

TEACHING NON-SPECIALIZED SUBJECTS: CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PILA, LAGUNA

(Research Article)

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Abstract

This study investigated the challenges encountered by private high school teachers in Pila, Laguna who were assigned to teach subjects beyond their field of specialization, as well as the coping strategies they used to manage these demands. Utilizing a descriptive-comparative research design, data were gathered from teachers across several private schools through a validated questionnaire. The respondents were 55 private high school teachers. Findings showed that teachers generally experienced a moderate level of difficulty when handling subjects outside their specialization. Challenges were most evident in aspects such as teaching competence, content mastery, and pedagogical knowledge. Among the specific difficulties reported, the preparation of lesson plans and instructional materials for unfamiliar subjects emerged as the most demanding task. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated strong adaptability. They frequently employed a range of coping strategies, including problem-focused approaches, avoidance mechanisms, supportive methods, and adaptive techniques, allowing them to navigate the requirements of non-specialized teaching assignments effectively. Further analysis revealed that challenges related to content mastery, teaching competence, and pedagogical knowledge had a significant influence on the types of coping strategies teachers adopted. This relationship underscores the importance of equipping teachers with adequate support when they are required to teach beyond their specialization.

Keywords: Teaching competence; challenges; coping strategies; non-specialized subjects; private high school teachers

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1. Introduction

Teaching effectiveness relies heavily on the alignment between a teacher's academic preparation and assigned subject area. Teachers typically undergo four years of academic and practical training to develop both content knowledge and pedagogical skills in their field of specialization. This preparation is especially crucial at the secondary level, where instruction demands deeper subject expertise in areas such as Mathematics, Science, English, and Social Studies. As emphasized by Jeschke et al. (2021), effective teaching requires not only subject-specific knowledge but also pedagogical content knowledge.

However, recent reports highlight a significant mismatch between teacher specialization and teaching assignments. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2) reported that 62% of high school teachers are assigned to subjects outside their field of specialization (EDCOM 2 Communications, 2024). This misalignment has been linked to lower teaching effectiveness, as evidenced by Malahay (2021), who found that non-specialist teachers demonstrated weaker performance due to insufficient content knowledge. Similarly, global findings, such as those of the World Bank Group (2016), indicate that limited teacher content knowledge negatively affects student outcomes. In contrast, Moono et al. (2019) found that 79.3% of teachers teaching within their specialization significantly improved students' academic performance.

In private high schools in Pila, Laguna, this issue is likewise evident. Due to staffing constraints, teachers are frequently assigned to teach subjects beyond their expertise, creating challenges in content delivery, classroom engagement, and instructional quality. This situation underscores the importance of aligning teacher qualifications with teaching assignments to ensure optimal learning outcomes.

This study aims to examine the challenges encountered by teachers handling non-specialized subjects in private high schools in Pila, Laguna, and to identify the coping strategies they employ. By exploring these experiences, the research seeks to contribute to the development of policies and programs that support teacher effectiveness and improve student performance.

2. Review of Related Literature

Teachers assigned to teach subjects outside their specialization face numerous challenges that affect both instructional quality and personal well-being. Studies have shown that these teachers struggle with insufficient content knowledge, difficulty in applying concepts, and limitations in delivering lessons effectively (Tope, 2023). They also encounter challenges in responding to students' questions, maintaining classroom authority, and selecting appropriate teaching strategies (Villano-Ac, 2024). These difficulties often lead to increased stress, reduced confidence, and a sense of being undervalued, ultimately affecting their motivation and

classroom performance (Perez, 2024). Such findings highlight that the mismatch between teacher expertise and teaching assignment can result in both academic and emotional strain.

Despite these challenges, teachers adopt various strategies to cope with the demands of teaching non-specialized subjects. Research indicates that teachers rely on effective time management, continuous learning, peer mentoring, and diverse instructional approaches to address gaps in content knowledge (Tope, 2023; Villano-Ac, 2024). They also demonstrate adaptability, resilience, and resourcefulness by seeking expert guidance and utilizing available resources, sometimes even providing their own materials (Perez, 2024). These coping mechanisms not only help them manage their responsibilities but also contribute to their professional growth and development.

