design

This research study gauged on the gender differences on stress and coping strategies of the faculty both female and male in Central Philippines State University (CPSU). This is a quantitative study using a phenomenological approach as a methodology to answer the research question. Quantitative research study according to Mills and Birks (2014) "aimed to examine phenomena that impact on the lived reality of individuals or groups in a particular cultural or social context" (p.9). The researchers in this study will be using this quantitative approach in order to link with the participants and to better understand the gender differences on the challenges that the female and male faculty face amidst challenges.

The Respondents of the Study

The target respondents of the study were the regular faculty members of the Central Philippines State University across the different campuses for the academic year 2022-2023. Overall, 191 out of 224 (85%) respondents agreed to join and completed the survey.

Data Collection Instruments

An online survey instrument was designed to measure gender differences on stress and coping strategies among faculty of Central Philippines State University during the pandemic. The instrument was divided into parts. Part I and II of the online survey was allotted to personal information and consent form, respectively. Part III gathered the respondents' demographic information such as age, gender, and civil status. Lastly, Part IV was a survey the respondents' gender differences on stress and coping strategies using DASS-21 and Brief-COPE.

The study utilized the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), developed by Lovibond and Lovibond in 1996 as a condensed version of the DASS-42. DASS-21 consists of three self-report scales aimed at assessing levels of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress, each containing 7 items organized into subscales with related content.

The DASS-21 is a questionnaire consisting of 21 items that individuals can complete to assess their levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. It utilizes a four-point Likert Scale, with response options ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (almost always). To calculate the scores for each subscale, the totals are multiplied by two. The severity ratings for the total scores are based on the guidelines proposed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1996) and are specifically tailored for the Australian population, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. DASS-21 Subscale Severity Ratings (Lovibond and Lovibond, 1996)

Severity	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Normal	0 – 9	0 – 7	0 – 14
Mild	10 – 13	8 – 9	15 – 18
Moderate	14 – 20	10 – 14	19 – 25
Severe	21 – 27	15 – 19	26 – 33
Extremely Severe	28+	20+	34+

Additionally, reliability analysis of DASS-21 among Filipino school personnel reported adequate Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.89, 0.81, and 0.93 for the subscales of depression, anxiety, and stress respectively (Clavecillas & Perez, 2020).

Meanwhile, the Brief-COPE by Carver (1997) was adopted to determine the coping strategies employed by the respondents. It is a 28-item self-report questionnaire that measures effective and ineffective ways to cope with a stressful life event. The inventory uses a four-point Likert Scale from 1 (I haven't been doing this at all) to 4 (I've been doing this a lot). The three subscales, namely problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidant coping, can be utilized to identify primary coping styles. Additionally, various facets of coping have been documented, including self-distraction, denial, substance use, behavioral disengagement, emotional support, venting, humor, acceptance, self-blame, religion, active coping, use of instrumental support, positive reframing, and planning (Carver, 1997). Reliability analysis of Brief-COPE inventory among employed teachers of a state university revealed a sufficient alpha value of 0.92 (Ngohayon & Culimay, 2023)

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was carried out using Google Form containing the survey questionnaire for those faculty who prefer to answer online while those who prefer the printed material were given the printed questionnaire. Faculty responses to the survey online has been automatically forwarded to a single drive managed by the corresponding author. On the other hand, those printed survey questionnaires from other faculty who preferred the manual process were recorded and tallied in a tally sheet. Once target number of responses was reached, the researcher forwarded the data to the statistician for analysis. The analyzed data, then, was sent to co-researchers for collaborative interpretation and discussion.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to determine faculty demographic profile and their depression, stress, and anxiety severity ratings. Meanwhile, mean and standard deviation was used to determine their coping strategies. Non-parametric tests such as Mann-Whitney test and Kruskal-Wallis test at 5% level of significance were used to determine whether there is a significant difference on faculty's stress and coping strategies when they are grouped according to age, gender and civil status. Lastly, spearman rank correlation was used to determine the relationship between stress and coping strategy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data. Results are presented in tables followed by descriptive analyses and statistical interpretation. Implications of the findings are also given with the support from relevant studies and future research.