However, most existing studies focus on public school settings, leaving a gap in understanding the experiences of private high school teachers, particularly in provincial areas. Private schools often face unique challenges such as limited resources, fewer teaching personnel, and increased likelihood of assigning teachers outside their specialization. In areas like Pila, Laguna, this issue remains underexplored despite its impact on both teaching effectiveness and teacher well-being. Therefore, further research is necessary to examine the specific challenges and coping strategies of private school teachers in such contexts, providing a more localized and comprehensive understanding of the issue.

This study was anchored on the model of critical factors in good teaching, which highlights the importance of personality-based dispositions, content mastery, teaching competence, and pedagogical knowledge. Previous studies emphasized that effective teaching is not based on a single attribute but rather on the integration of personal traits, professional skills, and subject expertise. Bustos-Orosa (2008) identified personality and teaching competence as key elements, while Abulon (2014) expanded this framework by including additional dimensions such as content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and extension of the self. These concepts guided the study in examining how the absence or limitation of these factors may affect the effectiveness of teachers assigned to non-specialized subjects.

In addition, the study was grounded in the Coping Model Theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explains how individuals respond to stress. The theory describes stress as a process shaped by an individual's perception and evaluation of a situation. It involves primary appraisal, where a person determines whether a situation is a threat or challenge, and secondary appraisal, where they assess their ability to cope. Based on this evaluation, individuals employ coping strategies that are either problem-focused, addressing the source of stress, or emotion-focused, managing emotional responses. This framework was applied to understand how teachers cope with the challenges of teaching subjects outside their specialization and how these coping mechanisms influence their performance and well-being. To address the research gap, the present study employed a quantitative approach to investigate the challenges and coping strategies of

private high school teachers in Laguna who were assigned to teach non-specialized subjects. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the respondents in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, field of specialization?
3. What is the perceived extent of challenges faced by teachers in teaching non-specialized subjects in terms of content mastery and expertise; teaching competence; and pedagogical knowledge?
4. What is the status of coping strategies employed by the respondents in teaching non-specialized subjects in terms of problem-focused coping; avoidance coping; supportive coping; and adaptive coping?
5. What are the significant effects of challenges faced by teachers on the coping strategies they employed in teaching non-specialized subjects?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-comparative research design to systematically examine the challenges and coping strategies of private high school teachers assigned to teach non-specialized subjects. The descriptive approach allowed for the identification and measurement of existing conditions, including the extent of challenges and strategies used, while the comparative component enabled the analysis of differences among respondent groups. This design was intended to explore relationships among variables in natural settings without manipulation. Overall, the chosen design was appropriate for capturing and comparing the real experiences of teachers in Pila, Laguna, providing a comprehensive understanding of an issue that remains underexplored in provincial private school contexts.

2.2. Participants

Using G*Power software, a sample size of 55 private high school teachers in Pila, Laguna was determined through power analysis under a one-way ANOVA design. The computation used an effect size of 0.40, a significance level of 0.05, and a statistical power of 0.60, resulting in an actual power of 0.6054. Although slightly below the ideal threshold, this level was

considered adequate for detecting meaningful differences across five schools. The sample size ensured sufficient sensitivity while maintaining the reliability of the study's findings.

2.3. Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data-gathering instrument, consisting of three parts: respondents' demographic profile, challenges in teaching non-specialized subjects, and coping strategies. The challenge items were adapted from Abulon (2014), while coping strategies were based on Folkman and Lazarus (1985), all measured using a four-point Likert scale. The instrument underwent expert validation, achieving a perfect Content Validity Ratio (CVR = 1), and was pilot-tested for reliability. Results showed high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 across all variables, confirming that the questionnaire was both valid and reliable for the study.