Demographic Profile

The demographic data used in this research were the age, sex and civil status of respondents, which faculty were asked to supply. Using descriptive statistics, the number of males who participated in the study is 100 (52.4%), female 89 (46.6%) and that of non-binary/ gay is 2 (1.0%). The most age of faculty presented for this study is within the bracket of 31-40 years old which is 79 (41.4%) and 41 - 50 years old with 48 (25.1%) of the respondents. As to the civil status, majority of the faculty are married with 127 or 66.5%, 62 or 32.5% are single and 2 or 1% of the faculty respondents are widowed/separated.

Severity of Depression, Anxiety and Stress Encountered by the Faculty

Second research question sought to find out the severity of depression, anxiety and stress encountered by the faculty of the university. The outcome of the responses given by the respondents, shown in the tables that follows.

Table 2. Depression Severity Rating Distribution

	Frequency	Percent
Normal	104	54.5
Mild	34	17.8
Moderate	35	18.3
<i>Severe</i>	11	5.8
<i>Extremely Severe</i>	7	3.7
Total	191	100.0

As shown in the result, a number of faculty has experienced depression caused by the difficult situations they have encountered. Seven (7) out of the one hundred ninety-one (191) faculty has experienced extremely severe depression while eleven (11) turned out to be severe.

This implies that faculty, though, they wake up do their duty every day, are experiencing different levels of depressive symptoms. They tend to have unhappy experiences in daily functioning, somehow feel hopeless in most situations and depreciate life. Most of the time, they tend hard to unwind, sometimes over-react or under-react in some situations. They have lack of interest or involvement in some activities they usually enjoy thus unable to become enthusiastic about anything They felt so downhearted and blue and that don't have worth much as a person. Since this data was taken after post pandemic, it could be traced up to the pandemic time why the faculty were experiencing depression.

Table 3. Anxiety Severity Rating Distribution

	Frequency	Percent
Normal	60	31.4
Mild	21	11.0
Moderate	51	26.7
<i>Severe</i>	32	16.8
<i>Extremely Severe</i>	27	14.1
Total	191	100.0

On the other hand, twenty seven (27) of the faculty has experienced extremely severe anxiety and thirty two (32) experienced severe anxiety. This implies that faculty are feel anxious most of the time, being faced with situations that they are getting so worried about situations they might cause them to panic. Sometimes, they felt that they are easily to get agitated and difficult to relax, as well as experiencing those experiences by the faculty who are extremely depressed. These feelings are expressions of autonomic arousal, skeletal muscle effects- caused them to sweat, feel restless and tense and has rapid heartbeat and a situational anxiety. Also stress severity rating showed that four (4) out of 191 respondents are extremely severe as to stress while six (6) are severely stressed.

Table 4. Stress Severity Rating Distribution

	Frequency	Percent
Normal	135	70.7
Mild	29	15.2
Moderate	17	8.9
Severe	6	3.1
Extremely Severe	4	2.1
Total	191	100.0

Noticed that a considerable number of respondents are depressed and anxious but only a few are stressed. This implies that majority of the respondents can tolerate stress but if face with difficult stressful situations can be sensitive which leads from chronic to more severe form of stress. Stressed person are intolerant of anything that kept them from getting on from what they are doing. They cannot able to relax, and feel nervous most of the time leading to feel upset, irritable, agitated and impatient.

Severity of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress by Profile

The severity of depression, anxiety and stress as to profile is presented in Tables 4,5,& 6. Mann-Whitney test revealed no significant difference on depression of faculty when classified by gender ($U = 3818.000, p = .054$) and civil status ($U = 4010.500, p = .881$). Meanwhile, Kruskal-Wallis test showed no difference on depression by age groups ($\chi^2 = 4.919, p = .178$).