2.4. Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Version 25 was used to analyze the quantitative data, applying appropriate statistical tools to address the research objectives. Frequency count and percentage described the respondents' profile, while weighted mean and standard deviation measured the extent of challenges and coping strategies. Linear regression analysis was further employed to determine the significant effect of teachers' challenges on their coping strategies, enabling a comprehensive examination of the relationships among the variables.

3. Results

3.1. Profile of the respondents

Table 1. Profile of the respondents in terms of Age

Age	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Below 25	26	47.3
26-30	15	27.3
31-40	7	12.7
41-50	6	10.9
51-60	1	1.8
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Table 1 presented the profile of the respondents in terms of age. The majority of respondents were below 25 years old, comprising 26 individuals or 47.3% of the sample. This was followed by those aged 26–30, with 15 respondents or 27.3%, 31–40 with 7 respondents or 12.7%, 41–50 with 6 respondents or 10.9%, and 51–60 with only 1 respondent or 1.8%. The data indicated

that most respondents were relatively young, likely representing fresh graduates who had entered the teaching profession. This demographic trend suggested that a significant portion of the teaching workforce in the sampled schools consisted of early-career teachers who may have faced unique challenges, especially when they were assigned to subjects or grade levels that did not match their specialization. Supporting this observation, Small and Buckman (2021) noted that younger teachers in private schools often reported lower levels of job satisfaction compared to their more experienced counterparts, highlighting potential implications for teacher retention and professional development.

Table 2. Profile of the respondents in terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Female	44	80.0
Male	11	20.0
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Table 2 presented the profile of the respondents in terms of sex. The majority of respondents were female, comprising 44 individuals or 80% of the sample, while males accounted for 11 respondents or 20%. This distribution reflected the global trend of female predominance in the teaching profession. According to UNESCO (2023), women were over-represented in the teaching workforce, with their proportion increasing across primary, lower, and upper secondary education levels since 2015. In pre-primary education, women constituted 94% of teachers, while at higher levels, their representation gradually decreased, 68% in primary, 58% in lower secondary, 52% in upper secondary, and 43% in tertiary education. Consistent with these trends, Latif (2024) found that female teachers reported higher levels of job satisfaction compared to their male counterparts. These findings suggested that male and female teachers experienced different challenges and adopted varying strategies when teaching non-specialized subjects, highlighting potential implications for professional development and support mechanisms tailored to gender-specific needs.

Table 3. Profile of the respondents in terms of Teaching Experience

Teaching experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-3 years	35	63.6
4-5 years	6	10.9
6-10 years	7	12.7
11 and above years	7	12.7
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Table 3 presented the profile of the respondents in terms of teaching experience. The majority of respondents, 35 individuals or 63.6%, had 1–3 years of teaching experience. This was followed by those with 6–10 years and 11 or more years of experience, each comprising 7

respondents or 12.7%, while respondents with 4–5 years of experience accounted for 6 individuals or 10.9%. The data indicated that most of the respondents were relatively new teachers, which aligned with the age profile showing that the majority were young. Novice teachers often faced unique challenges in adapting to the demands of the profession. As noted by Pagutayao and Paglinawan (2025), heavy workloads and misaligned responsibilities were significant challenges for early-career private school teachers. These factors may have influenced their teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction, and the strategies they employed when handling non-specialized subjects.

Table 4. Profile of the respondents in terms of Field of Specialization

Field of Specialization	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Elementary Education	1	1.8
English	16	29.1
Filipino	5	9.1
ICT	1	1.8
Math	9	16.4
Physical Education	5	9.1
Science	7	12.7
Social Science	5	9.1
TLE	5	9.1
Values Education	1	1.8
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Table 4 presented the profile of the respondents in terms of their field of specialization. The majority of the respondents specialized in English, comprising 16 individuals or 29.1% of the total sample. This was followed by Mathematics with 9 respondents or 16.4%, and Science with 7 respondents or 12.7%. Meanwhile, Filipino, Physical Education, Social Science, and Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) each had 5 respondents or 9.1%. Only one respondent, or 1.8%, specialized in Elementary Education, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and Values Education, respectively. The data revealed a diverse range of specializations among the respondents, suggesting that teachers came from various academic backgrounds. This diversity may have contributed to challenges when they were required to teach subjects outside their expertise. As emphasized by Tope (2023), teachers assigned to subjects beyond their specialization often struggled with mastering content knowledge, applying concepts, delivering instruction effectively, and selecting suitable learning materials. Similarly, Villano-Ac (2024) noted that such teachers experienced difficulties in adjusting to unfamiliar content, addressing students' questions confidently, establishing authority in class, and utilizing effective teaching strategies. These findings underscored the need for continuous professional

development and support systems to help teachers adapt when handling non-specialized subjects.

3.2. Challenges faced by teachers in teaching non-specialized subjects

Table 5. Challenges faced by teachers in teaching non-specialized subjects in terms of teaching competence

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1. Organizing lesson plans and instructional materials for unfamiliar subjects is challenging.	2.98	.76	Moderate extent
2. I sometimes feel less confident in my intelligence and subject knowledge when teaching outside my specialization.	2.78	.71	Moderate extent
3. I find it challenging to assess my strengths and weaknesses in teaching non-specialized subjects.	2.87	.67	Moderate extent
4. Making learning enjoyable and interactive is harder when I am not fully knowledgeable about the subject.	2.80	.73	Moderate extent
5. Planning and preparing lessons ahead of time for non-specialized subjects is more difficult.	2.85	.78	Moderate extent
6. Incorporating ethical values and good virtues into lessons in an unfamiliar subject is challenging.	2.85	.83	Moderate extent
7. Setting clear boundaries between professional and personal relationships with students is more difficult in a subject I am unfamiliar with.	2.78	.79	Moderate extent
8. Respecting students' diverse backgrounds and avoiding biases is more challenging when teaching outside my specialization.	2.84	.90	Moderate extent
9. My limited years of experience in a particular subject make it harder to deliver lessons effectively.	2.85	.78	Moderate extent
10. The lack of recognition or citations for my teaching performance in non-specialized subjects affects my motivation.	2.76	.69	Moderate extent
AVERAGE MEAN	2.84		Moderate extent

The results indicated that teachers experienced a moderate level of challenges in teaching competence when handling non-specialized subjects, with an overall mean of 2.84. The most prominent difficulty was organizing lesson plans and instructional materials for unfamiliar subjects, highlighting the demands of preparation without sufficient subject familiarity. In contrast, lack of recognition had a lesser impact on motivation, although it still influenced teachers' confidence and enthusiasm (Perez, 2024). Despite these challenges being manageable,

the findings emphasized the importance of providing continuous professional development, mentoring, and adequate instructional resources to enhance teachers' competence and effectiveness.

Table 6. Challenges faced by teachers in teaching non-specialized subjects in terms of Content Mastery and Expertise

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1. I struggle to develop a strong knowledge base in the non-specialized subject I teach.	2.62	.71	Moderate extent
2. I find it difficult to be fully prepared for every lesson in a subject outside my field.	2.67	.67	Moderate extent
3. My limited background in the subject makes it challenging to provide clear and updated content.	2.80	.67	Moderate extent
4. Answering students' questions with relevant examples and illustrations is more difficult in a subject I am unfamiliar with.	2.73	.67	Moderate extent
5. My lack of extensive reading in the subject area limits my ability to provide deeper insights.	2.69	.63	Moderate extent
6. Keeping up with new trends and innovations in an unfamiliar subject requires extra effort.	2.82	.75	Moderate extent
7. I experience challenges in attending seminars and training that would improve my competence in the subject.	2.76	.79	Moderate extent
8. Pursuing further studies related to the subject is difficult due to my primary specialization.	2.64	.68	Moderate extent
9. I feel less confident in assessing students' understanding accurately due to my limited expertise in the subject.	2.73	.76	Moderate extent
10. I find it challenging to connect the subject matter to real-life applications because of my unfamiliarity with the field.	2.64	.70	Moderate extent
AVERAGE MEAN	2.86		Moderate extent