Table 5. Depression by Profile

Group	Categories	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value
Gender			3818.000	.054
	Masculine	103.32		
	Feminine and others	87.96		
Civil Status			4010.500	.881
	Single/Widowed/Separated	96.84		
	Married	95.58		
Age			4.919	.178
	Ages 30 and below	111.38		
	Ages 31 to 40	87.44		
	Ages 41 to 50	97.24		
	Ages 50 and above	97.23		

This implies that regardless of gender, civil status and age of the faculty, it does not have difference if they feel depressed or not. Depression can be felt either by male, female or other non-binary persons in whatever situation and status in life. According to the 2017 report by the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is a significant global health concern, representing 10% of the total burden of non-fatal diseases worldwide. Interestingly, this study contradicts the notion that depression predominantly affects girls and women, highlighting the need for further investigation. The gender gap in depression is commonly thought to result in twice as many women suffering from major depression compared to men, highlighting a significant health inequality. However, the findings of this research indicated otherwise. On the other hand, using Mann-Whitney test results revealed no significant difference on anxiety of faculty when classified by gender ($U = 4442.500$, $p = .777$) and civil status ($U = 3963.500$, $p = .780$). Meanwhile, Kruskal-Wallis test showed no difference on anxiety by age group ($\chi^2 = 5.889$, $p = .117$).

Table 6. Anxiety by profile

Group	Categories	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value
Gender	Masculine	97.08	4442.500	.777
	Feminine and others	94.82		
Civil Status	Single/Widowed/Separated	94.43	3963.500	.780
	Married	96.79		
Age			5.889	.117
	Ages 30 and below	114.12		
	Ages 31 to 40	89.37		
	Ages 41 to 50	97.14		
	Ages 50 and above	87.56		

This implies that the faculty regardless of their gender, civil status and age can manage their anxiety in any given time and situation. This is in contradiction of the common notion that females usually gets anxious more than males. In the study of McLean, et.al. (2017), women have consistently higher prevalence rates of anxiety disorders, but less is known about how gender affects age of onset, chronicity, comorbidity, and burden of illness. In their study, women had higher rates of lifetime diagnosis for each of the anxiety disorders examined, except for social anxiety disorder which showed no gender difference in prevalence. Thus, contradicting the result of this study.

In case of stress, Mann-Whitney test revealed no significant difference on stress of faculty when classified by gender ($U = 4109.500, p = .246$) and civil status ($U = 3810.500, p = .480$). Meanwhile, Kruskal-Wallis test showed no difference on stress by age group ($\chi^2 = 2.657, p = .448$).

Table 7. Stress By Profile

Group	Categories	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value
Gender	Masculine	100.41	4109.500	.246
	Feminine and others	91.16		
Civil Status	Single/Widowed/Separated	92.04	3810.500	.480
	Married	98.00		
Age			2.657	.448
	Ages 30 and below	107.30		
	Ages 31 to 40	89.73		
	Ages 41 to 50	96.32		
	Ages 50 and above	97.92		

This implies, that the experiences of stress and its severity of it can be just the same with whatever gender, civil status and age of persons. does not choose what gender, status or age to dwell into the well-being of human beings.

The result of this study is not in conformity with the researches that have been conducted to interrogate issues related to differences between males and females regarding the perception of stress. Adasi, G. et.al. (2019) for instance mentioned the following studies in their review of related literature to emphasize the gender differences in stress experienced by individuals. One, a study was conducted to “examine the relationships between stress level and academic achievement among students in urban and rural secondary schools in one of the districts in Malaysia which findings indicated that there are significant differences in the level of stress for gender”. Similarly, in an investigation conducted to “assess the levels of stress encountered by university students at Tafila Technical University, results revealed that female students encountered more stress than male students, however, male students were influenced more by monetary issues than females”. Therefore, the stress encountered by the faculty of the university contradicts other studies on gender differences with relation to stress.