The findings showed that teachers experienced moderate challenges in content mastery, particularly in keeping up with new trends and innovations in unfamiliar subjects, which required additional effort and continuous learning. While developing a strong knowledge base was less challenging, teachers still needed to exert effort to improve their understanding. These results were consistent with previous studies, which highlighted that teachers assigned outside their specialization often struggled with content adaptation but demonstrated resourcefulness and commitment to professional growth (Aventura & Viña, 2023; Bugwak, 2021; Tingzon &

Buyok, 2022). The findings emphasized the need for ongoing professional development, subject-specific training, and institutional support to enhance teachers' competence and confidence in handling non-specialized subjects.

Table 7. Challenges faced by teachers in teaching non-specialized subjects in terms of Pedagogical Knowledge

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1. I find it challenging to maintain strict discipline in a subject I am not fully specialized in.	2.47	.72	Moderate extent
2. I struggle to consistently enforce classroom rules and policies when teaching a non-specialized subject.	2.55	.88	Moderate extent
3. Managing classroom time efficiently while covering all necessary topics is more difficult in an unfamiliar subject.	2.78	.90	Moderate extent
4. I find it difficult to think of and implement innovative teaching methods for a subject outside my expertise.	2.71	.81	Moderate extent
5. Applying real-life situations in discussions is harder due to my limited background in the subject.	2.62	.78	Moderate extent
6. Making lessons engaging and lively is more challenging when I am unfamiliar with the subject content.	2.69	.86	Moderate extent
7. Preparing visual aids and digitized lessons requires additional effort due to my lack of expertise in the subject.	2.75	.87	Moderate extent
8. I find it difficult to encourage student participation and allow meaningful discussions in a subject I am less familiar with.	2.62	.85	Moderate extent
9. Simplifying teaching strategies to match students' comprehension levels is harder in a subject outside my specialization.	2.76	.82	Moderate extent
10. Addressing students' individual learning needs is challenging due to my limited mastery of the subject.	2.75	.78	Moderate extent
AVERAGE MEAN	2.67		Moderate extent

The results indicated that teachers experienced a moderate level of challenges in pedagogical knowledge, with an overall mean suggesting that these difficulties were present but manageable. The most notable challenge was managing classroom time efficiently while covering all

necessary topics in unfamiliar subjects, highlighting the difficulty of lesson pacing and effective delivery. In contrast, maintaining strict classroom discipline was less challenging, though still a concern. These findings were consistent with previous studies, which emphasized that while teaching outside one's specialization posed instructional difficulties, it also contributed to the development of teachers' pedagogical skills and adaptability (Raymundo, 2021; Arendain & Limpot, 2022). The results underscored the importance of continuous training and mentoring programs to enhance teachers' instructional strategies, time management, and classroom management skills.

3.3. Coping Strategies in Teaching Non-Specialized Subjects

Table 8. Coping Strategies in Teaching Non-Specialized Subjects in terms of Problem-Focused Coping

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1. I mentally prepare by reviewing what I will say or do before teaching a non-specialized subject.	3.42	.71	Used a great deal
2. I stand firm in my instructional approach and advocate for what I believe is effective in teaching the subject.	3.35	.70	Used a great deal
3. I recognize the challenges and put in extra effort to ensure effective teaching.	3.44	.74	Used a great deal
4. I explore multiple solutions to overcome difficulties in teaching an unfamiliar subject.	3.36	.62	Used a great deal
5. I take time to reflect and carefully evaluate my approach before making instructional decisions.	3.38	.71	Used a great deal
6. I create a structured plan of action and follow it to effectively teach the subject.	3.45	.63	Used a great deal
7. I try to understand the perspectives of students and colleagues to improve my teaching strategies.	3.47	.72	Used a great deal
8. I manage my emotions to prevent them from affecting my teaching performance.	3.42	.71	Used a great deal
9. I make necessary adjustments in my teaching methods to ensure positive learning outcomes.	3.47	.66	Used a great deal
10. I analyze the challenges in teaching a non-specialized subject to develop a better understanding and approach.	3.38	.65	Used a great deal
AVERAGE MEAN	3.41		Used a great deal

The findings revealed that teachers extensively utilized problem-focused coping strategies when handling non-specialized subjects, as reflected by a high overall mean of 3.41, interpreted

as “used a great deal.” This indicated that teachers actively addressed challenges through planning, reflection, and instructional adjustments. The most commonly practiced strategies involved understanding students’ perspectives and adapting teaching methods, highlighting the importance of empathy and flexibility in improving learning outcomes. Meanwhile, maintaining a firm instructional stance was the least practiced, suggesting openness to change and adaptability. These results were consistent with prior studies showing that teachers rely on solution-oriented approaches such as problem-solving, time management, and collaboration to effectively manage instructional challenges (Soria & Naparan, 2022).

Table 9. Coping Strategies in Teaching Non-Specialized Subjects in terms of Avoidance

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
I reflect on ways to improve my situation and adapt to the challenges of teaching a non-specialized subject.	3.38	.62	Used a great deal
I look forward to overcoming difficulties and focus on solutions to make the teaching experience better.	3.35	.58	Used a great deal
I take moments to visualize a more effective teaching environment to inspire my approach.	3.49	.54	Used a great deal
I consider different possibilities and strategies to enhance my teaching methods.	3.38	.68	Used a great deal
I try to shift my focus to more productive aspects of teaching rather than dwelling on challenges.	3.27	.68	Used a great deal
I maintain a sense of normalcy and professionalism while addressing difficulties in teaching a non-specialized subject.	3.47	.63	Used a great deal
I assess the situation carefully before taking action to ensure the best approach.	3.29	.71	Used a great deal
I acknowledge that challenges are part of teaching and focus on adapting rather than blaming circumstances.	3.45	.63	Used a great deal
I recognize that some challenges take time to resolve, and I remain patient while seeking improvement.	3.45	.69	Used a great deal
I accept the situation but continue exploring ways to enhance my teaching strategies.	3.40	.66	Used a great deal
AVERAGE MEAN	3.39		Used a great deal

The findings showed that teachers frequently employed avoidance coping strategies when teaching non-specialized subjects, with an overall mean of 3.39, interpreted as “used a great deal.” This indicated that teachers utilized avoidance not as withdrawal, but as a form of emotional regulation and positive reframing to manage stress. Strategies such as visualizing effective teaching environments and maintaining professionalism were highly practiced, reflecting resilience and optimism. Although reflective assessment was slightly less

emphasized, it remained evident in their approach. These results aligned with studies highlighting that emotional regulation and stress management enable teachers to maintain a positive and stable learning environment despite instructional challenges (Sharma et al., 2023; Ma, 2023).

Table 10. Coping Strategies in Teaching Non-Specialized Subjects in terms of Supportive Coping

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
I express my thoughts and emotions by discussing my experiences with a trusted colleague or mentor.	3.25	.67	Used a great deal
I seek support and encouragement from others to help me manage the challenges I face.	3.24	.72	Used a great deal
I find healthy ways to release my emotions to maintain my well-being.	3.29	.71	Used a great deal
I communicate with someone who has the authority or ability to help address the issue.	3.31	.72	Used a great deal
I gather information by talking to others to gain a better understanding of the situation.	3.33	.70	Used a great deal
I consult a respected friend or family member for guidance and advice.	3.45	.69	Used a great deal
I seek strength and clarity through prayer or personal reflection.	3.45	.60	Used a great deal
I sincerely appreciate the guidance and support provided by school authorities in assisting me in navigating unfamiliar subjects.	3.44	.63	Used a great deal
I confide my difficulties in handling non-specialized subjects to my mentors and close friends.	3.13	.61	Used a great deal
I seek out collaboration with other teachers who have expertise on the unfamiliar subject/s assigned to me.	3.38	.65	Used a great deal
AVERAGE MEAN	3.33		Used a great deal