Coping Strategies Adapted by the Faculty

Table 7 displays the coping mechanisms utilized by the university faculty to address their depression, anxiety, and stress. These include problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping strategies.

Table 8. Coping Stategies Adapted by the Faculty

	Mean	Std Dev
Problem-focused	22.68 ^a	5.450
• Active Coping	5.99	1.496
• Use of Instrumental Support	5.16	1.827
• Positive Reframing	5.87	1.681
• Planning	5.65	1.608
Emotion-focused	29.85 ^b	6.311
• Use of Emotional Support	5.08	1.772
• Venting	4.46	1.387
• Humor	4.60	1.593
• Acceptance	6.03	1.637
• Religion	6.08	1.652
• Self-Blame	3.60	1.545
Avoidant	15.55 ^a	3.930
• Self-Distraction	5.57	1.577
• Denial	3.79	1.417
• Substance Use	2.76	1.245
• Behavioral Disengagement	3.43	1.438

Mean score ranges from 2 – 8

^a Mean score ranges from 4 – 32

^b Mean score ranges from 4 – 48

Active coping (M = 5.99, SD = 1.496), positive reframing (M = 5.87, SD = 1.681) and planning (M = 5.65, SD = 1.608) are the most dominant form of active-focused coping among faculty.

Meanwhile, acceptance (M = 6.03, SD = .637) and religion (M = 6.08, SD = 1.652) are the most used form of emotion-focused coping. On the other hand, venting (M = 4.46, SD = 1.387) and self-blame (M = 3.60, SD = 1.545) are least used form of emotion focused coping. In terms of avoidant coping, self-distraction (M = 5.57, SD = 1.577) is most used while substance abuse (M = 2.76, SD = 1.245) is least used type of coping.

This implies that the faculty in facing stressful situations tend to focus on the problem by actively coping, positively reframing and planning for possible ways how to cope with the occurrence of depression, anxiety and stress. Further, as to emotion-focused coping, faculty hold on to their religion and accept the present situation and problem as strategy to cope. Moreover, in terms of avoidant coping, the faculty tends to distract themselves away from the problem and unfavorable situations so as not to focus with the problem and dwell in it. This result is in concordance with the study of Rajesh (2022) which states that positive reframing, active coping, and preparation were the most commonly used coping strategies by the teachers. Teachers are a vital resource who have received less attention than they deserve for their psychological well-being.

Coping Strategies Adapted by the Faculty by Profile

Tables 8, 9 and 10 presents the coping strategies employed by the faculty by gender, civil status and age. Results revealed that there is no significant difference in problem-focused coping ($U = 3895.000, p = .086$) and avoidant coping ($U = 4067.500, p = .205$) between masculine and feminine/gay/non-binary faculty. On the other hand, feminine/gay/non-binary faculty have significantly higher emotion-focused coping than their masculine counterparts ($U = 3707.500, p = .027$).

Table 9. Coping by Gender

Variable	Group	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value
Problem-focused Coping	Masculine	89.45	3895.000	.086
	Feminine and others	103.20		
Emotion-focused Coping	Masculine	87.58	3707.500	.027
	Feminine and others	105.26		
Avoidant Coping	Masculine	100.83	4067.500	.205

Feminine and 90.70
others

This implies that the faculty, either they focus or avoid the problem does not differ as to their gender but when it involves emotion - feminine/gay/non-binary there is much difference. This is evident on the high significance in difference with their emotion-focused coping and gender. This implies further that masculine faculty does not prefer emotion-focused coping when faced to stressful situations and rather face of avoid the problem.