The results indicated that teachers frequently utilized supportive coping strategies when teaching non-specialized subjects, with an overall mean of 3.33, interpreted as “used a great deal.” This showed that teachers relied on both interpersonal and internal sources of support, such as seeking advice from family and engaging in prayer or personal reflection, to manage challenges. While sharing concerns with colleagues and mentors was slightly less practiced, it remained evident in their coping approach. These findings suggested that supportive coping played a vital role in maintaining teachers’ emotional stability and professional growth,

consistent with studies emphasizing the importance of social support and collaboration in enhancing teacher resilience and job satisfaction (Soria & Naparan, 2022).

Table 11. Coping Strategies in Teaching Non-Specialized Subjects in terms of Adaptive Coping

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
I reflect on my actions and identify areas where I can improve.	3.38	.62	Used a quite bit
I acknowledge my role in the challenges I face and learn from them.	3.40	.71	Used a quite bit
I commit to making positive changes and improving my approach in the future.	3.45	.63	Used a great deal
I take a break or rest to recharge and regain focus.	3.31	.72	Used a great deal
I engage in activities that provide comfort and relaxation.	3.38	.65	Used a great deal
I manage stress through physical activities such as jogging or exercise.	3.24	.69	Used a great deal
I prefer to process my emotions privately.	3.30	.72	Used a great deal
I spend time alone to cope with challenges.	3.16	.74	Used a great deal
I limit sharing my struggles with others to maintain personal boundaries.	3.13	.67	Used a quite bit
I remain optimistic and open to unexpected opportunities that will improve my teaching experiences.	3.33	.72	Used a great deal
AVERAGE MEAN	3.31		Used a great deal

The findings showed that teachers frequently employed adaptive coping strategies when teaching non-specialized subjects, with an overall mean of 3.31, interpreted as “used a great deal.” This indicated that teachers adopted positive and reflective approaches, such as committing to self-improvement, maintaining optimism, and engaging in stress-relieving activities. While some preferred more private or independent coping methods, adaptive coping overall contributed to their resilience and effectiveness. These results aligned with studies

emphasizing that teachers who utilize adaptive strategies are more organized, proactive, and capable of managing classroom challenges and changes effectively (Samfira & Paloş, 2021).

3.4. Significant Effect of Challenges Faced by Teachers on the Coping Strategies They Employed in Teaching Non-Specialized Subjects

Table 12. Regression Coefficients of Challenges Faced by Teachers on the Coping Strategies They Employed in Teaching Non-Specialized Subjects

Model Coefficients - Overall Coping Strategies Levels

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	2.105	0.358	5.879	< .001
Content Mastery and Expertise	0.284	0.116	2.448	0.016
Teaching Competence	0.331	0.104	3.183	0.002
Pedagogical Knowledge	0.231	0.107	2.251	0.027

Model Fit: $R^2 = .398$; $F(3, 51) = 15.70$; $p < 0.001$

Test used: Linear Regression

The regression analysis revealed that challenges faced by teachers significantly influenced the coping strategies they employed when teaching non-specialized subjects, with the overall model found to be statistically significant. Teaching competence emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by content mastery and pedagogical knowledge, indicating that greater challenges in these areas prompted teachers to adopt more coping strategies. These findings aligned with previous studies showing that coping mechanisms are shaped by instructional challenges and supported by institutional factors such as training and resources (Conda & Benavides, 2024; Tiangco, 2025; Oquendo et al., 2025; Amoroso, 2025). The results highlighted the need for comprehensive support programs to enhance teachers' skills, resilience, and effectiveness in handling non-specialized subjects.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study provided support for the primary hypothesis that the challenges encountered by teachers significantly influence the coping strategies they employ when teaching non-specialized subjects. In particular, teaching competence emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by content mastery and pedagogical knowledge, indicating that greater instructional

difficulties prompted teachers to adopt more coping mechanisms. Secondary findings also revealed that teachers experienced moderate levels of challenges but responded by frequently utilizing various coping strategies, including problem-focused, avoidance, supportive, and adaptive approaches. These results suggest that while teachers face notable difficulties outside their specialization, they remain proactive and resilient in managing these demands.

The results aligned with existing literature, which emphasized that challenges related to insufficient content knowledge and teaching competence often lead teachers to develop coping strategies to maintain effectiveness (Conda & Benavides, 2024; Oquendo et al., 2025). Similar to prior studies, teachers in this research demonstrated adaptability, resourcefulness, and a solution-oriented mindset. However, unlike some findings that highlighted avoidance coping as a negative response, this study showed that avoidance strategies were used constructively for emotional regulation and maintaining a positive outlook. This distinction clarified that coping strategies among teachers are not merely reactive but can be adaptive and purposeful in sustaining instructional quality.

In interpreting these results, several limitations were considered. The study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias and social desirability. Additionally, the sample was limited to private high school teachers in Pila, Laguna, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other regions or public-school settings. The moderate statistical power and the use of a cross-sectional design also limited the ability to establish causal relationships. Despite these limitations, the consistency of findings across variables suggested meaningful relationships between challenges and coping strategies.

The findings have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study reinforced the models of effective teaching and coping by demonstrating that instructional challenges and coping mechanisms are interconnected processes. Practically, the results highlighted the need for targeted professional development, institutional support, and mentoring programs to strengthen teachers' competence and resilience. Addressing gaps in content mastery and pedagogical skills can enhance teachers' confidence and effectiveness, ultimately improving student outcomes.

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that teaching outside one's area of specialization presents moderate yet meaningful challenges that affect teachers' instructional practices, particularly in lesson planning, content mastery, and pedagogical delivery. Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrated strong resilience by actively employing a range of coping strategies, including problem-focused, avoidance, supportive, and adaptive approaches. The findings further established that challenges in teaching competence, content mastery, and pedagogical

knowledge significantly influenced the coping mechanisms teachers adopted, highlighting that coping is a responsive and adaptive process shaped by professional demands.

However, several limitations should be considered in interpreting these findings. The study was confined to a specific group of teachers within a limited context, which may affect the generalizability of the results to other populations, such as public-school teachers or those from different regions. In addition, the use of self-reported data may be subject to response bias, as participants' answers depend on their personal perceptions and experiences. The cross-sectional design of the study also limits the ability to examine changes in teachers' challenges and coping strategies over time. Furthermore, the study primarily focused on teaching outside one's area of specialization and did not extensively consider other factors that may influence instructional practices, such as institutional policies, workload, and access to resources.

In light of current knowledge, the study underscores the importance of strengthening teacher preparation and continuous professional development, especially in addressing subject-matter gaps and enhancing pedagogical skills. Institutional support systems, such as mentoring programs, collaborative environments, and recognition mechanisms, are essential in sustaining teacher motivation and effectiveness. Moreover, fostering open communication within schools can encourage teachers to seek support and share professional experiences more freely.

Future research may explore broader populations, including public school teachers or other regions, and consider longitudinal or intervention-based approaches to examine how support programs impact teacher performance over time. The study contributes to the understanding that while non-specialization poses challenges, equipping teachers with adequate resources, training, and support can enhance their adaptability and ensure the delivery of quality education.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics

The author declares no conflict of interest.

AI Use Statement

The authors maintain full responsibility for the intellectual content and originality of the manuscript. AI was used to improve language and readability of the manuscript with caution.

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