The findings of Cholankeril (2023) support the notion that women are inclined to utilize emotion-focused coping mechanisms, while men are more likely to employ problem-focused strategies when dealing with depression, anxiety, and stress. On the other hand, there is no significant difference in problem-focused coping ($U = 3838.500, p = .531$), emotion-focused coping ($U = 3950.500, p = .753$), and avoidant coping ($U = 3918.000, p = .685$) between single/widowed/separated and married faculty which implies that the ability to cope with depression, anxiety and stress is not dependent on whether your are married or not. A contradicting result from the study of Amazue (2016) states that marital status are predictors to a balance life.

Table 10. Coping by Civil Status

Variable	Group	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value
Problem-focused Coping	Single/Widowed/Separated	99.52	3838.500	.531
	Married	94.22		
Emotion-focused Coping	Single/Widowed/Separated	97.77	3950.500	.753
	Married	95.11		
Avoidant Coping	Single/Widowed/Separated	98.28	3918.000	.685
	Married	94.85		

While in terms of coping by age, results revealed that there is no significant difference in problem-focused coping ($\chi^2 = 3.896, p = .273$), emotion-focused coping ($\chi^2 = 6.020, p = .111$), and avoidant coping ($\chi^2 = 3.983, p = .263$) of faculty when classified by age.

Table 11. Coping by Age

Variable	Group	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value
Problem-focused Coping			3.896	.273
	Ages 30 and below	106.84		
	Ages 31 to 40	99.22		
	Ages 41 to 50	84.93		
	Ages 50 and above	90.83		

Table 11. Coping by Age (continued)

Variable	Group	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value
Emotion-focused Coping			6.020	.111
	Ages 30 and below	113.17		
	Ages 31 to 40	86.73		
	Ages 41 to 50	95.70		
	Ages 50 and above	99.62		
Avoidant Coping			3.983	.263
	Ages 30 and below	111.11		
	Ages 31 to 40	89.46		
	Ages 41 to 50	95.18		
	Ages 50 and above	95.31		

This implies that the faculty, regardless of age does not differ in their coping strategies such as problem-focuses, emotion-focused and avoidant coping. This result does not conform with the study of Chen, et.al. (2018) on Age Differences in Stress and Coping which states that older adults are less likely unlike younger ones to use problem-focused coping. Thus, the study recommended that the use of problem-focused coping be promoted to adults.

Lastly, Sperman rank correlation revealed that depression, anxiety, and stress is positively correlated to emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping. The greater the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress experienced by teachers, the more they tend to rely on emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping strategies.

Table 12. Relationship between DASS and Coping

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Depression	-	.709**	.862**	.011	.269**	.595**
2. Anxiety		-	.758**	.113	.326**	.581**
3. Stress			-	.117	.343**	.622**
4. Problem-focused				-	.715**	.313**
5. Emotion-focused					-	.522**
6. Avoidant						-

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the researchers would like to remark that the faculty of the university are experiencing different levels of depression, anxiety and stress. Although there has been no significant gender differences in their level of severity and coping strategies, maybe because of the limitation of the test which has the validity of two weeks after the sample was taken. Additionally, in order to come up the valid and absolute result of the constructs being measure such as Depression, Anxiety, and Stress, it should be cross-validated with another test which measures same construct. On the other hand, the results shows that there exists a considerable situation that could be alarming in the future if not given proper attention since Depression, Anxiety, and Stress is a medical condition if proven severe. The wellness or well-being of the faculty if very necessary to be given attention thus, this study has given the administration a database of the psychological well-being of the faculty in different stressful situations.

Rooting from the conclusion, the researcher would like to recommend for the test-retest for a span of one month to validate the consistency of the result and; we should employ additional testing materials of the same kind to measure internal validity of the result of the well-being of the faculty using some more test of the same kind so that the this result could be the baseline data for the conduct of another study before an effort of the creation of a wellness program that would address the needs of the faculty in the university.

FURTHER STUDY

The aim of this research was to investigate the variations in stress levels and coping mechanisms among the faculty members of Central Philippines State University based on gender. A comprehensive survey questionnaire was administered to a total of 191 faculty members from both the main and extension campuses.

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